

SUNSHINE E-NEWSLETTER

2026-2027 September - Issue # 3

Team Florida



FROM THE DESK OF THE DEPARTMENT PRESIDENT



GROWING STRONGER FOR OUR VETERANS 2026-2027

September 2026

Dear VFW Auxiliary members,

Our School of Instruction is now history, and I was so pleased with the outstanding attendance and interaction we had. Traditionally the school is a little more relaxed, and we all enjoyed that. On Friday night the program chairmen wowed everyone with their colorful engaging displays. I gravitated to the spinning wheels and, of course, the ladder of plants caught my eye. There was so much information for the attendees and there were even prizes that you could win.

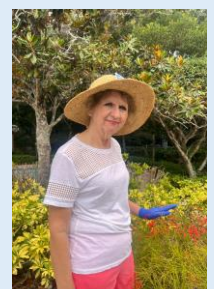
On Saturday the chairmen gave a short promotion/commercial for their programs. By now some of you have your Crisis Line Garden flag in a flowerpot at your post. We will have those flags for sale at Fall Conference. I love it when I see those flags on Facebook. They can save lives by getting a veteran the help needed when one is in crisis. Also start planning where you're going to establish your lending library and what books you're going to offer. See the youth program for resources that will help you.

Buddy Poppies adorned gorgeous watering cans on Saturday reminding everyone that we are "Growing Stronger for Our Veterans." It was such a difficult task for the judges to pick the top 3.

I had a good time giving everyone a glimpse of flowers in my yard through my PowerPoint leadership presentation. But each of those slides had an important message. For example, be a beautiful flower and look your very best as officers and members. Wear the Auxiliary apparel proudly and remember that "Words Never Die" so choose your words carefully. Our Jeopardy game gave us important information and brought out that spirit of competition.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Spidy Wright".

VFWA President
Department of Florida



Back to School! Auxiliary School Supply Drives

Angela Santos Post 4781 Auxiliary generously supplied the brand-new school in Marion Oaks with a large amount of essential school supplies.



On August 20, 2026, Eugene Quinn VFW Post 4337 Auxiliary members delivered donated school supplies to Inverness Primary School, where Youth Adviser Mrs. Tyler gratefully accepted the contributions.



VFW Post 10084 Auxiliary in Lake Panasoffkee packed backpacks with school supplies to support their local elementary school.



VFW Dumas Hartson Post 8189 Auxiliary in Homosassa packed backpacks with school supplies to support Homosassa elementary school.

VFW Post 8095 Auxiliary in Jasper partnered with the Hamilton County Alcohol & Other Drug Prevention Coalition on August 8, 2026, for their Drive-Through Bookbag Giveaway.



SAY NO HAMCO
Hamilton County Alcohol & Other Drug Prevention Coalition

Announcing Our **2026** **DRIVE-THROUGH BOOKBAG Giveaway** **HELPING OUR STUDENTS START THE YEAR STRONG!**

FOR HAMILTON COUNTY STUDENTS

DATE: SATURDAY, AUGUST 8, 2026

LOCATION: HAMILTON COUNTY ANNEX (OLD HIGH SCHOOL) 1953 HWY 41 SE, JASPER, FL 32052

TIME: 9:00 AM - 12:00 NOON

Please enter from the road into the Hamilton County Annex (old high school) off Highway 41 and drive through with caution. Bookbags and other items from other agencies will be given away from the sidewalk. Adhere to the signs posted. Please stay in your car for the drive-through.

Cautious partners have been invited to distribute their agencies' information as you drive through the designated area.

STUDENT(S) MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY THE PARENT/GUARDIAN TO RECEIVE A BOOKBAG.

For more information on this event, please contact the Coalition at 336-792-9388 or email partners@hamco23@gmail.com

Thank You! This event is made possible through the generous donations of our Coalition partners.

COLLABORATE EDUCATE EMPOWER THRIVE

VFW POST 4250 THE LITTLE V

DELIVERED School Supplies TODAY!

PROUD TO SUPPORT OUR LOCAL STUDENTS AND TEACHERS!

Delivering to:

- ✓ CHISHOLM ELEMENTARY
- ✓ READ-PATILLO ELEMENTARY
- ✓ EDGEWATER PUBLIC ELEMENTARY

Stronger Together

THANK YOU FOR LETTING US BE A PART OF YOUR JOURNEY!

2350 SUNSET DRIVE
NEW SMYRNA BEACH, FL 32168

SUPPORT OUR VETERANS

The VFW Post 4250 Auxiliary, known as The Little V, delivered school supplies to three elementary schools.

Hospital/V.A.V.S.

CHRISTMAS IN OCTOBER

Christmas in October donations are now part of the Circle of Champions.

Our VAVS Representatives and Deputies can use your financial support this holiday season.



