

CHECKPOINT INT

WHAT'S INSIDE

Extra! Extra!..... 2

- National publications contest deadline is April 1.
- Reserve housing for 2016 National Convention.
- The VFW Store can customize items for your personal needs.

Service Officer Profiled 3

An Air Force veteran of Vietnam who learned hard lessons from his own claims ordeal helps some 300 veterans a year avoid the same pitfalls.

A VFW Member from Outer Space 4

Astronaut Scott Kelly becomes the first-ever VFW member to take his oath of obligation while orbiting Earth.



Iowa Post Renames Itself for Afghanistan Veteran 5

A Post in Iowa changes its name to honor a soldier who died in Afghanistan.

Easter Egg Hunts Popular at Posts 6

Post members around the country attract their fellow citizens with Easter bunny fun.



WWII Vets Leading Posts 7

This list recognizes WWII veterans still serving VFW and their communities at the grassroots level.

Honoring the Fallen 8

A Post in East St. Louis, Ill., memorializes its war dead with honor.

\$2,000 Raised Offsets Robbery

Pro Wrestlers Stage Matches to Aid Detroit-Area Post



Above left, Terry Gerin, known as Rhyno, takes on a fellow professional wrestler on Dec. 8, 2015, at a school in Dearborn Heights, Mich. Rhyno organized a fundraiser for Post 78, which fell on hard times following a robbery at the Post home. Right, Rhyno signs fan autographs after the wrestling match. Bottom right, Post 78 Commander George Wells and member Charlie Cosgro watch the wrestling from ringside. Post 78 is named in memory of Pfc. James D. Donovan. The WWII vet was killed in France on July 12, 1944, while serving with the 314th Infantry Regiment, 79th Infantry Division.

Post 78 in Dearborn Heights, Mich., has long been a fixture in its community. So when the Post was robbed in 2014, the community stepped in to offer support.

According to Post Commander George Wells, the thieves pulled around the back of the Post, cut the alarm system wires and walked away with the Post's money, some equipment and all the high-end liquor from the bar.

The Post, which is the oldest in Michigan, had a back-up system in place, but for some reason it failed to work. The insurance money didn't cover everything, and the Post couldn't keep up with its bills.

Wells said the gas and electricity was shut off, causing the cancellation of events that would have generated more revenue in order to pay the utility company.

When Dearborn Heights native, Terry Gerin, known as Rhyno in the professional wrestling world, heard about the Post's plight, he wanted to help. He gathered his fellow wrestling pals for an event on Dec. 8, 2015, to raise money for the Post.

Rhyno, along with wrestlers DBA, the Scarboni Brothers, Zach Gowen and John E. Bravo entertained some 350

residents at O.W. Best Middle School, bringing in \$2,000 for the Post.

"I'm proud to participate in an event that will help our veterans," said Gerin, who previously performed for troops in Iraq with World Wrestling Entertainment.

Wells said the Post even got a portion of the merchandise and concession sales.

"It was a wonderful event," he said. "Terry has no military connection whatsoever, but he has a soft spot for veterans. We are truly indebted to that man."

At press time, Wells said the Post was close to reaching its goal of having \$5,000 in savings in order to get back to work in the community.

For instance, Wells said the Post home serves as the site for fundraising events for community organizations. The Girl Scouts use it for their annual cookie drive and the neighborhood watch committee meets there.

Here is a look at some of the ways the Post has been at work in the Detroit suburb in the past five years:

- Collected and donated more than 200,000 school supplies in support of *Operation Homefront*.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF PRESS & GUIDE

- Donated items to decorate the student veterans lounge at the University of Michigan-Dearborn.
 - Annually host a Veterans Day event at the Post offering free breakfast and dinner to local vets.
 - Raised money for the war memorial at Dearborn Heights City Hall.
 - Hosted the *Walk a Mile in Her Boots* display, a collaborative art project celebrating women in the military.
- Having celebrated its 101st anniversary last August, members hope to rebound and celebrate 102 this year.
E-mail: jblankenship@vfw.org

PUBLICATIONS CONTEST DEADLINE IS APRIL 1

The deadline for entries in the 2016 VFW National Publications contest is April 1. Carefully read the information e-mailed to you in January. All entries must be mailed by Department adjutants, quartermasters or Department editors. Entries received from anyone else will be immediately disqualified. If you require further information before then, please call (816) 756-3390 ext. 167, or e-mail kgibson@vfw.org.

REGISTER NOW FOR NATIONAL CONVENTION

It's time to register for the 117th VFW National Convention, July 23-27, in Charlotte, N.C. It will be VFW's first-ever convention in the "Queen City."

VFW National Headquarters mailed convention housing and registration forms in February with Post election mailings. VFW's bylaws state that each Post must register at least one delegate for the convention.

To make housing reservations, call 1-877-464-6840, fax 704-347-1158; international call (980) 337-3372 from 8:30 a.m.-9 p.m. EST, Monday through Friday. Mail information to *Visit Charlotte Housing, 500 S. College St., Suite 300, Charlotte, NC 28202-1873* or e-mail vfw@visitcharlotte.com.

The housing cut-off is Monday, June 13. However, do not wait until the last minute to make reservations as there is no guarantee rooms will be available by that time.

Additional information is located at www.vfw.org. The website also has general convention information including the registration form, links to other convention-related material and a tentative schedule.

All advance registrations should be mailed to *VFW National Headquarters, 406 W. 34th St., Kansas City, MO 64111*, ATTN: *Convention Registration* or you may register online by visiting www.vfw.org.

