

CHECKPOINT



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Helping the Community Heal

Pennsylvania Post Surprises Police with Generous Donation

When tragedy struck the borough of Canonsburg, Pa., last year, VFW Post 191 felt it, too. Post Commander Alex Nakoneczny told his local newspaper, the *Observer-Reporter*, that his fellow Post members knew exactly how to respond.



Canonsburg (Pa.) Police Chief Al Coghill points at his department's new vehicle in November as VFW Post 191 Honor Guard Sergeant Chuck Moyar, Post Commander Alex Nakoneczny, Canonsburg Council President R.T. Bell and Canonsburg Mayor David Rhome look on. The Canonsburg Police Department purchased the new Ford Explorer with a \$36,000 donation from members of Post 191. PHOTO BY CELESTE VAN KIRK, COURTESY OF THE *OBSERVER-REPORTER*



VFW Post 191 Commander Alex Nakoneczny, Canonsburg (Pa.) Mayor David Rhome, Canonsburg Police Chief Al Coghill, Canonsburg Council President R.T. Bell and Post 191 Honor Guard Sergeant Chuck Moyar display a facsimile check in November at the Post. The donation is the latest of many that members of Post 191 have given to various groups in the Canonsburg area. PHOTO BY PATRICK THOMAS

"We want to help the community and police department start to heal," Nakoneczny said. "If this helps even a little bit, what we are doing today, we are honored to do it. The community has suffered so much."

Nakoneczny was referring to the Post's November donation of \$36,000 for a new police vehicle to replace one that had been damaged earlier in the month. The incident left three people dead and one police officer wounded.

One of the dead was Canonsburg police officer Scott L. Bashioum, who was a life member of VFW Post 6553 in Slovan, Pa. He and officer James Saieva, who was wounded, were responding to a domestic violence report on Nov. 10 at a house in Canonsburg. During the altercation, Bashioum was killed by a shot from a high-powered rifle fired by Michael Cwiklinski, who was later found dead in the house along with his wife, Dalia Sabae.

Sabae, who was three-months pregnant at the time of her death, had filed a protection-from-abuse (PFA) order against Cwiklinski. No suicide note was found at the scene, and Canonsburg Police Chief Al Coghill told the *Observer-Reporter* that his department officially found no motive for the shooting.

"It may have been the recent events in his life," Coghill said. "He had lost his job and had the PFA served on him."

Coghill added that the sight of Bashioum's white police vehicle pulling up to Cwiklinski's house might have set off the shooter. For that reason, the new vehicle — a 2017 Ford Explorer — is black with "ghost markings" that make it less conspicuous.

Even before the donation, Post 191 was known as a generous benefactor in Canonsburg, located some 18 miles southwest of Pittsburgh. Nakoneczny said his Post donates \$25,000 annually to various groups, such as the local fire

department, youth baseball teams, bowling leagues and Canonsburg General Hospital.

"This has been going on for more than 20 years," said Nakoneczny, a Vietnam War Army vet.

The Post also has given money to the police department for defibrillators. After the latest donation, Nakoneczny said Coghill was surprised by the generosity.

"The police chief said to me, 'We can't ever thank you enough,'" Nakoneczny said. "I told him, 'You do it every day.' Our community was hurting, and the police department needed it. It was a pretty simple decision."

Email: tdyhouse@vfw.org

REGISTER NOW FOR NATIONAL CONVENTION

It's time to register for the 118th VFW National Convention, July 22-26, in New Orleans.

VFW National Headquarters mailed convention housing and registration forms to all Posts 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

1-800-873-7265, fax 801-355-0250; international call (801) 214-7275 from 7 a.m.-6 p.m. MT, Monday through Friday, mail information to *Orchid Event Solutions, 175 S. West Temple, Suite 30, Salt Lake City, UT 84101* or email help@orchideventsolutions.com.

The housing cut-off is Friday, June 9. 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 can be found 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 can register online by visiting www.vfw.org.

Checkpoint NO LONGER ACCEPTING SUBSCRIPTION ORDERS

Beginning with the September/October 2017 issue, *Checkpoint* will become an electronic publication. Because of this change, we will no longer be accepting paid subscriptions to the newsletter.

PUBLICATIONS CONTEST DEADLINE IS APRIL 3

The deadline for entries in the 2017 VFW National Publications Contest is April 3. Carefully read the information emailed to you in January. If you require further information before then, please call (816) 756-3390 ext. 113, or email kwilliams@vfw.org.



PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE: LIFE INSURANCE

While planning for life insurance might be off-putting for some, it's one of the best financial decisions you can make, especially if you are the primary breadwinner for your family.

