



The picture above is Pennsylvania Past State Commander and State Parliamentarian Thomas "Ace" Hanzas presiding and giving him his oath of obligation.

DAVID W. "SPIKE" GYGER ELECTED STATE COMMANDER OF THE PENNSYLVANIA VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

The Pennsylvania Veterans of Foreign Wars elected Hummelstown resident David W. "Spike" Gyger as the State Commander of the Pennsylvania Veterans of Foreign Wars on June 17, 2023.

Gyger enlisted in the Pennsylvania Air National Guard in August 1979. He served for 36 years and retired from the Middletown based 193rd Special Operations Wing. During his long and storied career, he served in combat operations and participated in at least 20 deployments to include worldwide and classified missions.

Gyger held many VFW positions for the Post, District and Department levels. He has served as the Pennsylvania VFW Homeless Veterans Chairman for many years as well.



"I am honored to Command the Pennsylvania Veterans of Foreign Wars," said Gyger. "I look forward to working with this great team and helping to support the Veterans of Foreign Wars across Pennsylvania."

Spike is the proud father of two children and three grandchildren. He is the son of Willi Gyger WWII Veteran of Switzerland and Beatrice Gyger.

STATE COMMANDER DAVID "SPIKE" GYGER VISITS NEW HAMPSHIRE

In August 2023, Denis Querrard, New Hampshire VFW Commander, invited David "Spike" Gyger to visit his state for his COA to follow with the Grand Cootie Scratch. "Denis and his lovely wife, Abby, took us to visit their home post, VFW Post 3041 in Lancaster, New Hampshire," said Gyger.



From left to right Gene Comeau, Kurt Ruch Post 3041 Commander, Department of New Hampshire Commander Denis Querrard, Department of PA Commander David W. "Spike" Gyger, New Hampshire National Council Member Leon Rideout and Jerry 'Squirrel' Martin Post 4041 Past Commander.

STATE COMMANDER



DAVID W. "SPIKE" GYGER
STATE COMMANDER

One of the honors of being the Pennsylvania State VFW Commander is visiting with people at the local posts. The posts drive this massive organization across the State. It is not something unfamiliar with military service. The real work is always done by our heroes at the tip of the spear. Collectively these efforts make a huge difference. For this reason, I would like to refocus our attention on our VFW Programs.

What we do for youth is wonderful. Voice of Democracy competition annually awards nearly \$3 million in scholarships nationwide. The Patriot's Pen, more than \$1.2 million is awarded annually nationwide. We also have teacher awards and Scouting Awards. We do community projects, PA VFW members volunteered and reported more than 77,542,454 hours to community service projects annually and donations around \$740,792.00 to their communities. There is a need for better reporting on the Community Service. These are just some of the numbers that we achieve as an organization. Embrace these programs, find ways to participate and help make a difference this year.

The safety program is a great way to recognize our local first responders. This is very important. These first responders are doing tough jobs that many can't, or won't, do. They are true patriots serving our commonwealth and communities. We should see a strong participation in recognizing their service.

These programs are tried and true. They are an important part of what it means to be a member of the VFW. Step up and recognize those in our communities through your VFW. Interact with the community and assist those who will foster the future of our nation. These programs will do just that. The template for successful programs is there. Visit the Pennsylvania Department website and look under programs for additional information and the chair contact for each.

Thank you for your service to your country and to the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Respectfully,

David W. "Spike" Gyger
Commander
Department of Pennsylvania

GENERAL ORDERS

Comrades:

Thank you for all that you do in your Posts and Communities. Now that all the PTI's (Pennsylvania Training Instructions) have been completed, I hope that you are now more familiar and comfortable with your leadership responsibilities. If you need any help or need a clarification, please call Headquarters. A special thank you to the Posts who hosted our PTIs. Our training instructions provide a great opportunity to meet comrades from across the Commonwealth and build our Pennsylvania VFW team.

Membership is critical to this organization, and we need to become more involved in our communities, events, fairs, carnivals, etc. Have a recruiting table during these community events and let the public know what the VFW is all about and what the VFW's mission is. Have recruiting handouts available and be professional and positive. If you need any recruiting items, please reach out to the Department Membership Team or myself.

1. Dates for Council of Administration Meetings: > Oct 6th, 2023 – State College, PA at 1 PM at The Ramada Conference Center in State College, PA That weekend is also the State Commander's Retreat.

> Mid-January 2024 at the Double Tree Hotel Pittsburgh – Cranberry, 910 Sheraton Drive, Mars, PA 16046. The date and time will be published on the website soon.

2. Changes of Post and District Officers: All District and Post Commanders are reminded that whenever there is change of officer(s) within the Post or District that they need to FILE A NEW ELECTION REPORT in OMS and notify the Department HQ.

3. Chain of Command: All Posts members are reminded that if there are any issues at your Posts it is asked that you start at the Post Commander level, then the District Commander and finally the State Commander. In most cases/situations, problems can be resolved at the post level.

4. District Meetings Date Changes: District Commanders are reminded to notify the State Adjutant Office and myself ASAP of any changes in District meeting dates so that the respective Department Representative can be notified in adequate time.

Please note there were a few corrections made to the District Commanders and Chairman POC.

