

CHECKPOINT



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Troops in Kuwait Receive Kentucky Soda



A Post in Frankfort, Ky., arranged for a shipment of soft drinks to a

7 Kentucky National Guard unit serving in Kuwait.

Cub Scouts Say 'Thank You'

- 8** A local Cub Scout pack in Hudson, N.Y., offered members of Post 1314 personal thanks for their service at the town's Veteran's Day parade last year.

Nearly \$11,000 Donated

Tennessee Posts Assist Families of Chattanooga Shooting Victims

ON JULY 16, FOUR MARINES AND ONE SAILOR were murdered in Chattanooga, Tenn., at the Navy Operational Support Center & Marine Corps Reserve Center. The Marines belonged to M Btry., 3rd Bn., 14th Marines, 4th Marine Div., a Chattanooga-based Reserve artillery unit. The five men killed by Muhammad Youssef Abdulazeez left behind three widows and six children.

Not long after this, on July 31, VFW Post 1289 in Chattanooga and Post 2598 in nearby Cleveland, Tenn., donated a combined \$10,875 to the families of those killed.

Those funds were combined with \$80,000 from a local affiliate of Riverside Transport headquartered in Kansas City, Kan., and \$27,680 from an area branch of PCL Industrial Construction headquartered in Denver. Each of the five families was given about \$24,000.

During the brief presentation made at the Chattanooga City Hall, Kelly Cotton, wife of Capt. Chris Cotton of M Battery, accepted the donations on behalf of the families not present at the ceremony.

"We have been overwhelmed by the graciousness and generosity of the people of Chattanooga," said Cotton, whose husband is inspector-instructor for M Battery. "We have felt your prayers, and we have been humbled by your show of love."

Donations began coming in after the Ooltewah-Collegedale District Council began posting on its Facebook page and e-mailing local businesses asking for donations.

Though the presentation ceremony was short and solemn, each of the donors had a chance to offer their support to the families.

"If there is anything we can do for you, do not hesitate to get a hold of us," Terry Thomas, quartermaster of Post 1289 said at the time. "You will always be a part of our family."

After hearing about the donations, VFW Commander-in-Chief John Biedrzycki, Jr., praised the two Posts involved.

"This is clear evidence that VFW is relevant and involved," he said. "These military families should be remembered in our thoughts and prayers each and every day."

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Lori Wyatt receives condolences from Post 2598 Commander James Johnson on July 31 in Chattanooga, Tenn., following a check presentation to the families of the five servicemen killed on July 16 at the Navy Operational Support Center & Marine Corps Reserve Center. Post 2598 in Cleveland, Tenn., partnered with Post 1289 in Chattanooga to donate \$10,875 to the families.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHATTANOOGA TIMES FREE PRESS



Remembering Those Killed

- **SGT. CARSON HOLMQUIST**, 25, of Grantsburg, Wis., logged two tours (2013 and 2014) in Afghanistan. He was married and had one son.
- **GUNNERY SGT. THOMAS SULLIVAN**, 40, of Springfield, Mass., was a two-time Purple Heart recipient who deployed twice to Iraq (2004 and 2007). Sullivan was attempting to save one of his wounded colleagues when he was fatally shot.
- **LANCE CPL. SQUIRE "SKIP" WELLS**, 21, of Marietta, Ga., enlisted in February 2014 and was on active duty but had not deployed overseas. His great-grandfather, grandfather and father had all served in the military.
- **STAFF SGT. DAVID WYATT**, 35, of Hixson, Ark., served two tours in Iraq (2007 and 2008) and one in Afghanistan (2010). Wyatt was married with two children.
- **NAVY PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS RANDALL SMITH**, 26, of Paulding, Ohio, was married with three young daughters. He had not served overseas.



EXTRA! EXTRA!

CONVENTIONEERS RAISE \$30,000

VFW's 116th National Convention in July in Pittsburgh, VFW's Veterans & Military Support received more than \$30,000 in total contributions from 18 VFW Departments and seven Posts. This amount includes the sale of lapel pins at the convention.

The donating VFW Departments include: Arizona, California, Colorado, District of Columbia, Europe, Hawaii, Kansas, Maryland, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Pacific, South Dakota, Vermont, Wisconsin and West Virginia.

Posts that donated are: Post 10033 of Pacific, Post 10614 of Europe, Post 10708 of Europe, Post 12109 of Pacific, Post 4666 of Colorado, Post 5825 of Missouri and Post 7402 of Georgia.

The donations will help fund *Operation Uplink*, *Unmet Needs* and the *Military Assistance Program* for the upcoming year.

VFW RESOLUTIONS ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE

All VFW members can obtain resolutions and bylaw amendments approved in July at VFW's 116th national convention. By creating an account at VFW's website—www.vfw.org—with a valid member number, members can know exactly where the organization stands on a multitude of issues.

Once on VFW's home page, simply click "Login" to get started. Then click "Create an Account." You will need to supply your name, member number, e-mail address and establish a password. At that point you will be logged on to "My VFW," and you can access approved bylaw amendments and resolutions under the heading "General Member Tools & Resources."

