

# 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](mailto:dktilley@comcast.net)

cut-off February 27, 2026



SEPT. 2025

# AMERICANISM & PATRIOTIC INSTRUCTOR

## Department President's Theme

*"Building Bridges for our Veterans"*

## National President's Theme

*"From Sea to Shining Sea Our Veterans Keep Us Free"*

### PROGRAM GOALS

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



***We also cannot forget Fall Conference Oct. 17-19!***

***Let's not forget HALLOWEEN October 31st***

It is a great opportunity to hand out Patriotic Bookmarks you can create for the kids, found on [vfwauxiliary.org](http://vfwauxiliary.org) sign into Mata under member resources under Americanism.

### Important Dates:

**Reminder Teacher of the Year Deadline: October 31, 2025: information found <http://www.vfw.org/community/youth-and-education/teacher-of-the-year>**

10/07	<b><i>Global War on Terrorism &amp; Desert Storm Veterans Day</i></b>
10/13	<b><i>Navy Birthday --the day Continental Congress passed to establish in 1775</i></b>
10/13	<b><i>Columbus Day</i></b>
10/26	<b><i>Day of Deployed- a Day to say Thank You to all our Military serving outside the US</i></b>
10/28	<b><i>Statue of Liberty/Lady Liberty Birthday- a universal symbol of freedom 1886</i></b>

**Now that we have replaced and collected all those flags, ready to retire them invite your family, scouts, civic groups and community to assist in the Retirement Ceremony. Share how we show honor and respect.**



**Remind those in our Community about Suicide Awareness – Just one life lost to suicide is a tragedy.**



Approved By:  
Dept. President  
Mike Yates

Michelle Butler – Americanism Chairman  
[American.Patriotic.2526@gmail.com](mailto:American.Patriotic.2526@gmail.com)





## AUXILIARY OUTREACH

Sept. 2025



### SEPTEMBER IS SUICIDE AWARENESS MONTH!

This year's theme is:

**WE ARE STRONGER TOGETHER. CONNECT TO PROTECT!**

### **CAN YOU SEE HOW BUILDING BRIDGES IN AUXILIARY OUTREACH IS SO IMPORTANT???**

What better way to help our Veterans than to get them the community support they need; to "connect" them and "protect" them.

[Here are the basics requirements of the Program Goals.](#)

#1 Get your partnership approved at an Aux mtg.

#2 Wear Aux clothing of some kind.

#3 Report on the DEPARTMENT website

**NO \$\$\$\$ YES HOURS !!!**

#### **PROGRAM GOALS:**

**1. BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY.** Let's work on BUILDING THOSE BRIDGES FOR OUR VETERANS. There is no better way to become known in our Communities than to be known as HELPERS AND VOLUNTEERS. It's what we DO, Florida!!

**2. EXPANDING AUXILIARY PARTICIPATION IN OUTREACH.** We need a STRONG presence in ALL our volunteerism! Spend MORE HOURS in the Community. Get MORE Members involved. **REMEMBER SEPTEMBER IS ALSO FIRST RESPONDERS DAY , 9/11, AND PATRIOTS DAY.** There's a lot of Veterans in those groups that also need to feel the "Connect to Protect". Plan your Outreach around them this month!!



Approved by:  
Dept. President  
Mike Yates

Becky Kieffer  
Aux. Outreach Chairman  
bkiso2012@gmail.com



# Fall Conference Buddy Poppy Contest

September 2025



The Department of Florida is holding its annual Buddy Poppy Contest at the upcoming Fall Conference. Judging will take place on Saturday, October 18, 2025, at the Florida Hotel in Orlando.

## Categories are as follows:

### Category 1- Public Promotion of the Poppy campaign

(window, booth, parade, poster campaign promotions).

Display must be designed for public exposure and must bear a message soliciting a donation for and wearing of the VFW Buddy Poppy. At least one Poppy used in the display must be in its original form and color, with label attached.

### Category 2 - Memorial or Inspirational Display

(wreaths, memorial tablets, or plaques, patriotic or devotional themes).

