

CHECKPOINT



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New Deck is Just One Perk

Georgia VFW Post Selected for Adam Sandler Movie

On Memorial Day 2015, Andy Burney and members of Post 660 in Savannah, Ga., sat on the Post's 12'x12' deck, discussing how they needed a larger one.

The next day, a representative from Netflix called to say the site was perfect for a scene in its upcoming film "The Do Over," starring Adam Sandler and David Spade. The only problem, according to the rep, was producers needed a larger deck and an updated wheelchair ramp—which they would build for the Post—to support the cameras.

'The Do Over' To Premier in 2016

Scheduled to be released on Netflix in 2016, "The Do Over" stars Adam Sandler, Paula Patton and David Spade, and was directed by Steven Brill. It was filmed as part of a four-film deal between Sandler and Netflix (the first being "The Ridiculous Six," which premiered on Netflix on Dec. 11, 2015).

In the film, Sandler and Spade play two men, down-on-their luck, who fake their deaths and assume new identities, only to discover their new lives are troubled also.

"At first we thought it was a joke," Burney, the Post's commander, said. "Here I am, a brand new commander, and they came in and made a nice space for us. It's a good boost for the Post."

Location scouts chose the Post because they needed a rustic setting for a "biker bar" scene. The Post fit the bill, but "they made it look really grungy, like greasy hands had been all over the walls," Burney said.

"They were meticulous. They took pictures of everything before they touched it, and then made sure it looked exactly like that before they left."

Production crews started working on the property in early August. Filming was only supposed to take 2-3 days, but the crew ended up shooting for six days.

"It was really interesting," Burney said. "It gave me a whole new outlook and appreciation for how a movie is made."

In addition to providing a new deck—now measuring 18'x24'—and wheelchair ramp free of charge for the Post, the

film producers donated seven pallets of food—some 6,000 pounds—and paper products to the Post's homeless veterans program. They also donated deli trays and leftover catered food at the end of each day.

But beyond the material changes to the Post, the filming

personally helped Burney transform. Burney's wife passed away on Aug. 27, 2013, and it remains a hard day for him. But this year he was so focused on assisting the film crew that he didn't have time to grieve. "My daughter told me this was a blessing," Burney said. "It gave me somewhere else to be. I had a diversion."

The Post also received donated props such as picnic tables and pint glasses after filming wrapped. The production team made sure the building was restored to better condition than it was before, paying for supplies to re-gravel the parking lot, repainting the canteen and buffing the floors "to a high shine." Just in time for a member of the Post to have his wedding there only four days after production crews moved out.

"The cast and crew couldn't have been any nicer," Burney said. He reminisced about a moment in the Post's ballroom, set up as a staging area for equipment, when Sandler

plugged in his iPod and played rock music over the speakers. Sandler asked Burney if he liked the Beach Boys, and played "Barbara Ann."

"We were all singing," the 66-year-old Vietnam veteran said. "I was just about hoarse. I did something not many people do: cutting up with Adam Sandler. He was really easy to talk to."

Now that the whirlwind of celebrity has died down, Post members can sit out on their newer, larger deck and enjoy the peaceful outdoors.

"More people have been out to the Post since," Burney said. "Now that it's cooling off, people are hanging out on the deck. If we want to have dinners outside, we can do that now."

The Post hopes to have a screening of the film after it premieres on Netflix this year. E-mail: kgibson@vfw.org



Top to Bottom: Hollywood movie star Adam Sandler (left) poses with Post 660 Commander Andy Burney (right). Burney served as the film crew's point of contact throughout the filming process.

For the movie, the Post was temporarily renamed "The Musty Swamp," a "grungy" biker bar where Sandler's character hangs out.

Production crew shingle the roof of the new deck built for the Post to accommodate filming equipment. They also built a new wheelchair ramp and paid to re-gravel the Post's parking lot.

Post members appear as extras in the film, acting as motorcyclists in the "biker bar" scene filmed at Post 660.

Once filming was over, production crews made sure the Post looked the same as it did before they transformed it into a "biker bar" for the movie.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF VFW POST 660

CAPITOL HILL HOSTS VFW

This year's VFW Legislative Conference is Feb. 28-March 3, at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City in Arlington, Va. Housing reservations opened Nov. 15, 2015, and you can make them online at <https://resweb.passkey.com/go/VFWHyatt2016> or by calling 1-888-421-1442. Remember to identify yourself with VFW. For a complete schedule, visit www.vfw.org/conference.

Here is an abbreviated tentative agenda of what is to take place at the conference.