If you already have a "My VFW" account, simply login at the home page and go from there.

SIGN YOUR NAME AND CHANGE THE FUTURE

VFW members like you frequently tell us, "I wish I could do more." Learn about ways you can have an impact for future generations of veterans, just by signing your name—and with gifts that cost you nothing now. For more information about adding VFW to your will, call the VFW Planned Giving Office at (816) 968-1119, e-mail plannedgiving@vfw.org or visit www.vfw.org/plannedgiving.

FLAGS MAKE GOOD CHRISTMAS GIFTS

Shop at the VFW Store for the holidays. Select from a variety of items, including military flags, patriotic attire, VFW logoed merchandise and more. Remember that every purchase helps veterans, military service members and their families. To place an order go to www.vfwstore.org or call 1-800-821-2606 to request a free catalog.

MEDICAL ALERT DEVICE PROVIDES INDEPENDENCE

Falls are the leading cause of injury among older adults with 60% of falls happening inside of the home. A personal medical alert device can help you remain independent and in your own home by alerting emergency services, neighbors or loved ones in the event of any emergency.

Help is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week with just the press of a button. When the help button is activated, you are connected with a certified care specialist who will assess the situation and contact emergency services and your loved ones, while staying on the line until help arrives.

For additional information about a medical alert system, please contact VFW's Member Benefits Department at 1-800-821-2606, option 1, or visit the Member Benefits website at www.vfw.org/MemberBenefits and click on Medical Services.

Leadership Perspectives

John Hamilton, Adjutant General

Army Wrong to Dismiss Green Berets

In late September, VFW learned that the Army had begun discharge proceedings against Green Beret Sgt. 1st Class Charles Martland. Martland and his team leader, Capt. Dan Quinn, are accused of physically confronting an Afghanistan police commander in September 2011 who had allegedly raped a boy and then had the child's mother beaten when she attempted to stop the attack.

In his first public statement about the incident, Martland said "kicking me out of the Army is morally wrong and the entire country knows it." Martland added that he believed he and Quinn had a "moral obligation to act."

According to Martland's account, the boy claimed that the police commander, Abdul Rahman, tied the child to "a post in Rahman's house" and repeatedly raped the boy for "10 days to 2 weeks." When Quinn and Martland confronted the commander, "the child rapist laughed it off and referenced that it was only a boy," according to Martland.

Martland admits to body-slammng Rahman, as well as kicking him in the ribcage and putting his foot on Rahman's neck. Quinn added that "I physically threw him through our front gate and off our camp."

The Army removed Martland and Quinn from the camp in Kunduz province and eventually sent both back to the States. Quinn has since left the Army, but Martland appealed his pending Nov. 1 discharge. The U.S. Army Human Resources Command has already denied that appeal.

VFW believes the Army is hypocritical to make examples out of Quinn and Martland. If the pedophile had been

Taliban or al Qaeda, both Green Berets would be applauded for helping the Afghan people.

VFW Commander-in-Chief John Biedrzycki, Jr., said in September that Quinn and Martland both did the right thing. As a result, VFW supports efforts of Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-Calif.) to overturn the Army's decision.



Larry Maher, Quartermaster General

Shop with VFW for the Holidays

The holidays are quickly approaching, and it's time to start putting the shopping lists together. As you purchase gifts, consider buying from the VFW Store. In addition to competitive pricing and great products, when you buy from the VFW Store your money stays in VFW and is used to help veterans, military members and their families.

The VFW Store is your one-stop shop to get high-quality VFW and VFW Auxiliary merchandise at affordable prices and help veterans in the process. Shopping at the VFW Store is a convenient way to buy gifts for the holidays. Furthermore, a portion of every purchase goes back to your Department.

You may be surprised to find such a wide variety of products. The VFW Store is proud to stock a wide selection of T-shirts, polos, uniform shirts, and long-sleeve performance shirts that are ready to ship whenever you need them.

VFW Store is committed to offering a variety of made-to-order shirts, jackets and caps with a huge array of styles, sizes, colors, and pocket and embroidery options. Many of these items are made in the U.S.A. While these items take a little longer (up to six weeks for delivery), you are sure to get exactly what you want. To check out our inventory, go to www.vfwstore.org.

We also have a special custom order department that is ideal for Post, District or Department events, anniversaries, sports sponsorship or fundraisers. We can help you select the ideal product, design a logo and have the items shipped directly to you, all at a competitive price. To get a free, no-obligation quote, call Kim Winston at 816-968-1181 or e-mail her at kwinston@vfw.org.

Always remember that only the VFW Store and licensed vendors are authorized to use the VFW logo. To check out our inventory or to place an order, go to www.vfw.org or call 1-800-821-2606.