Display must be designed to honor the dead, to inspire devotion to God and Country, or to dramatize the activities supported by the Buddy Poppy. At least one Poppy used in the display must be in its original form and color, with label attached.

### Category 3 -Artistic or Decorative use of Poppies

(Post Home Display, table centerpieces, corsages, pictures, plaques, models, scenes, hats, novelty pieces, etc.)

Any display not meeting the qualifications for Categories 1 or 2 shall automatically be entered in category 3. At least one Poppy used in the display must be in its original form and color, with label attached.

You may include a 4x6 white card on your display using black ink with a explanation of your theme or other facts of information for viewers or judges.

**Post Name or Number should not be visible on the displays.**

**Please write your Post Name, Number & District, how many poppies were used and place in a sealed envelope taped to the bottom of your display.**

***This contest is a great joint event to bring our VFW Post & Auxiliaries together and work as one team with one common goal!***



Approved by:  
Dept. President  
Mike Yates

**Jennifer Holland, Chairman Buddy Poppy/VFW National Home**  
**[jenniferLholland72@comcast.net](mailto:jenniferLholland72@comcast.net)**

**September 2025**



**"Be the Lighthouse in  
Somebody's Storm"**



**♥ Supporting Veterans, Strengthening Families**

**The VFW National Home has been a place of hope, healing, and community for veteran families for generations. Every day, they provide housing, wraparound services, and compassionate case management to military and veteran families in need. These services are lifelines—helping families overcome challenges, rebuild stability, and find a brighter path forward.**

**But the VFW National Home cannot do this without support.**

**Donations directly support the programs that make this possible, from counseling and case management to educational support and family stability services. Every dollar helps them continue the mission of keeping families strong and connected.**

**This work is also tied to suicide prevention awareness. By offering support, guidance, and resources, they provide families with the tools and community they need during their most difficult times. Together, we can help prevent feelings of isolation and despair by ensuring that no veteran or family member feels alone in their journey.**

**When you give to the VFW National Home, you are not only providing hope today you are helping to prevent tragedy tomorrow. Use the QR Code below to be directed to the VFW National Home to see the ways you or your Auxiliary can donate.**



**Post & Auxiliaries purchasing Buddy Poppies for their Poppy Drives, also funds and supports the VFW National Home which makes a difference in the lives of those who have sacrificed so much for our freedom.**



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

**Jennifer Holland, Chairman  
Buddy Poppy/VFW National Home  
[jenniferLholland72@comcast.net](mailto:jenniferLholland72@comcast.net)**

# Historian Media Relations

September 2025



“Be The Lighthouse in Somebody’s Storm”  
“Embrace the Waves of Change”



<https://www.veteranscrisisline.net>

<https://www.changedirection.org/#five-signs>



Approved by:  
Dept. President  
Mike Yates

## National President, Lois Callahan’s **Special Project**

### Continuing Education Scholarships

Continuing Education Scholarships are offered to assist members and their immediate family members who wish to further their education by pursuing a college degree or career direction at a vocational/technical school

[Continuing Education Scholarship –  
VFW Auxiliary](#)

[vfwauxiliary.org/scholarships/continuing-education/](http://vfwauxiliary.org/scholarships/continuing-education/)

### Creating & Utilizing Reels!

National Historian & Media Relations Ambassador Kristin DiGiacomo wants to focus this year on using & creating reels to spread the word about our programs and what our Auxiliaries are doing in our communities! Reels are videos up to 90 seconds long and can be made up of a single video, multiple video clips, still photos or a combination of all.

### Department Awards

Most outstanding social media reel highlighting the VFW Auxiliary in action awarded on each Membership Class entry form and the social media reel to the Department Historian & Media Relations Chairman by March 31, 2026

Kathy Ingall  
Historian/Media Chairman  
[vfwauxflhistorian25.26@gmail.com](mailto:vfwauxflhistorian25.26@gmail.com)