VFW STORE CUSTOMIZES PRODUCTS

The VFW Store offers customization. If you are looking to have shirts, hats or other items specialized with your logo, give the store a call. The VFW Store offers thousands of products at competitive prices. To get a *free* quote, call Kim Winston at 816-968-1181 or e-mail her at kwinston@vfw.org.

GET TO KNOW YOUR HEALTH INSURANCE OPTIONS

January 31 officially marked the end of open enrollment for health insurance under the *Affordable Care Act* (Obamacare). On that day, at midnight, your opportunity to enroll for coverage in 2016 was over. Or was it? Not if you meet the criteria for a specific life event.

A qualifying event occurs when an identified circumstance has altered your life. For example, getting married, having a child, losing your job or moving to a new state. According to the *Affordable Care Act*, you can enroll in health insurance up to 60 days from the date of the event. See the entire list and find out if you're eligible by visiting www.healthcare.gov. Search for "coverage outside open enrollment."

HONOR VFW WITH A GIFT IN YOUR WILL

When it comes to your will and estate plans, we agree that your loved ones should come first. After your family has been taken care of, we ask you to evaluate VFW's place in your overall plans. If you're interested in supporting VFW and your fellow veterans with a gift in your will, please contact the VFW Planned Giving Office for more information at (816) 968-1119, e-mail plannedgiving@vfw.org or visit www.vfw.org/plannedgiving.

John Hamilton, Adjutant General

VFW Helps 133 Vets Attend College

Thanks to VFW and Sport Clips, a record number of troops and veterans are attending college this semester through the *Help A Hero Scholarship* program. It was made possible with an \$910,000 donation last year by Sport Clips, a sports-themed chain of more than 1,400 barbershops for men and boys located throughout the country.

VFW Commander-in-Chief John A. Biedrzycki, Jr., told Sport Clips CEO Gordon Logan during the check presentation last December that VFW is "truly grateful" for the effort Logan, his employees, customers and partners put forth in 2015.

Since the program began in 2013, Sport Clips has raised more than \$1.8 million, which has enabled 444 troops and veterans to attend college.



The 133 scholarship recipients selected for the 2016 spring semester will receive more than \$563,500 in combined aid. Scholarship recipient Joshua R. East spoke for many when he said that "even though the gesture of a scholarship may seem insignificant to some, it is a beacon of hope and inspiration to me and to those like me."

Stylists for the Texas-based haircutting franchise collected contributions of \$1 per haircut from mid-October through Veterans Day last year. Hair-care products manufacturers Nioxin, American Crew and John Paul Mitchell Systems donated an additional \$130,000.

VFW's Veterans and Military Support Programs department at VFW National Headquarters administers the effort.

Logan, an Air Force veteran and 2013 recipient of VFW's *James E. Van Zandt Citizenship Award*, told Chief Biedrzycki that "the reason Sport Clips is able to say 'thank you' to our military in this way is because of the hard work of team members and our very generous clients and product partners. We're grateful and gratified for their part in this *Help A Hero Scholarship* donation."

VFW awards the scholarships twice a year. To apply, visit www.vfw.org/scholarships.

Larry Maher, Quartermaster General

Time for VFW Cap Ordering

While the dynamics of VFW are changing, some things never change — our commitment to helping veterans and the traditional caps that our members have worn with pride for more than 100 years.

Department conventions are quickly approaching, and officer changes will be taking place. The peak season for ordering member and officer caps is April through July. The VFW Store processes more than 10,000 cap orders in this time.

During this period, it can take up to 10 weeks to receive a cap. If you need your cap by a certain date, it is important to let the VFW Store customer service representative know, and they will do everything they can to accommodate your needs. Be aware that rush orders will cost more to ship.

Each cap is custom made and personalized to the style, size, braid color and embroidery to fit an individual member's unique specifications.

Caps are made by one of two U.S. manufacturers that work with the VFW Store. They customize caps to include Post number, membership information, title and year. It is a very detailed and time-consuming process to make a cap designed specifically for our members.

It is important to place your cap order as soon as possible. Remember, the earlier you get your order in, the sooner you will receive it.

Also, now would be a good time to beat the rush and order other items you need for officer changes and Department and national conventions, such as gifts, plaques, certificates, awards, pins or magnetic

car signs.

Orders may be placed by phone, mail, or online at www.vfwstore.org. For assistance regarding cap orders or other merchandise, please call the VFW Store at 1-800-821-2606, and our customer service representatives will be happy to help you.



CHECKPOINT

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

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VFW
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

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SERVICE OFFICERS



Far left: Service Officer Gordon Wheeler, member of Post 9969 in Del City, Okla., helps a veteran with his VA claim. Wheeler works on about 300 claims a year and says he does it all for the veterans and their families.

Left: Gordon Wheeler served as a radio operator with the 21st Tactical Air Support Squadron in Vietnam from 1967-68. Wheeler, a service officer with Post 9969 in Del City, Okla., retired in 1984 after 22 years in the Air Force.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF GORDON WHEELER

'Grandpa's Therapy'

Air Force Veteran Finds Calling in Helping Others

Service Officer Gordon Wheeler knows about second chances.

When he retired from the Air Force in 1984, he said his VA disability compensation decision came back and he "didn't know any better" when it came to what he was truly owed.

"You know you can re-evaluate them," someone told him at a meeting. That piqued Wheeler's interest, and it's that personal experience that fueled his desire to help others.

