



Friends and fellow members of the VFW Auxiliary,

Thirty-seven years ago, right here in Orlando, a ten-year-old girl sat in these very seats watching Mrs. Lucille Plant lead with grace, confidence, and pride. She watched the officers parade and the flag bearers march with honor—and in that moment, something stirred in her heart. A whisper said, “Someday, you could serve like her. Someday, you could make a difference.” That little girl was me.

My name is Maria Katzmire, and I am proud to serve as your Department of Florida Auxiliary 50/50 Raffle Chairperson and Lake City VAVS Representative. Today, I humbly ask for your vote as I seek the honor of serving as Guard for the Department of Florida VFW Auxiliary for the 2026–2027 year.

I joined the VFW Auxiliary as a Junior Girl under my father, Jerry Sandlin, who became a member of Post 8255 in District 6 back in 1987. Since then, I’ve had the privilege of serving in nearly every chair at both the local and district levels. I didn’t do this for titles—I did it because I believe we earn the right to lead by serving first. Through the years, I’ve learned from our members, our past presidents, and the living legends who have shaped this great organization. Their wisdom and passion have guided me, and now, I hope to give back everything they’ve so generously shared.

When I look at our VFW Auxiliary, I don’t just see an organization—I see a family, a promise, and a legacy of service. As your Guard, I want to protect that legacy and help it grow. Together, we can reach more veterans, support more families, and strengthen the bond that holds our communities together. We can ensure that every veteran knows they are seen, valued, and never forgotten—not because we speak the loudest, but because we show up when it matters most.

They say knowledge is power, and I believe that’s true—but only when we use it to lift others up. I’ve always loved learning and sharing that knowledge to empower our members, because when one of us grows, we all grow. The little girl who dreamed of standing here is still inside me—still believing in the power of service, still driven by the same love for this organization that inspired her all those years ago.

If you’ll trust me with your vote, I promise to serve with integrity, dedication, and heart. Together, we will continue building a future defined by compassion, unity, and unwavering commitment—to our veterans, to their families, and to one another. Together, we’ll write the next chapter of service. For our veterans. For our families. For our future.

Thank you.