Finding life insurance that's right for you should take several points into consideration — affordable premiums, limits (amount payable upon your death) and additional coverage for events such as accidental death.

From ensuring outstanding bills are taken care of to covering the costs of your grandchildren's college, a life insurance policy can safeguard your family's needs for years to come.

To learn more about life insurance, call the VFW Member Benefits Department at 1-800-821-2606, option 1.

HONOR FELLOW VETERANS WITH A MEMORIAL GIFT

One way to honor your fellow veterans is by supporting future generations of veterans with a memorial gift to the VFW in your will or trust. Learn more about estate planning by requesting our free Personal Estate Planning Kit.

Contact the VFW Planned Giving Office at (816) 968-1119, email plannedgiving@vfw.org or visit www.vfw.org/plannedgiving for more information.

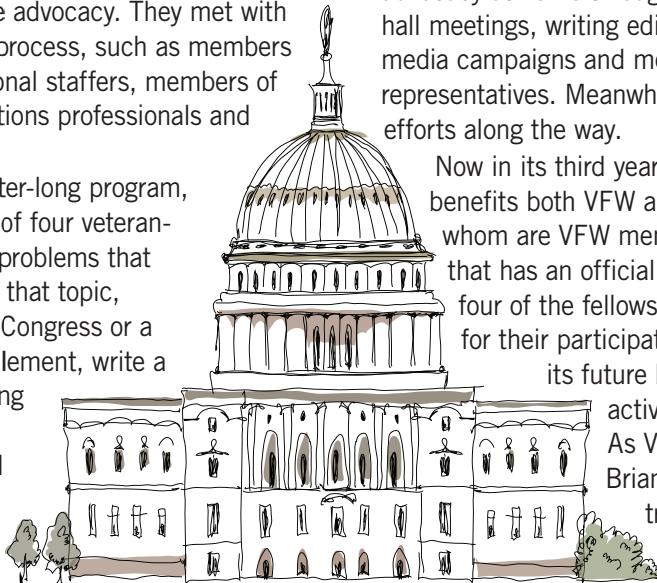
Bob Wallace, Adjutant General

10 Student Vets Join VFW in Washington

One important aspect of this year's VFW Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C., was the inclusion of 10 student veterans who helped promote our message. They comprise the 2017 VFW-Student Veterans of America (SVA) Fellowship class, and they will spend the rest of this semester advocating for veterans as part of their responsibilities.

While in the nation's capital from Feb. 26 to March 2, the 10 VFW-SVA fellows gained hands-on experience in legislative advocacy. They met with people integral to that process, such as members of Congress, congressional staffers, members of the media, communications professionals and government officials.

As part of the semester-long program, the fellows choose one of four veteran-related topics, identify problems that veterans face regarding that topic, develop a solution that Congress or a federal agency can implement, write a research paper defending their position and take action to promote it. All four topics have long-term implications for veterans.



This year, the topics are:

- Transitioning from the military to civilian life.
- Ensuring veterans succeed in higher education.
- Helping veterans find employment after service.
- Determining the future of VA health care.

During the Legislative Conference the fellows met with their state's lawmakers and presented their research. Now, they are continuing that advocacy at home through methods such as town hall meetings, writing editorials, conducting social media campaigns and meeting with their local representatives. Meanwhile, VFW supports their efforts along the way.

Now in its third year, this trip to Washington benefits both VFW and the fellows — all of whom are VFW members who attend a college that has an official SVA chapter. Last year, four of the fellows received college credit for their participation. In turn, VFW ensures its future by gaining young, smart activists committed to its goals. As VFW Commander-in-Chief Brian Duffy said, this program transforms "today's scholars into tomorrow's leaders."

Debra Anderson, Quartermaster General

Protect VFW's Name and Marks

The use of the name "Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States," and any associated logos or emblems, is property worth protecting. Your cooperation in monitoring unauthorized use, and in using approved VFW products, is greatly appreciated. It is important that we protect our marks and reputation by carefully choosing which companies we allow to display the VFW marks.

If a local T-shirt company offers to sell a shirt with VFW marks, and it has not obtained appropriate permission to do so, then that company is violating the law. In some instances, such a company may appear to offer lower prices, but products purchased with approved VFW marks are generally reviewed to ensure they are a certain quality.

Purchasing products that use unauthorized VFW marks can reduce the overall value of those marks. Moreover, by using existing vendors, you will save considerable time searching for products.

It also is important to remember that use of the

VFW marks can only be granted by written approval by VFW's quartermaster general. For instance, if a VFW Post or Department wants to partner with a business and that business wants to use the name "VFW" on a product or any other material, then permission to use the VFW name must come from the quartermaster general.