CHECKPOINT

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VFW
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

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Pennsylvania Service Officer Says Listening is a Valuable Tool

MARTY MORRIS HAS BEEN A service officer at VFW Post 7714 in North Fayette, Pa., for two years. After graduating from Rutgers University in 1967, Morris was commissioned and served as a signal officer with the 459th Signal Bn., in Vietnam from May 1969 to May 1970.

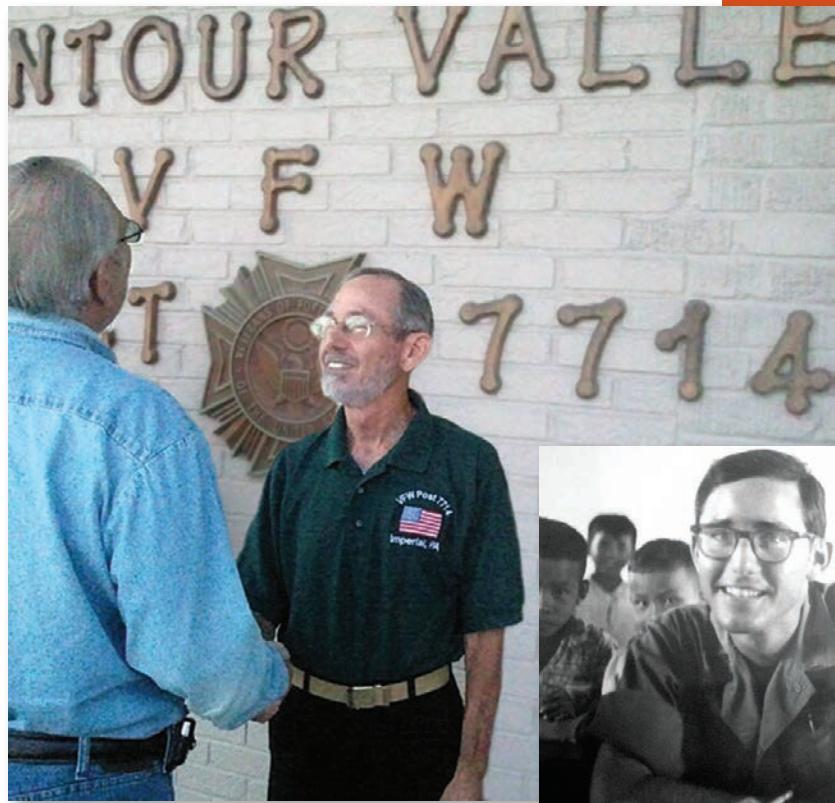
His specialty? When a veteran needs assistance that goes beyond the norm, Morris is there. Though needs vary from case to case, Morris said his most common kind of work is “helping local and hospitalized veterans and active military who have fallen through the bureaucratic cracks, such as those in need of housing or financial aid, or those unaware of and entitled to disability benefits.”

Earlier this year, Morris worked with VA hospital staff to help a soldier who was on the temporary disability retirement list and was ordered to travel out of state for a DoD-mandated medical exam.

“He was unable to travel and warned that he would lose his disability benefits if he did not comply,” Morris said. “DoD and VA procedures did not allow for the exam to be done at a VA facility.”

After Morris stepped in and discussed it with both the DoD and VA, Morris found an approved method for the VA doctor to complete a disability benefits questionnaire that would satisfy both agencies’ requirements. Just one day prior to the deadline, the veteran met the requirements and was able to keep his benefits.

Morris got into volunteering after reading an article in *VFW* magazine about helping hospitalized veterans. Soon there after, he volunteered with the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System,



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MARTY MORRIS

“It’s amazing how quickly you become attuned to the veteran’s needs, as though you hear their silent calls for help.”

– Marty Morris, Service Officer, Post 7714 in North Fayette, Pa.

which motivated him to become a service officer. “I visit many veterans at their hospital beds, listen, then I suggest what help is available in the hospital or after discharge,” he said. “Often, the only help they need is someone to listen. It’s amazing how quickly you become attuned to the veteran’s needs, as though you hear their silent calls for help.”

Morris helps about 10 referrals from other service officers and 100 hospital patients a year. He also assists veterans by accompanying them to file a claim.

“I do it to help my veteran brothers and sisters who are less fortunate than me,” he said. “I love helping veterans recover from severe hardships and seeing them return to life.”

For others who are interested in becoming a service officer, Morris said everyone should listen to the veteran and never be judgmental. “Each case is unique, so never use the cookie-cutter approach,” he said. **E-mail:** swilken@vfw.org

Above left: Marty Morris, service officer with Post 7714 in North Fayette, Pa., was inspired to help others after reading an article in *VFW* magazine about volunteering to help hospitalized veterans. Earlier this year, Morris helped one hospitalized veteran keep his benefits after solving a problem involving a medical exam.

Lower left and above right: A South Vietnam army officer at Nha Trang Air Base recognizes 1st Lt. Marty Morris with an award for his work improving the communications infrastructure in the country. Morris served with the 459th Signal Bn., in Vietnam from May 1969 to May 1970.