# HOSPITAL PROGRAM

SEPTEMBER 2025

## SUICIDE AWARENESS IS NOT JUST FOR SEPTEMBER!!

- **Important dates to remember for September!!!!**
- 1<sup>st</sup> Labor Day- Maybe help with serving lunches
- 11<sup>th</sup> National Day of Service- Have A Prayer meeting & A movie day
- 19<sup>th</sup> POW/MIA- Include your Post & Auxiliary members have a Ceremony
- 28<sup>th</sup> Gold Star Mother's Day- Maybe give them a special Pamper Day
- 29<sup>th</sup> VFW Day- Let are Veteran's know how much we Appreciate them

- ❖ **Just a Little early Preparing for OCTOBER right around the corner!!!!**
- ❖ 27<sup>th</sup> Navy Day- For your Navy Veteran's do a little something special to show how much you appreciate their service.
- ❖ 31<sup>st</sup> Halloween- Have a Costume party, Music, raise money with-in your Auxiliary to maybe purchase halloween bucket's & put, stuff like water , crackers, trial size hand sanitizers, Playing cards, lotion, face wipes. How much fun!!!!

- ✚ **REMEMBER:** Volunteers are always's needed & welcomed
- ✚ Check with your local facilities to see how you can get involved, our primary goal for Hospital Volunteers is to improve patient care.
- ✚ **ALWAYS REMEMBER**
- ✚ **CONFIDENTIALITY**
- You don't have to wait for a Holiday to participate at a VA center or hospital. Every day is Veterans Day.**

**" Bridging the Gap for Our Veterans"**

Approved by:  
Dept. President  
Mike Yates



Viki Stripling Hospital Chairman  
Vikiplottsdistrict11@yahoo.com





# Veterans Administration Volunteer Service

## “V.A.V.S.” Program

### WHAT DOES A V.A.V.S. VOLUNTEER DO?

- ❖ Volunteer assignments vary depending on the needs of the facility and, at the direction of the facility’s Voluntary Service Program Manager.
- ❖ Once accepted, volunteers will be required to complete orientation and receive information concerning assignments, policies and procedures, infection control, fire and safety and liability. Each volunteer will be entered into the Voluntary Service System (VSS) which is used to record volunteer program hours.

### TYPES OF V.A.V.S. VOLUNTEERS

- Regularly Schedule (RS) Volunteers: RS volunteers are individuals who participate in the VAVS program on a regularly scheduled assignment under VA supervision.
- Occasional Volunteers: occasional volunteers are those individuals serving under the VAVS program who do not meet the requirements of RS volunteers. Individuals frequently volunteer with a group or organization on an occasional basis.
- Sponsored Volunteers: Non-members of the VFW Auxiliary who wish to serve under the VFW Auxiliary sponsorship and supervision as volunteers at VA and non-VA facilities or in VA community-based programs. They must be interviewed and screened in the same manner as VFW Auxiliary members. Upon acceptance, sponsored volunteers are governed by the same ethics and rules prescribed for the members.
- Student Volunteers: Student volunteers are under the age of 18 and must have written parental or guardian approval to participate in the VAVS program. They must also have written authorization for diagnostic and emergency treatment if injured while volunteering. The minimum age for volunteers is determined by the facility.

Approved by:  
Dept. President  
Mike Yates

Viki Stripling  
Hospital Chairman  
Vikiplottsdistrict11@yahoo.com



## Extension and Revitalization

### *“Be The Lighthouse In Somebody’s Storm”*

#### *September is National Suicide Awareness Month!*

September serves as a reminder that suicide is preventable and that everyone can play a role in supporting Veterans in connecting them with resources. A single act can make a difference in the life of a Veteran in crisis. It is important to reach out and connect with Veterans and we can show support by doing a “check-in”, spending time with them or just asking how they are doing.

The VA encourages individuals to learn the warning signs of suicide, participate in free training like S.A.V.E., and utilize resources like the VA's Social Media Safety Toolkit to identify and respond to potential distress.

As an Auxiliary or even a District, you can do “call to action”.