If the quartermaster general has not granted written permission to use VFW's name or marks, then it is a violation of law.

We routinely monitor the use of our marks. If we discover someone using them without permission, we will get in contact with them. It is critical that we investigate

any unauthorized use of our name. If there is any doubt as to whether our marks are being used without permission, you can contact us, and we will be glad to investigate.

Permission to use the VFW name or logo may be obtained by completing the Trademark Authorization Request form found under FAQs at <http://www.vfw.org/about-us/faq>.



CHECKPOINT

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Agent Orange Research Led to Career

Michigan Service Officer Says ‘Credibility’ is Key to Success

For Barry Walter, what started as a personal quest has led to a career making a difference in the lives of veterans.

Walter, a Gold Legacy Life Member of VFW Post 4005 in Corunna, Mich., has worked as a veteran’s advocate since 1981 in capacities ranging from the VFW National Home for Children in Eaton Rapids, Mich., to the VFW Department of Illinois director of veterans service and, most recently, as a service officer in Michigan. He was drafted into the Army in July 1966 and arrived in Vietnam Aug. 10, 1967, serving as a field artillery fire direction control chief assigned to C Btry., 5th Bn., 16th Arty, 4th Inf. Div.

In December 1978, Walter’s only son was born. The event changed his life in more ways than one.

“[My son] had an array of minor birth problems that collectively were a concern to us, but we couldn’t really find any answers as to why,” Walter said. “My father was an assistant state VFW service officer, and we eventually started to learn about a new subject at the time, Agent Orange. I tried to learn as much as I could, but it was obvious that there was more to the subject than I was going to be able to learn on the outside and at the time the VA was not helping at all.”

Searching for answers led Walter to a life of service to veterans. He said it can be difficult, at times, for service officers to “keep things in perspective.” Those who take on that responsibility are meeting people solely because “they have a problem and are looking for answers, for help, just like I was in 1978.”

“I made it a habit of at least once a day, no matter what else was happening in the office, to call at least one veteran to personally tell him of the decision on his claim,” Walter said. “Whether it was a 10 percent rating or a 100 percent rating, it didn’t matter. To that veteran, it was knowing that someone had listened and had cared about his case.”

One of the most rewarding cases Walter has worked on was for a Vietnam-era veteran who served in Korea. Walter met the veteran, whom he called “Paul,” at a Detroit, Mich., homeless shelter. Paul had been diagnosed with tuberculosis, but Walter said they could not prove it was related to his military service.

Because of the diagnosis, Walter said Paul could not land a job and was living on the streets “with only some food stamps each month.” They applied for VA non-service-connected pension, which Paul was granted.

Paul, according to Walter, qualified for education benefits under a now-defunct VA program. He graduated from Wayne State University in Detroit with a degree in counseling.

“Paul went from homeless on the streets of Detroit mired in drugs and alcohol, ill and hopeless to a compassionate outreach advocate because of a VA program that, unfortunately, no longer exists,” Walter said. “All Paul needed was some direction to achieve his potential.”

Walter said a “good advocate” should know the rules for processing claims.



Above: Barry Walter, a Gold Legacy Life Member of VFW Post 4005 in Corunna, Mich., is currently a veteran service officer in Michigan. His journey of helping others began with his own search to understand the effects of Agent Orange. PHOTO COURTESY OF BARRY WALTER

Right: Barry Walter was drafted into the Army in July 1966 and arrived in Vietnam Aug. 10, 1967, serving as a field artillery fire direction control chief assigned to C Btry., 5th Bn., 16th Arty, 4th Inf. Div. PHOTO COURTESY OF BARRY WALTER



