

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Dept. Commander & President
Joint Homecoming

March 13 - 14, 2026

Florida Hotel - Room rates \$139

1500 Sand Lake Rd.

Orlando, Fl.

Phone: 800-588-4656

(Must mention VFW Homecoming)

Hotel Reservations Cut-off

February 16, 2026

Reservations for Banquet on March 14, 2026

Must be sent to Debbie Tilley

904-460-9345 or cell 904-495-3622

dktilley@comcast.net

cut-off February 27, 2026





AISLE OF FLAGS

**VETERANS VILLAGE
MARCH 21, 2026**

National President Lois Callahan Visits Florida

On Saturday, March 21st, during the Veterans Village Picnic, we will have the honor of celebrating our National President Lois Callahan with a special “Aisle of Flags” ceremony.

This event is a wonderful occasion for the whole family to come together, and pay tribute to our Veterans and distinguished guests.

Take this opportunity to explore Veterans Village and visit with the residents!!

Enjoy a delicious lunch with friends, family and fellow members.

Please arrive at Veterans Village no later than 10:30 am to ensure everyone is in place on time.

We ask that all participants be lined up by 11:15 am.

If you have flags, please bring them.

The Department Conductor will be on hand to line everyone up.

*Pauline Riddle
Department Conductor*

JANUARY 2026

AMERICANISM AND PATRIOTISM

Department: ***“Building Bridges for our Veterans” “Bridging the Gap for our Veterans”***

National: ***“From Sea to Shining Sea Honoring Veterans Who Keep Us Free”***

How are we teaching Patriotism?

Awards are almost here, are you ready for your entree?

Patriotic symbols and Traditions being taught to new members

Patriotic Days remembered and shared with the community

You are “The Lighthouse in Someone’s Storm”



New Members are our future

Educating on our **Flag**

World Kindness should be every day

Youth is our Voice of the Future

Engagement with Educating

“Americanism is an unfailing love of our Country”

Respect and Recognition for the Flag

Did you Know?

*We have Rap Cards for Random Acts of Patriotism in Malta
A high school student Designed the 50- Star Pattern Flag.
Francis Scott Key wrote a poem “Defense of Fort McHenry.
Now known as The Star Spangled Banner”*



Program Goals

- Flag Education
- Promote Patriotism
- POW/MIA Recognition
- Star Family Recognition
- #AuxiliaryPatriotism

Important Dates

New Years 01/01/2026

Martin Luther King Jr Day

3rd Monday 01/19/2026



Awards

***Most outstanding activity and/or Event displaying or Educating others
about proper ways to display and Respect the AMERICAN FLAG.***

Due MARCH 31,2026



***“Every time I see the Flag, I think of the Soldiers who fought for it,
And the families who supported them.***

The Flag symbolizes their sacrifice and our Freedom.” Unknown

Looking forward to seeing you all at Mid-Winter Conference!!

Approved by:
Dept. President
Mike Yates

Michelle Butler
Americanism/PI Chairman
American.patiriotic.2525@gmail.com



AUXILIARY OUTREACH

January 2026

HEY THERE FLORIDA!! HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

It's a brand new year and time to be finishing up those Outreach Partnerships!

If you're still looking for ideas, here's some suggestions:

January 9th is Law Enforcement Appreciation Day. Are there any programs being held that you can help our Community Partners?

January 19th is Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Churches, Community groups, schools will all have memorial events.

January 24th is International Day of Education. Find those schools, day cares, etc. and help them out.

January 28th is Global Community Engagement Day. This day encourages organizations to "connect, collaborate, and work together to improve their local Communities".

In other words, **COMMUNITY OUTREACH!!! THIS IS OUR DAY!!!** Use it to Build Bridges into our Communities for our Veterans and be Beacons of Love !



It's coming close to Reporting Time for your Partnerships. You **MUST** have your completed National Program Award Entry Forms to me (bkiso2012@gmail.com) by **MARCH 31ST, 2026**.

The National Promo for this year is for the "most outstanding Auxiliary Outreach activity or event that is shared on social media using #AuxiliaryOutreach".

YOU'VE DONE THE WORK....NOW TAKE THE CREDIT! If you've seen my videos, you know how to report it correctly.

The form can be found by signing in to MALTA, Looking under Member Resources, and Printing Aux Outreach Awards. If you need help, **PLEASE** contact me. I'm more than willing to help!

Make Florida ROCK!

Approved by:

Dept. President

Mike Yates

Becky Kieffer

Aux Outreach Chair

bkiso2012@gmail.com

Buddy Poppy & VFW National Home



Closing Out 2025 – Looking Ahead to 2026

As we welcome January 2026, we also should take a moment to begin to wrap up our 2025 Buddy Poppy and VFW National Home reporting. Start fresh for 2026!



