

SUNSHINE E-NEWSLETTER



June 2026 Issue NO 12

Team Florida

Building Bridges For Veterans



FROM THE DESK OF THE DEPARTMENT PRESIDENT



Greetings,

As we reach the end of the year, I want to take a moment to express my gratitude to all the members of this Department for your unwavering support and dedication to our veterans. Together, we have achieved so much.

Your thoughtful and heartfelt donations have truly enriched the lives of the veterans at Veterans Village. Additionally, you have played a vital role in educating students in your communities about patriotism and the importance of being good citizens.

The success of our fundraisers has enabled us to support many worthy causes, such as The National Home, and provide numerous items to VA hospitals. While the impact of our efforts may sometimes seem unnoticed, I assure you, it does not go unrecognized. Your commitment demonstrates that we, as the auxiliary, are meeting the needs of our veterans while also supporting their families and communities.

We have worked together, "Building Bridges for Our Veterans", while continuingly "Bridging the Gap for Our Veterans" with our programs. Our collective efforts have amplified the voices of our veterans and helped advocate for meaningful legislation in government. For this, I give to you the Department of Florida:

THANK YOU for a job well done.

Michael Yates
President



Scan the above QR code for the Sunshine E. Newsletter video presentation featuring photos of Auxiliaries from across the state.

VFW District 1 Marks Ninth Year Supporting Flora-Bama's World-Famous Mullet Toss

Department Commander Scott Hice joined VFW and Auxiliary members from District 1 to support the 2026 Flora-Bama Mullet Toss from 23–26 April, marking their ninth-year volunteering at the iconic Florida–Alabama beach event. The three-day competition draws thousands of participants who try to throw a mullet the farthest along a 200-foot course, with all proceeds benefiting children's charities in Northwest Florida and Southeast Alabama.

Volunteers spent Thursday hauling equipment, setting up tents, fencing, sound systems, and the full course layout. From Friday through Sunday, they staffed registration, measured throws, managed crowds, maintained the throwing circle, and secured equipment each night—often working 11–12-hour shifts in the sun. Contestants ranged from age 2 to over 80, and roughly 2,000 people competed, with daily awards for top throws.

This year's event raised over \$40,000 for local school programs and organizations such as the Community Drug & Alcohol Council. Flora-Bama organizers continue to welcome District 1 each year for their professionalism and dedication to veterans and the community.



Congressman Diaz-Balart Delivers \$9 Million for New Veterans Center at VFW Post 7721 Event


VFW Post 7721 hosted a special community event on Tuesday, April 7th, coordinated in partnership with County Commissioner Burt Saunders and the office of Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart. The gathering brought together local leaders, veterans, and community members to celebrate a major federal investment in Collier County's veterans' services.

During the event, Congressman Diaz-Balart presented a \$9 million check from the U.S. Congress Community Project Funds to county officials and VFW leadership. The funding will support the creation of a new Veterans Center on Golden Gate Parkway, located on the same campus as the state-funded, 120-bed Veterans Nursing Home currently under development.

The Veterans Center will occupy an existing building on the property, which will undergo significant renovations to serve as a dedicated resource hub for local veterans. The project represents a major step forward in expanding services, support, and outreach for the region's veteran community.



STATE VETERANS' NURSING HOME



A Long Term Care Campus:

- 120 Skilled Nursing Beds
- Dementia Care Unit
- 40 Slot Adult Day Health Care (First of its kind in the nation!)
- Outpatient Therapy
- Community Wellness Center



Safety Harbor VFW Post 10093 Participates in Bay Pines VA Hospital Stand Down

Safety Harbor VFW Post 10093 proudly took part in the Bay Pines VA Hospital Stand Down event on March 28, 2026, joining fellow veteran service organizations, volunteers, and community partners in supporting local veterans in need. The Stand Down, hosted annually by Bay Pines VA Healthcare System, provides essential services such as healthcare screenings, benefits assistance, housing resources, clothing, and food for at-risk and homeless veterans. Post 10093 members were on-site to assist veterans, share information about VFW programs, and offer direct support throughout the event. Their participation underscored the post's ongoing commitment to outreach and advocacy for veterans across the region, ensuring that those who served receive the care, respect, and resources they deserve.