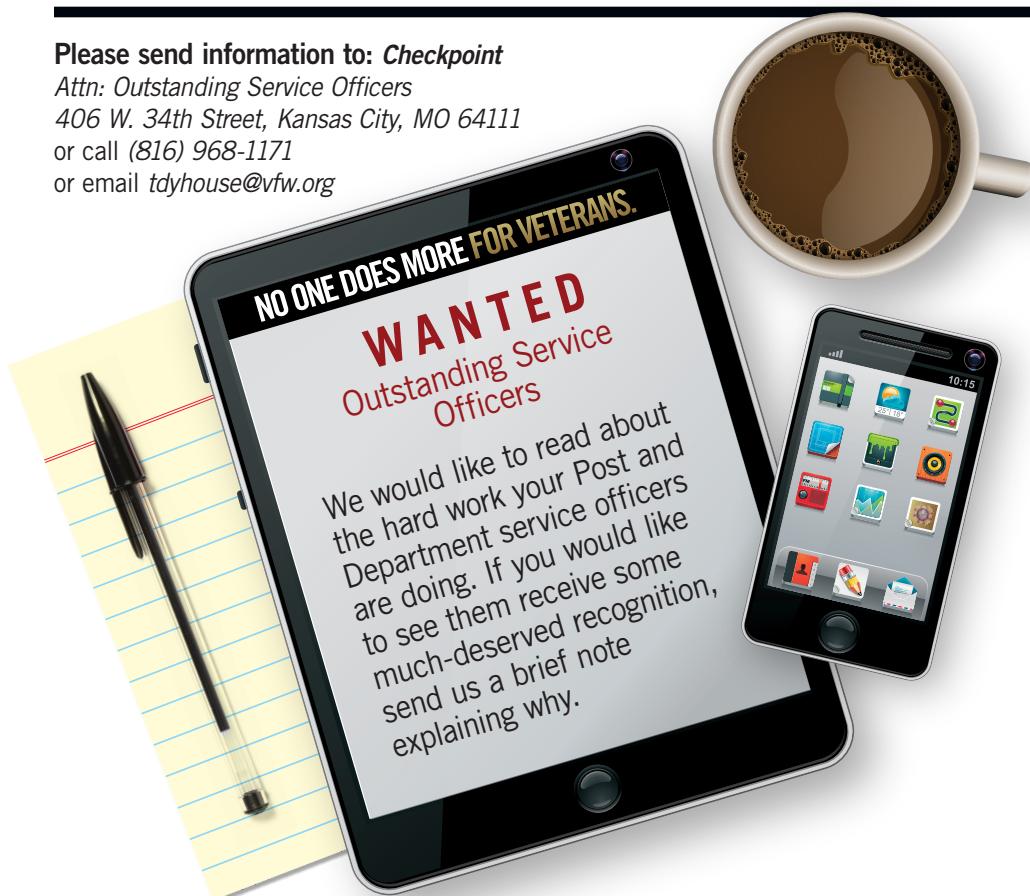
“We cannot create false expectations that cannot be met,” Walter said. “Our long-term success requires credibility. Credibility with the veterans we serve and credibility with the VA with whom we must interact is ultimately what makes us successful.”

And the most rewarding aspect of his work as a service officer is simply guiding veterans through the claims process and “ultimately achieving a level of resolution for him.”

“In the end, the service officer’s reward is knowing that everything that could be done to assist the veteran was,” said Walter, who mostly handles service-connected compensation claims.

Email: kwilliams@vfw.org

Please send information to: **Checkpoint**
Attn: Outstanding Service Officers
406 W. 34th Street, Kansas City, MO 64111
or call (816) 968-1171
or email 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 >>

Wisconsin Post Establishes \$125,000 Scholarship

A VFW Post in Wisconsin has ensured its name will be known in the community, even in the event that the Post itself no longer exists.

Cory Geisler, commander of Post 721 in Waukesha, Wis., initiated the establishment of a \$125,000 endowment scholarship for students at St. John's Northwestern Military Academy.

The Post has had a relationship with the academy since 1973, and has presented its VFW Citizenship Medal to St. John's "most worthy candidate that they put forward."

Post members created the scholarship to ensure the Post's legacy, while assisting academy students.

"We're getting to a point where our numbers are dwindling, and we wanted to do something that made an impact in the community," said Geisler, who served in the Army for seven years as a military police officer and deployed to Iraq from May 2007 to August 2008 with the 108th MP Company.

The scholarship is intended for students in need and having "financial hardship," according to Geisler. Recipients also should have a veteran in his or her family.

"We really wanted to gear it toward veteran's families," Geisler said, "but more importantly, we wanted to make sure if there were students who wanted to attend that institution, that they would have the opportunity."

Geisler said the Post had additional funds from selling its home about 10 years ago.

"As a group, we came up with the idea that we wanted to do something in the community, and I came forth with this idea of St. John's Military Academy," Geisler said.

The award is called an "endowment scholarship fund," according to Geisler, because the academy awards up to 5 percent of the total funds to one or two students and the remaining amount accrues interest.

"It's a scholarship fund that's going to go on for a long, long time," Geisler said.

The first scholarship will be awarded in September, according to Geisler, who said his hope is that other Posts see what Post 721 has done and realize there are ways to contribute to their respective communities.

"If you've got the funds to do it, don't be afraid to do it... Do the good things in the community that you can, while you can," Geisler said.