Why Your Reporting Matters

- ❖ Honors the impact your Auxiliary made
- ❖ Ensures compliance with Department and National requirements
- ❖ Strengthens future Buddy Poppy and National Home programs

IMPORTANT REPORTING DEADLINES!

All Buddy Poppy & VFW National Home Reports Must Be Submitted by: APRIL 15, 2026, reports should include all 2025 activities, including any completed April 16, 2025 through April 15, 2026. Timely reporting ensures proper recognition, award eligibility, and accurate Department records.



Thank you, Dept. of Florida Auxiliaries, for your dedication, creativity, and unwavering support of our veterans, service members, and their families.



QR Code Buddy
Poppy



QR Code
National Home

January – April 2026

Action Steps

- Continue Buddy Poppy distributions, donations, and educational outreach
- Continue fundraising and awareness efforts for the VFW National Home
- Review the Dept. & National Promotions to see what events you can plan for the remaining 2026 reporting year

**Approved by:
Dept. President
Mike Yates**

Let's "Be the Lighthouse in Somebody's Storm and continue to "Build Bridges for our Veterans" in 2026!

Dept. Chairman, Jennifer Holland
jenniferLholland72@comcast.net



Building Bridges with the VFW Auxiliary's and Veterans Village

I looking forward to seeing you at the Mid-Winter Conference for the PARADE OF CHECKS.

What a great way to show, The VFW Veterans Village the love of the VFW Auxiliary by helping to pay for the floors. So that it will free up money for the VFW to make other up grades at Veterans Village. Did you know that Veterans Village was built in 1991 it is almost 35 years old. Did you also know that you can report this under Veterans and Family Services and other areas of reporting depending on what you do and say at your fundraiser.

Remember you can only report your money in one program.



This CAN NOT be reported in Outreach.

Building A Bridge With Your Adopted Veteran At Veterans Village

Adopting a veteran is a gift of love to a veteran. It is true Americanism it is showing a veteran that we are thankful for them putting their life on the line for us. If they did not go to war for us think about how different your life would be right now. The VFW and the VFW Auxiliary are here to help fight for our veterans whether they fought over seas or here in America supporting those over seas, all of our military is needed. Please don't forget that, after the holidays don't stop the care packages, cards and letters. The veterans at Veterans Village have birthdays and there are still more holidays to follow.

January 1st New Years Day and National Bloody Mary Day

February 2nd Ground Hog Day

February 14th Valentines Day

March 17 St. Patrick Day

April 5th Easter Sunday



Approved by:
Dept. President
Mike Yates



Kelly Barr
Department Chairman Presidents Special Project
flpresproject2526@gamil.com

Extension & Revitalization

January 2026

Why This Program Matters

"The Extension & Revitalization Program can benefit every member of the Auxiliary through education. Keeping informed and becoming knowledgeable of our traditions and Programs helps us mentor members and prepare them for leadership roles. This is the heart of what we do." Karlene Beams, National Chief of Staff, Extension & Revitalization Ambassador

National President's Motto: *"Be the Lighthouse in Somebody's Storm"*

Department President's Theme: *"Building Bridges for our Veterans"*



How You Can Help: Recognize the Signs

Green Flag – Healthy Auxiliary

- Using the Healthy Auxiliary Toolkit in MALTA
- Completed the 5 Essentials of an Auxiliary (National requirement)

Yellow Flag – Struggling Auxiliary

- Failure to meet the 5 Essentials of an Auxiliary (National requirement)
- Not completing Program reports
- Failing to attract new members or officers
- Not attending Department/District meetings or trainings

☞ If this is your Auxiliary, don't worry—it means you may need a "Lighthouse" to guide you back. Contact the Department President for mentoring support, which may include a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP).

Red Flag – Suspension

- Auxiliary placed on suspension
- Requires full commitment to rebuild
- Suspension can be a reset—many Auxiliaries return stronger than ever!

Bringing on New Auxiliaries

- Remember: An Auxiliary cannot exist without a Post
- Always notify the Department before presentations to Posts
- Talk with Unaffiliated Posts about the benefits of having an Auxiliary
- Extension tools and presentations are available in MALTA → Member Resources
- A Department team will work closely with the Post and District President to institute new Auxiliaries, once approved

Approved by:
Dept. President
Mike Yates

Sherri Golder
Extension & Revitalization Chairman
sherrigolder@gmail.com





HAPPY★NEW★YEAR

WHAT TO DO AS A HISTORIAN?

