

Uniting to Combat Hunger

The VFW Foundation adds full-match, unrestricted grant for Posts and Auxiliaries helping fight food insecurity

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Since the VFW teamed up with Humana and Feeding America[®] to establish the Uniting to Combat Hunger (UTCH) initiative in 2018, the campaign remains a staple in fighting hunger and food insecurity in America.

Responsible for raising the equivalent of more than 1.2 million meals between 2018 and August 2021, the campaign now looks to sharpen its focus to address food insecurity among military families and veterans.

“Our goal this year was to provide 1 million meals for those experiencing food insecurity, especially geared toward the military community,” said VFW Foundation Manager Richard Freiburghouse. “To facilitate this goal, we established a UTCH grant where for every dollar raised by a VFW Post/Auxiliary, the VFW Foundation would provide a one-half match.”

Beginning on Oct. 1, however, the VFW Foundation will reward the efforts of VFW Posts and Auxiliaries supporting UTCH by adding more incentives to the current Uniting to Combat Hunger Grant guidelines.

The revision to the Grant now states that for every dollar raised by a VFW Post/Auxiliary in support of the UTCH campaign, the VFW Foundation will match the full amount raised by said VFW Post/Auxiliary. According to the Foundation, a minimum of \$500 must be raised to qualify for the unrestricted matching grant, with a hard-cap of \$5,000 per Post/Auxiliary.

“We have also added a component that considers volunteer hours,” added Jason Couch, the VFW Foundation’s Grants and External Relations Coordinator. “For every hour that VFW Post/Auxiliary members volunteer to address food insecurity in their community, the Foundation will provide a dollar match in the form of an unrestricted grant.”

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A minimum of 500 hours must be documented to qualify for the volunteerism grant.

Among the Posts already carrying out the campaign at the grassroots level, VFW Post 1 members in Denver began on Aug. 6 during its “First Friday Art Walk,” joining volunteers from its Auxiliary and Humana to raise more than \$600 in one night.

“Being able to help a focused campaign is a great way to make sure funds we raise go further,” said VFW Post 1 Quartermaster Jesse Eastburn. “ We see homelessness and need on a daily basis, being in downtown Denver. Even though our Post is currently closed for renovations, we have adapted and utilized technology to still help veterans.”

In continuing to help VFW’s UTCH campaign, Eastburn added that Post 1 has made contact and created partnerships with local organizations.

“We’ve been able to make contact with local food pantries directly helped by Feeding America to point comrades who need help to their doors,” Eastburn said. “We like partnering with local nonprofits around us because we all have the same goal, which is to help our veteran community and their families.”

Grateful for VFW Foundation’s UTCH Grant program, VFW Post 7863 in Duboistown, Pa., about 198 miles east of Pittsburgh, also began its grassroots campaign to help its local veterans suffering from food insecurity this year, helping raise more than \$4,500 towards the fund.

“We really appreciate the VFW UTCH grant program,” Kim Rockwell of Post 7863 said. “It’s really helped us as I imagine it’s helped other local Posts/Auxiliaries with the mission to leave no veteran behind with food and nutritional health.”

VFW Posts and Auxiliaries wanting to join the campaign can do so by following the VFW Foundation’s UTCH grant program guidelines below.

1. UTCH grants are restricted to VFW Posts and Auxiliaries. Other VFW entities are ineligible. In order to qualify for the grant,
 - a) Financial contributions to UTCH must be made online at www.vfw.org/UTCH, or via check made out to VFW Foundation, designating UTCH in a cover letter or the memo portion of the check.
 - b) Volunteer hours must address food insecurity in your community. Volunteer activities may include but are not limited to: serving meals at a homeless shelter, conducting a food drive, packing/sorting food at a food pantry, etc.
2. A Post and its Auxiliary may each apply for a UTCH grant, but donations and volunteer hours will only count toward one request. If a joint request is submitted, grant funds will be split evenly between the Post and Auxiliary.

3. Volunteer hours and financial contributions to UTCH may be combined in the grant application. For example, VFW Post/Auxiliary donates \$500 to UTCH and documents 500 volunteer hours served at a local soup kitchen. They are eligible for a \$1,000 grant to be split evenly between the Post and its Auxiliary.
4. The grant that the Post or Auxiliary receives from the Foundation may be utilized by the Post or Auxiliary for any purpose, so long as it is in accordance with VFW or Auxiliary by-laws. The maximum amount for a grant back to the Post or Auxiliary is \$5,000.
5. This is a retroactive grant; applicants will submit their requests after their projects have been completed. VFW Posts and Auxiliaries must document financial contributions and volunteer hours; for example, a copy of the VFW Foundation receipt for the UTCH grant, photos or screenshots of qualifying volunteer event, etc. The exact donation amount and number of volunteer hours must be specified on any such documentation. Supporting documentation must be provided at the time of submission.
6. The VFW Foundation reserves the right to make changes to the application procedure at any time. If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Jason Couch at 816-968-1174 or at jcouch@vfw.org.