



Americanism

September 2026



Department President's Theme
"Growing Stronger for Our Veterans"

National President's Theme
"Serving America's Heroes"

Remember Our Veterans Through Patriotism in Action, S.W.A.P. & POP Displays Share. Inspire. Grow.

September is a time to **remember, educate, and honor**. As we observe **Patriot Day (September 11)** and **POW/MIA Recognition Day (September 18)**, let's also begin planning Veterans Day activities that promote Americanism in our communities.

POW/MIA Recognition Day – Sept 18

Help your community understand that **POW** means **Prisoner of War** and **MIA** means **Missing in Action**. These are more than letters—they represent heroes who served and the families still waiting. **Reminder:** Prisoner of War/Missing in Action special Award to one Auxiliary in each of the 5 Membership Classes that host an activity and/or event that educates the community that our VFW Auxiliary acronym for POW/MIA are more than just letters. Support **Operation Bring Them Home**, the 2026–2027 National Joint Special Project benefiting the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), by hosting educational events, POW/MIA ceremonies, and sharing their mission.

Reporting Reminder

- **Veterans & Family Support:** Monetary donations
- **Americanism:** Volunteer hours

POP Display Challenge

Create a Point-of-Purchase display that promotes the VFW Auxiliary, Americanism, volunteerism, and membership. Display it at your Post, library, school, community center, or local business.

Award Deadline: March 31, 2027 (Entry form required.)

S.W.A.P. – Share Wonderful Auxiliary Projects

Share 1–3 photos of your Americanism activities, 9/11 ceremonies, POW/MIA education, Flag Education, veteran recognition events, or POP displays. Inspire another Auxiliary to build on your ideas.

Remember 9/11

Honor the lives lost and recognize the courage of first responders, military members, and all who answered the call to serve. Consider hosting or participating in:

- 9/11 remembrance ceremonies
- Flag ceremonies or moments of silence
- Community patriotic programs
- Veteran appreciation events

Share Your Patriotism

Show us your events, ceremonies, and creative projects using **#AmericanismFL**. Together we can inspire Auxiliaries across Florida to remember, educate, and honor our nation's heroes.

Remember. Educate. Honor. Inspire.

☐☐☐ September 27 – Gold Star Mother's & Family's Day

Approved by:
Dept. of Fl. President
Kathy Wright



Lanaie Reed
Americanism Chairman
Dept of Florida 2026-2027
AmericanismFL@gmail.com





Patriotic Instructor



September 2026

Department President's Theme
"Growing Stronger for Our Veterans"

National President's Theme
"Serving America's Heroes"

Remembering Service and Sacrifice

September reminds us to honor those who sacrificed for our Nation while teaching respect for our country's symbols. As we remember the heroes of **September 11** and observe **National POW/MIA Recognition Day**, take time to participate in or host ceremonies that honor those who served, those who were lost, and those who remain missing.

Patriotic Instructor Spotlight

Explain why members should:

- Face the Flag
- Remove hats
- Place the right hand over the heart
- Remain silent during ceremonies

The Federal Flag Code

Discuss:

- When the Flag is flown
- Proper illumination at night
- Weather considerations
- Never allowing the Flag to touch the ground

Community Outreach

Host a community **Flag Education** program and participate in or organize **9/11 Remembrance** and **Prisoner of War/Missing in Action** Recognition Ceremonies to honor our nation's heroes.

Auxiliary Challenge

Invite a local school, Scout troop, or youth organization to learn proper Flag etiquette and attend or assist with a **9/11** or **Prisoner of War/Missing in Action** remembrance ceremony.

Recognition

Recognize a **Gold Star Family**, a former **Prisoner of War**, or the family of a **Missing in Action** service member within your community.

MALTA Reminder

Don't forget to report every patriotic activity, **9/11 ceremony**, **POW/MIA ceremony**, classroom presentation, and Flag education event.

"Patriotism begins with education and grows through example."