Auxiliary 8189 Leads the Charge with Two Successful Buddy Poppy Drives

VFW Auxiliary 8189 member Laurie Rash continues to demonstrate outstanding dedication to veterans and her community by organizing and running two separate Buddy Poppy Drives in recent weeks. Her efforts not only raised awareness of the Buddy Poppy program but also helped generate essential support for veterans and their families. Through careful planning, coordination, and hands-on leadership, Laurie ensured both drives were well staffed, visible, and welcoming to the public. Her commitment reflects the heart of the Buddy Poppy tradition—honoring the fallen while supporting the living. Great job, Laurie! Your hard work makes a meaningful difference and showcases the strong spirit of service within Auxiliary 8189.





Sherrri GOLDER

★ CANDIDATE FOR ★
DEPARTMENT GUARD
— 2026-2027 —

VFW AUXILIARY, DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA

★ As your candidate for Department Guard, I stand firmly anchored in the values that define our great organization — **PATRIOTISM, SERVICE** and **UNWAVERING LOYALTY** to those who served.



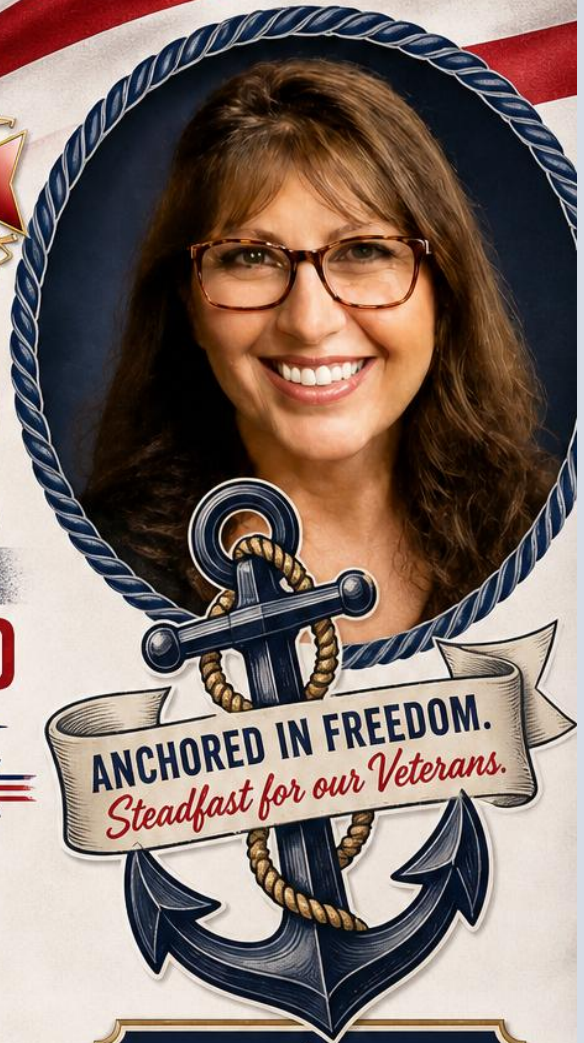
★ An anchor holds steady through every storm, and that is the strength I bring to this position: **steady leadership, strong commitment, and a heart dedicated to our mission.**



★ I am ready to stand the watch, protect our traditions and support every member who walks through our doors.



★ Together, anchored in purpose and united in service, we will keep our Department strong, steady and moving forward for the Veterans and families who depend on us.



ANCHORED IN FREEDOM.
Steadfast for our Veterans.

★ ★ ★
**Our veterans
stood the watch
for our freedom.
NOW IT IS OUR
TURN TO STAND
THE WATCH
FOR THEM.**
★ ★ ★

STEADY ★ STRONG ★ AMERICAN.

Anchored in service to Veterans.

★ I RESPECTFULLY ASK FOR YOUR SUPPORT. ★



VFW
AUXILIARY
DEPARTMENT

Carole JOHNSON

Forged in Legacy

★ FOR VFW AUXILIARY DEPARTMENT GUARD ★



INSPIRE

Empowering every member to lead with vision and heart.



UNITED

Stronger together— one team, one mission, one VFW Auxiliary.