Wheeler is the service office for Post 9969 in Del City, Okla., where he works on about 300 claims per year. He served as a radio operator with the 21st Tactical Air Support Squadron in Vietnam from 1967-68. And after 22 years of military service, he now serves his fellow veterans.

One of his proudest moments comes from helping a surviving spouse five years ago. The woman brought Wheeler a foreclosure notice.

"She'd been elsewhere to try to

get help and didn't get much," he said. After Wheeler worked on her claim, she was awarded \$336,000 in Dependency and Indemnity Compensation.

"The first thing she did was pay off her house loan," he said. "I still see her occasionally, and she still comes over and gives me a hug. Those kind of things really make you feel good about doing service work."

Whether he's in the office or on the road, Wheeler is prepared. He's armed with a portable printer for house calls or visiting nursing facilities. And he does it all for the veterans and their families.

But Wheeler isn't just making an impact on veterans' lives, he's also making a big impression close to home. One day Wheeler's grandson asked Wheeler's wife why his grandpa helps veterans. She answered: "It's Grandpa's therapy."

Wheeler said it's rewarding to see

a veteran come in for help and see the results later down the road. "It just gives you that warm and fuzzy feeling," he said.

One of his most common cases is tinnitus (constant ringing in the ears) among older vets, or PTSD for younger veterans, Wheeler said. He also works with service officers from other organizations to help pool resources and share knowledge. "We all work together as a team," he said. "We might be different organizations, but we're all here to help veterans."

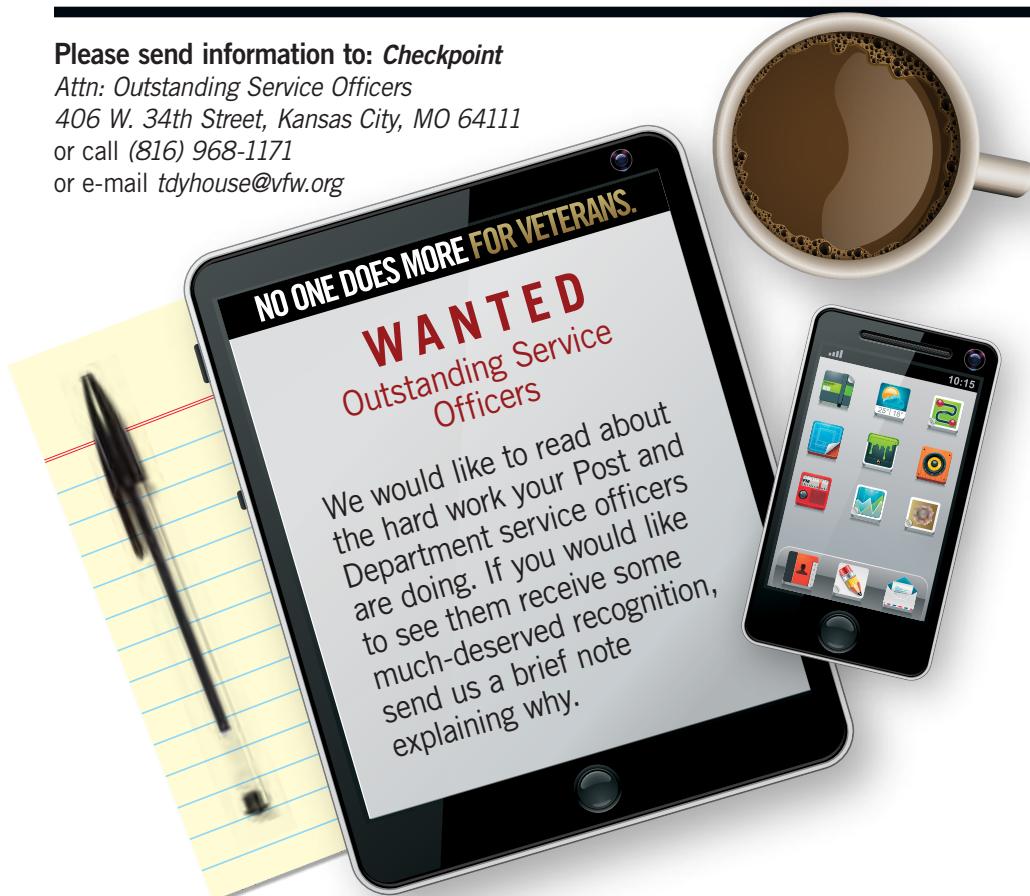
If someone wants to work as a service officer, Wheeler said they have to be dedicated and willing to train. "Don't be afraid to ask someone for help," he said, adding that it's also important to be empathetic and a good communicator. "Be a good listener and ask probing questions," Wheeler said. "You can't be bashful about that."

E-mail swilken@vfw.org

After Wheeler worked on a widow's claim, she was awarded \$336,000 in survivor's compensation.



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 >>

Astronaut Joins Colorado Post from Outer Space



Astronaut Scott Kelly takes his VFW induction oath on Dec. 6, 2015, from the International Space Station as it orbits Earth. Kelly, who served during the 1991 Persian Gulf War, joined Post 1 in Denver. PHOTOS COURTESY OF NASA

It's unprecedented, to say the least, that a VFW member has taken his oath while orbiting Earth. But astronaut Scott Kelly did just that on Dec. 6, 2015, some 249 miles above Earth, when he joined Post 1 in Denver.

"Now when people tell me they live too far away and can't be part of the Post, I say there is someone not on this planet who's a member," said Michael Mitchel, Post 1 commander. "It's no longer an excuse."