Feb. 28

- Arrivals for all attendees
- Foundation board meeting
- Life Member Committee meeting
- Committee on Appeals
- Briefing for new Legislative committee members

Feb. 29

- National Veterans Service Advisory Committee
- Budget and Finance Committee
- Legislative meeting (all attendees)
- National Council of Administration
- Voice of Democracy Parade of Winners

March 1

- Capitol Hill visits

March 2

- Commander-in-Chief's testimony
- Legislative reception on Capitol Hill

March 3

- Departures

For more information regarding conference or hotel information, please contact Vanessa Kane, CMP, CMM at (816) 968-1198, or by e-mailing vkane@vfw.org.

PREPARE NOW FOR PUBLICATIONS CONTEST

By now, all Department adjutants should have received an e-mail detailing VFW's 2016 National Publications Contest. To find out how your Post can enter at the Department level for consideration in the national contest, contact your Department headquarters.

RESERVE HOUSING FOR CONVENTION

VFW members can start reserving convention housing on Feb. 17 for the 117th VFW national convention to take place July 23-27, 2016, in Charlotte, N.C. Visit www.vfw.org to access the housing form. For more information, contact Vanessa Kane, CMP, CMM at (816) 968-1198.

VFW STORE HAS FREE CATALOGS

Need a VFW Store catalog? We will ship one to you free. Call 1-800-821-2606, write us at VFW Store, 406 W. 34th St., Kansas City, MO 64111 or contact us through our website at www.vfwstore.org.

REMEMBERING VETERANS IN YOUR WILL

Have you named veterans in your will? A few simple words can strengthen VFW's efforts to support current service members and future generations of veterans. For details, see www.vfw.org/plannedgiving or contact the VFW Planned Giving Office at (816) 968-1119 or e-mail plannedgiving@vfw.org.

KEEP YOUR PET HEALTHY WITH PET INSURANCE

Just like you, family pets depend on routine doctor visits to maintain good health. Access to veterinary care can make sure pets stay in good health—and that's what makes pet insurance so useful.

With a variety of plans that cover everything from basic care to comprehensive coverage for accidents and illnesses, you can choose the coverage you need at the price that fits your budget.

From dogs and cats to birds and goats, you'll likely be able to find a plan that suits your needs and helps ensure pets live long, healthy and happy lives.

For additional information about pet insurance, please contact VFW's Member Benefits Department at 1-800-821-2606, option 1, or visit our website at www.vfwinsurance.com.

John Hamilton, Adjutant General

VFW First to Support Gulf War Memorial

VFW presented \$100,000 in November to a group committed to building a national memorial to the veterans of 1991's Persian Gulf War. In so doing, VFW became the first major veterans service organization to support construction of the National Desert Storm War Memorial on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

VFW Commander-in-Chief John Biedrzycki, Jr., made the presentation to Scott Stump, president of the memorial's non-profit association, at VFW's Washington Office on Nov. 12. The \$100,000 is the first installment of a pledged total donation of \$500,000.

Some 383 Americans died during the buildup to the war (*Operation Desert Shield*, Aug. 7, 1990 to Jan. 16, 1991) and the war itself (*Operation Desert Storm*, Jan. 17-April 6, 1991).

Stump's group wants to break ground on the \$25 million memorial by the middle of 2018. Stump, who served in Saudi Arabia during the war with G Co., 3rd Bn., 24th Marines, 4th Marine Div., thanked VFW for its "generous" donation, noting that it came "at a

crucial point in our mission."

Construction of the memorial must be paid for with private donations. Federal funds are not available, and work cannot begin until fundraising is complete. As part of VFW's agreement with Stump's group, we require it to provide us a strategic plan with measurable goals and annual updates.

The memorial will include the names of all Americans who died in the war. The actual structure

will be "an elegantly curved, massive Kuwaiti limestone wall" that encloses an inner memorial space. The design recalls the famous "Left Hook" maneuver that U.S. and coalition forces used to encircle and defeat Iraqi forces occupying Kuwait.

As Chief Biedrzycki said, "We owe Gulf War veterans our gratitude, and this memorial will help ensure that the memory of their commitment and sacrifice endures."



VFW Commander-in-Chief John Biedrzycki, Jr., presents the first installment of a \$500,000 donation to Scott Stump of the National Desert Storm War Memorial on Nov. 12 at VFW's Washington Office.

Larry Maher, Quartermaster General

VFW to 'Modernize' Website

Generation after generation, VFW has led the way in welcoming home service members. As an organization where the primary mission is to provide service to these veterans and their families, we ask ourselves, "Are we ready to be of interest and service to a new generation of veterans?"

We continue to evolve as an organization as seen by the growing number of female veterans joining our ranks. It is encouraging to see their active participation as they assume many leadership roles.