Patriotic Days

September 11 – Patriot Day 9/11
September 17 – Constitution Day
September 18 – U.S. Air Force Birthday

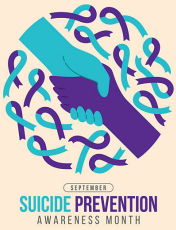
September 18 – POW/MIA Recognition Day
September 27 – Gold Star Mother's & Family's Day

Approved by:
Dept. of FL.
President
Kathy Wright



Lanaie Reed
Patriotic Instructor
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SEPTEMBER

"BUDDY" POPPY

2026

**VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARNS OF THE UNITED STATES
PROGRAMS DEPARTMENT
"BUDDY"® POPPY PROGRAM**



FALL CONFERENCE "BUDDY" POPPY DISPLAY CONTEST

These guidelines have been designed to place emphasis on the purpose and effectiveness of the displays. It is recommended that Department (State) contests rule be established in a like form.

RULES

(1) Displays will be presented and judged in three categories:

CATEGORY 1. **Public Promotion of Poppy Campaign** (Window, booth, parade, poster displays, campaign promotions, etc.)

- (a) Displays must be designed for public exposure and must bear a message soliciting a donation for and wearing of the VFW "Buddy"® Poppy.
- (b) At least one (1) of the poppies used in the display must be in its original form and color, with a label attached.

CATEGORY 2. **Memorial or Inspirational Displays** (Wreaths, memorial tablets or plaques, patriotic or devotional themes)

- (a) Displays must be designed to honor the dead, to inspire devotion to God and Country, or to dramatize the activities supported by the Buddy Poppy.
- (b) At least one (1) of the poppies used in the display must be in its original form and color, with a label attached.

CATEGORY 3. **Artistic or Decorative Use of Poppies** (Post Home displays, table center-pieces, corsages, pictures, plaques, models, scenes, hats, novelty pieces, etc.)

- (a) Any display not meeting the qualifications for Categories 1 or 2 shall automatically be entered in Category 3.
- (b) At least one (1) of the poppies used in the display must be in its original form and color, with a label attached.

(2) Buddy Poppy display entries must be constructed using Buddy Poppies purchased through the VFW Store. Any display found to have used non-VFW Buddy Poppies will be disqualified.

(Revised 5/8/26)



Make sure to report this display under "Buddy" Poppy – Document how many poppies were used.

Approved by:
Kathy Wright
Dept. President

MARY CONKLE
"Buddy" Poppy Chairman
mmac2123@comcast.net

Extension Revitalization

September

2026



Not attracting new members,

Failure to report in Programs

Not assisting veterans and families,

Limited new officers,

Not growing

Failure for members to attend District, Dept. meetings & trainings

Not enough members for a quorum at your meeting

Red Flag- Bad beach day-Rough surf and dangerous RIP currents

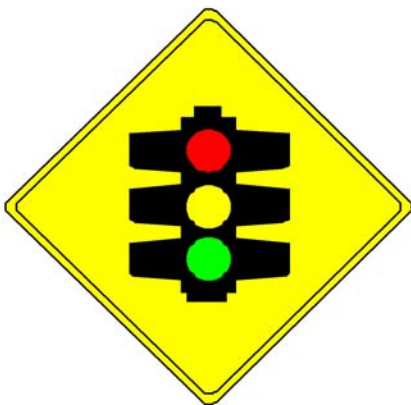
Resources to help maintain a healthy auxiliary

Building on the Foundation

Healthy Auxiliary Tool Kit (MALTA RESOURCES)

Healthy Auxiliary Checklist & member questionnaire

www.vfwauxfl.org



Approved by:
Dept. of Florida President
Kathy Wright

Debbie McCollum, Dept. Chief of Staff
ucfnole21@yahoo.com

HOSPITAL

September 2026

"Serving America's Heroes"



"Growing Stronger for Our Veterans"

Now is the time to plan with your Auxiliary for the 2026-2027 Auxiliary year, I am sharing with you some important dates where our Auxiliaries can honor our veteran patients at a VA or non-VA facility. Be sure to make it fun for the veterans and your volunteers!

Veterans Day

Christmas

Salute to Veteran patient week (Valentine's Day)

Vietnam Veterans Day

Memorial Day

Food baskets for Thanksgiving and Christmas (due by the 13th of each month).

Baby shower (date TBD)

Salute to Women Veterans.

Christmas tree lighting (date TBD).

Make cards, gifts, and snacks. Visit our veteran patients and brighten their day with a themed event, providing decorations, costumes, and activities.

Suicide prevention is for all Veterans, no matter what you're facing. Some Veterans wonder if they've "earned" the right to reach out. Maybe they feel someone else has it worse. Maybe they're not sure if their service qualifies. None of that changes the answer: Live in a rural area? Not enrolled? Never reached out before? Learn more, VA support is for every Veteran.