****Your donations will provide needed items that the VA cannot supply.**

****Holiday gatherings with the residents of the CLC and the Domiciliary.**

****In-patient and out-patient events.**

****Food for Veterans and Veteran families with financial insecurities.**

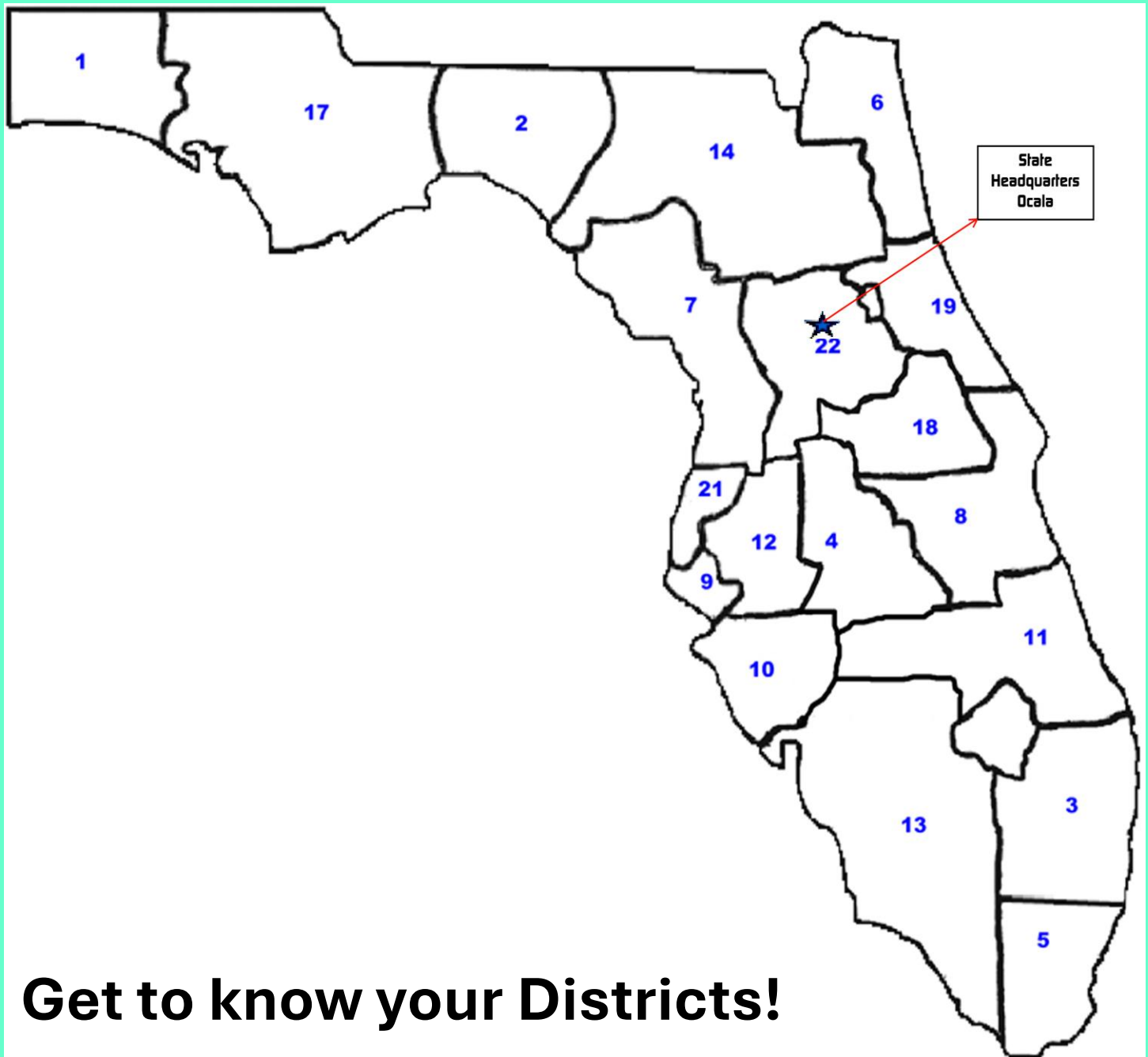
****Checks payable to the Dept. of Florida**

Use contribution worksheet (available on Dept. website)

Treasurer Cindy Estell, P.O. Box 55850

St. Petersburg, Fl. 33732-5850

Must be paid by October 31, 2026



Get to know your Districts!



VFW Post 4252 in Hernando honored POW/MIA service members by creating a dedicated POW Table inside their helicopter display, offering a solemn reminder of those who have not returned home.