- ✓ Invite all your members, past and present to come together and take the VA S.A.V.E. training. This can be coordinated by contacting your local VA Suicide Prevention Coordinator by visiting [VeteransCrisisLine.net/LocalResources](http://VeteransCrisisLine.net/LocalResources).
- ✓ Ask the Coordinator for items that can be shared within the Post and your Community, bringing awareness to the Veterans Crisis line – 988
- ✓ Extend the invite to your community. (You may even gain a member or two)

While you are working to bring awareness to Veterans Suicide, you are also helping to maintain a healthy Auxiliary and “Building Bridges for Our Veterans”.

Don’t forget to report 😊



Approved by:  
Dept. President  
Mike Yates

Sherri Golder  
Extension/Revitalization  
[sherrigolder@gmail.com](mailto:sherrigolder@gmail.com)



SUICIDE PREVENTION



SEPTEMBER 2025

# LEGISLATIVE

***Be an Advocate – Be Informed – Be Engaged***

## **SUICIDE AWARENESS MONTH**

Bridge the gap to Mental Healthcare for our Veterans

While the reasons are complex and multifaceted, factors such as deployment stressors, combat experiences and difficulty reintegrating into civilian life can contribute to behavioral health challenges and increased risk.

You may wonder what this has to do with Legislative. There are many bills pending legislation regarding our Healthcare Priority Goals such as the H.R. 3627, Justice for America's Veterans and Survivors Act 2025. Be an Advocate and take action on these bills and bring them to the attention of your legislators. When they respond in a positive way be grateful and say thank you.

### **VFW PRIORITY GOALS**

- Budget
- Health Care
- Disability Assistance & Memorial Affairs
- Education, Employment and Transition Assistance
- Military Readiness
- National Security, Foreign Affairs and POW/MIA

Approved by:  
Dept. President  
Mike Yates

Keep these bills in the minds of your legislators:

- Major Richard Star Act
- TAP Promotion Act



With a gratitude attitude



Pamela Monroe  
Legislative Chairman  
Anamcarax2@gmail.



# Membership/Mentoring

September 2025 FOCUS - Include



## M.A.L.T.A. TOOLS

These tools will help us

Bridge the Gap for our Veterans through using our membership resources to help make our members feel included

- Do you know how many of your Auxiliary members are signed into M.A.L.T.A (Membership Auxiliary Leadership Technology Access).
- Presidents, Secretaries, and Treasurers can pull reports under duties: Malta Activated Members.
- Discover your members who haven't signed into M.A.L.T.A and educate them on what the benefits are once they have signed on.
- Encourage your members to update their personal information on M.A.L.T.A. Address's, emails, birthdate, and phone numbers.
- Find your "Investigators" in your Auxiliary, we need to find those members who have passed and are no longer with us. Start a committee to begin the process.
- Have you sent out your annual member dues reminders? Try offering an "Early Bird Special"? We want to encourage them to convert to life.

## SEPTEMBER IS SUICIDE AWARENESS MONTH

Did you know, you can take a self-assessment test to find much needed support for veterans? Anyone can take the test to see if they need help.

Resources are available on the VFW website which is offered through VA.GOV

Looking for other ways to get involved? Plan an event for your membership, bring in a speaker to your monthly meetings or have a luncheon and introduce one of the many Suicide Promotion programs available.



*We would like to celebrate last year's Membership Program Chairman, Betty Bailey, on her 1<sup>st</sup> place win in Membership at the 126<sup>th</sup> VFW National Convention. Congratulations on an incredible year!*

Approved by  
Dept. President  
Mike Yates



Holly Evans  
Membership/Mentoring  
Chairman 2025-2026  
Hadams1221@hotmail.com

September  
2025

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# Veterans Village

September is suicide awareness month. This is the time to educate your members about suicide awareness and the signs to watch for. As we go forward into the holidays this is the time that impacts our veterans and friends. The top items that veterans need during this time are, improved financial security, stabilized housing, and the ability to get to and from medical appointments. **Veterans Village** offers these securities with the help of VFW auxiliary donations. Please remember this when working Presidents Special Project fundraisers to help raise money for Veterans Village.

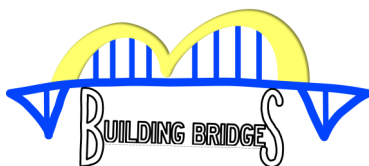
You can order Suicide Prevention pin at the VFW Store. In Malta you will find suicide awareness teardrop stickers that you can print and hand out. Along with other resources that have the suicide crisis phone number on it.