District Commanders for the term 2023 – 2024

District	Name	Phone	Post	Email
1	Joseph Sokol	267-584-1324	20	dotsokol104@gmail.com
7	Johnnie Walker	610-220-5053	928	fstsgtwalker@comcast.net
8	John Otte	267-644-7942	7293	john.otte@gmail.com
9	Claresa Whitfield	610-322-1410	287	claresa1974@yahoo.com
10	Vincent Gavin	570-862-2955	7963	Vincentdangavin@gmail.com
11	Melissa Dimmitt	931-561-8763	6615	missmissid@yahoo.com
12	Lance Nelson	570-590-6587	7654	pdd1533@verizon.net

GENERAL ORDERS CONTINUED

13	Ronald Brown	484-772-5387	38	ronaldbrown694@gmail.com
14	Phillip Price	570-506-1347	8488	pprice@nep.net
15	Jesse Olson	706-577-7293	6611	vfw.pa.sva@gmail.com
16	Walt Hartnett	484-362-3957	1074	walt.hartnett4@gmail.com
17	Harold Aucker	570-765-0025	6631	haucker1117@gmail.com
18	Fred Hechler	717-512-3843	9639	persiangulfvet91@gmail.com
19	John Pagliaro	814-661-5282	7252	Jpags.vfw7252@gmail.com
20	Gregory Protsko	570-677-9222	8612	g.protsko@outlook.com
21	Christine Smith	717-487-5089	1446	csmithvfw@gmail.com
22	Douglas Warmath	814-414-6953	7689	creasegrinder@gmail.com
23	Alister McGibbon	724-415-8160	8543	alistermcgibbon@hotmail.com
24	Gary MacArthur	724-941-2334	764	gary.macart@gmail.com
25	Stephen Freeman	724-506-3890	249	tiger437@hotmail.com
26	Dave Seymore	814-931-0600	2076	rooftopinsp@aol.com
27	Kenneth King	724-640-5450	7781	colkking@gmail.com
28	Michael Staab	814-450-3718	470	mikey.staab@gmail.com
29	Richard Stefanick	412-400-0819	9197	vfwdistrict29@gmail.com
30	Melody Price	814-644-3760	5754	mjp81364@gmail.com

Chairmanship for the Term 2023 - 2024

Chairmans	Name	Phone	Email
Arthritis/Diabetes Chairman	Larry Hawthorne	724-699-2521	larry.hawthorne@att.net
Barger Scholarship Chairman	Dwight Fuhrman	717-578-3151	dmfuhman@comcast.net
Buddy Poppy Chairman	Robert Marshall	717-319-0991	robert192@verizon.net
Bylaws Chairman	Glenn Umberger	610-517-3455	glenn.umberger@gmail.com
Citizen/Education Chairman/Coloring Contest	Glenn Owen	814-812-1970	buck012@frontiernet.net
Communication Contest Chairman-Website-New Ltr.	Dwayne MacKenzie	717-738-2923	ephratavfw@outlook.com
Honor Guard - Captain	Robert G. Snook	717-582-7776	rsnook7922@gmail.com
Community Service Chairman	Jodi Hartle	814-229-8320	hartlejodi@gmail.com
Credentials Chairman	Barbara Kollar	814-322-8634	barbiekollar@outlook.com
Dept. Legislative Chairman - 3 Years	Charles Jackson	484-707-9757	chuckjackson21@gmail.com
Finance Chairman	Robert Eiler	412-974-4095	golddust2@peoplepc.com
Heath Care Award Chairman	Ruth Fairchild	724-544-4745	raf4ever@aol.com
Homeless Veterans Chairman	William Meiser	717-383-6099	wmeiser@raiderweb.org
Homeless Veterans Co- Chairman	David "Spike" Gyger	717-991-1473	djc57@verizon.net
Internal Affairs Co- Chairman - East	Chester Potoski	570-687-5375	cpotoski1954@gmail.com
Internal Affairs Co- Chairman - East	James Frisbie	570-840-0847	hillbillykid_99@yahoo.com
Internal Affairs Co- Chairman - West	Robert Eiler	412-974-4095	golddust@peoplepc.com
Internal Affairs Co- Chairman - East	Roy Schrimp	607-846-8636	schrumpfouwheel@epix.net
Internal Affairs Co- Chairman - West	Thomas Hanzes	724-815-9164	thomashanzes@yohoo.com
Internal Affairs Co- Chairman - West	Wayne Perry	724-816-1247	wayper@zoominternet.net
Internal Affairs Assistant - West	Brian Armstrong	412-901-9610	barms13@gmail.com

GENERAL ORDERS CONTINUED

Membership / Gold Legacy Chairman	Robert Hinkle	717-542-6948	bhinkle@vfw5265.org
Membership Chairman Co-Chairman N. East	William D. Lamond III	570-241-5875	ta30chev@gmail.com
Membership Chairman Co-Chairman -West	Greg Stump	760-443-6811	gstump.90@gmail.com
National Home Chairman	Ronald Peters	814-366-1698	acavrp@hotmail.com
National Legislative Chairman	James Brown	814-758-6087	jbpit36@gmail.com
National Legislative Co-Chairman	Richard G. Cassey	610-937-1438	commander@trappevfw.org
Patriot Pen Chairman	William D. Lamond III	570-241-5875	ta30chev@gmail.com
POW/MIA Chairman	Dusten E. Zimmerman	814-435-6739	d.zimmerman15@outlook.com
Programs Chairman	Amy MacKenzie	717-575-3982	Quartermaster@ephtravfw.org
Redistricting Chairman	Russell Canevari	570-877-2479	bigguy1248@comcast.net
Safety Awards Chairman	Jim Lewis	724-988-9181	jimandlinda@zoominternet.net
Student Veterans Chairman	Jesse Olson	706-577-7293	wfw.pa.sva@gmail.com
Veterans Service Chairman	Jessica King	412-618-8902	jadamsking2019@gmail.com
Veterans Service Committee	Charles Beattie	814-506-3176	charles.j.beattie62@gmail.com
Veterans Service Co-Chairman	Jessica King	724-672-2953	district29vfwcmdr@gmail.com
VFW Motorcycle Riders Chairman - East	David Schnorr	570-710-4133	Presidentofdistrict11riders@yahoo.com
VFW Motorcycle Riders Chairman - Central	Larry Bills	717-824-1614	lbills70@yahoo.com
VFW Motorcycle Riders Chairman - West	Brian Armstrong	412-901-9610	barms13@gmail.com
Veterans Military Service	Rick Bower	717-440-2365	xcougar@hotmail.com
Voice of Democracy Chairman	Thomas Hanzes	724646-3072	thomashanzes@yahoo.com
Women's Veterans Chairman	Amy MacKenzie	717-575-3982	Quartermaster@ephtravfw.org
Youth Activities/Scouting Chairman	Frank McGovern	610-742-4220	frankjmcgovern@msn.com

5. Membership

Congratulations goes out to the following members for attending the PTI and winning contest number 6.