Post 1 coordinated the effort with NASA in time for their Founder's Banquet. It was a complement to the inaugural presentation of the Post's *Jack Swigart Aeronautical and Astronautical Award*, unveiled at the Founder's Banquet in December and named for the late astronaut best known for his mission aboard *Apollo 13*. NASA Chief of Astronaut Office Chris Cassidy received the award.

Of Kelly's induction, Cassidy told a Denver CBS affiliate, "Every little thing is helpful in the last part of the mission when you have to stay focused and stay strong."

Kelly is a retired Navy captain. He joined the Navy in May 1987 upon graduating from State University of New York Maritime College. He qualified for VFW thanks to his time aboard the *USS Dwight D. Eisenhower* in 1991's Persian Gulf War. He retired from the Navy in June 2012. Kelly was expected to return to Earth in March after a one-year mission aboard the International Space Station. Kelly's twin brother, Mark, also is an astronaut and Navy veteran.

"It's the coolest thing," Mitchel said. "I think it says a lot about today's VFW and Post 1."

E-mail kgibson@vfw.org

A Tool for Fundraising, Too

Patio and Fire Pit Added to Draw in Younger Members at Rhode Island Post

Thanks to a \$6,000 Home Depot grant, VFW Post 10011 in North Providence, R.I., got a little cozier. VFW members and Home Depot volunteers completed the first phase of a new patio and fire pit in November 2015.

"We want to be a new home for a lot of veterans," Post Quartermaster Jim Geyer said. "These Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are coming back, and we want to give them a place to go. Now they have an area to have a nice cookout or for holidays and birthday parties."

Post 10011 doesn't have a bar, and it is only open two days a week. Geyer says they rent the hall on the weekends, and that helps "pay the bills."

"We're a tight-knit group," said Geyer, a Marine Corps veteran who served in Vietnam. "We have a couple of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who belong and they are very active. We're hoping those young guys can bring in more young guys and help them with any benefits they might need."

But, Geyer says, the older members can help guide younger members too. Many of the Post's members are retired law enforcement officers or first responders.

"We've got the right people in place to guide and counsel these young members," Geyer said.



Post 10011 in North Providence, R.I., used a Home Depot grant to build a patio and fire pit in November 2015 to encourage younger vets to join. Post members hope to finish the project in March. PHOTO COURTESY OF JIM GEYER

The new fire pit and patio will help with the Post's fundraising efforts—specifically its regular clothing and food drives, benefiting the Bristol (R.I.) Veterans Home as well as vets at the nearby VA medical center.

"The whole design was to do something for the community," Geyer said. "We're working on putting a roof on it. The weather has been a problem, but we're hoping to get that going by March."

To learn more about applying for a Home Depot grant, visit <http://homedepotfoundation.org/page/applying-for-a-grant>.

E-mail kgibson@vfw.org

Student Veterans an 'Asset' to Posts

Three years ago, VFW and Student Veterans of America (SVA) signed a memo of understanding between the organizations, cementing a partnership that bonds student veterans and VFW members across the country. That relationship helps Post leadership reach out to local colleges and universities to see how VFW members can best assist student veterans in their area.

For some Posts, that can mean offering a meeting space for the local SVA chapter. For others, it might mean hosting social events (such as potlucks) or community service projects (such as blood drives) and inviting student veterans to attend.

"Student veterans want to get involved in their communities," says Justin Smith, associate director of VFW student veteran outreach, employment and transition services. "Show the student veterans what VFW is about. Remove that stigma of a bar. We have a shared goal, so get out there and build friendships."

According to Smith, student veterans don't look like typical 18-year-old freshmen. "They are older," Smith says. "They might have jobs and families. Their needs might be different. We want to know how they are surviving on campus day-to-day and how we can help them."

Smith—who served in Korea from 2007-09—earned his bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice Administration from Columbia Southern University in Orange Beach, Ala.

Student veterans can be an asset to Posts. "They have the leadership skills necessary," Smith says. "They go above and beyond. Reaching out now will have a significant impact on our organization for decades to come."

Smith suggests being patient and approachable when reaching out to student veteran campus organizations. He also says going to campus and meeting face-to-face helps.

Smith says student advocacy is a priority. By writing to a dedicated e-mail address (1student-veteran@vfw.org), student veterans can reach out to VFW and request assistance—often "cutting through educational and benefit-related bureaucracy," Smith says. A VFW representative works with the student and the school or university to resolve the issue.

"You don't have to be a member to get our help," Smith said.

Smith says he sees the partnership growing by "leaps and bounds" this year. "We look forward to working with SVA in the next year."

One such way is the VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship program. In January, SVA and VFW announced that 10 student veterans would participate. Now in its second year, the program offers the student vets an opportunity to research, report and advocate on behalf of veterans in Washington, D.C., during VFW's annual Legislative Congress in March. Fellows are paired with a VFW mentor and meet with their members of Congress to discuss policy initiatives.

Wrote 2014 Fellow Ryan Theon, a Marine veteran attending the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse: "It is hard to nail down the biggest benefit of the fellowship. Was it the new friends and allies I made, the lobbying experience, or the new-found appreciation discovered for the VFW? For me, I guess in the end it is a little bit of each. It has given me hope that things can change even at the lower level."