<https://news.va.gov/148703/suicide-prevention-veterans-no-matter-facing/>

Non-Traditional Holidays are days we create to share with veteran patients, to let them know we care, and they are not forgotten. Here are some examples:

National "Ice cream day".

National "Tropical fruit day".

National "I love my feet day".

National "Crazy hat day".

National "Sing a long day"

Be sure to take pictures to correspond with your report, and text to 386-453-6513.



Approve by:
Dept. of Fl. President
Kathy Wright

Karen Heikkila
Hospital/VAVA
hospitalauxfl@yahoo.com

Veterans Affairs Voluntary Services

Center for Development and Civic Engagement

September 2026

Program

Goals:

*Volunteer Recruitment and Recognition

*VAVS (CDCE)



*Women Veteran's Health Care

*Honors Escort

Why do we support the Veterans Administration?

To “Honor America’s veterans by providing Exceptional healthcare that improves their health and wellbeing.

New certified volunteers are needed every day to help offset the cost of healthcare, and to bring the caring support our veterans need. The process ensures our veteran patients will always be safe. Here are some tips to help you become a certified volunteer of the VA:

1. Contact your VAVS representative, Deputy, or the Department of Florida Hospital Chairman for contact information, and how to get an application. (Not all VA locations process new certified volunteers).



2. Be prepared for a background check, fingerprints, and training classes.
This can take from 1-6 months.

3. The requirements for a certified volunteer are to dress appropriately, wear your I.D. badge and vest, and sign up for at least 2–4-hour shifts per month.



4. Total hours from both hospital and VA programs equal your total volunteer hours.

Find your local VA Voluntary Service office at
www.volunteer.va.gov/directory/index.asp



Approved by:
Dept. of Florida President
Kathy Wright

Karen Heikkila
Hospital Chairman
V.A.V.S. Representative
hospitalauxfl@yahoo.com

"Gardening with Grace & Goals"

How is your garden of members doing? Your members need to know the legislative goals. Make sure they are Sharing Wonderful Auxiliary Projects "SWAP" so we all can honor our Veterans.

VFW's Action Corps is the VFW's grassroot lobbying effort. This group works to inform and educate veterans and service members on the initiatives and policies that affect benefits and take the voice of Veterans to local, state and national lawmakers.

Join: Action Corps Weekly

[www.VFW.org/advocacy/national-legislative service](http://www.VFW.org/advocacy/national-legislative-service)

Learn about pending legislation

Let's start by being informed so you and others are engaged:

- Identify your legislative representatives
- Ask questions of your representative on what they are doing for Veterans
- Auxiliary or VFW members are not permitted to endorse political candidates. You may attend events but do not wear anything that identifies you as an auxiliary member
- Use your resources under MALTA "Member Resources"
- Communicate by emails or phone calls to legislators
- Be familiar with both 2026 and 2027 VFW legislative action goals
- Use social media to share information about community leaders.
- Have your Auxiliary Chairman bring up important issues, use monthly newsletters and information posted on Dept of Florida facebook page.

Florida Senators: Senior – Rick Scott 202-224-5274

Jr. Senator – Ashley Moody 202-224-3041

Your voice matters and will be heard! Consult the Department of Florida and MALTA website for legislative resources.



Have you made a video about your legislative actions? How about reporting any action for legislation?

Need help - Send me an email

Approved by
Dept. of Florida Aux President
Kathy Wright



Betty A. Bailey,
Chairman 26/27
Bann652@aol.com





DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA MEMBERSHIP SEPTEMBER 2026 ENGAGE



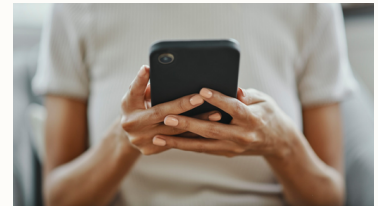
We have September and October to reach our first Membership Milestone 95%

- Let's engage with our annual members and encourage them to convert to life!
- We have lots of ceremonies at our Posts and ask all attending, "Are you a member of our VFW Auxiliary?" if they say no hand them a membership brochure.
- You can order up to 50 free membership brochures from National, the order form can be found on M.A.L.T.A under membership resources.