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 >>

WANTED
Outstanding Service Officers

We would like to read about the hard work your Post and Department service officers are doing. If you would like to see them receive some much-deserved recognition, send us a brief note explaining why.

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

Celebrating the Holidays VFW Style

VFW MEMBERS HAVE LONG BEEN KNOWN FOR THEIR GENEROUS SPIRIT, especially during the holiday season. From Christmas parties and dinners to buying gifts for children who might not otherwise receive anything, veterans go that extra mile.

Post 5670 in Gwinn, Mich., is no exception. For 36 years, the members have hosted a Kid's Christmas party. Last year, nearly 90 children participated in games and received gifts from a tree decorated with mittens and gloves. Santa Claus showed up to visit with the honored guests, who were eager to share their Christmas lists with him.

In Farmer City, Ill., Post 6190 Auxiliary hosts an annual Children's Christmas Gift Program, where kids come to the Post and pick out a new toy. They also are given hats and gloves and the opportunity to pick out a small gift for parents. "We brought smiles to more than 149 children during the two-day event," said Sarah Judd of the Auxiliary.

Last Christmas Eve in Duluth, Minn., people were lined up outside Post 137 at 10 a.m. for dinner. From noon until 3 p.m., Post members fed people who had nowhere else to go for a holiday meal.

And these are just three examples of what happens every year.

Here is a photographic look at what other Posts around the country are doing to make a difference in their communities during the holidays.

If your Post hosts a Thanksgiving or Christmas event, please let us know.

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Left: Nicholas Rivera helps distribute gifts from Santa Claus at VFW Post 10141 in Bradenton, Fla., last December. The Post honored 13 families during the first-ever Christmas party, complete with dinner and a visit from Santa. One child, Nate Southgate, wanted Legos for Christmas. Santa delivered. "I got two Lego sets," Southgate said excitedly. "I've been wanting Legos all year long."

PHOTO BY GRANT JEFFERIES, BRADENTON HERALD



HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Post 2780 Men's Auxiliary President Stan Simons presents Iraq veteran Sarah Bean with a bicycle for her daughter's Christmas in December 2014. Bean is a single mom and student at Northwestern Michigan College. Located in Traverse City, Mich., the Post also gave Bean \$250 in Walmart gift cards to buy presents for her family.

PHOTO COURTESY OF TRAVERSESTICKER



Top right: Members of Post 7308 in Kenosha, Wis., with Coast Guard personnel last year on Thanksgiving, after delivering dinner. The Post has been providing Thanksgiving dinner to those on duty at Coast Guard Station Kenosha for about five years. According to Randy Strickland, chief of staff, the Post usually feeds about 14-20 people and spends between \$175 and \$250. The Post also provides Easter dinner annually and hosted a picnic this year. "We are typically overwhelmed by the warm reception each time," Strickland said.



PHOTO COURTESY OF POST 7308

Bottom right: Two of the 25 children picking out presents during Post 392's "Shop with a Vet" last December at the Navy Exchange at Naval Air Station Oceana. According to the Virginia Beach Post Commander Doug Isles, eight families were assisted last year. The Post typically spends \$100-\$200 per family. "This is always such a good thing," Isles said.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WVEC 13 NEWS NOW



Post 1064 Auxiliary members serve dinner at their Huntington, W. Va., location on Dec. 21, 2014. More than 50 children received gifts at this event, which has been ongoing for more than 50 years. Santa and Mrs. Claus also made a special appearance at the Post's celebration. On Christmas Eve a few days later, Post members visited veterans in the Huntington VA hospital to hand out fruit, candy and coupon books for the hospital's canteen.

PHOTO BY TORIL LAVENDAR, THE HERALD-DISPATCH



Stan Asp and Sue Ossman of Post 8739 in Oregon, Ill., fill food boxes on Dec. 20, 2014, for the Post's annual Christmas food basket deliveries. More than 100 food baskets were assembled and delivered to families and individuals in need. The baskets contained Christmas meal staples such as ham, potatoes, milk, butter, bread and vegetables. A separate bag of candy, apples and oranges also was included.

PHOTO COURTESY OF OGLE COUNTY NEWSPAPERS



Post 3373 Commander Dave Pettys gives a \$50 Walmart gift card to a lucky stranger on Christmas Eve 2014. Members of the Post, located in Pascagoula, Miss., decided that with the help of the Pascagoula Police Department, they would randomly hand out gift cards in their community. Pettys said they looked for people with carloads of kids or those looking extra stressed out at the wheel. In such instances, the police would pull over those individuals to present the cards. "We had a great day," Pettys said. Also helping out from the Post was Robert Hance, Tracie Pettys and Bob Cochran (who is one of the police officers). In all, 52 cards were distributed that day.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WLOX

Colorado Post Boasts Young Leadership Focused on Community Service

FOR MEMBERS OF POST 12009 in Conifer, Colo., sticking with the status quo is no longer an option.

"We needed to breathe new life into leadership to help the Post roll out of the rut of just surviving and continually doing the same things," said Post Commander David Mason.