Reflecting on Recent Festivities

As the celebrations come to an end, it is an ideal time to reflect on all the events that have taken place over the past few months. Gather the photos and videos captured during the festivities and celebrations. With Mid-Winter just around the corner, we find ourselves halfway through the year, making it the perfect moment to assess everything that has transpired. *Do you recall the reels that I have been promoting and requesting?* Now is the ideal opportunity to bring those elements together.

Documentation Tips

You should record the events of the Auxiliary and District in the order they occurred. A helpful approach is to use the **5 W's**: Who, What, Where, When, and Why. Ensure your documentation is thorough to facilitate easy reporting. Have you partnered with another program? **Be sure to report it!** Keep in mind that while managing social media is crucial, there are many other factors to consider as well.

Media

Contact local Newspapers, Radio and TV Stations, use all forms of social media. You can also make posters and banners to put out in your community. Word of mouth is also a great way to let the community know. Research all the ways you can reach your community and try to do them all. Getting the information out is your goal. Community engagement enhances public awareness regarding veterans and their issues, elevate the visibility of the VFW Auxiliary, and improve its reputation.

Reels

This year, the National Historian Ambassador is encouraging auxiliaries to focus on creating REELS, short videos that have great presence on both Facebook and Instagram. MALTA member resources provide information for how to create a reel. Give it a try and showcase all the wonderful events your Auxiliary is doing.

Youth/Adult permission forms: <https://malta.vfwauxiliary.org/MemberResources/Download/476>

How to create a reel: <https://malta.vfwauxiliary.org/MemberResources/Download/986>

Awards

Historian Media Award Form: <https://malta.vfwauxiliary.org/MemberResources/Download/938>

VFW Auxiliaries must send the required entry form and the social media reel to the Department Historian & Relations Chairman by March 31, 2026 for judging.

Approved by:
Dept. President
Mike Yates



Kathy Ingall
Historian/Media Relations
vfwauxflhistorian25.26@gmail.com
#vfwafhistorianreels25.26

Hospital

January 2026



"HAPPY NEW YEAR FLORIDA"

- VFW Auxiliary members have been working to meet the needs of hospitalized Veterans in VA Medical centers and other facilities since the organization's inception in 1914. Auxiliary members volunteer more than 400,000 hours annually and one in 15 members volunteer through the Hospital Program.

THE HOSPITAL PROGRAM:

- Promotes volunteerism of members, non-members, youth and families in local hospitals, veteran's homes, nursing homes, domiciliary and both VA and non-VA medical centers and clinics. Opportunities vary based on the facility, age and ability of the volunteer.
- Don't forget to show appreciation to your Hospital Volunteers with certificates and pins for hours earned.

THINKING A HEAD - FEBRUARY!!!



VALENTINES DAY is the 14th, now is the time to get those cards, candy & little gifts together for our Veteran's. Schedule a day to have a Valentine Party.



Approved by:
Dept. President
Mike Yates

Viki Stripling
Hospital Chairman
vikiplottsdistrict11@yahoo.com



LEGISLATIVE

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

January 2026

PRIORITY

- Budget
- Health Care
- Disability Assistance & Memorial Affairs
- Education, Employment & Transition Assistance
- Military Readiness
- National Security,

AMPLIFIED ADVOCACY

JANUARY FOCUS!

Keep the wave of gratitude moving forward for our veterans and their families.

- ❖ Email your legislator a quick “thank you & reminder”
- ❖ Encourage 2 new Action Corps sign-ups.
- ❖ Post a #GratitudeAttitude message tied to current VFW-supported legislation
- ❖ Read the latest Action Corp Weekly and spread the key points

These Quick touches keep our messaging alive, aligned and impactful.

It is a critical time to act!

January marks the start of a new Legislative session – when priorities are set and bills begin to move. This is when your voice has the greatest impact. By engaging early VFW, VFW Auxiliary and all veteran supporters help shape the conversations that define the year ahead.

Approved by:
Dept. President
Mike Yates



Pamela Monroe
Legislative Chairman
Anamcarax2@gmail.com

Membership/Mentoring January 2026 Focus - INVITE

Congratulations to all our
“Builders” who have worked
so hard to get us past
our original goal to reach ...

100%

NEW Membership applications can be found on M.A.L.T.A. under membership resources. Only new applications will be accepted. Please remind your Auxiliaries to throw away all OLD membership applications.

Be sure to email your recruiter forms to National Headquarters so your “Builders” can receive their celebratory pins. info@vfwauxiliary.org
ATTN: Program Awards Administrator, which can be found in M.A.L.T.A.