Last month we asked "Have you sent out your Auxiliary annual members renewal notices?" It's time to follow up... Let's reach out to each annual member by text or phone call. Send a cute reminder about renewing their membership dues. Explain that their membership can help a veteran! How many members converted to life?

BE ENGAGED!

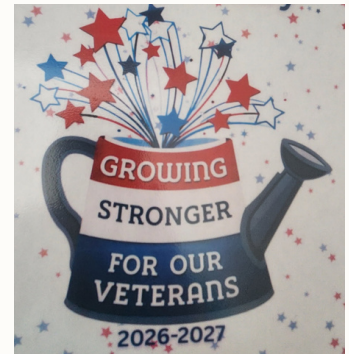


Engage with your members and explain awards they can receive from National...

NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM AWARDS for Members:

1. 5 Member Recruiter Pin. Each VFW and VFW Auxiliary member who recruits five (5) new and/or rejoined members to the VFW Auxiliary will receive a pin. Each member will be placed into a recruiter drawing for a \$100 Visa Gift Card.
2. National Membership Achievement Recruiter Award. Each VFW and VFW Auxiliary member who recruits twenty (20) new and/or rejoined members to the VFW Auxiliary will receive a National Membership Achievement Recruiter Award. Each member will be placed into a drawing to win a \$400 Visa Gift Card.

VFW Auxiliary Treasurers on all levels are not eligible for this award. The Department Treasurer must enter membership in MALTA with credit given to the recruiter by June 10, 2027. New and /or rejoined members must be recruited to the VFW Auxiliary from July 1, 2026, through May 31, 2027.



Approved by:
Dept. of Florida Aux. President
Kathy Wright

Holly Evans
Membership/Mentoring
Chairman 2026-2027



Department of Florida Membership/Mentoring September 2026 Invite, Invest, Include & Engage

How are you “Gardening” with your current members?

- Did you invite your officers to School of Instruction (SOI) in August? If not please plan for next year. This is a fabulous opportunity to introduce members to our officer duties.
- Speak with your District President and ask about a School of Instruction at your next District meeting. Invite your members who couldn't attend the Department SOI.
- Invite those that attended SOI to speak at your next meeting on what they learned, include them and make them feel valued.
- Find the PowerPoints on our Department of Florida website from SOI. Mentor those that didn't attend by taking the time to show these and any notes taken at the conference.
- Introduce your programs by using the monthly promotions. These are fantastic tools to help you with explaining our National Programs.
- If you are still looking for chairman at the Auxiliary level, show your members all the pictures shared on Facebook from SOI and show them how much fun our programs can be. Introduce the September program promotions... that might help excited members to become more engaged.
- Teach your members how to navigate M.A.L.T.A. and show off our Department website www.vfwauxfl.org Introduce reporting.

Approved by:
Dept. of Fl. President
Kathy Wright

So proud of the Membership
tiered garden...Gardening
with Grace & Goals this past
SOI showcasing our garden
full of Programs!



Thank you to all those that
attended the
SOI Program Fair in Orlando
a few weeks ago.

All of your Dept. of Florida
Chairmen spent the evening
mentoring the large group of VFW
and Auxiliary members who
walked through the fair.



Holly Evans
Membership/Mentoring
Chairman
2026-2027



VFW NATIONAL HOME



September 2026

Your Donation can make a difference.

Hosting a Fundraiser.

The goal is to have an impact on families that come to the National Home so they can begin to heal, learn and thrive.

"Every gift makes a Difference"

Give once or monthly



VFW AUXILIARY
UNWAVERING SUPPORT FOR UNCOMMON HEROES®

info@vfwnationalhome.org

866-483-9642



Help with the VFW National Home back to School Campaign. Help the littlest heroes. Your generosity can make a meaningful difference in the lives of Veterans' children and families. Give today to help provide school supplies, academic support and essential family services. Together, we can give these children the tools, encouragement, and opportunities they need to succeed.

4x8

**Your personalized
Message engraved**

4x8 3 Lines \$200

8X8 4-6 Lines \$500

8x8

**The funds collected
for Bricks are put
into an Endowment.**

**Forms are available
on the Dept. website**

**A permanent fund
where the principal
is invested and only
the earnings are
used for a specific
cause.**



**Military &
Veterans
Families
succeed
with our
help**



Approved by:
Dept. of Florida Aux. President
Kathy Wright

Jeanne F Laurine
VFW National Home
Jeannelaurine8@gmail.com



DEPARTMENT PRESIDENT'S SPECIAL PROJECT

SEPTEMBER 2026



HEY THERE FLORIDA FAMILY? HOW YA DOING??