Mason is an Iraq veteran. He served with the 467th Engineers from 2004-05 doing route clearance. He assumed the role of Post commander in June 2015, and the Post's leadership is almost exclusively younger veterans.

"Our Post believes anything is possible," Mason said. "We like when we are told it can't be done. We find a way to get it done. The one statement we do not like at our Post is, 'It has always been done this way.' We do not believe in this statement; we believe in change."

Christopher Barker (Post senior vice commander), Gray Bennion (junior vice commander), and Allisha Cody (quartermaster) all served in Iraq or Afghanistan.

"For the Posts out there that say it can't be done, I completely disagree,"

Mason said. "These new officers at our Post wanted to step up. They wanted to be part of the future of the Conifer VFW Post. They came into these positions with new ideas on recruiting, on community service and on programs."

Community engagement is key for members of the Post. They participate in parades, host toy and food drives around the holidays, and offer breakfasts for incoming high school freshmen and outgoing high school seniors. Breakfasts are their thing, hosted monthly and open to the public. Post members come in as early as 4 a.m. to start prepping, after a week of gathering dessert donations from local grocery stores. And once a year, the Post serves a fundraiser breakfast for the Mountain Resource Center pediatrics clinic.

But beyond feeding the community, the Post also puts together a veterans fair, which includes free health screenings for veterans. The Post provides information about VA assistance, as well as other programs benefiting veterans.

Post 12009 officers stand near the Post's Battle Cross. From left, Gray Bennion (Junior Vice Commander), Chris Barker (Senior Vice Commander), Allisha Cody (Quartermaster), and Dave Mason (Commander).

PHOTO COURTESY OF KIRK ROSA



"I realize that the older generation is not getting any younger and that the younger generations are what are going to keep this organization going," Mason said. "With so many organizations out there for the Iraq and Afghanistan veterans I realize that there is competition, and that truly VFW is out there to take care of and help the veterans."

Mason says the transition to younger leadership has been successful because of the guidance of the older veterans.

"With this vast amount of knowledge from these veterans, we can do anything," he said. "It's a team effort, and we get it done. It's not about where you served, it is about the fact that you served and qualify for VFW. We are all veterans who served in our various times."

The Post was chartered in 2004 and has 24 members who are on active duty. Like most Posts, increasing and maintaining membership is an important goal. The Post began fundraising efforts by selling t-shirts so that members can purchase a permanent Post home.

"I see a large future for our Post in aiding and supporting veterans both young and old, and becoming even stronger in supporting our community," Mason said.

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Small Tennessee Post's Work Helps Keep Patriotism Alive in Community

EDDIE BRAY HAS TO LOOK BACK through a paper calendar to remember all of the things the Post has been up to lately. As the commander for Post 1294 in the small town of Lexington, Tenn., Bray has made community his business and his passion. He starts listing all of

the community service projects the Post has initiated, only to pause because the calendar in front of him only goes back to July 2015.

For the second year in a row, Post 1294 was named a national community service Post. It reached 100% member-

ship faster than any Post in the region and gained All-American status. For a Post with 150 members—only 30-40 active—the veterans in Lexington are doing good work in Henderson County.

"Like 'the little engine that could,' Post 1294 members see no reason why they cannot accomplish any goal on which they set their sights," said Bray, a 1991 Persian Gulf War veteran.

It's a group effort. All of the Post's active members are deeply involved in projects.

"We all do projects outside of VFW, too," Bray said. "We try our best to be involved in everything in the community. We are part of everything that goes on. We're competing with Posts like Memphis and Nashville, it's a big accomplishment. Everyone works so hard together to get where we're at."

Bray's list of Post-supported community service is long. His members host parades and free meals for veterans on special occasions. They cleaned up a Civil War-era cemetery and replaced a missing footstone for a soldier. Bray says he's lost count of how many funeral services and color guards they've provided. They work with the schools, the Boy Scouts and the local nursing homes.

"We're all about keeping patriotism in the younger generation alive," Bray said. "It's all about that and taking care of veterans."

That spirit extends to their families, too. Recently, the Post raised \$2,100 in

24 hours so that the sister of a wounded Afghanistan veteran could visit him at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md. The military was paying for his mother and wife to be with him, but it wouldn't pay for his sister to go as well. Members reached out to other veterans service organizations in the area, asking for donations.

"She didn't ask us to," Bray said. "We saw what was happening and made sure she could go. Everybody just gave."

The Post works hard to sign new members as well. Bray personally has signed up 36 veterans through his encouragement.

He's also the local service officer and a deputy sheriff. Since taking over as service officer in 2013, Bray has helped double the amount of VA benefits area veterans receive—jumping from \$5 million in 2012-13 to \$10 million in 2014-15. He says he likes showing veterans exactly how VFW works for veterans.

"It's a win-win for everyone," Bray said. "They come to get help, then I tell them how important it is to be part of VFW."

The commander says he, himself, was hesitant to join initially, but was hooked after finding out the Post was so community-service oriented.