E-mail kgibson@vfw.org

Iowa Post Renamed for Deceased Afghanistan Veteran

Steven Blass left his home in Estherville, Iowa, on March 13, 2006, to follow in his grandfather's footsteps by joining the Army. Exactly seven years later to the date, March 13, 2013, Staff Sgt. Blass returned home to be laid to rest next to his grandfather in North Lawn Memorial Park Cemetery in nearby Spencer.

Serving with 4th Bn., 3rd Avn. Regt., 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, 3rd Inf. Div., Blass died on March 11, 2013, following a helicopter crash in Kandahar, Afghanistan (four others died, as well). On his second tour to Afghanistan, he was crew chief on board the Blackhawk when it crashed.

To honor him, VFW Post 3388 renamed its building *SSG. Steven Blass Hall*, on Nov. 14, 2015.

Previously named for John W. Brawford, an Estherville native killed in World War I, the Post membership decided it was time for a change.

"Our idea is to hopefully bring the younger generation into VFW," Post member Gene Haukoos said at the dedication ceremony, which was held in conjunction with the Post's 80th anniversary.

Blass' family attended the dedication and shared words about their soldier, saying he would have been embarrassed by the renaming of the Post. They said he "exemplified teamwork," and that he was always concerned for his team and family.



Family members of Staff Sgt. Steven Blass gather outside the newly renamed Post 3388 in Estherville, Iowa, on Nov. 14, 2015. Blass was killed in a helicopter crash in Afghanistan in 2013. Post members decided to honor Blass by renaming the building SSG. Steven Blass Hall. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ESTHERVILLE NEWS

Blass was highly thought of in his hometown. The day of his funeral, more than 2,000 U.S. flags lined the route to the cemetery. The service had to be held at the high school gymnasium because it was the only place large enough to hold all those wishing to pay their respects.

At the memorial service, Army Brigadier Gen.

Peter DeLuca said Blass found not a profession, but a calling that he loved deeply.

"He was very good at it and widely respected," DeLuca said.

Blass and his wife, Tricia, have a young son, Hayden.

E-mail jblankenship@vfw.org

California Post Elects First Woman Commander



Nicole McBurnett is the first-ever female commander of Post 8762 in West Sacramento, Calif. The Army vet of Iraq was elected in June 2015.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NICOLE MCBURNETT

Nicole McBurnett made history at Post 8762 in West Sacramento, Calif., when she was elected commander last June. She is the first female to lead the Post, which was chartered in 1946.

When she took over as commander, McBurnett hoped that she could bridge the divide between the Vietnam veterans—who make up about 90% of the 323 members—and the newest era of veterans.

There are about eight Afghanistan or Iraq veterans who regularly attend all Post meetings, said McBurnett, who earned her eligibility while serving in Kosovo in 2004.

McBurnett, who is the assistant inspector general for the California Army National Guard, joined VFW

in 2005 before serving in Iraq in 2007 with the 118th Maintenance Company.

It wasn't until 2011 that she became a life member after "scouting around" for the right Post. While Post 8762 isn't very close to where she lives—it's about a 35-minute drive—she said it "felt like home."

She immediately showed an interest in leadership and worked through the chairs before being elected commander.

"It's been challenging on some levels," she said, noting that some still refer to VFW members as the men and Auxiliary members as the ladies. "We've made some changes, but know we can't make drastic changes all at once. Some of the younger vets want to change a lot and I'm like, 'Whoa, whoa.'"

Members have been hard at work updating the look of the Post with new furniture and paint.

McBurnett comes from a long line of veterans. Her great-grandfather was in World War I, her grandfather was a World War II vet and her dad is a Vietnam veteran. She said they were active VFW members.

Just shy of seven classes from receiving her bachelor's degree in organizational leadership and management, McBurnett says she is not sure if she will be able to take on a second year as Post commander.

"I just don't want to shortchange VFW," she said, referring to the time committed to her studies and her career with the Guard.

Until then, she'll keep at it, offering a reassuring smile to those shocked at the notion of a female VFW commander.

E-mail jblankenship@vfw.org

VFW Supports Women Vets

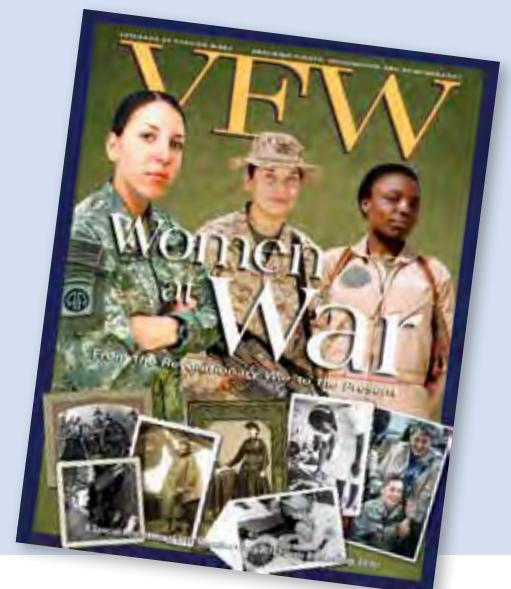
Earlier in the year, Commander-in-Chief John Biedrzycki, Jr., appointed four of VFW's seven female state commanders to a commission tasked with investigating women's health issues and to investigate how well VA serves them.

Specifically, Biedrzycki wants to know if women being treated at VA facilities should have separate waiting areas and exam rooms from their male counterparts. He asked his commission to determine whether or not VA employs enough women doctors and experts on women's care.

Look for the results of the investigation in a future issue of *Checkpoint*.

If you have female vets at your Post who you would like to honor, contact Carla Darnell at VFW's Membership Department (cdarnell@vfw.org) to order copies of *Women at War*.