And now the "millennial" generation of veterans, ranging in age from 19-36, are becoming eligible to join VFW.

With the advent of this new generation of veterans, we are looking internally at how best to attract and retain their membership. Information technology will be a key area of focus since the millennials are technologically savvy and are regular social-media followers.

VFW needs to communicate a compelling mix of no fuss, quick and efficient items of interest to keep this new generation of veterans in the know.

Speaking to their core values, we need to give them a reason to engage with VFW.

According to a leading research firm, 85% of those 18-35 use mobile devices such as smartphones or tablets to communicate. Therefore, VFW is reviewing its communication and marketing strategies to ensure that we are "mobile friendly" and engaging.

VFW's website is the primary entry portal for accessing vital member information, and it will be an initial objective to modernize this site.

VFW remains committed to providing relevant and timely information to our nation's veterans and a key component to achieving that objective will be through our continuing effort to be technologically friendly.

CHECKPOINT

Editor
Tim Dyhouse

Assistant Editor
Janie Blankenship

Senior Writer
Kelly Gibson

Staff Writer
Stephanie A. Wilken

Graphic Designer
Sally A. Nemeth

Checkpoint is an award-winning newsletter published six times a year in January, March, May, July, September and November. Its purpose is to provide VFW Department, District and Post leaders with information to enhance their job performance and furnish them with a more comprehensive understanding of the organization.

Correspondence can be sent to the editor at VFW National Headquarters.

VFW Department, District and Post publications may reproduce sections of *Checkpoint*. All other publications must receive editor's permission. Internet address: www.vfwmagazine.org

Annual subscription rate: \$6

© January/February 2016

VFW
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National Headquarters
406 W. 34th Street, Kansas City, MO 64111
(816) 756-3390 • FAX 816-968-1169
Checkpoint e-mail: tdyhouse@vfw.org

VFW WASHINGTON OFFICE

VFW Memorial Building
200 Maryland Ave., NE, Washington, DC 20002
(202) 543-2239 • Fax: 202-543-6719
E-mail: vfw@vfw.org

SERVICE OFFICERS



Left: Michael Johnson, is a 20-year Marine veteran who now helps others by serving as one of two service officers for Post 4992 in Silverdale, Wash. Johnson is pictured here in 1968, the year he joined the Marine Corps.

Right: Post 4992 Service Officer Michael Johnson helps veterans get the assistance they deserve – and making personal connections is key to his work. Johnson has been a member of the Post, located in Silverdale, Wash., since 1991.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MICHAEL JOHNSON

Listening to the Veteran

Retired Marine Finds Passion in Helping Others

Inspired by his first meeting to become a service officer, Michael Johnson of Post 4992 in Silverdale, Wash., said he knew he wanted to help veterans get the assistance they deserve.

For Johnson, it's a personal connection that drives his work. "Instead of just taking the information and putting it on a form, you actually listen to what the veteran or the family member is saying and create a bond with that person," he said.

Johnson served as a truck driver from March 1969 to March 1970 on Route 1 in Vietnam with C Company, 9th Engineering Battalion. Now, Johnson, a 20-year Marine veteran, serves others through his volunteer work. He's been a service officer at the Post for three years. "I feel that true empathy for the individual veteran or family member is important," Johnson said. "Many times they are in

a real difficult situation."

Most commonly, Johnson said he sees a veteran or a family member who is in financial distress. That can range from facing eviction to not being able to make ends meet. When they've exhausted all community resources and are having trouble with their paperwork, they turn to Johnson, who says he helps a lot of people who receive a three-day notice to vacate. "They've gone through all the possibilities for keeping a roof over their heads," he said.

He sees about 50 claims per year, working on several at a time, and he both gives and receives referrals from the county. Johnson works closely with Kitsap county community resources to ensure each veteran is helped.

He is one of two service officers at the Post. Having a partner allows both to work in other areas of the local veteran community. Johnson also

serves on the Kitsap County Veterans Advisory Board, where he advises the board of county commissioners to drive policy and affect change. The group also escorts the unclaimed remains of deceased veterans to the Tahoma National Cemetery and sponsors Stand Down events, aimed at assisting homeless veterans by providing food, clothing, access to VA benefits and employment assistance.

Johnson said he recommends tenacity to others interested in becoming a service officer. "They should be someone who really wants to help find a solution to the problem, whether it's a spouse who's had a recent passing of a veteran or a flag retirement," he said.

But Johnson said this work wouldn't be possible without each of the 150 members of Post 4992. "It's truly a team effort to be able to accomplish community service," he said.