STEADFAST

Upholding our values with pride and unwavering commitment.



SERVICE

Answering the call. Supporting veterans, families, and communities.



OUR STRENGTH IS OUR PURPOSE

We honor the past by living our mission today.

We stand together for what matters most.

We serve with courage and kindness.

We build a legacy of impact and hope.

Guard at the Door

ADVOCATE ON THE FLOOR

ONE MISSION. MANY HEARTS. LASTING IMPACT.

Rising to Serve. Committed to Veterans. Dedicated to Our Communities.



★
**TOGETHER,
WE EMPOWER.
WE SUPPORT.
WE HONOR.
WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE.**

★
Our Veterans.
Our Communities.
Our Future.

**STANDING FOR
VETERANS.
WORKING FOR
FAMILIES.
BUILDING FOR
TOMORROW.**

COURAGE ★ RESPECT ★ COMMITMENT ★ HOPE ★ UNITY

★ PROUD TO SERVE THE VFW AUXILIARY AND THE GREAT STATE OF AMERICA ★

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- Youth Program – Lanaie Reed lanwileth@gmail.com
- Program Advisor - Debbie Tilley dktilley@comcast.net

Keep up to date with the monthly promotions from your chairmen!

TAKE NOTE: “FOR ASSISTANCE LOGGING ON TO OUR REPORTING WEBSITE:

CONTACT DEBBIE TILLEY @ dktilley@comcast.net or call 904-460-9345

DO NOT USE THE CONTACT US BUTTON!”

The Heart of a Volunteer

Being a volunteer is more than giving time,
It is sharing your passion, your heart, and your light.
There is no paycheck waiting at the end of the day,
Only the feeling that somehow
You helped someone along the way.

It is standing beside our Veterans,
Our communities, and families too,
Offering your talents and kindness
In all the things you do.

It is fundraisers filled with laughter,
Friendship, music, and fun,
Knowing even the smallest gesture
Can brighten someone.

It is supporting the National Home,
Fort McCoy, and causes held dear,
Helping local nursing homes
Where Veterans reside year after year.

It is calling bingo with a smile,
Serving meals made with care,
Creating handmade gifts of love
To remind others someone is there.

It is visiting hospitals and nursing homes,
Praying beside a Veteran's bed,
Comforting worried families
With gentle words softly said.

It is mailing Christmas cards,
Sending hope through every line,
Making sure no Veteran feels forgotten
During difficult times.

Volunteering is where compassion lives,
Where loyalty and love remain,
Where strangers become family
And kindness eases pain.

Come join the VFW Auxiliary,
And you will clearly see,
The greatest gift a person gives
Is serving humanity.

With love, loyalty, and purpose,
Together we stand strong and true—
For our Veterans, our families, our country...
Come volunteer too.

VFW
—AUXILIARY—

IMPORTANT DATES FOR 2026-2027



SCHOOL OF INSTRUCTION
FLORIDA HOTEL

AUGUST
14-15,
2026



**DEPARTMENT FALL
CONFERENCE**
FLORIDA HOTEL
ORLANDO, FL

OCTOBER
30-31,
2026



**DEPARTMENT MID-WINTER
CONFERENCE**
FLORIDA HOTEL
ORLANDO, FL

FEBRUARY
4-7,
2027



**VETERANS VILLAGE
PICNIC**
FORT McCOY, FL

MARCH
20,
2027



**DEPARTMENT
CONVENTION**
RENAISSANCE
ORLANDO, FL

JUNE
17-20,
2027

Attention!

Take Note: Please ensure that your installation reports are entered into MALTA **before the June Convention.**

If you experience any issues or need assistance with the process, please contact **Debbie Tilley** at: dktilley@comcast.net or by phone at **904-460-9345**. She is happy to help with any questions or technical difficulties you may have.

Attention!

This is a reminder to submit your Auxiliary's delegate information to **Cindy Estell** at dflaux.treas@gmail.com no later than **May 31**.

Additionally, please be sure to enter your delegates into **MALTA** for the National Convention, even if no one from your Auxiliary is attending. Thank you for your attention to these important requirements.