**Adopt-a-Vet** program is a program that many auxiliaries showed a great interest in. Please Call me at 719-963-3370 for more information the number on the handout was incorrect. I will get you information on a veteran.

Mike Cline informed me that veterans are already receiving items from our auxiliaries. This makes me proud to be a part of this organization. Thank you to all who are participating.



**How big is your Bridge going to be?**



### Department Awards

The Bridge of Lions \$100.00-\$499.00.  
Dames Point Bridge \$500.00-\$999.00.  
Seven Mill Bridge \$1000.00-\$1599.00.  
The Sunshine Skyway Bridge \$1600.00.

Approved By:  
Dept. President  
Mike Yates

Kelly Barr  
Department Presidents Special Project  
flpresproject2526@gmail.com



# SCHOLARSHIPS

SEPTEMBER 2025



## Building Bridges for Our Veterans

## RECOGNIZE, REPORT!

- Decide How you will recognize the students (and teachers).
  - In the school, at a meeting, special dinner at the Post...
  - Cash
  - Certificate
  - Check out the available rewards through the VFW Store – Order early so you have the supplies in time. (See my video on the Department Facebook page.)
- Report how you recognize the students – remember details matter.
- Keep promoting – follow-up with the schools and organizations you reached out to.

## VOICE OF DEMOCRACY - PATRIOTS PEN

**PROMOTIONAL UPDATE:** VFW is now using the Scholar's App ([https://scholarsapp.com/donor\\_home](https://scholarsapp.com/donor_home)).

- At School of Instruction information was passed out to District Commanders for getting the Posts' accounts set up. Each post will get their own QR code to print out flyers and receive applications through the App.
- Work with your post to get their account set up – they can add an Auxiliary member to assist with chairman responsibilities.
- Don't worry; the old-school brochure style application and paper/audio formats are still being accepted.
- Remember to get your judges lined up ahead of time from sources outside your Post.

### Submission Deadlines for Each Contest:

- Post – 31 October      District – 15 November      Department – 15 December
- Submissions: Post sends 1 entry for every 15 entries received to District. District sends 1 entry to Department.

## CONTINUING EDUCATION

"Be the Lighthouse in Somone's Storm"



Continue spreading the word to members on this great scholarship opportunity for them as well as their spouse and children. Children must be age 21 to apply.

Continue to Build the Fund and Don't forget to Report about your fund raising event and donation for increasing the fund.

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

## Q + A

What is the difference between Young American Patriotic Art and Illustrating America?

Patriotic Art is a Scholarship Program for grades 9-12.

Illustrating America is a Youth Program contest for grades K-8.

### Program Goals

Student Participation  
Community Awareness  
Recipient Recognition  
Increasing the Fund

### \*\*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 Website under MALTA, Member Resources, Scholarships. Entry form due to Department Chair by 31 March 2026.

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

National VFW Auxiliary Scholarship



Approved by:  
Department President  
Mike Yates



Carrie Messer  
Scholarship Chair  
[messerca@gmail.com](mailto:messerca@gmail.com)



September 2025

# Veterans & Family Support Program

## Building Bridges for our Veterans

### ONE LIFE LOST IS ONE TOO MANY

**September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month**—a time to shed light on a difficult but important issue. Suicide impacts countless families and communities, and for veterans, the risk can be even greater due to unique challenges such as post-traumatic stress, depression, chronic pain, and the transition back to civilian life. This month serves as a reminder that awareness, understanding, and open conversations about mental health can save lives.

A key resource for those in need is the Veterans Crisis Line. This free, confidential support service is available 24/7 for veterans, service members, and their loved

ones. By dialing 988 and pressing 1, individuals are connected with trained responders—many of whom are veterans themselves—who can provide immediate help and understanding. Support is also available through text and online chat, ensuring access in whatever way feels most comfortable.