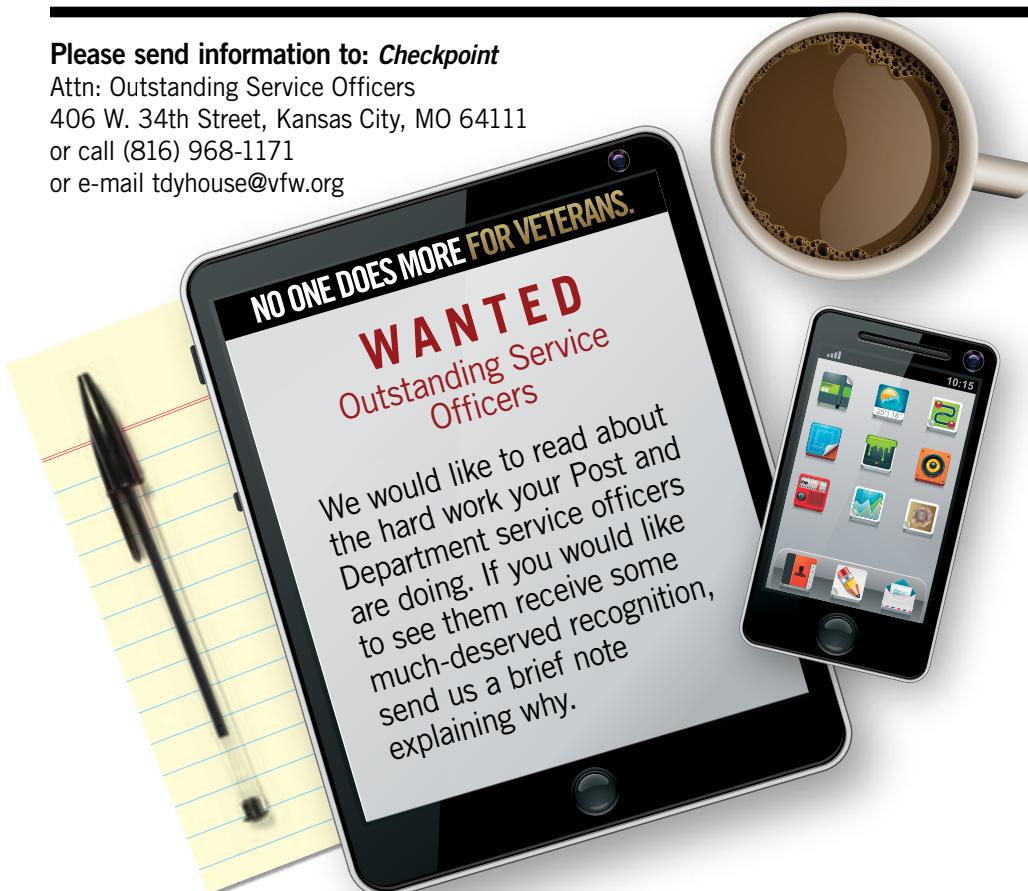
E-mail: swilken@vfw.org

"Instead of just taking the information and putting it on a form, you actually listen to what the veteran or the family member is saying and create a bond with that person."

– Michael Johnson,
Service Officer, Post 4992,
Silverdale, Wash.



Please send information to: **Checkpoint**
Attn: Outstanding Service Officers
406 W. 34th Street, Kansas City, MO 64111
or call (816) 968-1171
or e-mail tdyhouse@vfw.org



NATIONAL VETERANS SERVICE

Do you need help filing a claim?

VFW's National Veterans Service has a VFW Department service officer locator on its website. To find a service officer near you, just follow these easy steps:

1. Visit www.vfw.org/nvs.
2. Select "ASSISTANCE" from the menu.
3. Select "NATIONAL VETERANS SERVICE" from the pull-down menu.
4. Locate the "FIND A SERVICE OFFICER" box on the right-hand side of the screen.
5. Select your state and hit "GO".

FIND A SERVICE OFFICER

State

GO >>

VFW Members Participate in Mud Run to Benefit SEAL Children



New Canaan (Conn.) YMCA sponsored the Family Warrior Mud Run on Oct. 18, to benefit Little Warriors, a project of the Brian Bill Foundation. Little Warriors is an organization committed to supporting the children of active-duty and fallen Navy SEALs.

More than 100 men, women and children showed up at Kiwanis Park in New Canaan ready to get down and dirty. The 5K race consisted of 10 challenging obstacles for families.

Participating in the run was a team from VFW Post 12150 in New Haven and Post 9460 in Stratford. One of the members of the VFW Team, Quartermaster of Post 12150 Mike Finnegan, said assembling the group was easy because everyone wanted to honor the memory of Bill (see sidebar).