September brings us to the 25th anniversary of 9/11. What better way to honor the Heroes from that day and the many days to follow than to organize a HUGE fundraiser for President Kathy's Special Project, Esophageal Cancer Research and the National Joint Special Project Operation Bring Them Home ??

How about organizing a "BLANKET TOSS" with a dinner beforehand? I'VE OUTLINED TWO DIFFERENT WAYS TO DO IT BELOW:

OPTION #1

1. NEED ONE QUILT, (HOMEMADE AND PATRIOTIC IF POSSIBLE) .
2. EVERYONE WHO WISHES TO DONATE COMES TO THE BLANKET WHICH IS STRETCHED TIGHT BY VOLUNTEERS.
3. ANOTHER VOLUNTEER RECORDS THE NAME OF THE PERSON DONATING AND HOW MUCH. THE DONOR THROWS THEIR MONEY INTO THE MIDDLE OF THE BLANKET.
4. OTHER VOLUNTEERS SHOULD BE WALKING THROUGH THE CROWD WITH A COLLECTION BUCKET TO GATHER DONATIONS FROM THOSE UNABLE / UNWILLING TO COME TO THE BLANKET.
5. WHOMEVER THROWS IN THE MOST MONEY GETS THE QUILT.
6. DON'T FORGET TO INVITE THE PUBLIC

OPTION #2

1. NEED ONE QUILT, (HOMEMADE AND PATRIOTIC IF POSSIBLE) AND A CARD TABLE OR OTHER SMALL STAND .
2. PARTICIPANTS "BUY" A CHANCE TO TOSS THE QUILT ONTO THE STAND. YOU CAN SET THE PRICE LEVEL WHEREVER YOU THINK YOUR GROUP WILL PARTICIPATE. \$5 PER TOSS? Or 2 TOSSES FOR \$5?
3. THE DONOR TOSSES THE QUILT ONTO THE STAND. A "SUCCESSFUL" TOSS IS ONE THAT STAYS COMPLETELY ON THE STAND.
4. SUCCESSFUL TOSSEES RECEIVE A SMALL PRIZE.....A CERTIFICATE, A DRINK TICKET, ETC.
5. DON'T FORGET TO INVITE THE PUBLIC

DON'T FORGET!!!!

Donations go under Americanism and must be accompanied by the required donation form. AND.....The actual report for the event report goes under Veterans and Family Support Program.

TOGETHER, ONE TOSS AT A TIME, WE CAN "WRAP
OUR PROJECT IN SUPPORT AND CONTINUE
"GROWING STRONGER FOR OUR VETERANS".

Approved by:
Dept. of Florida President
Kathy Wright

TEAM
WRIGHT

BECKY KIEFFER
DEPT. PRES. SPECIAL
PROJECT
Bkiso2012@gmail.com





Dept. of Florida VFW Auxiliary Scholarships Program September 2026

Plant the Seeds. Inspire the Voice. Create the Future.
September Focus: Follow Up. Build Momentum.
Turn Interest into Entries.

September is the month to move from sharing information to helping applicants finish. Reconnect with every school, teacher, counselor, youth group and student contacted in August. A personal reminder can be the difference between interest and a completed entry.

September Action Challenge: Make Five Follow-Ups

- Revisit at least five August school or community contacts.
- Secure one classroom visit, school announcement, newsletter item or youth-group presentation.
- Ask each contact to identify students who are interested in entering.
- Schedule two reminder dates before the October 31 deadline.
- Confirm applicants have official forms and the local VFW Post's exact submission instructions.

The October 31 Countdown

Voice of Democracy Grades 9-12

3-5 minute recorded audio essay
plus a written copy
National first prize: \$35,000

Patriot's Pen Grades 6-8

300-400 word written essay
National first prize: \$5,000

2026-2027 Theme: "What a Veteran Taught Me About America"

Student entries are due by midnight October 31, 2026, to a participating local VFW Post through the submission method approved by that Post.

