

'We Are All in This Together'

After serving in the U.S. Navy for more than 20 years, veteran Paula Jansen found the VFW connects her to her community

Jul 08, 2021

“The VFW is family and we take care of each other. This is why I’m proud to say ‘I am the VFW,’” said Paula Jansen who is **#StillServing** as District 1 Commander, Department of California, and Post Commander at VFW Post 5867 in Lakeside.

“I am the VFW because I care. My family has served in every branch of the military over multiple generations. My father was a Vietnam veteran and he didn’t feel he had a place to belong. Together, the VFW and Post 5867 will make sure all veterans have a place to belong.”

This commitment to service and camaraderie fuels Jansen’s desire to make a difference for others as a Legacy Life Member of the VFW. After serving in the U.S. Navy for more than 20 years, she’s found the VFW connects her to her community.

For the past year, Jansen has been helping VFW members explore new possibilities for staying on mission. Post 5867 has focused on helping veterans and their local community maintain mental and physical health during the pandemic.

The Post held ceremonies virtually so members still felt engaged and made cards for a VA hospital and veterans home while visitors were not allowed. With a large hall, they gave Post kids a socially distanced visit with Santa, offered small yoga and exercise classes and have distributed more than 300 free therapeutic arts and crafts kits with Help Heal Veterans.

“The Post did a community clean up around Lindo Lake, which we’re located on. It’s one of the few places here that everyone could go,” Jansen stated.

“It was good to get people out in the fresh air. Walking around the lake could be done with social distancing.”

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Meals and community Halloween and Easter drive-through events also have kept Jansen and her fellow veterans engaged with local residents. She's proud of everyone's dedication to supporting each other in a challenging time.

"Our Post operates as one team – comrades, auxiliary and youth. We even have veterans who aren't eligible to join the VFW, but they still volunteer and participate in our activities," said Jansen.

"Our Post motto is 'One Team One Mission 5867.' We are all in this together and together is how we survived the last year."

As District 1 Commander, Jansen has been talking with Posts and sharing ideas of how members in various locations are adjusting activities because of COVID-19. She's impressed with efforts to continue answering the call of duty.

"Posts have done card mailings, used phone calling services to reach out to members and held a virtual Buddy Poppy drive," Jansen recalled.

"One Post scheduled meal delivery to members. Another hosted a community food drive, helping the members and donating the rest to local food banks."

Jansen hopes she and other VFW members and leaders inspire more people to a life of service.

"We are all so different, but yet the same, and each one of us has a skill," said Jansen.

"Figure out what that skill is and offer to do that one thing for your Post or community. If we all just did one thing, imagine how great we could be."

To find out more about the VFW's #StillServing campaign or to share your story, visit [vfw.org/StillServing](https://www.vfw.org/StillServing).