“It was cool to do something for someone else and get out away from the Post socially,” Finnegan said.

Despite the chilly temps, the team crawled through mud and tunnels and had to cross a pond all before reaching the finish line.

“If we have the opportunity, we will do it again,” Finnegan said. “It’s nice to go for a run, do something healthy as a group and then go do something not so healthy like eat a bunch.”

Post 12150 is predominantly comprised of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who are eager to volunteer in the community. (See *VFW* magazine’s “Member Corner” in the November/December 2015 issue for a Post profile.)

According to Brendan Carney, director of activities for the New Canaan YMCA, a Family Warrior Mud Run is being planned for later this year.

“The Mud Run was a way for us to give back to the men and women who have so selflessly served this country,” Carney said. “We are thankful for the support this event received.”

E-mail: jblankenship@vfw.org



Top: VFW members Titus Francoeur, Bryan Standish, Steve Comeau, Prez Palmer, Mike Finnegan, Stanislav Sergeez and Crystal Brown appear muddy after competing in a mud run benefiting children of active-duty and fallen Navy SEALs last October in New Canaan, Conn. Above: The VFW team runs a 5K complete with 10 obstacles. Mike Finnegan said it was good for members to do something fun outside of the Post setting.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF VFW SR. VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BRIAN DUFFY



‘The Quiet Professional’

Navy Special Warfare Operator Master Chief Brian Bill was killed on Aug. 6, 2011, in Wardak Province, Afghanistan. His Chinook was shot down by enemy fire. Bill, 31, was one of 30 Americans killed in the Taliban shoot down.

Growing up in Stamford, Conn., Bill had a dream of being a SEAL. He excelled at the Newfield Swim Club and was an Eagle Scout.

After graduating from Trinity Catholic High School, he attended Norwich University in Vermont. A member of the Corps of Cadets, Bill chose electrical engineering because he believed it to be the toughest major.

In college, he joined the Mountain Cold Weather Rescue, worked as an EMT with the Norwich Ambulance Corps and swam on the swim team. He graduated in 2001 and that June enlisted in the Navy.

Not surprising to those who best knew him, Bill was the only one in his BUDS class to complete every test in the dive phase the first time, every time. In 2003, he was awarded his SEAL Trident and assigned to a team in Virginia Beach, Va. He completed several missions in support of the wars on terrorism.

Bill’s parents said their son had planned to attend graduate school after his service and hoped to one day become an astronaut. For the people who knew Bill while he was growing up, this was not a stretch.

“Brian just wanted to do his best,” said Diane Warzoha, who taught Bill in high school. “Brian wanted to be the best at whatever he did. Challenge did not deter him.”

After Bill’s death, one of his teammates wrote to Bill’s family: “I knew him as an unassuming SEAL with an insatiable appetite for new horizons. He epitomized the quiet professional.”



Your Post Can Receive \$1,000 from VFW Foundation

There's a lot a Post can do for its community. Now, thanks to the help of the VFW Foundation, a Post can put an additional \$1,000 toward a project. This amount was recently increased from \$500 to \$1,000.

The VFW Foundation Community Service Grants program will provide up to \$1,000 when a Post or its Auxiliary sponsors a beneficial community activity. It's a great way for a Post to stretch its dollars — all while benefiting its neighbors.

Just pick a community activity — not necessarily geared toward troops, veterans or military families — and apply for the grant. It's that simple.

"It's a way for the Post to better connect with its community, which is what a VFW Post is all about," said Richard G. Freiburghouse, manager of the VFW Foundation.

He encourages Posts to apply for the grants now. Freiburghouse and his staff at the Foundation, founded in 1996 and located at National Headquarters in Kansas City, Mo., administer the grants.

For more information and to apply, visit <http://www.vfwfoundation.org/grants>.

One Arizona Post already has received the grant and used it to help contribute to a local youth center. Bill Talcott, Post 9400 youth activities chairman, and Vietnam veteran with the 82nd Airborne Division, said it was easy to apply. And in two hours, their Phoenix, Ariz., Post was able to help more than 30 local children participate in the youth center's basketball league.

"I didn't even have to go to the Post Office," Talcott said. "I would really encourage any VFW Post to take advantage of this program — just go ahead and do it."

E-mail: swilken@vfw.org



Members of Post 9400 in Phoenix, Ariz., present the Sunnyslope Youth Center with a check for \$1,500 to fund youth basketball. The Post was awarded a \$500 grant through the VFW Foundation Community Service Grants program.