John Rowles – Post 1785, District 22 – Gift certificate for \$ 400.00 from the VFW Store.

Richard Hart – Post 6076, District 18 – Received a Bronze Legacy.

Peter Guidotti – Post 6393, District 8 - Received a Bronze Legacy.

Tom Heilman – Post 8951, District 21 – Received a Bronze Legacy.

Contest # 1 – Lead the Pennsylvania Team

The post in each division with the highest new, continuous and reinstated by August 31, 2023 will receive a Life Membership.

Congratulations to the following posts that receive a Life Membership

District 28 - Division 3 – Post 5958 – Titusville, PA

District 9 - Division 4 – Post 3376 – Ephrata, PA

District 24 - Division 5 – Post 4793 – Waynesburg, PA

District 18 - Division 6 – Post 1620 – Middletown, PA

District 26 - Division 7 – Post 2076 – Punxsutawney, PA

District 18 - Division 8 – Post 8023 – Annville, PA

District 15 - Division 9 – Post 7810 – Austin, PA

District 11 - Division 10 – Post 6518 – Exeter, PA

District 11 - Division 11 – Post 3498 – Roslyn, PA

Contest # 2 – Let's keep pushing on

Any Post who obtains 97 % by September 30, 2023 will be entered in a drawing for a Life Membership. If the member is already a Life Member, an upgrade to Legacy Life Membership will be awarded.

Congratulations to the following post that received a Lifetime Membership
District 18 - Post 8023-Annville, Pa

Contest # 3 – Early Bird Special

All Posts with 101% membership reported by December 31, 2023, will receive a bonus of \$.75 cents per member. The Posts will receive a bonus of \$ 1.00 per member for each member properly reported over 100% as of December 31, 2023.

Life members will not count until September. This should give us a start with good momentum for the beginning of the membership year.

Always remember, No one does more for Veterans than what we do.

David W. Gyger

David W. "Spike" Gyger
Commander



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GENERAL ORDERS CONTINUED

National Update

MEMBERSHIP CHALLENGE FOR AUGUST

For this month's challenge, we're going to continue focusing on membership growth and see how many members a Post can bring in during the month of August. New, renewed, and reinstated members, as well as dues-paying transfers will all count towards this contest goal. The Post in each membership Division that shows the highest increase in their membership total will win a \$500 cash award and a framed citation for the Post! This contest will specifically count annual members; since Life will not show up in your Post's totals until September, they will not factor into this month's contest.

Membership is a continual process through the year, and it's always the right time to bring in new members, make sure your annual members renew or convert to Life, and work those unpaid/expired lists to bring members back into the fold.

The goal for this year is 102%, and with hard work we know that it is within our reach. This is going to be the year that we show exceptional growth because this will be the year everyone will go out and **MEET THE CHALLENGE!**

2023-24 MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM

The 2023-24 Membership Program is available online at vfw.org, under MY VFW, scroll down to Membership Quick Links, click on Membership Recruiting and Retention. You will see the 2023-24 VFW National Membership Program in blue letters.

ALL-AMERICAN POST CAP ORDER INFORMATION

All-American Quartermasters and Post members may submit their cap order through the VFW store.

LEGACY LIFE MEMBERSHIP

CHECK OUT OUR LEGACY LIFE VIDEO! Go to vfw.org, click on JOIN, and scroll down to Legacy Life Membership and then click on the video on the right. This prestigious program is available to all Life members and is now available in memoriam for past Life members. There are three levels of membership; each offer their own package of exclusive member benefits. Financial contributions to the Legacy Life member program are tax deductible to the maximum extent allowed by law.

Enrollment Cost:	Annual Payouts:	Levels Posts	Departments	National
Gold-	\$1,200.00	\$18.00	\$18.00	\$18.00
Silver-	\$800.00	\$12.00	\$12.00	\$12.00
Bronze-	\$400.00	\$6.00	\$6.00	\$6.00

What will your Legacy be?

DEVELOPMENT

Have You Heard About the VFW's Partners in Patriotism? – Commander-in-Chief Duane T. Sarmiento would like you to join with him in supporting the VFW's life-changing programs for veterans, service members and their families and reduce the amount of mail you receive. The VFW has an option that allows you to support VFW programs on a monthly, quarterly or yearly basis, as well as reduce expenses and eliminate fundraising mail. It is called Partners in Patriotism. As a member of Partners in Patriotism, you choose a set dollar amount for your donation (minimum amount of \$10) that is either charged to your credit card or set up as an Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) from your bank account. Once you join the VFW's Partners in Patriotism, you will only receive the Quarterly Supporter newsletters to keep you informed of the many efforts your monthly gifts are making possible and a Year-End Tax Receipt mailed by the end of January. If you are interested in joining Partners in Patriotism, you may contact Donor Services in the VFW Development Department toll-free at 1.833.VFW.GIVE (1.833.839.4483) or email us at partners@vfw.org with "Partners in Patriotism Application" in the subject line.

VFW Friends of Freedom – If you are not already a member of the VFW's online community, please visit vfw.org and look for the gold banner that says "Find Out What's Happening" to sign up. As a member of the VFW's Friends of Freedom, you

will receive special emails with breaking VFW news, legislative alerts and unique opportunities to help the VFW in assisting our nation's veterans, service members and their families. You may also visit vfw.org/VFWatWork and click on "Read VFW success stories" to learn how the VFW is fighting for veterans' rights, assisting veterans in need, educating our youth and aiding military families across the nation. Check back often to see newly posted stories!

VFW PROGRAMS

DISPLAYING MILITARY SERVICE SYMBOLS. Military service flags, insignias, etc. should be displayed in the following order (left to right as you face the flags): Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Space Force and then Coast Guard. For military flags, go to vfwstore.org/searchresults?q=MilitaryFlag.