Email: kwilliams@vfw.org



Post 721 Commander Cory Geisler speaks at a ceremony in November, during which he announced the Post's establishment of a \$125,000 Endowment Scholarship Fund for St. John's Northwestern Military Academy in Delafield, Wis., and its donation of \$625 in gas and food cards to the Waukesha County (Wis.) Veterans Service Office.

PHOTO BY 135TH MED CO. PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER SPC JOY STAAB



(Left to Right) Retired Army Lt. Col. James Kebisek, St. John's President Jack Albert Jr., Cadet Commander Robert Hall, Post Commander Cory Geisler, State Commander Mike Eggleston, State Junior-Vice Commander Gundel Metz, and National Council Representative John Geise.

PHOTO BY 135TH MED CO. PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER SPC JOY STAAB



Waukesha (Wis.) Veterans Commissioner Patrick Cranie; Retired Army Lt. Co. James Kebisek, Waukesha Mayor Shawn Reilly; Post 721 Commander Cory Geisler; Waukesha County (Wis.) Veterans Service Officer Michael Johannes and District 2 Commander Ken Cammer celebrate in November the receipt of \$625 in donations for the Waukesha County Veterans Service Office at the Eagles Club in Waukesha. Geisler ran in the 32-mile North Face Endurance Challenge to raise the funds.

PHOTO BY 135TH MED CO. PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER SPC JOY STAAB

Endurance race fundraiser

Post 721 Commander Cory Geisler also participated in a 32-mile endurance race, raising more than \$600 for the Waukesha County (Wis.) Veterans Service Office.

Geisler said he usually runs the race "for fun," but decided to turn this year's venture into a fundraising effort.

"I approached our media officer for the District, and I had him put it out to all the Posts what we were doing, what the money we raised was going to go towards," Geisler said.

Fundraising aside, Geisler said he usually participates in the endurance race and always wears something "veteran-related." There is a stigma, according to Geisler, that veterans return from duty "broken, either physically or mentally."

"My goal is to get out there and show them, 'Hey, we're not,'" Geisler said.

Geisler said the race also is a "great way to recruit," as he starts conversations with other veterans participating in the race and "always" has recruiting forms with him.



Post 721 Commander Cory Geisler participates in the 32-mile North Face Endurance Challenge, which took place in Eagle, Wis. Geisler finished the race in 4 hours, 43 minutes and 32 seconds, securing first place for his age group of males 40 to 44 years old, 11th overall for male runners and 11th overall out of 246 participants.

PHOTO BY 135TH MED CO. PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER SPC JOY STAAB



'Always a Good Day'

VFW Posts Sponsor Easter Events for Community Youth

A favorite springtime rite at Posts throughout the organization, Easter egg hunts help VFW members bond with their communities. Here are a few examples from last year.

A 'Special Time' in Minnesota

This year marks the 71st year Post 4393 in Northfield, Minn., has sponsored a community Easter egg hunt.

Last year, the event was held on the St. Olaf College campus. With a wide-open field surrounded by a small forest, it proved to be a good location for the hunt. The younger children searched the field area for bags of jelly beans while the older ones searched in the forest.

Bruce Stowe, now commander, organized last year's hunt. He said it's nice to see parents who once were hunting for eggs themselves bring their own children.

Justin Raabolle represented the Northfield Area Fire and Rescue Service by bringing a heavy rescue truck to announce the hunt's start. It gave the community an opportunity to admire it up close.

"This is actually the truck that the VFW played a large role in the fire department acquiring," Raabolle told the *Northfield News*. "We do this to promote the things that the VFW does for the community."

Along with his wife, Greta, Raabolle brought their three children, Lachlan, Madelyn and Nilsson, to hunt for eggs.

Then-Post Commander Darrin Stowe noted that the Easter egg hunt is a "special time" for Post members.

"The VFW has a strong sense of tradition," he told the *Northfield News*. "There's some guys that have been doing it for almost the whole 70 years."

'A Heartwarming Event'

Post 4843 in Ford City, Pa., boiled and colored 90 dozen eggs for last year's Easter egg hunt at its Post. That's 1,080 eggs.

Members didn't stop there, though. According to Post Commander Tom McMillen, some 1,200 plastic eggs were placed on the bar in the weeks leading up to the hunt. Patrons filled the eggs with coins and bills totaling \$600.

In addition to the eggs, two children in each of four age groups received bicycles, courtesy of individual Post members who purchased the bikes. The Post also gave Easter baskets to each participant.

"It's always a very good day at our Post," McMillen said. "It's such a heartwarming event."

Each year brings between 100 and 125 children to the Post for the hunt. A popular addition is a man hired to make balloon animals and flowers among other things.