PHOTO COURTESY OF VFW POST 9400



Employees at one of Army veteran Ed Northrop's six Georgia Burger King restaurants examine an MIA/POW table. The tables, set up at each restaurant, are Northrop's addition to the national Burger King fundraising campaign for the VFW Unmet Needs Program, to which he had contributed some \$10,000 as of press time. PHOTO COURTESY OF ED NORTHROP

Missing Man Tables Reach New Audience, Assist VFW

It's a symbol of remembrance for those captured and those who did not return home from war. And for one Georgia restaurant franchisee, it's an opportunity to show his appreciation for the sacrifices others make.

Edward Northrop, a retired Army officer, served two tours in Vietnam and today owns six Burger Kings located in southwest Georgia. The MIA/POW tables are in all six of his restaurants — and Northrop said it's one small way to make a difference.

"I have a sincere respect and deep conviction of trying, even if in a small way, of remembering their sacrifice, intense suffering and enduring hardship, which most of us cannot even comprehend," he said.

The table is also part of Northrop's ongoing contribution to VFW. For the past two years, his stores have participated in the fundraising effort to support VFW's *Unmet Needs*. The program assists service members and military families during times of financial hardship by providing emergency financial grants to help with basic necessities such as rent, mortgage and utility payments, medical expenses and groceries.

In 2014, Northrop's six stores raised a total of \$4,700. In 2015, his fundraising efforts brought in close to \$10,000 as of press time. It's a cause Northrop said he fully supports.

"We realize that many of our military families have special needs created by the unknown facing their loved ones, in parts of the world that are very dangerous," he said. "Whatever we can do, regardless of how small, maybe we can make a difference."

Northrop's personal connection to the military goes beyond his own service: His father, brother, nephew and son have all served in the military, too. The tables stayed up through the end of the fundraising campaign on Dec. 7, Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day.

E-mail: swilken@vfw.org

\$12,000 Track Chair 'Put to Good Use'

Wyoming Donation Assists Disabled Hunters

When Army Spc. Colton Sasser was wounded in Afghanistan on April 15, 2012, his future looked bleak.

Before he lapsed into a coma for 15 days, Sasser served with A Co., 1st Inf. Regt., 2nd Bn., 4th BCT. He was part of a Quick Reaction Force escorting an explosive ordnance disposal team to investigate possible IEDs.

The truck he was driving hit a bomb. He was medevaced to a field hospital before being transported to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DON CURRAH



Heroes in his native Casper, Wyo., with Vietnam veteran Dan Currah.

This organization takes physically and mentally challenged veterans on hunting and fishing trips in Wyoming. Until recently, though, the founders only had one "track chair" for wheelchair-bound veterans.

A track chair allows those vets who cannot walk to maneuver all sorts of terrain while hunting. With a price tag of about \$12,000, Hunting with

to purchase a chair for the group. On Sept. 11, the \$12,352 chair was presented to Currah and Sasser on behalf of Wyoming VFW and Auxiliary.

"There is a reason we do what we do," said Bob DeBernardo, Department of Wyoming adjutant/quartermaster. "And that is to make veterans lives better and this sure made these folks smile. The chair was used the next day at a hunt already scheduled."

A VFW member-at-large in Texas, Currah said the



Left: Wounded Afghanistan veteran Colton Sasser tries out a track chair donated to his organization, Hunting with Heroes, by VFW's Department of Wyoming on Sept. 11, 2015. Middle: Hunting with Heroes co-founder Dan Currah, thanks Wyoming VFW Auxiliary President Ansje Lansing and Department Commander Cheryl Shannon for the chair, which cost \$12,352. Right: VFW and Auxiliary members gather at Post 9349 in Casper, Wyo., for the presentation. PHOTOS COURTESY OF JIM PEDERSEN

He suffered 24 serious wounds to his brain, spleen, legs, lungs and back. Shards of his spine severed nerves in his hip. After realizing his left leg was too mangled, he asked doctors to amputate at the knee.

Despite the severity of wounds, Sasser rebounded quickly and in 2013 co-founded Hunting with

Heroes was not in a position to purchase a second chair.

Unknown to the hunting outfit, during the 2015 VFW Department of Wyoming's convention last June, members voted to purchase a track chair for a veteran. But they didn't have any luck finding someone who needed the chair.

They contacted Hunting with Heroes and offered

chair has been used multiple times since then.

"We've really put it to good use," he said, noting that since 2013 the non-profit has assisted more than 200 hunters. "We were floored when the state VFW said they wanted to purchase a chair for us. We will probably be using it on a bear hunt later this year."

E-mail: jblankenship@vfw.org

Sharing Ideas and Stories

VFW Launches 'Post Pride' Initiative

Last November, VFW National Headquarters introduced VFW Post Pride, an online platform to showcase the community service work of VFW Posts and Auxiliaries.

