

‘Service To All’

A profile on West Virginia’s first female state commander

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Despite becoming the first female Department commander of West Virginia in June, Dr. Corrina Boggess dwells little on the historic accomplishment, focusing rather on the tasks at hand.

A former deputy chief of staff for the Army Reserve in Washington, D.C., who retired in 2009 as a colonel after 28 years in the service, Boggess’ leadership will take the forefront as she exemplifies her motto — “Service To All.”

“It’s a neat accomplishment, but I didn’t place much attention toward that,” said Boggess, who deployed in 2004-05 to Tikrit, Iraq, in command of the 376th Personnel Services Battalion. “I’m more focused on re-energizing Posts across the state to increase membership, as well as growing our presence in local communities so people understand the work that we do.”

Since joining the VFW in 2013 at Post 9097 in Hurricane, West Virginia, Boggess attributes her swift rise up the ranks to an uncanny understanding of legislation that was apparent during her first state convention appearance.

“They were presenting a piece of legislation, and I stood up and added some input,” said Boggess, who received her doctorate in executive leadership from the University of Charleston in West Virginia in 2018. “I was very comfortable talking about legislation because I did that for many years in the military. I was then pulled aside and asked to join the Department’s legislative committee.”

By then, Boggess had transferred with her uncle, a Vietnam veteran, to Post 8363 in Chesapeake, West Virginia, where she became junior vice commander in 2016 and saw the Post attain All-State and All-American honors.

When the COVID-19 pandemic plagued the country in 2020, Boggess, who had recently been voted commander of Post 8363, received a proposition to further elevate her status

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within the organization.

“The Department commander at the time had asked me if I was interested in the junior vice position because it had become vacant,” Boggess said. “The vote was done by the council of administration because there was no state convention that year due to COVID. There was some resistance from a few Posts because I was a female, but the council was very supportive and unanimously voted me in.”

During her historic ceremony as the first female Department commander of West Virginia in June, Boggess again displayed a shrewd sense of leadership. Instead of holding the ceremony at the state headquarters, Boggess chose a banquet hall that allowed the state’s Auxiliary members to attend.

“From my perspective, the Auxiliary and the VFW are two sides of the same coin,” Boggess said. “I did my presentation at the banquet hall to allow the Auxiliary members to be present because they’re a crucial part the organization. They are a great asset to help recruit, and I think that’s a relationship we should be strengthening.”

Boggess also wants to capture the attention of veterans in communities across the Mountaineer State by enhancing VFW’s presence. From curating shabby VFW Posts in need of repairs to advocating for VFW’s many services.

“I am actively out there recruiting and servicing all veterans, not necessarily placing all my focus on a specific group,” Boggess said. “While I do want to recruit more female veterans into our great organization, we must first help them recognize that they are combat veterans.”

Boggess cited that over the last 20 years, there’s been a large influx of female veterans deploying to combat zones. A lot of them, however, are younger and placing most of their post-military efforts on having families and succeeding in their civilian careers.

“As they begin to age, I think these female veterans will be an active voice in our organization,” Boggess said. “Since I was older when I retired, I had the time to join and work towards something. I believe as these female veterans start to age out, they’ll start to get more involved like I did. For now, I’ll keep talking to as many of them as I can, sharing my experience that the VFW is more than welcoming to women.”