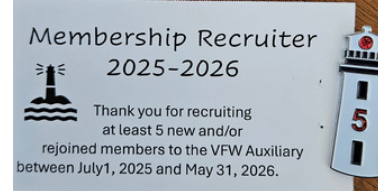
As we move into the new year, we want to continue strengthening our Auxiliaries with bringing in new members. Continue encouraging your members to invite friends and acquaintances to join us in our bridge building adventure for our Veterans.

This is the time to plan membership drives at our local county fairs, festivals and markets. Organize with your VFW Post and have both Auxiliary and Post members attend these events in your area and educate the public on the importance of our organization.

I am looking forward to reading all your submissions for the special Mentoring award which will be given to an Auxiliary member for his or her work mentoring new members in each Membership class. Who in your Auxiliary do you feel needs special recognition for their membership work this year? Anyone may nominate a member (Auxiliary Presidents excluded). Short Essay due to myself by March 30, 2026, explaining why their Auxiliary member deserves to be recognized.

Happy New Year to our incredible Department! We have an amazing year ahead of us.

Congratulations to our District's
for already hitting 100%
District Five
District Seven
District Nine
District Ten
District Eleven
District Twelve
District Thirteen
District Seventeen
District Nineteen
District Twenty-One
District Twenty-Two



Holly Evans
Department of Florida
Membership/Mentoring Chairman
2025-2026
hadams1221@hotmail.com

Approved by:
Dept. President
Mike Yates





SCHOLARSHIPS



JANUARY 2026



Building Bridges for Our Veterans

Program Goals

- Student Participation
- Community Awareness
- Recipient Recognition
- Increasing the Fund

<https://vfwauxfl.org/di/vfw/v2/default.asp?pid=133704>

National VFW Auxiliary
Scholarship



Auxiliary Award:

Most creative and/or unique activity and/or event educating their community about the scholarship opportunities in the VFW and the VFW Auxiliary. Look for the entry form on both the National and Department Websites. **Entry form due to Department Chair by 31 March 2026.**

PROMOTE!

- The act of promoting is never done - builds long-term awareness and encourages participation.

RECOGNIZE!

- Recognize each student who participates. This should be done at all levels. Make it meaningful.

REPORT!

- Report on each step of the process – Tell the story of your Auxiliary's creativity in promoting, recognizing, and building the funds.



Young American Patriotic Art and 3-D Art (grades 9-12)

One Entry per Auxiliary for Each Art scholarship.

Package carefully to ensure Art is received in tact.

3-D Art – must include a photo of the art

Deadlines:

Local Auxiliary - 31 March 2026

Department Scholarship Chairman – 15 April

Mail to: Carrie Messer, 5330 Barcelona St., Pace, FL 32571



Continuing Education

"Be the Lighthouse in Somone's Storm"

- **DEADLINE 15 FEBRUARY to National Office**
- Eligibility - You and immediate family (spouse, son, daughter) at least age 21.
- Application form
- Essay up to 300 Words
- Promote – fund raiser – **National President's Project Increase the fund**

<https://vfwauxiliary.org/scholarships/continuing-education/>



Approved by:
Dept. President
Mike Yates



Carrie Messer
Scholarship Chair
messerca@gmail.com

VFW Auxiliary
Department of Florida



January 2026

Veterans & Family Support Program

Building Bridges for our Veterans

NAVIGATING THE VA SYSTEM: WHERE TO REFER FOR ASSISTANCE

One of the most frequent questions I get asked as I visit different Posts, Auxiliaries, and other Veteran groups is, ***"Can you help me with the VA?"*** Knowing how and where to refer Veterans to one of the four VFW Service Officer locations in Florida is crucial because these accredited professionals provide expert, free assistance navigating the complex VA benefits system. VFW Service Officers in Florida — located in St. Petersburg, Orlando, West Palm Beach, and Miami — are trained and certified to help veterans identify all benefits they are entitled to, from disability compensation and pensions to healthcare and education benefits.

The VA's benefits structure can be extremely complicated, and even small errors or missing information can delay or jeopardize a veteran's claim. Service Officers have in-depth knowledge of VA regulations and access to VA systems, so they can accurately prepare, file, and follow up on claims. They also review decisions for accuracy and, if needed, represent veterans through appeals up to the Board of Veterans' Appeals.

Importantly, **you do not need to be a VFW member to use these services — they are available to all veterans and dependents at no cost.** Referring Veterans to these officers ensures they receive professional, accredited support, maximizes their chances of securing earned benefits, and helps prevent costly mistakes or gaps in coverage. This advocacy can make a significant difference in a veteran's quality of life and long-term well-being.

