

‘Impressed With the Vast Network of Free Resources’

A VFW Post in Oklahoma used VFW’s Adopt-A-Unit program to build a relationship with a local Air Force unit

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In order to serve as a cushion for the perils of deployment, VFW Post 7192 in Midwest City, Oklahoma, adopted the 552nd Air Control Wing out of nearby Tinker Air Force Base in March.

As a retired radio operator for the 552nd Air Control Wing in 2000, Post 7192 Commander Lee McCullum understood at an intimate level the benefits VFW’s Adopt-A-Unit program could have on his former unit.

“I was excited because I know what VFW’s assistance programs can do for active-duty troops,” McCullum said. “I know how important it is to build supportive relationships with units before, during and after deployments.”

McCullum, who also serves as president of the Airborne Early Warning Association (AEWA) chapter in Midwest City, pitched the idea to the 552nd AWC commander, Col. Keven Coyle, during a monthly breakfast event hosted by the chapter.

“The AEWA is an organization of retired AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) members, and Col. Coyle was in attendance at one of our monthly breakfasts,” McCullum said. “He asked if we could mentor the active-duty members, and we accepted.”

McCullum invited the Department of Oklahoma and District commander into the conversation, where they further explained what the VFW could offer to active-duty troops.

“We told him about our Adopt-A-Unit program and all that it entails,” McCullum said. “He was impressed with the vast network of free resources for military members and their families that the VFW offers.”

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Through the VFW's Adopt-A-Unit program, which currently supports more than 121,000 active-duty members and their families, McCullum highlighted special events that included family days, welcome home ceremonies and deployment sendoffs, holiday parties, support seminars and community projects.

McCullum also spoke about the program's direct assistance before, during and after deployments, which can include accommodations for wounded service members in the form of lawn care, auto repairs and home renovations.

"We're a very active Post, and as a result, we are the first Post to reach our recruiting quota in the state," McCullum said. "A lot of the members of the AEWA have joined our Post, and even a few active-duty guys."

Part of the allure for new members, McCullum added, comes from the plethora of events the Post hosts throughout the year. Holidays range from Oktoberfest to St. Patrick's Day, MLK Day, Veterans Day and Armed Forces Day, as well as cook-offs.

"We are offering all our members, especially the older ones, a place where they can come in and feel comfortable in their surroundings," McCullum said. "A place where they can all share similar stories, but also a place where younger veterans can come in and feel welcomed."

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