ALL-AMERICAN DASHBOARD. Please encourage Posts to read the 2023-24 Membership Program. Military Assistance Program grants have been launched to show Departments and Posts how much in grant assistance has been received from National Headquarters to supplement the Unmet Needs financial grants and VFW Sport Clips Help-A-Hero scholarship statistics. The information charts reside on the KPI tools section.

IT'S SCHOLARSHIP TIME! It is the perfect time to contact schools, youth groups, parent organizations and others with information about Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen. Schools are making curriculum decisions now and parents are thinking about scholarships.

Please remember that Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen are VFW programs supported by the VFW Auxiliary. It is inappropriate for the VFW Auxiliary to conduct a separate judging at any level.

UPDATED" POW/MIA FLAG -- OFFICIAL DISPLAY DAYS. Under previous Public Law 105-85 (Nov. 16, 1997), it indicated there were only six days that federal agencies, military installations and U.S. post offices were required to display the POW/MIA flag. Now under new law, Public Law 116-67 (Feb. 21, 2020), it is required that the POW/MIA flag be flown on all days on which the flag of the United States is displayed. To purchase a POW/MIA flag, go to vfwstore.org/products/GP237.

Other Points of Interest From National

1. Attention of all members is directed to the purposes listed within the VFW's Congressional Charter. "To maintain and extend the institutions of American freedom" is one of the VFW's chartered purposes; as such the VFW represents fighting for American rights, civil rights and humanitarian impulses that have always guided the VFW's principles.

Today the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States reaffirms its commitment to that chartered purpose by first recognizing that in order to end racism within our organization, it is not enough to be non-racist/non-discriminatory: we must be proactive. While we focus on education and mentorship we work to identify, address, and eradicate any and all forms of racial bias and discrimination. We will work to eliminate racial injustices and discriminatory practices within our organization. The VFW's leadership is united in the pursuit to end racial bias and discrimination while empowering our members and the greater veteran community towards this collective goal.

2. Attention of all members is directed to Section 901 of the National Bylaws, "Discipline of Members." Members who have committed offenses recognized by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States may be subject to disciplinary action. Members are reminded that acts of Sexual Harassment, Racial or Sexual Discrimination, and all other conduct prejudicial to good order and discipline or conduct determined to be unbecoming of a member will not be condoned. In general, harassment and discrimination consists of any form of verbal, non-verbal, or physical conduct that is sufficiently severe and/or pervasive enough to have the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment or otherwise interfering with another's ability to participate in VFW events. All members will be treated with dignity and respect.

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GENERAL ORDERS CONTINUED

3. For purposes of clarification, we do not operate as a men's organization or a ladies organization, but as the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and its VFW Auxiliary.

4. Every Post chartered by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States will be expected to participate in the following programs during the 2023-24 year: Voice of Democracy, Patriots Pen, "Buddy"® Poppy and Veterans and Military Support Programs. Additionally, it is necessary that all Post and Department Commanders comply with all provisions of the National Bylaws and the Manual of Procedure and Ritual.

5. The Manual of Procedure amendment passed by the 119th National Convention modified Section 1001(25) to read, "The dispensation and/or consumption of alcoholic beverages or the use of smoking/vaping products in VFW meeting rooms during VFW meetings are prohibited."

17. U.S. Army ARDEC has issued guidance on the operation and maintenance of the M1 Garand. The manual can be found in the VFW Training & Support section at vfw.org or you can visit the M1 Garand Associated Website: m1garandtraining.com.

STATE SR. VICE COMMANDER



BARBARA "BARB" LONCAR
STATE SR. VICE COMMANDER

Membership seems to be the most difficult task to manage and maintain at the Post level. We have excellent trained recruiters in our state to help Post's with recruiting. Our membership team can provide training and demonstrations on how to recruit members. Post's need to get out into their communities ie: Fairs, Carnival's and other events. Training also needs to be given to all VFW Post members, canteen managers and staff.

Posts need to be friendly and welcoming for those who walk-in off the street or visit from other posts. It's very important that staff is trained at being friendly and how to recruit members. Now what do you do once you have recruited members?

Communication and getting to know your Post members is very important. Knowing your members' strengths and weaknesses is a good way to know how to get them involved in your post. Knowing your members can help you know what positions that they would be a good fit for in helping your post. Having a smoke-free family environment at your post will help you recruit the younger veterans with families. Keep in mind that veterans with young children may not be as active as those without children or who have older children. It is also good to encourage family members to

join the Auxiliary at your post as well. Don't assume that every female is going to be an Auxiliary member. What you should assume is that everyone is a veteran.

Look at your Non-paid list of members and contact them via phone, email or snail mail. Try to send someone out to personally visit them and talk to them. Find out why they don't want to renew their membership. There could be a reason that is easily fixed with communication and minor changes within your post. Remember that every name on your list is a veteran and it's our job to take care of our veterans. Some of these veterans may be too proud to let you know that they can't afford to pay their membership. They may give other excuses regarding the post of the VFW and it's our job to remind them about the real reason for being a VFW member. You can use your membership or relief fund money to pay for their membership and nothing is wrong with doing this. You are taking care of Veterans and keeping your membership strong by paying for their membership. Some posts even pay to make life members of their annual members as rewards for supporting the post activities.

Please remember that you can always contact Department Headquarters for recruiting assistance. Come to our Mid-Winter Conference for recruitment training and take it back to your post to train others in recruiting. Our upcoming Mid-Winter conference will be held 19-21 January 2024 at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Pittsburgh - Cranberry, 910 Sheraton Drive, Mars, PA 16046

Together Everyone Achieves More! TEAM!

STATE JR. VICE COMMANDER



WILLIAM "BILL" ROLLAND
STATE JR. VICE COMMANDER

Communication is often the weak link in any organization and the VFW is one of them. Do not assume that everyone knows what you are doing. Commander Gyger, Barb,

and I wants to make communication a high priority for the VFW. But Districts and posts should improve communication. District Commanders should communicate with posts not only at District meetings, in fact, I believe the district should visit posts and not just for the annual inspection. Let us all make communication a priority. Thank you for all you do!