VFW's Publications Department paid tribute to women veterans with this 64-page booklet spanning the Revolutionary War through the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. It's a must-have publication for all women who have served.



Posts Across the Country Celebrate Easter with Their Communities

Colorful eggs, hidden treats and a visit from one special friend with a big cotton tail: it must be Easter. And VFW Posts across the country celebrated by hosting activities for their friends and neighbors.

Bringing a Community Together

In Hollister, Calif., members of one local Post are building a future through community activism. Their Easter egg hunt is a tradition that's been happening for 15 years, said Post 9242 Commander Barnardo Ramirez – and it's all for the kids.

"To see the look on their faces, it's like receiving a gift on Christmas," he said. "Especially for the real, real young ones, to see them makes everything we do worthwhile."

Ramirez said it brings the Post and its Auxiliary closer, as well as the community. "Everyone gets involved, so it makes us a tighter family, and right now that's what we're building toward."

In addition, Ramirez said Post and Auxiliary members look at the egg hunt as a way to reach out to new, young members. "We're striving toward that."

Egg Hunt Happens Rain or Shine

A little weather can't keep Post 8577 and its Auxiliary down when it comes to giving children an Easter celebration.

The event used to be held at the local park, but after a couple years of inclement weather, the group began to host the event indoors at their Post in Copperas Cove, Texas.

Auxiliary President Juanita Workman told *The Killeen Daily Herald* that the Post has hosted the event for as long as she's been involved – and that's 32 years. "It's just one of the projects we do for the children in the community," she said. "We're serving them cupcakes and Capri Suns, there will be prizes for each age group, and we're holding a raffle for the big bunny and some Easter baskets."

New Tradition Draws Crowds

For Post 3628 in Riverton, Wyo., its Easter tradition may be fairly new, but that doesn't stop it from being a hit with the town.

Last year was the first year the Post hosted an Easter egg hunt, and it drew about 250 children. This year, they're almost doubling that said Commander Renford Smith, Jr.

"It's not just for the community, it's for the little ones," Renford said. "Our children are our future."

After the success of the 2015 event, Renford said local businesses wanted to pitch in, and now it just keeps growing. "We've had excellent community support," he said. "It's been a good adventure."

Hopping Along 70 Years Strong

For as long as anyone can remember, Post 4393, in Northfield, Minn., has hosted its annual Easter egg hunt.

This year marks their 70th, and members hope to continue it. "I know the kids look forward to it every year," said Auxiliary Member Clayton Landsteiner. "Everyone always has a really good time."

In an era where communities are constantly changing, Post 4393 proves it's possible to keep those core values a constant.

"It means a lot to the community," Landsteiner said. "It's a tradition."

E-mail swilken@vfw.org



Top left: A young resident of Hollister, Calif. gets his picture taken with the Easter Bunny at a celebration hosted by Post 9242. Members have hosted the event for 15 years and say they hope to continue the tradition. PHOTO COURTESY LISA ROBINSON-WARD, BENITOLINK.COM

Top right: There are activities for everyone at the indoor Easter celebration hosted by Post 8577 and its Auxiliary in Copperas Cove, Texas. After several years of bad weather, the Post moved the event indoors, ensuring fun rain or shine. PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVID A. BRYANT, *KILLEEN DAILY HERALD*

Middle left: Children show off their finds last year at the inaugural Easter Egg hunt hosted by Post 3628 in Riverton, Wyo. About 250 children attended the 2015 event, and the Post hopes to almost double that in 2016. PHOTO COURTESY OF COUNTY10.COM

Middle right and bottom: Children scramble for eggs last year in Northfield, Minn. This year marks the 70th anniversary of Post 4393's annual Easter egg hunt. PHOTOS COURTESY OF NICK GERHARDT, *NORTHFIELD NEWS*