"We have a good community," Bray said. "They really get behind the veterans. We all stay pretty involved in the veteran business."

E-mail: kgibson@vfw.org



Above: Post 1294 members Sam Fought, David Miller, Kenneth Halters and Eddie Bray work a food booth, serving food to soldiers from the 251st MP Co., in Lexington, Tenn., earlier this year.

Left: Post Commander Eddie Bray, Senior Vice Commander James Lindsey and his grandson Michael Lindsey display a brand new flag they helped erect at Ridge Grove Baptist Church in Henderson County, Tenn., this past spring.



Michigan Post Raises \$50,000 through Buddy Poppy Donations

JIM HUBBARD MAKES A POINT to lead by example. As the commander at Post 334 in North Oakland, Mich., he prefers a "boots-on-the-ground" approach when encouraging his members to be active in the community. In 2006, the Post raised \$4,466 through its Buddy Poppy drive. From a small community of 12,000, that amount of money was fair, but in 2015—only nine years later—the Post raised an astounding \$50,605.

Hubbard spends an entire week, working 12-hour shifts, to distribute Buddy Poppies. He lost his right arm and leg in Vietnam serving with the 196th Light Infantry Brigade from 1966-67, he's had four hip replacements, but he stands out there with the other members.

"It's not just one or two of us, but 38 or 40 guys at a time," Hubbard said. "We work together well, especially at our age. And the community sees us."

Hubbard says the Post is made up of mostly older guys. He's one of the younger members at 70 years old, and

this year is his fourth as commander. But age doesn't deter this Post from getting the job done.

Posting outside of 13 different establishments—including Kroger grocery stores, Bass Pro Shop, and K-Mart—some 40 VFW members handed out Buddy Poppies in exchange for small donations.

"We typically get a dollar, \$10, \$20," says Randy Stetson, Buddy Poppy chairman and Post senior vice commander. "Here and there we get \$100, but it's mostly smaller donations."

The Post scours neighboring communities in a 50-mile radius where Buddy Poppy distribution is lacking.

"We don't just reach out and expect money," Hubbard said. "We have conversations with the community. We are well-liked in our community."

The Post lives for the community. It hosts all the parades, pays for funerals when a veteran dies and the family can't afford one, holds events at the local veterans memorial in Orion, Mich., and cleans headstones at the local cemetery.

So the Buddy Poppy drive is just one more chance to be out and about, showing the community just what VFW can do.

"Basically we have loyal men," Stetson said. "I have to say I have a few WWII veterans, and they are very determined. They're pretty good at it. A lot of the credit goes to them. They care about the Post."

Each year, the Post donates money to the VFW National Home for Children, as well as other programs promoting patriotism and helping veterans. This year, the Post committed to participating in the Vietnam 50th anniversary commemorative efforts. Members are planning a parade, which will include all local Vietnam veterans and photos of those who have passed, to honor and remember their service.

"We're all veterans, and we help each other," Hubbard said. "We're there. We're in the community, waving Old Glory."

E-mail: kgibson@vfw.org



"We don't just reach out and expect money. We have conversations with the community. We are well-liked in the community."

— Post 334 Commander Jim Hubbard

2,200 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 at right are 25 WWII veterans who serve VFW Posts in official capacities. *Checkpoint* has recognized a total of 2,200 such Post leaders since the March/April 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 |
|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|
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| Roger Baker | Trustee | Post 9430, Seattle, Wash. |
| Nick Borato | Jr. Vice Cmdr. | Post 9693, Bay Village, Ohio |
| Joseph Brniak | Jr. Vice Cmdr. | Post 6863, Summit, Ill. |
| Joe Caserta | Trustee | Post 6650, Ocean City, N.J. |
| John Delliskave | Chaplain | Post 12087, West Jordan, Utah |
| Guy Evans | Honor Guard | Post 9451, Oldtown, Md. |
| James Fenner | Trustee | Post 9430, Seattle, Wash. |
| Tony Francati | Chaplain | Post 9693, Bay Village, Ohio |
| Harold Gomer | Color Guard | Post 1216, Austin, Minn. |
| Tom Hill | Judge Advocate | Post 9693, Bay Village, Ohio |
| Bob Hitchcock | Judge Advocate | Post 3928, Benecia, Calif. |
| Harold Holman | Judge Advocate | Post 1230, Sheboygan, Wis. |
| Les Jacobs | Chaplain | Post 9430, Seattle, Wash. |
| Bob Johnson | Trustee | Post 9430, Seattle, Wash. |
| Norman Kaminski | Trustee | Post 6863, Summit, Ill. |
| Paul Kubis | Trustee | Post 6664, Library, Pa. |
| Charles Lake | Service Officer | Post 6863, Summit, Ill. |
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| Charles Rector | Color Guard | Post 1216, Austin, Minn. |
| Norval Twigg | Honor Guard | Post 9451, Oldtown, Md. |
| Wallace Walker | Surgeon | Post 9451, Oldtown, Md. |

Kentucky Post Sends a Taste of Home to Troops in Kuwait

LIFE DOWNRANGE GOT A LITTLE SWEETER FOR ONE National Guard unit deployed earlier this year.