12,000 Colored Easter Eggs

In North Platte, Neb., VFW Post 1504 and its Auxiliary team up with the NebraskaLand National Bank each year to sponsor an Easter egg hunt. This year will mark the 58th year for the event.

Children 10 years old and younger are invited to attend. There are six designated areas at the city's Cody Park, including one for special needs children.

To prepare for the annual hunt, Post and Auxiliary members color more than 12,000 eggs. The community is always invited to the Post to help with such a large endeavor, Post Commander Jerry Jurgens said.

Raffling a Large Stuffed Bunny

The Auxiliary of VFW Post 8577 in Copperas Cove, Texas, sponsored an indoor egg hunt last year at the Post home. About two dozen children participated in the hunt. Each age category has 75 eggs to find.

Auxiliary members donated candy, plastic eggs, drinks and snacks for the event.

"Pretty much everyone else is doing an egg hunt at the same time," then-Auxiliary president Bonnie Henderson told the *Killeen Daily Herald*. "But, we usually have a pretty decent crowd come in."

Last year's event also saw the raffle of a large stuffed bunny, which proved popular with the children.

Email: jdyhouse@vfw.org

Other Known Posts Sponsoring Annual Easter Egg Hunts

Post 5366	Isabella, Mo.	Post 4943	Echo, Ore.
Post 7110	New Braunfels, Texas	Post 1642	Waseca, Minn.



PHOTO BY DAVID CROYLE, KITTANNING PAPER

Participants in Post 4843's annual Easter egg hunt line up last year in Ford City, Pa., to search for colored Easter eggs. As an added bonus, two children in each of four age groups received bicycles.



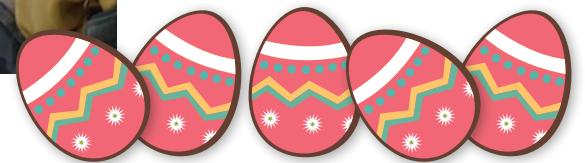
The Easter bunny passes out candy to children entering Post 1642 in Waseca, Minn., last March before the egg hunt began.

PHOTO BY JACOB STARK, WASECA COUNTY NEWS



Ivy Asher receives a new bicycle following the annual Easter egg hunt at Post 5366 in Isabella, Mo., in March 2016. More than 30 children participated in the event.

PHOTO COURTESY OF OZARK COUNTY TIMES



Children search for eggs last year on the St. Olaf College campus during VFW Post 4393's annual Easter egg hunt in Northfield, Minn. The Post has sponsored the event for 71 years.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NORTHFIELD NEWS

Idaho Post Honors Vets with Hockey Match

Bob Akins has been playing hockey for years, and he tells veterans, especially those who have PTSD, to “get out, skate and have fun.”

Akins, commander of Post 2146 in Idaho Falls, Idaho, initiated a veterans appreciation hockey game in 2006. Akins, who joined the Air Force in 1963 and served at Da Nang Air Base in Vietnam from July 1966 to July 1967 with the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing Squadron (Maintenance), said he helped build the Joe Marmo & Wayne Lehto Ice Arena, where the game has been held since its inception.

Playing hockey, according to Akins, encourages people who are not members of the Post to get involved.

“They can see how our Post is family oriented...,” Akins said. “We’ve established a very good rapport among the families and also among the veterans because they talk to one another and communicate.”

The family environment is “the best way in the world to counteract against the PTSD stuff,” Akins said.

Most skaters in the game are Vietnam veterans, according to Akins, but Iraq and Afghanistan vets also take part. There are typically 20 players, and a crowd of more than 70 people, including family members of the players, shows up to watch.

Mike Canavan, who has played in the game since 2015, said he enjoys getting on the ice, regardless of who shows up.

“It’s a fun game, not very competitive, so us weaker skaters actually have a chance to play,” said Canavan, a Navy veteran who served as a submarine officer in the 1991 Persian Gulf War and in the Caribbean on the *USS Virginia* and *USS Albuquerque*.

Canavan said he enjoys the flag ceremony before the game, which doesn’t usually happen at amateur hockey games.

The community has taken an interest in hockey, according to Akins, because it “gets you out of the house and doing things with the kids.”

Akins advertised the event by posting flyers in the community and generating coverage in the local newspaper. A canned food drive for the Idaho Falls Food Bank also coincides with the hockey game.

