

Wife Leads the Post, Husband Leads the Auxiliary

A VFW Post commander and Auxiliary president in Tennessee share the secret to a prosperous union built on a love to serve veterans and their community

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In Manchester, Tennessee, the joint success of its local VFW Post and Auxiliary remains an open love letter from Kimberly and David King to veterans and their community.

The Kings, who have been married for 20 years and have a son, Kyle, an active-duty Navy veteran and VFW Life member, provide a dynamic that since 2017 has revitalized the veterans' community in and around Manchester.

Kimberly, a retired Navy chief petty officer with more than two decades in the service, sits at the helm of Post 10904, while David runs its Auxiliary, often hosting joint sessions to have both factions run in symbiosis — a family.

“We know our role in the community, and we represent VFW in the best way possible, as it is the organization that makes so much happen for so many,” said Kimberly, who retired in 2007 after several deployments to Bosnia, Kuwait and Afghanistan. “We do this as a family, with both the Post and Auxiliary members participating and working together all the time.”

The chemistry between the Kings, however, is the secret ingredient behind Post 10904 and its Auxiliary's meteoric success in membership numbers and community service. Since becoming Post commander in 2017, Kimberly has seen this duo propel the Post into All-American honors four consecutive times and All-State five times in a row. With the Auxiliary by its side, the Post also has won its Department's Community Service Award (2022), the VFW National Award of Merit three times and the National Special Project Award twice.

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“I think my role as a female makes the Auxiliary feel more welcome,” Kimberly said. “David also is well-liked and respected by our Post members, and his Auxiliary could not be happier. He had the top membership in the Department last year because he makes joining so important for both men and women alike.”

‘I WAS SOUGHT-OUT FOR THE MOST DIFFICULT LOADS’

A hard-nosed overachiever, Kimberly enlisted in 1985 at the MEPS Center in New Orleans and went on to serve in VR-60, 56, 46 and 54, as well as in a Fleet Logistics Support Wing and at the Naval Air Logistics Office.

As an aircrewman wanting to upgrade to loadmaster, Kimberly encountered her first taste of what would eventually prepare her for the thick-skinned duties and obstacles reserved for leadership roles in a male-dominated organization.

“When I served, it was almost completely a male-dominated job,” Kimberly said. “I was turned down several times when I asked to be upgraded to loadmaster. The answer will sound rough, but I was told, ‘Women were too stupid for the job,’ or we ‘weren’t strong enough.’”

Persistent, as her husband, David, can attest, Kimberly continued to apply until approved to train as a loadmaster.

During her training, she received the single-most useful tip in what has since become her *modus operandi*.

“My command master chief at the time advised me to learn the job at the most detailed and advanced level possible,” said Kimberly, who worked as a loadmaster on C-130, C-9 and DC-9 aircraft. “His advice was spot-on, and in time I learned the job so well that I was sought-out for the most difficult loads. I even became an instructor and evaluator for loadmasters.”

It was in Kimberly’s propensity for detail and advanced execution that Navy and Marine Corps veteran Gary Benton, the Post 10904 senior vice commander in 2017, nominated her for Post commander in just her second meeting.

“I joined in late 2016 but had only been able to attend two meetings by April 2017,” Kimberly said. “I went to the bathroom during that meeting, and when I came out, I had been nominated as commander. I asked, ‘What’s wrong with the job?’ as this seemed odd, but Gary told me he knew how chief petty officers were trained, and he felt I could do the job.”

‘I SAW THE POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH’

Following Kimberly’s ascension as Post 10904 commander, David sought to help his wife in any capacity possible. He attended several Auxiliary meetings before deciding to join as a

Life member in September 2017.

“It was important for me to determine if there was a place for me in the Auxiliary,” David said. “I saw the potential for growth and many ways to help our community, especially our local schools.”

David, who retired as a senior safety consultant for ExxonMobile after 36 years, had previously taught high school science and coached several sports between 1976 and 1980, understanding how to bridge the gap between generations.

With ties to Westwood Middle School in Manchester, where he also spent three years as an assistant basketball coach, David approached the school leadership about introducing Patriot’s Pen.

“I fully understand the school structure, so it was easy for me to secure participants in our VFW contests,” said David, who acquired 30-45 participants for Patriot’s Pen during his first year as an Auxiliary member.

With David’s help as Auxiliary president, Kimberly’s Post has been able to tout a link between its local schools and veterans. The symbiotic relationship between Post and Auxiliary has led to several Department of Tennessee awards for teacher of the year, as well as a community service award from the Boys Scouts of America and a couple of Tennessee Governor’s Volunteer Star awards.

“I am very proud of the many accomplishments we have successfully brought to Post 10904,” said David, who was elected Auxiliary president in 2018.

“Our Post has become a well-oiled machine, working tirelessly together on so many events in our communities like the creation of the first-ever Veterans Day Parade in Manchester.”

For their local success at the Post level, Kimberly and David have since taken on larger roles. Kimberly is now both the Post and District 5 commander, and David now serves as both Auxiliary president at the Post and as District 5 senior vice president.

‘HIGHER AND HIGHER’

While their situation at the Post is unique, David says the level of inclusiveness between Post and Auxiliary that has allowed them to succeed, side-by-side, can be modeled at other Posts.

“It has been a wonderful experience, but hopefully it can serve as an example to other Posts

that working together as a Post and Auxiliary is what has allowed us to succeed,” he said.

The lessons are twofold, as Kimberly believes the action must always be held outside of the Post, while David carries out the personification of what a healthy relationship between the Auxiliary and Post can do for veterans and their community.

“We know that to be the most effective, we must always be on call 24/7 and out in the public,” Kimberly said. “To this end, we work with and in schools, with teachers and with the public in a wide variety of ways.”

Despite their venturing out to spread the gospel of unity, the Kings’ favorite part of the job is the joint sessions between Post 10904 members and its Auxiliary.

“This is the time when we are all together as one, and we always have great, motivating meetings,” Kimberly said.

David echoes his wife’s sentiments, adding, “We have found it to be really fun, enjoyable and fulfilling as we have learned together and moved our expectations higher and higher.”

This article is featured in the October issue of [VFW magazine](#) and was written by [Ismael Rodriguez Jr.](#), senior writer for VFW magazine.