Members of Post 4075 in Frankfort, Ky., met with the Kentucky National Guard's B Co., 351st Aviation Support Bn., when they hosted a pre-deployment luncheon for 200 members of the unit and their families before they deployed in February. The Post and unit were connected through VFW's Adopt-a-Unit Program. The Post hosted the event this spring thanks to a \$250 VFW Military Assistance Program grant.

But the friendship didn't stop after the luncheon.



"We wanted to be a tool in the commander's kit bag. We were all so thankful for the help we received when deployed. Now it's our opportunity to be helpful to others."

— Post 4075 Commander Richard Quire

The Post was right there to help when members of the unit craved a taste of home while deployed at Camp Buehring, Kuwait. Ale-8-One is a popular soda that has been bottled in Winchester, Ky., since 1926 and is the only soft drink created in Kentucky still in existence. The company donated 50 cases to the unit — and Post 4075 stepped up to help cover the approximately \$1,000 cost to ship it to the troops.

Along with donations from local businesses and individuals, the Post was able to ship the soda to the Middle East. It helped the soldiers of Bravo Company, who provided aviation maintenance support to a variety of Army aircraft throughout the theater of operation for *Operation Spartan Shield*, unwind after their shifts.

Post Commander Richard Quire said he and his members were happy to help. "We wanted to be a tool in the commander's kit bag," he said, adding that they all remember what it's like to receive a treat from home while overseas. "We were all so thankful for the help we received when deployed. Now it's our opportunity to be helpful to others."

E-mail: swilken@vfw.org



Members of Kentucky National Guard B Co., 351st Aviation Support Bn., proudly display their Ale-8-One while on deployment at Camp Buehring, Kuwait. Post 4075 helped support the unit through the VFW Military Assistance Program. PHOTO COURTESY OF RICHARD QUIRE



MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

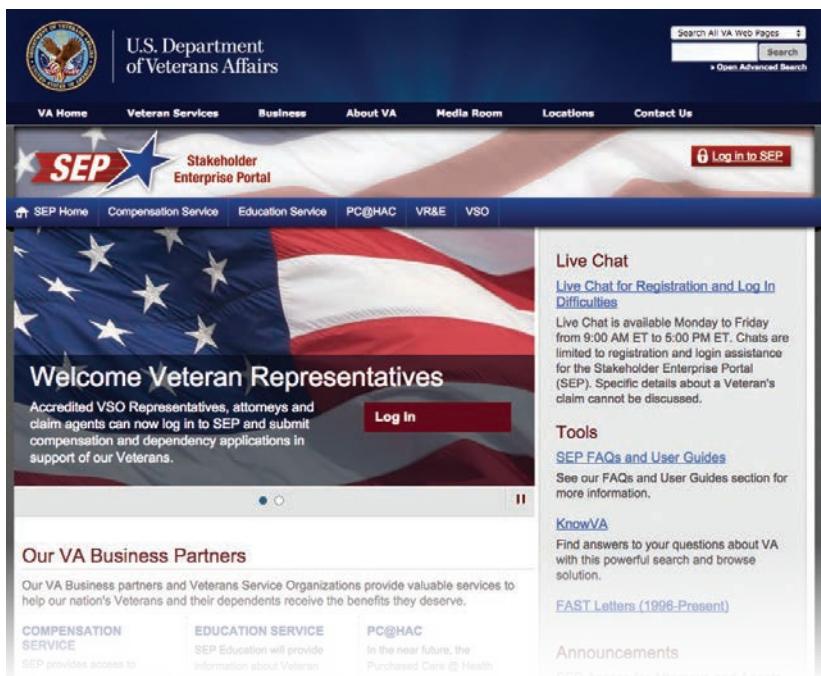
Checkpoint is launching a new series beginning with the November/December 2015 issue, and we want your input. We are going to spotlight Posts, Districts and Departments that utilize VFW's *Military Assistance Program* (MAP).

If your Post, District or Department is going to sponsor an event this holiday season and plans to use MAP funds, we want to hear about it. Please be sure to take good quality photos so we can publish them in an issue of *Checkpoint*. Photos of VFW members interacting with folks in the community are always the best.

E-mail your photos, event information and contact person to Janie Blankenship at jblankenship@vfw.org.

Streamlining the Claims Process

VFW Helps Army Vet Receive \$15,000 in Benefits



One Georgia VFW service officer helped an anonymous 28-year Army veteran receive \$15,000 in benefits through the VA online claim site Stakeholder Enterprise Portal. The web-based portal is designed for partners who assist in the claims process and is aimed at improving the speed, quality and efficiency of VA's claims process.

A 28-YEAR ARMY VETERAN HAS the assistance she needs thanks to the help of a VFW service officer and an online tool from VA.