Brady’s Inc., a veteran-owned business, sponsors the game each year. This year’s game was held Feb. 25. **Email:** kwilliams@vfw.org



Navy veteran Brad Brady (left) and VFW Post 2146 Commander Bob Akins prepare to face off in a ceremonial puck drop from Richard Zopff (center), an Army veteran and member of the Idaho Falls American Legion, as part of the 2015 Veterans Appreciation Hockey Game held at the Idaho Falls Joe Marmo and Wayne Lehto Ice Arena. Brady’s company, Brady’s Inc., sponsored the 2015 game. PHOTO COURTESY OF BOB AKINS



Participants and attendees of VFW Post 2146’s Veterans Appreciation Hockey Game gather on the ice during the 2015 event at the Idaho Falls Joe Marmo and Wayne Lehto Ice Arena. Post 2146 has organized the game since 2006. As part of the event, the Post asks for canned good donations. The collected items are given to the Idaho Falls Food Bank, whose manager volunteer, Buck Horton (third from left in back row), is a Navy veteran. PHOTO COURTESY OF BOB AKINS



“It’s your VFW, and we can work together, the young and the old.”

– Darren Hughes, Post 1435 adjutant quartermaster



A local TV station interviews members of VFW Post 1435 and its Auxiliary last June in Spokane, Wash., about their involvement in Hoopfest, billed as the world’s largest three-on-three basketball tournament.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DARREN HUGHES

‘Not Your Grandfather’s VFW’

Basketball Tourney Assists Washington State Post with Recruitment

Members of VFW Post 1435 and its Auxiliary stepped onto the asphalt basketball courts of Spokane, Wash., last summer in hopes of increasing membership and attracting younger veterans.

Since 2015, three Post members and one Auxiliary member have created a team for Hoopfest, the world’s largest three-on-three basketball tournament that has been held in Spokane for more than 25 years.

Post Adjutant/Quartermaster Darren Hughes said the Post’s senior vice commander approached the membership about putting a team together “to get our name out there in the public.”

Hughes said the Post decided to participate in an event “that the younger crowd will be around” in hopes of generating membership.

Held in June throughout downtown Spokane, Hoopfest helped the Post garner two new members in 2015 and three last year, according to Hughes.

“The [goal] was trying to show these younger people that the older veterans and the younger veterans can work together,” Hughes said. “That’s why I played.”

But he also enjoyed the camaraderie on and off the basketball court, as families of VFW members attended in a show of support.

In addition to the four-person team, which includes one substitute, Hughes said about 10 additional VFW members handed out flyers and Buddy Poppies.

When people heard there was a VFW team participating, “they were down there watching us play,” according to Hughes.

“I wish we would have played better,” Hughes said.

But the point, he said, was to show that the older and younger generations can interact socially. He added that “it’s not your grandfather’s VFW” anymore.

“It’s your VFW, and we can work together, the young and the old,” said Hughes, who served in Bosnia in 1995 with the 301st Psychological Operations Company, assigned to Army Special Operations Command as a logistical non-commissioned officer.

Hughes said local TV stations covered their involvement both years. The Post also plans to participate in this year’s event, which will be held June 24 and 25. **Email:** kwilliams@vfw.org

Gulf War Vet Renovates Post and Boosts Membership

Female veterans continue to break new ground in various positions throughout VFW.

Teresa Shane is one example. Shane became the first woman elected as commander of Post 2513 in Warrensburg, Mo., in May 2016.

Shane earned her VFW eligibility while serving in the 1991 Persian Gulf War with the Army National Guard's Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 109th Engineer Group, out of Rapid City, S.D. She deployed from January to June 1991.

But it wasn't until 2009 that she became a VFW member.

"I had heard for years that women veterans were not always so welcome," Shane said. "My thought was that I already fought one battle, I didn't want to fight another battle."

Shane was persuaded by a few Post members to attend a VFW meeting where she felt "very wanted, very welcome."

Just a couple of years later, she was elected junior vice commander and then served two years as senior vice commander before becoming commander last summer.

"I come from a military family," said Shane, a reporter at *The Daily Star-Journal* in Warrensburg. "Serving was always something that our family does. So for me to step forward and be commander, it's just really, really exciting."

Shane said that of the nearly 110 members, three or four are women who regularly attend meetings. Two are Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.

In her time as commander, membership at Post 2513 has increased by 23 new members. A \$5,000 Home Depot grant provided the means for an internal renovation of the Post home. The 84-year-old Post got a much-needed facelift with new

flooring, windows and a bright paint job.

"The renovations have allowed us to rent it out, which gives us much-needed income," Shane said.

A \$1,000 VFW Foundation grant paid to have the outside of the Post home power-washed and cleaned earlier this year. It will be painted in late spring.