Highlighting the Veterans Crisis Line during Suicide Prevention Awareness Month reinforces a powerful message: help is always available, and reaching out is a courageous step toward healing. Together, by sharing resources and showing support, we can make a difference in the lives of veterans and their families and Build the Bridges of Support.

Approved by:  
Dept. President  
Mike Yates



### GOLD STAR FAMILY DAY

Gold Star Family Day, observed on the last Sunday in September, honors families who have lost a loved one serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. To recognize them, host a remembrance ceremony, sponsor a meal, or simply offer a heartfelt "thank you" if you encounter someone wearing the Gold Star Lapel Pin. Most importantly, remember the fallen service member's name and sacrifice.



Ryan M. Harris  
Program Chair

[Ryan.Harris.CISA@gmail.com](mailto:Ryan.Harris.CISA@gmail.com)



# Veterans & Family Support Program

## VFW NATIONAL VETERANS SERVICE (NVS) PROGRAM

The VFW created the National Veterans Service (NVS) program to ensure veterans, service members, and their families receive the benefits they have earned. Through accredited Service Officers, the program provides free, professional assistance in filing claims for disability compensation, pensions, education benefits, health care, and survivor support. Each year, NVS helps secure billions of dollars in benefits, improving the lives of countless veterans and honoring their service.



Knowing who your local VFW Service Officers are and how to contact them is an important part of supporting this incredible program. Raising funds and helping to solicit donations to support the operation is just as important. Donations to support the NVS Program and the VFW Service Officers can be made directly to the VFW on their website: <https://heroes.vfw.org/page/23433/donate/1> or using the QR Code to the right.

By standing behind the NVS program, we ensure no veteran navigates the system alone.

## VFW MILITARY APPRECIATION PROGRAM (MAP)

The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) proudly supports America's service members through its Military Appreciation Program. This initiative provides recognition, resources, and assistance to active-duty personnel, National Guard, Reservists, and their families. From care packages and morale-boosting events to scholarships, financial aid, and community partnerships, the program ensures that those serving feel appreciated and supported. By strengthening the connection between military families and local communities, the VFW demonstrates enduring gratitude for their sacrifices. Supporting this program means showing respect, care, and tangible assistance to the men and women who defend our nation—both at home and abroad. Financial support of the MAP program can be made directly to the VFW on their website: <https://heroes.vfw.org/page/23289/donate/1> or the QR Code to the right.



Approved by:  
Dept. President  
Mike Yates

Ryan M. Harris  
Program Chair  
[Ryan.Harris.CISA@gmail.com](mailto:Ryan.Harris.CISA@gmail.com)

# Auxiliary Youth Activities

September 2025

**“Be the Lighthouse in Somebody’s Storm”**  
**“Bridging the Gap for Our Veterans”**



## Program Goal 4:

### **Illustrating America Art Contest**

#### **Youth Activities Program Goals:**

- Creating, Sponsoring, and Working with Youth Groups
- Youth Groups Supporting Our Veterans Citations
- Patriotism Through Literacy
- **Illustrating America**



The Illustrating America art contest encourages students in grades K through 8 to explore their artistic talents by creating original artwork that reflects patriotic themes. This national competition helps young artists gain confidence and recognition while allowing them to express their love of country creatively. We should all be excited to see the world through the eyes of our youth! To download and print the **Illustrating America Art Entry Contest**:

- Go to MALTA (<https://malta.vfwauxiliary.org>) and log in with your username/password.
- Once logged in, click on **“Member Resources”** on the *top* menu, then **“Youth Activities”** on the *left side* menu.
- Click on the Illustrating America Art Contest Entry Form which is in the middle of the page under the **“Illustrating America Art Contest”** and save to your computer (it is editable)

#### **September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month.**

- If you or someone you know is having suicidal thoughts, call 988.
- Florida has an organization that provides workforce veteran suicide prevention training:
  - The Fire Watch (<https://thefirewatch.org>) can train your company as “Watchstanders” to know the signs and resources. You can get trained too!

Approved By:  
Dept. President  
Mike Yates



Kristy Possert  
Auxiliary Youth Chairperson  
2025-26  
[goldenanchorteam@gmail.com](mailto:goldenanchorteam@gmail.com)