If your Post is working hard in your community, VFW Post Pride is the place to share it. Maybe it's a holiday party benefiting the homeless or maybe your members have built a playground or organized clothing drives. Whatever it is, you need to share that information.

Sharing is easy. Snap a good photo or take a video at your Post's next service project and share it to social media using the hashtag #VFWPostPride.

Your content will then be displayed on VFW's national website alongside all other postings containing #VFWPostPride.

Additionally, national headquarters staff will compile news stories, leads and submissions and display them in this area, as well.

This effort is designed as a way for Posts to share ideas and success stories. It's also a place for Posts to get ideas for community service projects.

If your Post does not currently have a presence on social media, log into VFW's website at www.vfw.org and visit the "Media and Public Relations" link under the "Training and Support" section.

E-mail: jblankenship@vfw.org



Michigan Post Purchases Land for New Facilities

PHOTO BY LORENE PARSHALL/GAYLORD (MICH.) HERALD TIMES

The home for Post 1518 in Gaylord, Mich., was built in 1927. The roof leaked and the two-story building wasn't accessible to those with disabilities.

"The bathrooms were obsolete," said Post Commander John Facchinetti. "We couldn't fry an egg in the kitchen because the health department wouldn't let us. There were 12 stairs up and 12 stairs down—bad for our disabled members. We had to get rid of it."

So when Facchinetti found 8.7 acres just inside city limits for a "good deal," he said, the Post couldn't pass up the opportunity to build anew.

"We've taken down some trees and moved a little dirt," Facchinetti said. He says the goal is to start building this spring.

The 120-member Post hopes to finish the new home—as well as an outdoor pavilion, ball park and housing opportunities for local veterans—by 2017.

Funding remains an issue, but the Post tries every angle it can to raise money. One member is a professional grant writer and is working on securing construction funds. The Post also holds raffles and hosts an ox roast every year.

In the meantime, the Post holds its meetings at the Gaylord Regional Airport. The airport director is a member of the Post and offers a room for free. He also allows the Post to host a monthly veterans breakfast, when they serve coffee and doughnuts donated by community restaurants to any veterans interested in attending. In a year's time, attendance at the monthly breakfasts has risen from 30 to almost 100.

"We've gained members from that," said Facchinetti, who has been the Post commander for six years. "That's helped quite a bit. Any veteran is welcome. We want to get the younger ones."



Post 1518 Commander John Facchinetti (center) and Senior Vice Commander Ron LeBourais (right) accept a check from local realtor Bill Blaker (left) after purchasing 8.7 acres of land on which to build a new Post home. Blaker donated his commission to the Post.

Facchinetti, who served in Korea as an Army medic from 1953-55, says the Post has raised awareness about VFW by offering scholarships to local high-school students who have a parent or grandparent who is a veteran. This year they were able to offer some \$4,000 in scholarships.

"Everything we do is with the veterans in mind," Facchinetti said.

E-mail: kgibson@vfw.org

Pennsylvania Post Encourages Young Members to Take Charge

Tom Brown loves talking to young veterans, especially college students.

The 83-year-old thinks it's easy to connect with other generations—especially by listening to their needs and interests.

"The catch is [young vets] don't want to come in and be part of the bar, they want to be part of the community," said Brown, who is the senior vice commander for the Department of Pennsylvania. "Let them come and run events. Let them do their things. Don't just say, 'Come join.'"

Brown's Post—Post 928 in Swarthmore, Pa.—is on board with that train of thought.

"I'm letting the young folks run the show," Brown said. "I try to stay in the background."

For example, he is mentoring John Scheaffer, an Afghanistan veteran who grew up in the Swarthmore area and has the enthusiasm to organize events.

"He came out of heaven," Brown says of the gung-ho Scheaffer.

On Aug. 2, 2015, the Post hosted a Veterans Appreciation Day. Members invited the local Student Veterans of America chapters and made the event family friendly, allowing Post members and student vets the chance to mingle and get to know one another. Brown says he signed up 36 new members at that event. It also was a good fundraising effort, collecting some \$1,300.

Money raised at the Veterans Appreciation Day events allows the Post to fund various projects. Last December, for example, Post members donated 40 jackets to homeless veterans, and threw a Christmas party at a local veterans hospital.

Brown, a Korean War veteran, says what he has experienced when interacting with the newest generation of veterans is that they are "more into community and home."

Scheaffer was at the head of those events. Most recently, he has been working with the police department and the postal service to plan

future events that will include many veterans working in the public sector.

Additionally, Brown says his Post works with Team Red, White and Blue—a group that offers physical team-building activities for veterans to encourage camaraderie. The group is planning a ruck march for the spring where participants will march 19 miles carrying a full pack on their backs.