Local Boy Scout leaders provided the labor in putting in the new floors, while a group of women from the University of Central Missouri in Warrensburg painted the inside of the building.

"This has truly been a community effort," Shane said. "We've been active at festivals in the community, which has allowed us to get more members, too."

Within Missouri's District 6, Shane is the public relations chairman. She

offers assistance to Post members with writing news releases or guiding them in knowing how to communicate with local newspapers.

She also is the District 6 women veterans chairman. In this role, she has reached out to all Posts within the district to offer her assistance in helping female vets obtain resources and information.

"I couldn't do this job without my quartermaster, Glen Conen," Shane said. "He is a liaison between the older members and myself."

Another notable accomplishment of which Shane is proud, is the charter of an Auxiliary chapter.

"We lost our Auxiliary a few years ago because membership was down," Shane said. "I'm proud to say that my daughter was the first to sign up with the new 2513 Auxiliary."

Email: jdyhouse@vfw.org



A 1991 Persian Gulf War vet, Teresa Shane is the first female commander of Post 2513 in Warrensburg, Mo. Since she took over as commander in May 2016, the Post has grown its membership by more than 25 percent.



Teresa Shane is sworn as the first woman commander of Post 2513 in Warrensburg, Mo., in May 2016. Shane earned her VFW eligibility in 1991 during the Persian Gulf War.



Members of Post 2513 in Warrensburg, Mo., enjoy their newly refurbished Post home in December, thanks to grants from Home Depot and the VFW Foundation. Post Commander Teresa Shane said the Post can now rent out the hall to the community and bring in some much-needed revenue.

Nebraska Post Donates New U.S. Flag

Post 4836 Commander Donald Eckstein, Jane Urban, Post member Vic Urban and Post Quartermaster Marvin Hladky gather in July 2016 in downtown Schuyler, Neb., to display a U.S. flag that the Post donated to the Schuyler Cemetery. Eckstein and Hladky presented the flag to the Urbans, who are custodians at the cemetery, to replace one that had become worn.

“It needed to be retired,” said Hladky, a two-tour Navy Vietnam War veteran. “The cemetery has limited funds, so we provided them a flag that the Post purchased from the VFW Store with money from our general fund.”

Hladky said the Post, located about 65 miles west of Omaha, collects old flags from such places as area businesses, individuals, the local police department and post offices, and gives them to the local Boy Scout troop.

“The Boy Scouts have a fire pit where they properly retire the old flags,” Hladky said. “Post 4836 provides a color guard and an honor guard for the ceremonies. It’s a service we provide for the community that we are proud to perform.”

PHOTO BY DIANE ARPS



MARCH | APRIL 2017

CHECKPOINT

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Posts with the Most

VFW POSTS OF 1,000 MEMBERS OR MORE AS OF Feb. 1, 2017

Rank	Post No.	Location	Members	Rank No.	Location	Members	Rank No.	Location	Members
1	1503	Dale City, VA.....	2,703	11	4647 North Highlands, CA.....	1,343	23	1146 St Clair Shores, MI.....	1,165
2	27	Wiesbaden, Germany	2,588	12	10047 North Las Vegas, NV.....	1,327	24	10097 Fort Myers Beach, FL.....	1,151
3	1114	Evansville, IN	2,042	13	9342 Ansbach, Germany.....	1,324	25	6873 Abilene, TX.....	1,144
4	9972	Sierra Vista, AZ	1,957	14	76 San Antonio, TX.....	1,319	26	549 Tucson, AZ.....	1,089
5	8862	Vicenza, Italy	1,833	15	63 Boise, ID.....	1,295	27	2111 Chula Vista, CA.....	1,087
6	4709	Conroe, TX	1,737	16	7968 Apache Junction, AZ.....	1,272	28	10216 Songtan-Si, Korea.....	1,085
7	9785	Eagle River, AK	1,693	17	6506 Rosedale, MD.....	1,247	29	2503 Omaha, NE.....	1,060
8	392	Virginia Beach, VA	1,691	18	2391 Saint Augustine, FL.....	1,243	30	972 Terre Haute, IN.....	1,052
9	10692	Grafenwoehr, Germany	1,672	19	7234 Ocean View, DE.....	1,240	31	7686 Alamogordo, NM.....	1,045
10	2485	Angeles City, Philippines	1,651	20	4372 Odessa, TX.....	1,237	32	56 Leavenworth, KS.....	1,014
				21	628 Sioux Falls, SD.....	1,217	33	1512 Lemon Grove, CA.....	1,003
				22	4809 Norfolk, VA.....	1,175	34	9399 Apache Junction, AZ.....	1,000

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