

VETERANS & FAMILY SUPPORT

PROMOTE	Homeless Veterans initiatives Veteran Mental Health Awareness & Suicide Prevention VFW National Veterans Service (NVS)
SUPPORT	Operation Bring Them Home Caregivers of Veterans Veterans & Military Support Programs Aid to Veterans, Service Members & Their Families Veterans Village Ft. McCoy

PROGRAM GOALS:

- ❖ Joint National Special Project 2026– 2027 OPERATION BRING THEM HOME
- ❖ National Veterans Service (NVS)
- ❖ Military Assistance Program (MAP)
- ❖ Unmet Needs & VFW “Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship”
- ❖ VFW Mental Wellness Campaign & Suicide Prevention
- ❖ Disaster Relief
- ❖ Veterans Crisis Line
- ❖ Family Caregivers
- ❖ Veteran’s Village Ft. McCoy
- ❖ VFW Foundation Grants

Our Veterans & Family Support (VFS) Program initiatives in 2026-2027 will be supporting National President Donna K. Mills’ theme in **“SERVING OUR VETERANS”** & our Department of Florida’s President Kathy Wright’s theme **“GROWING STRONGER FOR OUR VETERANS”**!!! We will be putting on our gardening hats & gloves, gathering our tools, & going to work in the garden planting support for our Veterans, the Military, & their families.

The National Joint (VFW & Aux) Special Project **“OPERATION BRING THEM HOME”** fundraiser is very special to our National President. This initiative will support DPAA (Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency), bring awareness on their work, & support their efforts in Family Resource Sampling (FRS) through information sharing. It’s a new flower in our garden for VFS & look for information in an upcoming bulletin.

Promoting **NATIONAL VETERAN SERVICES (NVS)** is an integral part of our perennial VFS Garden, where VFW Accredited Service Officers & Pre-discharge representatives can help our military receive their benefits & entitlements - **FREE OF CHARGE**. Let’s help our Veterans & host a Veteran Service Officer Day, send thank you cards to our VFW Department Service Officers, our County Veteran Service offices, or do something special for our Post Service Officers that go out of their way to help Veterans.

In our Garden the **NATIONAL MILITARY SERVICE** continues growing our mission this year in supporting those currently serving. This part of the VFS garden include the (MAP) Military Appreciation Program which includes “Adopt a Unit”, sending troop boxes, card exchange programs, helping Units before, during, & after deployment. etc. Please note that regrettably, Auxiliaries will no longer be able to request money for these initiatives, but grants can be requested through the VFW Foundation. For information, forms, & links checkout the VFW Website: <https://www.vfw.org/community/troop-support>

Included in this part of our “Growing Stronger for Our Veterans” garden is Unmet needs, “Sports Clips Help a Hero Scholarship” & VFW Student Veteran Support Grants. The VFW Student Support Grants provides difficult to get funding for specific student veteran events for Veteran Students not affiliated with a Students Veterans of America Chapter. For additional Information, forms & links look at VFW Website: <https://www.vfw.org/assistance/student-veterans-support>

This year, we continue our commitment to **MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS AND SUICIDE PREVENTION**, building on the important work we have supported through programs such as K9s For Warriors, Know the 5 Signs, and our Tear Drop Program. We are also proud to recognize and support the many additional programs dedicated to assisting not only our Veterans and Military members, but their families as well. A key focus of our efforts remains the **Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS) and Mental Wellness Campaign**—an initiative that reflects our ongoing mission to provide a strong and compassionate network of support for those who have served our country & family members. This initiative helps educate

veterans and communities about mental health and wellness while providing resources and tools to recognize and intervene when veterans may be in crisis. Additional resources are available through the Veterans of Foreign Wars Mental Wellness Program. The heartbreaking reality that an estimated 20 veterans a day are lost to suicide is far too high a price for the sacrifices they have made in service to our nation. Resources: <https://www.vfw.org/assistance/mental-wellness>

Together, we can plant seeds of support for **HOMELESS VETERANS** by expanding access to resources and strengthening assistance programs within our communities. Through Stand Downs, veteran housing and assistance programs, food and clothing drives, job fairs, and community outreach efforts, we aim to build a connected network of support for our Veterans, active military members, and their families. By partnering with organizations such as the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, Volunteers of America, county Veterans offices, faith-based organizations, Vet Centers, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, we can work together to provide meaningful assistance and long-term solutions for those in need. In addition, the Veterans of Foreign Wars and Humana initiative, **UNITING TO COMBAT HUNGER (UTCH)**, helps address food insecurity among Veterans and military families through food drives and food pantry support programs. More information about this initiative is available through the VFW Foundation. The work ahead will not be easy, but the impact can be life changing. By planting seeds of support, we can offer homeless Veterans not just assistance, but hope, dignity, and a helping hand toward a brighter future.