Approved by:
Dept. President
Mike Yates



VFW UNMET NEEDS PROGRAM IS OPERATIONAL

The VFW Unmet Needs program provides financial grants to active-duty service members, Veterans, and their families facing unexpected financial hardships tied to military service, helping pay basic life needs like rent, utilities, food, medical bills, and more. To apply, visit the VFW Unmet Needs page at vfw.org/UnmetNeeds and complete the online application, including required documentation. Once submitted, a caseworker reviews the application. For assistance or questions, call the toll-free number **1-866-789-6333** or email unmeneeds@vfw.org.



Ryan M. Harris
Program Chair
Ryan.Harris.CISA@gmail.com

**VFW Auxiliary
Department of Florida**



January 2026

SUPPORT SPOTLIGHT: FLORIDA VFW SERVICE OFFICER LOCATIONS

For the most up-to-date information, please visit:
vfwfl.org/di/vfw/v2/default.asp?pid=153595

THE VFW VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE

Saint Petersburg, Florida
Director: Jason Smith
E-mail: jason.k.smith@va.gov
Phone# 727-319-7493

VA Medical Center, Orlando

13800 Veterans Way
RM 1N 202
Orlando, Florida 32827
E-mail: alyice.rivers@va.gov
Phone: 407-631-1828

VA Mini Service Center, West Palm Beach

73058 N. Military Trail, Building 10
West Palm Beach, Florida 33410
Monday - Wednesday

VA Mini Service Center, Miami

1201 NW 16th Street (RM 2A149) Miami, FL 33125
Thursday & Friday

For more information from the VFW National Veterans Service program, including VA Claim Assistance and Pre-Discharge Support, visit

vfw.org/assistance/va-claims-separation-benefits



Veterans Crisis Line



**DIAL 988 then
PRESS 1**

NEW YEAR, CONTINUING CRISIS

The Veterans Crisis Line is a vital, confidential resource available 24/7 for Veterans, service members, and their families. Every season is the season to remember Veterans in crisis—struggles do not pause for holidays, end with the new year, or change with the weather. One Veteran suicide is one too many. By calling 988 and pressing 1, texting 838255, or chatting online, lives can be saved and hope restored.

One life lost is one too many.

**Ryan M. Harris
Program Chair
Ryan.Harris.CISA@gmail.com**

Approved by:
Dept. President
Mike Yates

Youth Activities

"Be the Lighthouse in Somebody's Storm"
"Bridging the Gap for our Veterans"



Program goal 8
January 2026

Patriotism Through Literacy

Patriotism Through Literacy is a VFW Auxiliary Youth Activities initiative started in 2019, the purpose of which is to foster a love of reading while teaching students about America's past primarily through historical fiction and creative non-fiction, promoting both patriotism *and* literacy, in addition to encouraging empathy and broadening perspectives. The intended age range of readers/listeners of the books below spans from pre-k through grade 12.

Introduces youth to historical figures and teaches them about events in our nation's history while fostering a love of reading that can lead to a lifetime of learning.

In the world of children's literature, there is often talk of "mirrors and windows." In books labeled "mirrors," kid readers get to see themselves reflected in the main characters. In "windows," they see into the lives of characters they'd otherwise never know. That is why the books on our list of Recommended Reads not only showcase a number of periods in history from the Revolutionary War through post-9/11, they reflect a variety of character viewpoints: girls, boys, children, teens, adults, veterans, the children of veterans, etc., of all different backgrounds, cultures, colors, ethnicities, religions, American regions/states and abilities/disabilities.

The Recommended Reads are divided into **Historical Fiction** (fiction taking place in the past, set in the United States), **Americana and/or Educational** (fiction, non- or a mix of both, these books are about America's holidays, history, geography, government, parental deployment, etc., primarily for younger readers/listeners who may not be ready for more complex books yet, with additional titles for young children with a deployed or recently returned veteran parent), and **Creative Non-Fiction, Biography & Memoir** (biographies of important figures in American history, historical accounts from real people/events learned through interviews, letters, or diary entries, and memoirs of childhood that paint a distinct picture of America in the past). The list is periodically updated to include newly published works. While some classics appear among our Recommended Reads, most of these titles or series were published in the past 25 years, with many published within the last decade.

Age groups

Preschool-Kindergarten
Grades 1-2

Grades 3-4

Grades 5-6

Grades 7-8

Grades 9-12

Recommended books



Approved by:
Dept. President
Mike Yates



Youth Dept of Florida

Lanaie Reed
Auxiliary Youth Chair
Dept of FL 2025-2026
lanwileth@gmail.com