Working with the local college campuses has become a passion for Brown. He says his generation and the younger generation relate to one another.

"I have no problem telling them they are our future," Brown said. "I challenge them. The new generation is doing good work for the community."

E-mail: kgibson@vfw.org



Post 928 members Fred Borda (left) and John Scheaffer (right) converse at a Veterans Appreciation Day function in Swarthmore, Pa., on Aug. 2, 2015. The events encourage vets young and old to mingle and serve as family-friendly opportunities to fundraise for Post projects.

PHOTO COURTESY OF TOM BROWN

"The catch is [young vets] don't want to come in and be part of the bar, they want to be part of the community."

—Tom Brown, Department of Pennsylvania Senior Vice Commander

Honoring Vets on Independence Day in Texas

PHOTO BY JENNY OLDHAM, VFW POST 6522 AUXILIARY

A Boy Scout from Troop 116 receives a U.S. flag from Dewitt Nehrkom, past commander of Post 6522 in Bellville, Texas, and Post member Milford Gross during a veterans appreciation ceremony at Colonial Belle Nursing Home on July 4 last year.

According to Post 6522 Quartermaster Jay Crutchfield, the nursing home's activities director said her facility wanted to recognize its veteran-residents, one of whom is her father.

"She asked us to help them honor their service," said Crutchfield, a Navy Vietnam vet who served aboard the aircraft carrier *USS Kitty Hawk*. "We were happy to do it."

Crutchfield added that the Boy Scouts help the 79-member Post, located some 60 miles west of Houston, with various projects, such as placing flags on veterans graves on Memorial Day.

The ceremony at the nursing home, said Crutchfield, a past commander of Post 6522, was "simple and brief." It included a flag raising, as well as refreshments for guests and the three vets who live in the home.



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Posts with the Most

VFW POSTS OF 1,000 MEMBERS OR MORE AS OF DEC. 14, 2015

Rank	Post No.	Location	Members	Rank No.	Location	Members	Rank No.	Location	Members
1	27	Wiesbaden, Germany	2,599	11	4647 North Highlands, CA	1,324	23	972 Terre Haute, IN	1,071
2	1503	Dale City, VA	2,517	12	10047 North Las Vegas, NV	1,296	24	2111 Chula Vista, CA	1,070
3	1114	Evansville, IN	2,030	13	9342 Ansbach, Germany	1,276	25	2391 Saint Augustine, FL	1,068
4	9972	Sierra Vista, AZ	1,901	14	6506 Rosedale, MD	1,271	26	549 Tucson, AZ	1,060
5	8862	Vicenza, Italy	1,713	15	63 Boise, ID	1,236	27	2503 Omaha, NE	1,049
6	392	Virginia Beach, VA	1,687	16	628 Sioux Falls, SD	1,219	28	7686 Alamogordo, NM	1,043
7	9785	Eagle River, AK	1,632	17	76 San Antonio, TX	1,212	29	7968 Apache Junction, AZ	1,023
8	2485	Angeles City, Philippines	1,615	18	7234 Ocean View, DE	1,203	30	10436 Kitzingen, Germany	1,021
9	4372	Odessa, TX	1,422	19	1146 St Clair Shores, MI	1,171	31	1273 Rapid City, SD	1,013
10	10692	Grafenwoehr, Germany	1,403	20	6873 Abilene, TX	1,139	32	1326 Bismarck, ND	1,012
				21	4809 Norfolk, VA	1,120	33	10216 Songtan-Si, Korea	1,009
				22	10097 Fort Myers Beach, FL	1,108			

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Disabled Hockey a Hit in Idaho

Hockey players from the Inland Northwest Disabled Veterans Sports Association gather for a tournament match in June 2014 at the Frontier Ice Arena in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Sponsored by Post 889 in Coeur d'Alene, the team includes Post member Joe Pomarico (far left, front row), according to Post Surgeon Greg Munden.

"We all believe this is an important endeavor, and we always get about 10 volunteers from our Post and Auxiliary members when we do this," said Munden, a Vietnam vet who is the Post's point man for the project.

Munden says the Post donates about \$2,400 annually for the cost of ice time. He and other volunteers also help the wheelchair-bound players get on and off their sleds. He adds that the competition can be intense.

"We get airmen who play hockey at Fairchild Air Force Base (near Spokane, Wash.) to participate," Munden says. "They get handled by our team. It's a different type of hockey. It's tough on the able-bodied guys because they are forced to use muscles that they don't normally use."



PHOTO BY CHRIS FORD, SERVICE OFFICER, VFW POST 889