The veteran, who wished to remain anonymous, sought the help of a Georgia VFW Post service officer after her pending complicated claim for 18 disabilities went unanswered. That's when the service officer stepped in and helped using the VA Stakeholder Enterprise Portal (SEP). Now, the veteran has \$12,394 in retroactive benefits and \$3,068 a month in compensation.

SEP is a secure, web-based portal for partners who assist in the claims process, such as service officers and others who work with VA.

It's part of the VA transformation plan, focused on improving the speed, quality and efficiency of the VA claims process. SEP is part of the shift to a digital claims environment, with the goal of streamlining the

claims management process and increasing communication and connection with veteran service organizations such as VFW.

SEP allows service officers to communicate with VA's system, submit claim applications electronically and manage their client's claims process more effectively. According to VA, this will help veterans receive faster decisions on their claims and help eliminate the backlog. VA's goal is to have claims decided within 125 days with 98% accuracy. As of Oct. 6, VA's backlog (claims pending more than 125 days) stood at 368,771.

In this specific case using SEP, the service officer was able to help the veteran receive much-needed benefits relatively quickly, and he also helped recruit her as a VFW member.

"Thank you very much for all your assistance," she said. "You made my day."

For more information about the portal, visit <https://www.sep.va.gov>.

Cub Scouts Deliver a Personal ‘Thank You’

PHOTO COURTESY OF VINCE GRIMALDI

Vince Grimaldi, commander of Post 1314 in Hudson, N.Y., displays a poster presented to his Post from Isabella Davis, Cali Mayes and Elias Davis, representing Cub Scout Pack 130. The presentation occurred last year at the Post’s Veterans Day Parade, an annual event since the 1940s, according to Grimaldi.

“We have a good turnout for a small town,” said the Vietnam War vet, who served with the Army’s 18th Engineer Brigade from 1967-68. “The highlight is a memorial service at the courthouse park. It is a pretty solemn event.”

Grimaldi, who serves as master of ceremonies for the parade, said veterans representing various wars read the names of Columbia County, N.Y.,

residents killed while serving in those wars. The memorial service also includes the local high school band playing the national anthem, Grimaldi leading the Pledge of Allegiance, a local high-school student singing “God Bless America,” as well as speeches by the mayor and an honored guest.

The Post, located about 120 miles north of New York City, will host the parade again this year.



NOVEMBER | DECEMBER 2015

CHECKPOINT

VFW NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS • PUBLICATIONS
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VFW

Posts with the Most

VFW POSTS OF 1,000 MEMBERS
OR MORE AS OCT. 12, 2015

| Rank | Post No. | Location | Members |
|------|----------|---------------------------|---------|
| 1 | 27 | Wiesbaden, Germany | 2,578 |
| 2 | 1503 | Dale City, VA | 2,385 |
| 3 | 1114 | Evansville, IN | 1,855 |
| 4 | 9972 | Sierra Vista, AZ | 1,849 |
| 5 | 8862 | Vicenza, Italy | 1,666 |
| 6 | 9785 | Eagle River, AK | 1,603 |
| 7 | 2485 | Angeles City, Philippines | 1,580 |
| 8 | 392 | Virginia Beach, VA | 1,557 |
| 9 | 4372 | Odessa, TX | 1,411 |
| 10 | 10692 | Grafenwoehr, Germany | 1,349 |

| Rank | No. | Location | Members |
|------|-------|----------------------|---------|
| 11 | 9342 | Ansbach, Germany | 1,265 |
| 12 | 4647 | North Highlands, CA | 1,263 |
| 13 | 10047 | North Las Vegas, NV | 1,220 |
| 14 | 6506 | Rosedale, MD | 1,203 |
| 15 | 63 | Boise, ID | 1,159 |
| 16 | 1146 | St Clair Shores, MI | 1,148 |
| 17 | 7234 | Ocean View, DE | 1,141 |
| 18 | 628 | Sioux Falls, SD | 1,131 |
| 19 | 6873 | Abilene, TX | 1,104 |
| 20 | 76 | San Antonio, TX | 1,101 |
| 21 | 4809 | Norfolk, VA | 1,079 |
| 22 | 2111 | Chula Vista, CA | 1,044 |
| 23 | 972 | Terre Haute, IN | 1,033 |
| 24 | 10436 | Kitzingen, Germany | 1,019 |
| 25 | 10097 | Fort Myers Beach, FL | 1,012 |
| 26 | 549 | Tucson, AZ | 1,008 |
| 27 | 2503 | Omaha, NE | 1,003 |
| 28 | 7686 | Alamogordo, NM | 1,001 |

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“It was way too quiet. Something was wrong. One of my NCOs noticed a guy run around the corner and put his hand up his shirt. He blew up. The guy behind me was killed instantly...”

CPT Mark Brogan, USA
Iraq Veteran

For more information and insight about the Heroes With Hearing Loss® program, and to see more of Mark’s story, visit:

HeroesWithHearingLoss.org/Mark

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