There are many additional components of the VFS Program that continue to grow stronger & to make a meaningful impact on the lives of Veterans, service members, and military families. One important effort includes raising donations for **DISASTER RELIEF**, providing aid to those affected by natural disasters and unexpected hardships. We also continue to promote awareness of the **VETERANS CRISIS LINE** and the critical resources it offers to Veterans in need.

Another important focus of our mission this year is to honor, recognize, and support the **CAREGIVERS** of Veterans, military service members, and their families. These often-unsung heroes give so much of themselves while asking for little in return. Some are family members, while others are compassionate individuals who dedicate their time, strength, and care to supporting those who have served. Their commitment and sacrifice play a vital role in the well-being of our military and Veteran community, and they deserve our gratitude, recognition, and support.

Another special component unique to our department is **VETERANS VILLAGE** — the only Department with its own veteran-supported living facility. Proudly known as the “Best Bed & Breakfast” for our Veterans of Foreign Wars members, Auxiliary members, and their families, Veterans Village provides a welcoming place of fellowship, support, and connection for those who have served.

Just as a garden depends on fences, trellises, and stakes for strength and support, our programs are reinforced through the valuable grants provided by the VFW Foundation. These grants help Posts and Auxiliaries continue their mission of serving Veterans and strengthening their communities.

SOME OF THESE IMPORTANT GRANT PROGRAMS ARE:

- **VFW #StillServing Grant** — Grants offered to Posts, Districts, and Auxiliaries to help offset expenses related to community service projects and outreach efforts.
- **Uniting for Veterans Grant** — A limited matching grant available to VFW Posts and Auxiliaries that supports monetary, food, or item donations to local food banks, pantries, and homeless relief organizations.
- **Post Assistance Grant (PAG)** - A grant program designed to assist VFW Posts with building and equipment repairs, helping improve or restore their ability to continue serving Veterans and their communities.



Jean Lockwood – Chairman
Veterans & Family Support
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DEPARTMENT AWARDS

1. Certificate and a monetary award to one Auxiliary in each of the Membership classes for the most outstanding promotion of VFW resources for veterans, service members and their families. Entry form is required and available on the Dept. website under Programs Veterans & Family Support and also in MALTA under Member Resources.

VFW Auxiliaries must send the required entry form to the VFW Auxiliary Department Veterans & Family Support Chairman by March 31, 2027 for judging. The Auxiliary Department Veterans & Family Support Chairman must sign and send a copy of the completed Department-winning entry form to the VFW Auxiliary National Veterans & Family Support Ambassador by April 30, 2027 for judging.

2. Certificate and monetary award to one Auxiliary in each of the Membership classes for the most outstanding activity and/or event promoting resources, including those for PTS, and assistance for veterans and their families (resource fairs, mental health clinics, etc.)

VFW Auxiliaries must send the required entry form to the VFW Auxiliary Department Veterans & Family Support Chairman by March 31, 2027 for judging. The Auxiliary Department Veterans & Family Support Chairman must sign and send a copy of the completed Department-winning entry form to the VFW Auxiliary National Veterans & Family Support Ambassador by April 30, 2027 for judging.

NATIONAL AWARDS

Awards for Auxiliaries

1. Citation and \$25 to one VFW Auxiliary in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the most outstanding promotion of VFW resources for veterans, service members and their families. Entry form is required and available in MALTA Member Resources.

VFW Auxiliaries must send the required entry form to the VFW Auxiliary Department Veterans & Family Support Chairman by March 31, 2027 for judging.

Citations will be mailed directly to winning VFW Auxiliaries from VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters and money will be deposited into the VFW Auxiliary account after the 2027 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.

2. Citation and \$25 to one VFW Auxiliary in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the most outstanding activity and/or event promoting resources, including those for PTS, and assistance for veterans and their families (resource fairs, mental health clinics, etc.) Entry form is required and available in MALTA Member Resources.

VFW Auxiliaries must send the required entry form to the VFW Auxiliary Department Veterans & Family Support Chairman by March 31, 2027 for judging.

Citations will be mailed directly to winning VFW Auxiliaries from VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters and money will be deposited into the VFW Auxiliary account after the 2027 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.