SPORT CLIPS

VFW HELP A HERO SCHOLARSHIP

Spring 2027 application window: Aug. 1 - Nov. 15
Up to \$5,000 for qualified service members and veterans

Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship Spotlight

Spring 2027 applications are being accepted August 1 through November 15, 2026. Applications are online only.

- Scholarships of up to \$5,000 are available for tuition and fees and are paid directly to the accredited school.
- Eligible applicants include qualified active-duty, Guard/Reserve, retired or honorably discharged service members and veterans who completed initial training and hold or separated at the rank of E-5 or below.
- Applicants must demonstrate financial need and be accepted to or enrolled in a VA-approved program at an accredited post-secondary school.

Share it with: Post members, student veterans, local colleges and trade schools, veteran service offices, transitioning service members and military families.

Apply and learn more: vfw.org/Scholarship

Help Students Finish Strong

- Coordinate with the VFW Post Scholarship Chairman before distributing submission directions.
- Use the current official entry forms and verify the grade, format, word or time limits, signatures and deadline.
- Encourage students to begin now, proofread carefully and submit original work in their own voice.
- Follow up around October 10 and again during the final week - do not wait until deadline day.
- Plan how every participant will be recognized, not only the winners.

Keep Every Scholarship Seed Growing

Continuing Education: Applications remain open for eligible Auxiliary members, spouses, sons and daughters age 21 or older. Four \$2,250 scholarships are awarded; applications are due February 15, 2027.

Patriotic Art: Reconnect with high school art teachers now. Original 2-D and 3-D entries for grades 9-12 are due to a participating Auxiliary by March 31, 2027.

Recognition and Reporting

Begin a participant list and save copies of flyers, emails, school announcements and photos. Reports may include follow-up contacts, presentations, forms shared, social media promotion, Help A Hero outreach, entries in progress and Red Carpet recognition plans. Department and National Red Carpet entries are due March 31, 2027.

Build Your Scholarship Story File Now

- Names of contacts and dates of follow-up
- Copies of flyers, forms, emails and social posts
- Photos of displays, presentations and school visits
- Number of students interested or working on entries
- Plans for certificates, invitations and Red Carpet recognition

Every follow-up, every application shared and every student encouraged helps Florida grow stronger for our veterans.

Approved by:
Dept. of Florida President
Kathy Wright



Please reach out to me if you have any questions!

Stoney Lawrentz-Edwards
Scholarship Chairperson
StoneyLawrentz@gmail.com

VETERANS & FAMILY SUPPORT

September 2026

GARDENING
WITH
GRACE

September



GROWING
STRONGER
FOR OUR
VETERANS

Veteran & Military
Suicide



Suicide touches about five family members a day and 135 friends and family a day. On a national level Veterans commit suicide on average 17 to 18 deaths a day. That is down from "22 a day" in 2022. While suicide is down, one suicide is one too many.

Did you know that one family member of a veteran commits suicide every three days?

What makes Veterans commit suicide? Pain, financial problems, depression and anxiety, the lack of VA care, health problems, the shock of losing a community that they have worked with for years. Moral wounds that happened during combat are also a factor. PTSD and moral wounds go hand and hand. Moral injuries happen when a veteran has seen an act that deeply affects their moral values. It could be if a veteran kills a civilian during combat in a split-second decision. It could be when a soldier watches leadership betrays their fellow service members.

Veterans die by suicide at a higher rate than non-veterans. . Why does it matter? The veterans were not getting the health care they needed in the year before the veteran's death.

Mental health and chronic pain effects a veteran in the most devastating way. Nine percent of deaths are caused by the pain that a veteran feels every day. Veterans feel a loss of purpose or reduced quality of life due to the inability to do their favorite things or even to care for themselves. They do not want to be a burden on others. Feelings of isolation may also contribute to suicidal tendencies.

Approved by:
Dept. of Florida Aux. President
Kathy Wright

I am a veteran of a Veteran. I see the struggle that my veteran lives with every day. It does affect me. It affects families, friends, and our community. With the suicide death rate being so high **DID YOU KNOW** that a military spouse dies by suicide every 8 days.

How can I promote Suicide Awareness?

Volunteering and donating to programs that help support suicide awareness. Consider the following fundraisers to raise awareness.

Host a Gala— on every place setting put a tear drop.

Light the night— Have an event, for a donation sell candles to light or use battery operated candles and place them around your VFW to raise money and awareness for suicide prevention.

