

Working Together

A mother and daughter team up to run a Post and its Auxiliary in New York

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When Navy veteran Madison Fletcher became the first female commander of VFW Post 5444 in Dover Plains, New York, last year, a door of opportunity opened for her closest ally.

In navigating a male-dominated world for many years alone, Fletcher now stands head-and-shoulders with her mother, Melanie Ryder, who became Auxiliary president this year to serve her daughter as an additional voice of reason.

“My mom has always had my back, and she’s someone I can call and is always there for me,” said Fletcher, who served aboard the USS Wasp and HSC-26 out of Norfolk, Virginia, from 2004-2008. “I think her being in this new role will be beneficial for the both of us.”

Though both now work diligently as commander and Auxiliary president to enhance Post 5444’s image and reach in and around the community of Dover Plains, Ryder added that she will always be a mother first.

“As a mom, I’m very proud of her becoming the first female Post commander [of 5444] because I know it’s a big responsibility,” Ryder said. “It’s a man’s world, and I think she’s taking the position and handled it very well.”

Since being sworn in as Post commander in 2021, Fletcher’s ambitious nature has already helped her increase membership at the Post, as well as implemented new innovative ways to reach a larger veterans’ audience through apps and local events. For her efforts, Fletcher also has been elected as District senior vice commander and as a chairman for the Department of New York.

But Fletcher’s well-to-do attitude and early success has received a boost following her mother’s appointing as Auxiliary president this year.

Together thus far, the couple has united the Post and Auxiliary to host car shows, poker runs, silent auctions, dances and breakfasts to help raise more than \$4,000.

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“There’s a difference between mom and daughter, and president and commander,” Fletcher said. “The dynamic between us is for the good of the Post, having them both work closely together for a common goal.”

Despite an already organic relationship to support one another, Ryder added that a benefit of their unique situation is that any disagreements over VFW matters always end amicably at the dinner table.

“We always support each other during events, always trying to get new members and push the Post forward,” Ryder said. “I think some of the advantages is that we have that relationship already, and we can get mad, but we’re family and it doesn’t last.”

Fletcher believes together with her mother, they can continue to turn ripples in waves.

“I think we make a good team, and I am excited to see how far we can take the Post,” Fletcher said. “We have talked about what we can do for a while now, and we are certain this is certainly something that can benefit our membership and community.”