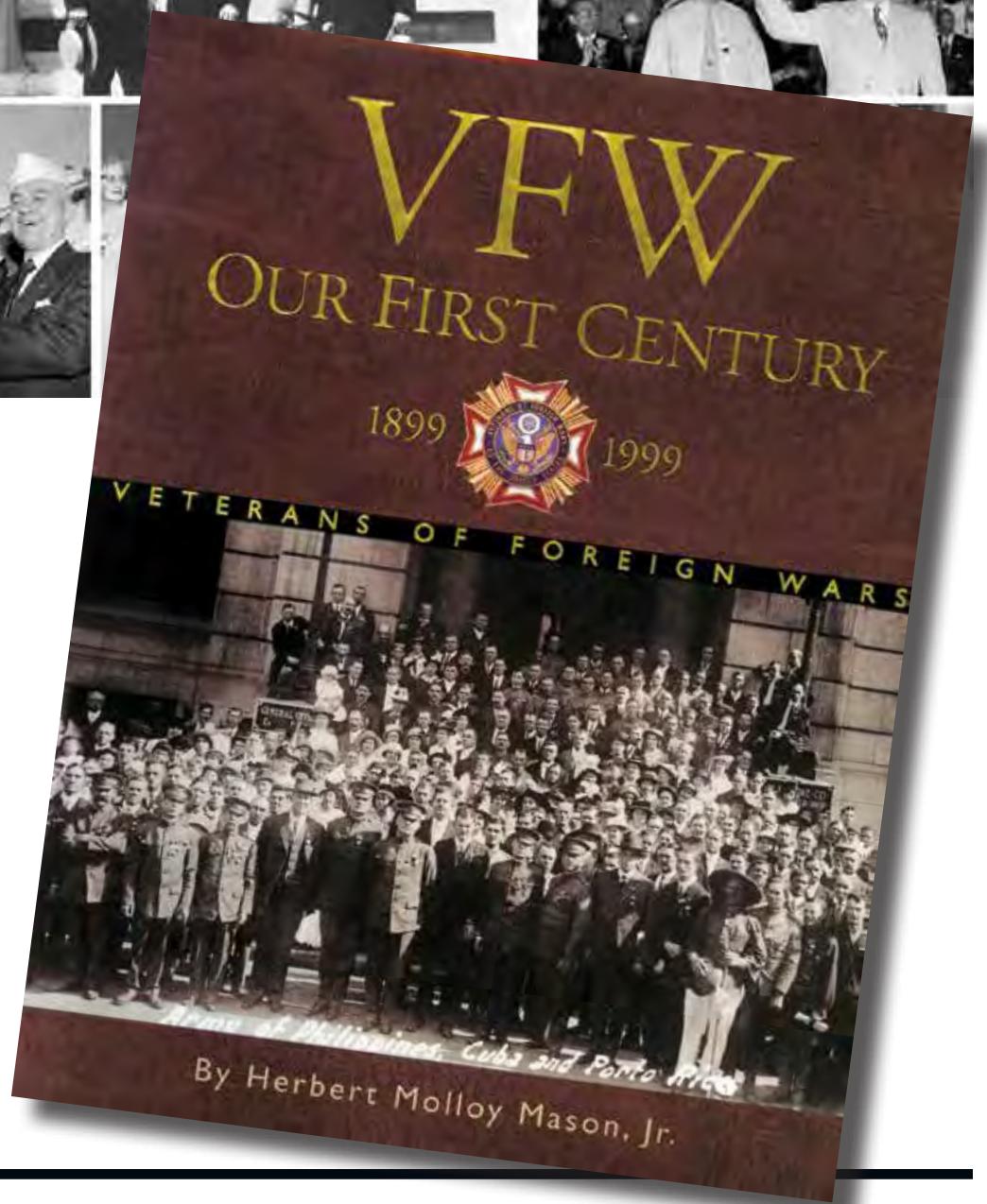
Essential Post Resource

VFW's Award-Winning History Book is Nearly Sold Out

You are a valued member of the world's oldest and largest combat veterans service organization. But how much do you know about VFW's history? In 1999, in honor of VFW's 100th anniversary, the VFW Publications Department produced an award-winning, full-color, hardback book outlining how VFW emerged as America's most prestigious veterans group.

Within its 11 chapters, *VFW: Our First Century* reveals the first 100 years of VFW's enthralling history. Written by Herbert M. Mason—a WWII Marine veteran, military historian and TV documentary producer—and only \$5, it is an affordable and essential resource for your Post.

There are fewer than 500 copies available, so be sure to order soon if your Post doesn't have its own copy. To place an order, visit www.vfwstore.org and search item number 04010, or call 1-800-821-2606.



2,225 Recognized to Date

World War II Veterans Leading VFW Posts from Coast to Coast

The *Checkpoint* staff extends a hearty "thank you" to all our World War II Post leaders, members and veterans. And we want to recognize those who still devote time and energy to VFW causes.

Listed below are 25 WWII veterans who serve VFW Posts in official capacities. Checkpoint has recognized a total of 2,225 such Post leaders since the January/February 2009 issue. We will continue to feature this section in subsequent issues until

every WWII Post leader whose name is submitted is recognized.

If you would like to recognize a WWII veteran who currently serves your Post, please send us his or her name, official Post position and your Post's location.

Send information to:

Checkpoint
 Attn: WWII Leaders
 406 W. 34th Street
 Kansas City, MO 64111
 E-mail: tdyhouse@vfw.org



| Name | Position | Post/Location |
|-----------------|----------------|--------------------------------|
| Rinaldo Bacordo | Jr. Vice Cmdr. | Post 1063, Philadelphia, Pa. |
| William Bryan | Surgeon | Post 8568, Livingston, Texas |
| Alan Cohrs | Honor Guard | Post 5098, Westbrook, Minn. |
| Darrell Eichner | Honor Guard | Post 5098, Westbrook, Minn. |
| Jack Emerson | Jr. Vice Cmdr. | Post 6640, Metairie, La. |
| Harold Emert | Honor Guard | Post 7285, Sabetha, Kan. |
| Edward Garber | Sr. Vice Cmdr. | Post 7285, Sabetha, Kan. |
| John Hirsch | Judge Advocate | Post 2110, Mount Carmel, Pa. |
| Bill Howland | Surgeon | Post 3873, Naperville, Ill. |
| Harold Irwin | Surgeon | Post 5040, Woodstock, Ill. |
| William Jones | Sr. Vice Cmdr. | Post 8568, Livingston, Texas |
| Edward Kaminski | Commander | Post 3982, Santa Clara, Calif. |
| Robert Lubecky | Chaplain | Post 1863, Solon, Ohio |

| Name | Position | Post/Location |
|-----------------|----------------|-------------------------------|
| Bill Lyford | Honor Guard | Post 5040, Woodstock, Ill. |
| Bill Mallory | Surgeon | Post 5553, Bowling Green, Mo. |
| Richard Meek | Adjutant | Post 6640, Metairie, La. |
| Michael Nero | Sr. Vice Cmdr. | Post 1863, Solon, Ohio |
| Frank Paredes | Trustee | Post 9946, Atwater, Calif. |
| Leon Reeves | Judge Advocate | Post 5553, Bowling Green, Mo. |
| Francisco Reyta | Sr. Vice Cmdr. | Post 1063, Philadelphia, Pa. |
| Tony Rivera | Commander | Post 1063, Philadelphia, Pa. |
| Eldon Rokey | Honor Guard | Post 7285, Sabetha, Kan. |
| Robert Romaker | Sr. Vice Cmdr. | Post 6170, Perrysburg, Ohio |
| Edward Roppel | Judge Advocate | Post 1863, Solon, Ohio |
| Richard Wade | Commander | Post 8568, Livingston, Texas |



