

'Extremely Grateful' for Women Vets Expo

A VFW Post in North Pole, Alaska, is readying for its second annual event specifically designed for female veterans

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For several years, Candy Kuck has co-chaired the Veterans Stand Down in Fairbanks, Alaska. A Life member of VFW Post 10029 Auxiliary in North Pole, about 20 minutes from Fairbanks, Kuck had the idea to host an event specifically for female vets.

March 9 will mark the second annual women veterans' expo sponsored by VFW Post 10029 and its Auxiliary.

"This came to be after working at the Stand Down," Kuck said. "A female vet there told me that something really needed to be done just for women vets."

For the first expo in March 2023, Kuck invited area Guard and active-duty women who are close to being discharged from the military. Post 10029 sits about halfway between Fort Wainwright and Eielson AFB. Additionally, the Alaska Army National Guard Readiness Center is just west of Fort Wainwright.

"There also were older female veterans who wanted to just come out and hang out and talk with the younger ones," Kuck said. "There were Korea and Vietnam War veterans. We had 36 ladies show up, and the majority stayed all day."

In addition to an acupuncturist and masseuse, the Fairbanks Rescue Mission participated in the expo. Kuck said the mission has a program specifically for homeless veterans. The Cohen Clinic attended as well, and offered free mental health services for women.

"We made sure that the employees sent from each place were women so that our veterans would feel the most comfortable," Kuck said. "The only men there were the service officers."

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Kuck said that representatives of the Aging and Disability Resource Center came to pass out information. The center has staff specifically assigned to assist veterans.

As she prepares for the second expo, Kuck said she is reflecting on the impact that last year's event made.

"The ladies who showed up were extremely grateful," said Kuck, who has lived in Alaska since 2011 when her husband retired after 22 years in the Army infantry. "One woman in particular, she hugged me and cried as she told me she finally got the help she needed."

Kuck said that while the expo provides an opportunity for female vets to bond for a few hours, it also allows the different providers to network with each other.

The second annual women veterans' expo will feature door prizes, lunch and will run from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Kuck said that based on last year's numbers, she expects this year to have an even greater turnout.

"I was worried no one would show up," Kuck said. "So when 36 ladies showed up, I was absolutely pumped. I was thrilled."

This article is featured in the 2024 March issue of [VFW magazine](#) and was written by [Janie Dyhouse](#), senior editor for VFW magazine.