STATE QUARTERMASTER



JOHN B. GETZ, JR
STATE QUARTERMASTER

Comrades, we just spent the last month traveling across this great Commonwealth of PA presenting the information we felt you needed to make a better running post and district. I want to thank all who attended the PTI training and for those who did not I am just a phone call or email away to answer anything that comes your way at your post or district. If your post or district did or did not do the training, I am available

to help you in any way possible. If you need training on issues call or email me and see if we can set up a date for me to come and help. Because of you we are the greatest Veteran's Organization in the world, let us keep up the excellent work and make everyone proud of the work we do to help our Veterans and their families. We need to understand that we need to use the computer more, this is the future for all of us, the National dashboard is only the beginning. We need to use this tool to do better at the reporting of all the posts and districts for their community. Thank you again, call me if you need anything .

STATE CHAPLAIN



REV. PETER R. HOOK
STATE CHAPLAIN

For fifty years the members of VFW Post 1865, and the citizens of Kenosha, Wisconsin, honored the VFW National Chaplain and other VFW Chaplains for the service they provide. This was a special event not duplicated anywhere else in the world.

Unfortunately, a number of years ago, the tradition stopped when Post leadership changed. Past National Chaplain, Ted Bowers, presented the idea of bringing this

event to Pennsylvania to his home Post (Richard J. Gross VFW Post 8896) in East Berlin, PA. The East Berlin Post decided to take on the responsibility of honoring the

VFW National Chaplain and the work of Chaplains. The tradition will continue next year, May 17-19, 2024.

This is a retreat weekend for Post, District, and State Chaplains and their spouses. Chaplains, and anyone else who would like to attend, should put this their calendar now and contact Chaplain Hook at 267-229-7722 or PeterHook@verizon.net to fill out a reservation form.

Blessings as you serve

ASSISTANT CHIEF OF STAFF TO THE COMMANDER



ROGER DECKER
ASSISTANT CHIEF OF STAFF
TO THE COMMANDER

"Thank you for your service." Why do I hear that phrase more often as Veterans Day approaches? Do we need to wait for a holiday to thank those who have served this great nation?

The purpose of Veterans Day is for a celebration to honor America's veterans for their patriotism, love of country, and willingness to serve and sacrifice for the common good.

Is Veterans Day only a yearly reminder that these men and women have served our country? Unfortunately for some the answer is yes. For others, they need no reminder.

As I recently watched as a disabled veteran exited his vehicle, I walked toward him and said, "Thank you for your Service". He lifted his head, looked me square in

the face and said, "Wow, it's been a long time since someone said that to me." I apologized and saw a tear come to his eye. We said "Have a nice day" to each other and as I was walking away, I heard a faint but meaningful "thank you."

I believe the best response I received when thanking a veteran was "Thank you for your Support."

This made me realize that as Lifetime members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, we are often lacking in our personal "Thank you for your Service" address. We, as members can do so much more than a thank you. I am asking all members to follow up "Thank you for your Service" with a Veterans of Foreign Wars commitment.

"I am a member of the local Veterans of Foreign Wars, is there anything we can do for you?" You don't need to turn this into a recruiting moment, perhaps invite them to your post, mention your Service Officer and any other programs or activities you can offer.

Our State Commander, David "Spike" Gyger, has chosen the following leadership initiative: Encourage-Expand-Educate.

DEPARTMENT MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN



BOB HINKLE
DEPARTMENT MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN

I hope everyone enjoyed their holiday weekend! As fall begins we are well into our membership year. Now is the time to engage with your annual members to ensure that they update their membership prior to expiration. Now is also a great time to develop a Post membership program that utilizes your Life Member payout that will be received from National HQ by the end of the month. During these financially challenging times, consider utilizing these funds, or your relief fund, to assist annual members with becoming life members or to assist those who may be struggling to pay annual dues because of age, illness or other issues. Every member you convert to a life member is one less member you need to encourage to pay next year or risk losing if they don't renew.

Every District and Post is encouraged to look for recruiting events and opportunities in your area. If you're unsure about how to set up or hold a recruiting event, reach out to a member of the membership team. We are here to assist in any way needed. Remember, every Post event is an opportunity to recruit new members.

This email includes many resources to help with your recruiting efforts. Please forward the email to all Post commanders in your District or anyone else that can assist with meeting your membership goals. If you have names that you would like added to this email list, please provide them to me along with their contact information.

Don't hesitate to reach out to anyone on the membership team for assistance in setting up a recruiting event or with any membership related questions or concerns you may have.

Good luck recruiting!

STATE PATRIOT PEN CHAIRMAN



BILL LAMOND
STATE PATRIOT PEN CHAIRMAN

It's a start of the year for our Patriot Pen Program. This year's goal is to have every VFW Post in the State submit an entry. With your help we all can make this happen. I have already reached out to each District Chairman and discussed it.

If you need an entry for the program, please ask your District Chairman or you can reach out to me. I will get you one but you must contact me asap.

Thank you

ACROSS PENNSYLVANIA



The Seventh District and Auxiliary Department of Pennsylvania Veterans of Foreign Wars recently honored their Post Veterans of the Year. They are, from left, John Tomosky, Post 4845; Joe Casey, Post 3460; Gus Ober, Post 928; Jack Corcoran, Post 598; Charles Coffman, Post 979; Curtis Cummings, Post 6633; District Judge Lee Grimes, Post 974; James Harrell, Post 7213; Joe Ahern, Post 6613; Ben Napier, 7390; and William Daws, Post 7949. (PEG DEGRASSA – DAILY TIMES)



Army Veteran Gus Ober of Post 928 was awarded as the Veteran of The Year at the 56th annual District Seven VFW Banquet. Above, from left, are Valerie DeCorte, Department of Pennsylvania Auxiliary Past Dept. President; David "Spike" Geiger, Department of Pennsylvania Commander; Steve Ober; Gus Ober; Johnnie Walker, District Seven commander; and Kathleen Ebling, District Seven auxiliary president



Media Post 3460 Commander Francis Newburg was presented with the National All-American Award from VFW National Commander Timothy Borland by State Commander Dave "Spike" Gyger and Past State Commander Henry Mannella. The Award is in recognition of steadfast leadership in all VFW endeavors, thus qualifying as a member of the 2022-2023 All-American Team of Post Commanders.