Concert—Organize a concert, sell tickets, and take donations.

BBQ— Organize a community barbeque to help raise awareness.

Please make sure to have information about what your event is for and where the money will be going.

Remember

If you or someone you know is thinking about committing suicide, there is help. Please pick up the phone and dial 988 or call 911. There is someone out there to listen to and help.

"MY LIFE IS BETTER WITH YOU IN IT"

Victoria Michaels



Kelly Barr
Veterans and Family Service
kabarr66@msn.com

Veterans and Families Support



Veteran & Military
Suicide



Honoring our Veterans after Disability or Death

There are many star families, some are official, meaning they have been designated by legislative actions. Some are symbols and indicate how the families are recognized because of the soldier's sacrifice and or connection to the military.

Gold Star Families— is the tradition of the US military to recognize the families of loved ones lost in combat. Gold Star families have a foundation that you can donate to by going to <https://americangoldstarfamilies.org>. This Foundation provides hope, honor and healing for grieving families

Blue Star Families is for families who have an immediate family member currently on active duty, Reservist or National Guard. This is a tradition that has been in effect since WWI. The blue star symbolizes hope and service. To make a donation go to <https://bluestaram.org>. This foundation helps families thrive.

Silver Star Families are families of an injured or ill veteran. Silver Star families are recognized by the US Military. The Silver star honors the ongoing challenges that a family faces day to day. To make a donation go to <https://silverstarfamilies.org>

Bronze Star Families are families of disabled or veterans who died prematurely from military disabilities. The bronze star represents the lasting impact from services related illness, injuries and death that have impacted the service member's family. The Bronze Star families were officially recognized by executive order in 1944 across all branches of the service. To make a donation go to <https://valorinstitute.org>.

White Star Families is a grassroots designation for a family who has lost a loved one—such as a military service member, veteran, first responder, or medical frontline worker—to suicide.

To make a donation go to info@onetribefoundation.org

Approved by:

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Kathy Wright

Kelly Barr

Veterans and Family Support
kabarr66@msn.com



Youth Activities September 2026

Youth Suicide Prevention

In 2026, youth suicide remained a leading cause of death among people ages 10–24. Suicide is preventable, and timely support can help young people facing depression, hopelessness, or suicidal thoughts.

2026 Youth Suicide Trends

- **Deaths:** Second leading cause for ages 10–14; third for ages 15–24.
- **Ideation:** About 1 in 5 high school students seriously considered suicide; 14.8% reported persistent thoughts.
- **Attempts:** One in 5 attempts was followed by another within a year.
- **Rates:** 19.5 per 100,000 for male teens; 4.6 for female teens.

Protective Factors and Supports

- School-based mental health programs: 20% lower suicide risk.
- Crisis hotlines: 35% lower attempt mortality.
- Treatment: 80% of treated teens report fewer suicidal thoughts.
- Strong family bonds and close friendships reduce risk by 50% and 60%, respectively.

Risk is shaped by mental health, access to lethal means, and social stressors, but early support, treatment, crisis services, and strong relationships can reduce it.

Prevention and Warning Signs

Suicide is preventable. As young people face new challenges, open conversations and timely support can help address depression, hopelessness, and suicidal thoughts.

Florida's 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey found:

- Sad or hopeless: 24.2% male; 43.4% female.
- Seriously considered suicide: 10.9% male; 20.2% female.
- Made a plan: 8.2% male; 15.5% female.
- Attempted suicide: 6.0% male; 9.6% female.
- Self-harmed without wanting to die: 0.5% male; 21% female.

Protective Factors

Protective factors at home, school, and in the community can lower risk and strengthen resilience.

Individual Supports

- Healthy development, school success, self-esteem, self-regulation, and coping skills
- Positive peer, activity, work, faith, or community connections

Family Supports

- Consistent structure, monitoring, and expectations
- Supportive family relationships and clear values

School and Community Supports

- Mentors, skill-building opportunities, and participation in school or community activities
- Positive norms, clear expectations, and physical and psychological safety

VFW Auxiliary Call to Action: You can make a difference by engaging youth in ALL VFW Auxiliary Programs, providing positive support and connection. Reach out to local youth groups to see how your Auxiliary can get involved.



Approved by
Dept. of Florida President
Kathy Wright