Performing an 'Important' Community Service

Boy Scouts from Troop 23 and Post 2775 Senior Vice Commander Ed McIntyre salute as another Boy Scout sounds Taps and Post Surgeon David Snapp retires old flags during a ceremony on Flag Day last year in Orange, Texas. Post Quartermaster Ledley Arnold says the Post, located about 15 miles east of Beaumont, Texas, began staging the ceremonies two years ago.

"Whenever we have an abundance of old flags, we'll conduct a ceremony," the Vietnam War vet said in February. "We've got about 200 right now, so we'll probably have to do another ceremony soon."

Arnold said another example of community service conducted by the 324-member Post is offering its facility to fundraising groups free-of-charge. He adds that the flag retirement ceremonies provide a stirring sight that keeps VFW's mission front-and-center in the minds of local citizens.

"We want the public to know exactly how U.S. flags are properly retired," he said. "We want them to understand why this is important. I believe this illustrates perfectly what VFW stands for."

PHOTO BY JEANETTE CLARK, COURTESY OF TEXAS VFW

MARCH | APRIL 2016

CHECKPOINT

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VFW

Posts with the Most

VFW POSTS OF 1,000 MEMBERS OR MORE AS OF FEB. 8, 2016

| Rank | Post No. | Location | Members | Rank No. | Location | Members | Rank No. | Location | Members |
|------|----------|---------------------------|---------|----------|----------------------------|---------|----------|--------------------------|---------|
| 1 | 27 | Wiesbaden, Germany | 2,676 | 11 | 4709 Conroe, TX | 1,384 | 26 | 549 Tucson, AZ | 1,110 |
| 2 | 1503 | Dale City, VA | 2,609 | 12 | 9342 Ansbach, Germany | 1,370 | 27 | 2111 Chula Vista, CA | 1,103 |
| 3 | 1114 | Evansville, IN | 2,137 | 13 | 4647 North Highlands, CA | 1,364 | 28 | 972 Terre Haute, IN | 1,102 |
| 4 | 9972 | Sierra Vista, AZ | 1,982 | 14 | 10047 North Las Vegas, NV | 1,337 | 29 | 2503 Omaha, NE | 1,088 |
| 5 | 8862 | Vicenza, Italy | 1,836 | 15 | 63 Boise, ID | 1,323 | 30 | 2866 Saint Charles, MO | 1,072 |
| 6 | 392 | Virginia Beach, VA | 1,767 | 16 | 6506 Rosedale, MD | 1,314 | 31 | 7686 Alamogordo, NM | 1,066 |
| 7 | 9785 | Eagle River, AK | 1,678 | 17 | 76 San Antonio, TX | 1,303 | 32 | 10216 Songtan-Si, Korea | 1,062 |
| 8 | 2485 | Angeles City, Philippines | 1,645 | 18 | 628 Sioux Falls, SD | 1,255 | 33 | 1326 Bismarck, ND | 1,037 |
| 9 | 10692 | Grafenwoehr, Germany | 1,557 | 19 | 7234 Ocean View, DE | 1,239 | 34 | 1273 Rapid City, SD | 1,035 |
| 10 | 4372 | Odessa, TX | 1,429 | 20 | 1146 St Clair Shores, MI | 1,198 | 35 | 1512 Lemon Grove, CA | 1,031 |
| | | | | 21 | 6873 Abilene, TX | 1,188 | 36 | 10436 Kitzingen, Germany | 1,027 |
| | | | | 22 | 2391 Saint Augustine, FL | 1,183 | 37 | 969 Tacoma, WA | 1,020 |
| | | | | 23 | 4809 Norfolk, VA | 1,170 | 38 | 56 Leavenworth, KS | 1,018 |
| | | | | 24 | 10097 Fort Myers Beach, FL | 1,169 | 39 | 3282 Port Orange, FL | 1,001 |
| | | | | 25 | 7968 Apache Junction, AZ | 1,142 | | | |

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Honoring the Fallen in East St. Louis

Members of Post 3480 in East St. Louis, Ill., conclude their annual Memorial Day ceremony last year at the city's Lincoln Park. Auxiliary President Vera Beckwith (far right) said the ceremony featured retired Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Thomas J. Williams, Sr. (center), who served two tours in Vietnam.

Beckwith says the Post is active in its community, with many events held at Lincoln Park, dedicated in 1997 to honor fallen Vietnam War veterans from the city and surrounding area. She said Post and Auxiliary members host the Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen contests, sponsor an Easter Egg hunt and Halloween party for children and offer an Americanism program that consists of a coloring and essay contest.

"We enjoy performing this Memorial Day ceremony to honor our fallen comrades," said Beckwith, who has served as Auxiliary President for 14 years.



PHOTO BY ERICA BROOKS, COURTESY OF ILLINOIS VFW NEWS