In the Photo: Left to right: Dept. of PA Commander Dave "Spike" Gyger, Post 3460 Past Commander Frank Newburg, Past Dept. of PA Commander Henry Mannella. In the background is Dept. of PA Quartermaster/Adjutant John Getz.



On July 3, 2023 PA VFW Commander David W. "Spike" Gyger with PDP Valerie DeCorte visited VFW Post 2 Bridesburg Lawton, District 1 in Philadelphia. A special thanks to the Post and Auxiliary members for the wonderful meal.

Greensburg VFW Post 33 Observed National POW/MIA Recognition Day

September 15, 2023

Post Quartermaster David Cackowski, Auxiliary Chaplain Roysyn Rogachesky lay a wreath in honor of the Missing POW/MIA's Honor guard member Dan Blissman with the POWMIA Flag



VFW Post 33 Honor Guard at attention during the reading of the Proclamation from President Joe Biden



ACROSS PENNSYLVANIA



VFW District Seven Commander Johnnie Walker with Post 7390 Advocate of the Year Karyn Confer, as he hands her a certificate of appreciation at the 56th Annual District Seven VFW Banquet at The Oaks Ballroom in Glenolden.



Sokol & Joseph Gallo



Sokol & Robert Betza

Monessen Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post 1190 was honored Thursday July 6, 2023 by state Rep. Eric Davanzo's chief of staff, Brian Sokol, for their lifelong service to the veterans community of Monessen.

Sokol bestowed the honors on Robert Betza, Joseph "Chip" DeFilicis, John A. Dudas and Joseph J. Gallo after he informed those who attended Thursday's meeting that Davanzo would be unable to attend because of a late-night session. Due to illness DeFilicis and Dudas were also unable to be at the meeting to receive their honors.

With VFW District 27 Commander Ken King in attendance, Sokol presented the four men with House of Representatives citations written by Davanzo commemorating their efforts for the United States of America and Mon Valley veterans.

Sokol presented the awards first, reading the Citation off from the inside.

In addition, a collection of veterans and community members were recognized for their work in and around veteran affairs. Post Commander Ron Chromulak presented awards to Richard J. Pankiewicz, Charles R. Kline, William J. Manus, James L. Pallini, for their work as members of post 1190, Monessen Mayor Ron Mozer, for his active involvement with Post 1190, Commander King and State Representative Davanzo, for their support and encouragement of Post 1190 projects and activities



Centenarian Joe Passaretti gets saluted and cheered by fellow veterans as he comes down the walkway to his 105th birthday celebration at Collingdale Community Center on Aug. 12 District 7-Johnnie Walker



All American TeamAll at the National Convention in Phoenix, Arizona - From left to right: Assistant Chief of Staff Roger Decker, Post 5954 Red Hill Commander Thomas Sally, Post 1620 Middletown Commander Steven Sellers, Post 5956 Manheim Commander Greg Fisher, Immediate PDC Henry Mannella, District 29 Commander Jessica King, District 18 Commander & Department Chief of Staff Fredrick Hechler, Department Commander David w. "Spike" Gyger and Adjutant/Quartermaster John B. Getz Jr.

ACROSS PENNSYLVANIA

PTI TRAINING



VFW POST 4909



VFW POST 5754



VFW POST 3368



ACROSS PENNSYLVANIA

PTI TRAINING



VFW POST 1785



VFW POST 7599



VFW POST 3460

ACROSS PENNSYLVANIA

PTI TRAINING



VFW POST 1754



VFW POST 5020



VFW POST 7842

ACROSS PENNSYLVANIA

PTI TRAINING



VFW POST 3376



VFW POST 3374



BILL ANDERSON
 Korean War Veteran
 visits Veteran organizations
 and spends time with
John Pagliaro,
 VFW Post 7252 and
 District 19 Commander



VFW Post 2341



VFW Post 7252
 Veteran members
 met with
CPL Ralph Laukitis
 recipient of the
 Bronze Star and Purple Heart
 to wish him
Happy 99th Birthday!

Pictured left to right: Mike Chappell, Ralph Laukitis, Rich Dressler, John Pagliaro



PA VFW ACCREDITED SERVICE OFFICERS & CLAIMS CONSULTANTS

VFW Veteran Services Officers and Claim Consultants are employed by the VFW to assist all veterans – regardless of membership in the VFW. This service is FREE. All of our veterans deserve comprehensive assistance with applying for and understanding their VA disability benefits. Please reach out to any of the Service Officers/Claims Consultants near you. Feel free to refer any veteran in need of assistance to one of us at the VFW.

ALTOONA

VAMC
2907 Pleasant Valley Blvd.
Altoona, Pa 16602
Cindy Kinzey
Cell: 814-600-9096
Email: Cindy.Kinzey@va.gov

BUTLER

Butler VAMC
353 N. Duffy Rd.
Room FN 0001
Butler, Pa 16001
Linda Eshenbaugh
Cell: 724-996-4076
Email: linda.eshenbaugh@va.gov
Fax: 878-217-6919

COATESVILLE

Harvey Greenawalt
Cell: 267-322-1688
Email: Harvey.greenawalt@va.gov

ERIE

VFW ERIE Dept. Service Division
3112 Buffalo Rd.
Suite A
Erie, Pa 16510
Office : 814-835-8494
Fax : 814-835-8493

Chris (Mick) DiRaimo
Cell: 814-460-1487
Email: Mick.vfwerie@gmail.com

Julie Hutchison
Cell: 814-520-4971
Email: julie.vfwerie@gmail.com

Rachel Vandyne
Cell: 717-836-4171
Email: Rachel.vfwerie@gmail.com

HARRISBURG

4002 Fenton Ave.
Harrisburg, PA. 17109
717-234-7927

Jonathan Hart
Cell: 717-798-0030
Email: jonathan.hart@va.gov
Mechanicsburg Veterans Center
Thurs: 8:30-4:00
Harrisburg: Monday-Friday-8:30-4:00