Dates to Remember for 2025 – 2026

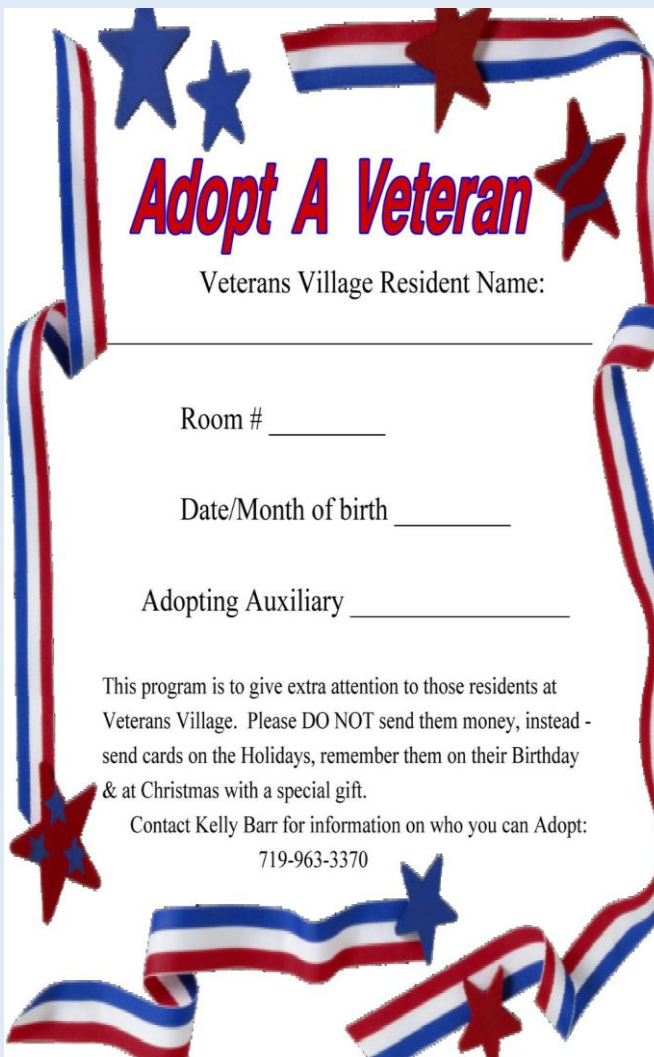
• School of Instruction	Florida Hotel, Orlando Fl	July 31 – August 3, 2025
• National Convention	Columbus, Ohio	August 9 – 14, 2025
• Department Fall Conference	Florida Hotel, Orlando Fl	October 16 – 19, 2025
• Southern Conference	Montgomery, Texas	November 6 – 9, 2025
• National Mid-Year Conference	Cruise – Key West & Bahamas	February 9 – 13, 2026
• Department Mid-Winter Conference	Florida Hotel, Orlando Fl	February 12 – 15, 2026
• C.A.F.E National	Washington D.C.	February 28, 2026
• Legislative Conference		March 2-4, 2026
• Dept Commander & Auxiliary	Florida Hotel, Orlando Fl	March 14, 2026
• Presidents Homecoming		
• National Sr. Vice Conference	TBD	March 19-22, 2026
• National Presidents Visit (Fri – Mon)	Various	March 20-23, 2026
• Veterans Village Picnic	Fort McCoy, Florida	March 21, 2026
• Planning Meeting for Kathy Wright (May change)		April 4, 2026
• Department Judging		April 29-30, 2026
• National Jr. Vice Conference	TBD	May 14-18, 2026
• Department Convention	Renaissance Orlando, Fl	June 11-14, 2026
• National Convention	Reno, Nevada	July 24-30, 2026

Attention!

The Sunshine E. Newsletter has a new Email Address. Please submit your pictures and stories to the link below or click on the QR Code for a direct link.

vfwauxflssen@gmail.com





Adopt A Veteran

Veterans Village Resident Name: _____

Room # _____

Date/Month of birth _____

Adopting Auxiliary _____

This program is to give extra attention to those residents at Veterans Village. Please DO NOT send them money, instead - send cards on the Holidays, remember them on their Birthday & at Christmas with a special gift.

Contact Kelly Barr for information on who you can Adopt:
719-963-3370