Emily LeVault
Cell: 215-356-3566
Email: Emily.LeVault1@va.gov
Spring Grove: Wed.and Fri. By Appt. Only
Harrisburg: Tues. and Thurs -8:30-4:00
Red Lion: Fri. - By Appt. Only

Ronald Smith
Cell: 717-332-1001
Email: rsmith@vfwpahq.org

LOCK HAVEN

20 Bellefonte Ave.
Lock Haven, PA. 17745
Office: 570-748-5929
Fax: 570-371-5479
Cynthia Bardo
Email: Cbardo4015@gmail.com
Karen Bombria
Email: karenabombria@gmail.com
Dave Bower
Email: dave.topdwb@gmail.com
Nadine Willits
Email: nadinewillits8@yahoo.com

PITTSBURGH

1000 Liberty Ave
Room 1601
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
Office: 412-395-6259
412-395-6256
Fax: 412-395-6261

Department of PA Service Officer
Charles (Chuck) Beattie
Cell: 717-614-3319
Email: Charles.Beattie@va.gov

Adam Beicher
412-395-6259
Email: Adam_X2@hotmail.com

Jessica King
Cell: 724-672-2953
Email: district29vfwcmr@gmail.com

Clarence Madigan
Office: 412-395-6259 Ext. 6260
Email: Clarence.madigan@va.gov

Tim Owens
Email: Timothy.owens6@va.gov

Kyra Price
Office: 412-395-6258
Email: kyra.price@va.gov

PHILADELPHIA

5000 Wissahickon Ave.
Attn: VFW
P.O. Box 42938
Philadelphia, Pa 19101-2938
Office: 215-381-3123
Fax: 215-381-3491
John Foster
Cell: 267-322-1653
Email: John.foster7@va.gov

Angie Johnson
Cell: 215-595-6267
Email: Evangeline.johnson@va.gov

Jack (John) Leaming
Office: 215-381-3123
Email: jacko4343@gmail.com

Ray Morace
Cell: 717-743-8183
Email: raymond.morace@va.gov

Michael Nichol
Cell: 717-884-1705
Email: Michael.Nichol@va.gov

Catherine Priore
Email: catherine.priore@va.gov
Gilda Reid
Email: Gilda.Reid@va.gov
Trudy Strain
Email: Gertrude.strain@va.gov

READING

Liz Graybill
Email: lizgraybill@yahoo.com
TELE: 484-577-6898

WILKES-BARRE

1123 East End Blvd.
Bldg. 35 Suite 1
Wilkes Barre, Pa 18702
Office: 570-821-2535
570-821-2536
Fax: 570-821-2539
Monday-Friday 8:00-4:00
Closed for Lunch-12:00-1:00

Joann Kane
Email: joann.kane@va.gov

Lorie Ybarro
Email: lorie.ybarra@va.gov

Judy Zaykoski*
Cell: 570-899-9672
Email: Judith.Zaykoski@va.gov

*updated cell #



VFW Post 9639 Commander Glen Hoffer said his granddaughter's work experiences with the local VFW have challenged her and helped her excel in school and other community activities.

VFW POST 9639, GRANTVILLE, PA

Commander Glen Hoffer and Auxiliary President Grace Rothermel are serving together as the leadership team for the post that is a family in more ways than one; Glen is her grandfather.

“She’s only 16 but she grew up with this post and is about to graduate and go to college for four years,” said Hoffer. “The members of the post need people to step up in leadership and I think they saw this as an opportunity for our family to serve together.”

Post members have watched Rothermel participate in VFW programs and events over the years. As she got older, she began to help work on some of the events and help run them. Easter is one of her favorite events. She went from hunting Easter eggs to helping organize and hold the event.

“I’ve been involved with the VFW auxiliary and post for my entire life,” said Rothermel. “During these events you can see the extensive effort and teamwork it takes. But you also see the impact and joy that it brings to our veterans and the community.”

THE VFW AUXILIARY

UNWAVERING SUPPORT FOR UNCOMMON HEROES



MARY JEAN MASTRIDGE
PRESIDENT
DEPARTMENT OF PA VFW AUXILIARY

Serving as Department President of our great state of Pennsylvania is a privilege, an honor, and a joy. The members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Auxiliary are dedicated, proud and enthusiastic about WHO we are and WHY we exist.

I wish Commander Dave Gyger a successful year. Working together, we can accomplish so much. Knowing there is strength in numbers, we continuously strive to grow our membership. These numbers and the people they represent allow us to support our Veterans, their families, and our communities.

Congratulations to all the elected officers who will provide the leadership necessary to continue moving forward. Without confident, well-trained leaders we would not be able to increase our numbers, provide for our Veterans and guarantee a strong future for our VFW and Auxiliary organizations. Continue to learn and stay informed as things continually change.

It is important to me that I meet as many of our members as possible during this "Let Freedom Ring" while "Banding Together for our Veterans" year. Let's make it a super year under the leadership of National President Carla Martinez, and VFW Commander-in Chief Duane Sarmiento.

Remember Sept. 11, 2001, and all of those who served then and who have sacrificed these past 22 years. Place Patriot Day on your list of patriotic holidays to annually observe.

Our Prisoners of War and Missing in Action should be remembered not only on the third Friday of September, but regularly throughout our busy lives. Present the POW/MIA ceremony to help keep their memories alive and teach our young people the importance of always remembering.



TINA HINKLE
VETERANS & FAMILY SUPPORT

We LOVE our veterans and Veterans & Family Support is the heart of the VFW Auxiliary. Our veterans have sacrificed so much for us, and we want to do all we can for them. Thank them for their service, honor them with ceremonies and provide them with resources for when life gets rough.

Our Veterans are our heroes. Many return home with heavy hearts and heavy minds. PTSD symptoms are a reality for many Veterans, from recently deployed to those with 50 or more years since their wartime experience.

The VFW has teamed up with nationwide organizations Give an Hour, Campaign to Change Direction, One Mind, PatientsLikeMe and the Elizabeth Dole Foundation to combat emotional stress.

Though great strides have been made in suicide prevention, 20 Veterans commit suicide each day. September is National Suicide Prevention Month; show your concern about the rate of suicide among Veterans by wearing the Auxiliary Suicide Awareness Prevention Pin (vfwstore.org)

Make a difference in the life of a Veteran by learning the warning signs of suicide at veteranscrisisline.net. The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans and their family with qualified Department of Veterans Affairs responders 24/7: Call 988 and Press 1.

The VFW offers assistance programs for Veterans. Spread the word about National Veterans Services to help all Veterans obtain the benefits they deserve – at no cost. Utilize vfw.org/assistance to be connected to a service officer, access to scholarships, or emergency financial relief when times get tough.

The VFW and its Auxiliary are there for America's Veterans.



JANET ALBIN
PATRIOTIC INSTRUCTOR

WHAT MAKES US PATRIOTIC?

First, we should define Patriotism. Patriotism is devotion and vigorous support for one's country; an emotional attachment to the nation that one originates from; and the eagerness to defend that nation against all enemies. In other words, it helps bring people together and it unites us as a Nation. For example, it united us when tragedy struck Pearl Harbor and 9-11. Why? What happened when these two events occurred? Everyone, no matter what their political beliefs or which state they came from, was UNITED in their feelings of horror and their need to protect our country. We were one in this feeling.

We felt our patriotism rise to a high point which drove us to do whatever it took to defend our country and avenge the attacks. It was like we were one family and felt enraged at the audacity of another country/terrorist to even think of striking our country. That is raw patriotism, the willingness to fight back, to risk everything and sign that blank checks payable to our country in an amount up to our lives. Our Gold Star families and their loved ones have paid that price, and others are continuing to pay that price.

What makes us Patriotic? Do we inherit it in our DNA? Personally, I think it's the WHY factor. Why are we patriotic? I'll start with my why.

I remember celebrating all the patriotic holidays with my family. We picnicked at my grandparents' house with my aunt, uncle, and cousins. We learned patriotic songs and flew the American flag. We learned about respecting the service of our veterans from current and prior wars. Fast forward to Desert Shield and Desert Storm. This time I was to experience war and send my husband off to another far away country. Then years later there was 9-11. At the time, I had four children in the military. As the second plane hit the towers, I realized that our country, our home, was under attack. I stopped, closed my eyes, said a prayer, and in my head went down the list of my children, where they were, their specialty, and if their specialty would be needed immediately. That's my why... my family, my family's history, and the generations of those who served. The respect and pride that I have in all of them.

We can't forget what any veterans or their families have done for us, and what they sacrificed for our country. Without those in the past, we wouldn't be here today, and without those who continue to serve, we will not be here in the future.

So, to answer the question, why am I Patriotic? It is the sum of my life and experiences, my family history and the lessons learned from my family and friends, and how deep my commitment is to those lessons. Why are you Patriotic?

SAVE THE DATES AND OTHER INFORMATION:

PA Midwinter Conference

January 18 - 20, 2024 - Cranberry Twp.

National VFW Auxiliary MidWinter Conference

February 12 -17, 2024 - Royal Caribbean's Mariner of the Sea

President Mary Jean Mastridge Testimonial

April 5 - 6, 2024 - Eisenhower Hotel & Conference Center, Gettysburg

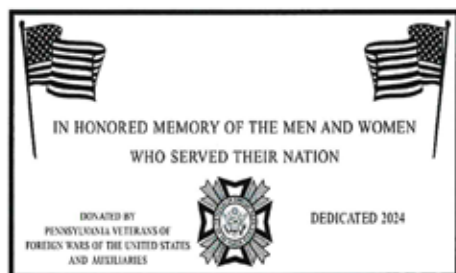
Please take some time and checkout our website for all up-to-date information and lots of support materials, including the 2023-2024 Program Book

www.vfwauxpa.org

COMMANDERS SPECIAL PROJECT

Our special project for the **2023 -2024 Encourage - Expand - Educate VFW** year shall be to place a monument in each of the three National Cemeteries within Pennsylvania. The National Cemetery of the Alleghenies in the west; Indiantown Gap National Cemetery in central; and Washington Crossing National Cemetery in the east. The picture below is what the VFW monument shall look like when it is completed and set. The stone is granite, and the engraved plaque is bronze. Each monument is expected to cost approximately \$10,000 each. Please consider donating to this worthwhile project. Make your check out to PA VFW and in the memo section add Commander's special project. Mail your check to PA VFW HQ, 4002 Fenton Avenue, Harrisburg PA 17109.

The engraved plaque reads:



And the six circles on the front are where the six branches of the Armed Forces emblems shall be placed.

Should you have any questions, please call me at 717-991-1473 or email me at djc57@verizon.net

BERWICK POST 821 ED HESS MEMORIAL BIKE RUN

The ED HESS MEMORIAL BIKE RUN is held annually by the Independent Bikers Federation to honor Ed, a founding member and a long-time president of the group.

After Ed passed away in 2015 following a battle with kidney disease that included two unsuccessful kidney transplants,

his fellow "brother" and "sister" bikers honored his legacy of community service by naming their annual benefit The Ed Hess Memorial Bike Run.

This years cause benefited Timberly Batten and Tammy Rupert. Timberly received a kidney donation from her mother Tammy in August.



80 bikers from Pennsylvania and New York take to the streets as part of the fundraiser event. There were various stops along the route, including two at military-based service organizations: both Benton VFW Post 8317 and American Legion Post 564 welcomed the riders to their chapters for pit stops along their journey.

PERIODICALS

SAVE THE DATE

State Commander's Retreat October
6-8, 2023-State College

Women Veterans Conference/Expo
March 15-16

Mid-Winter Conference
January 18-21, 2024 Cranberry, Pa.

Department State Convention
June 12-16, 2024



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

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Members of the Independent Bikers Federation (PA) present the proceeds from their 8TH ANNUAL ED HESS MEMORIAL BIKE RUN held Aug. 19, 2023, at Berwick Post 821.