Submitted by: Bill Pepito-
Auxiliary President

Citrus County Breaks Ground on New VA Clinic

Bill Pepito, Auxiliary President of VFW Post 4252 in Hernando, attended the July 24 groundbreaking ceremony for the new James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital and Clinics in Lecanto, a major expansion to more than 60,000 square feet to better serve the area's 17,000 veterans. District 7 VFW Commander Shawn Howard led the Pledge of Allegiance, with key remarks delivered by District County Commissioner Diana Finegan and keynote speaker Congressman Gus Bilirakis of District 12. Bill, accompanied by his wife Sharon Pepito, also captured photos with the speakers and Commander Howard as part of #auxiliariesinaction.



August 2026 School of Instruction



Remember: Report, Report, Report!

August 2026 School of Instruction - Continued



Monthly Program Focus: Americanism

Program Goals

**Flag Education, POW/MIA Recognition,
Star Family Recognition**

**Help everyone find your posts and reels
on social media by using the hashtag:**

#AmericanismFL

Organize efforts to educate the community on the importance of flag etiquette. Topics include folding the flag, respectful disposal of the flag, and displaying the flag.

Encourage members of your Auxiliary to volunteer in schools and community centers.

Recognize outstanding flag displays by businesses and/or organization by presenting a certificate of appreciation from your Auxiliary.

Flag retirement ceremonies, ceremonies that honor our flag serve as one of the most beautiful forms of respect for our Country

**Instruct members on the proper salute,
the pledge of allegiance, and how to stand
at attention or parade rest.**

1. Do not let the flag touch the ground.
2. Do not fly flag upside down unless there is an emergency.
3. Do not carry the flag flat or carry things in it.
4. Do not use the flag as clothing.
5. Do not store the flag where it can get dirty.
6. Do not use it as a cover.
7. Do not fasten it or tie it back. Always allow it to fall free.
8. Do not draw on or otherwise mark the flag.

Flag Display Protocol

- **Single Flagpole:** The POW/MIA flag must fly directly below and be no larger than the United States flag.
- **Separate Flagpoles:** The U.S. flag must always be placed to the right (the observer's left) of all other flags.
- **Mandatory Dates:** Public law mandates displaying the flag on six national observances: Armed Forces Day, Memorial Day, Flag Day, Independence Day, National POW/MIA Recognition Day, and Veterans Day.
- **Indoor Presentation:** Official indoor sets (like the Sunward Flag Presentation Set) feature an 8-foot oak pole paired with a weighted brass stand and ceremonial nylon flags.



The Missing Man Table Ceremony

The table is set for a single person to represent the frailty of a lone prisoner and symbolize their absence.

- **White Tablecloth:** Symbolizes the purity of their intentions when answering the nation's call.
- **Empty Chair:** Signifies that the service member is not present.
- **Single Red Rose / Yellow Ribbon:** Reminds families and friends of the ongoing hope for return.
- **Slice of Lemon & Salt:** Represents the bitter fate of captivity and the tears of waiting families.
- **Inverted Glass:** Indicates that the missing cannot toast with the attendees that evening.

Lanaie Reed

Americanism Chairman

Dept of Florida 2026-2027

AmericanismFL@gmail.co



School of Instruction Buddy Poppy Displays



National Convention Activities

At the VFW & Auxiliary National Convention in Reno, Nevada, members—including 2026-2027 Department of Florida President Kathy Wright and Department Secretary Debbie Tilley—joined together to pack tomato seeds for distribution to communities supporting local community gardens.



100% OF GOAL ACHIEVED
ONE MILLION MEALS

UNITING FOR VETERANS
2024 CAMPAIGN
VFW Humana.

Why We Fight: The Reality Our Veterans Face
While we celebrate the resilience of our military and veteran community, the undeniable truth remains that many veterans face invisible battles long after they leave the uniform behind.

Food Insecurity
1 in 4 veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars face difficulty putting food on the table. No one should have to choose between a healthy meal and paying the bills.

Homelessness
On any given night, more than 32,000 veterans experience homelessness in America. Every hero deserves a safe place to call home.

Mental Health
22 veterans die by suicide every day. The wounds we can't see are often the hardest to heal, but no veteran should ever have to face them alone.

Our Impact by the Numbers

- 6.4 MILLION MEALS provided since 2016
- 5.4 MILLION HOURS served by VFW and VFW Auxiliary members last year
- SERVED 2 MILLION people annually through our partner networks
- \$43.5 MILLION DONATED to local community programs by VFW members in 2023

UNITING FOR VETERANS
Vegetable Seed Sorting Event
At the VFW National Convention
Saturday, July 25
9:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Help sort vegetable seeds into packets that will be distributed to VFW Posts & Auxiliaries nationwide!

Promote community gardens to alleviate food insecurity!
Join us as we sort vegetable seeds to support our program and help veterans grow community impact.
Please bring your energy, teamwork, and a helping spirit.

★ All attendees are welcome to volunteer! ★

VFW FOUNDATION Humana.

TOMATO
Solanum lycopersicum
Annual

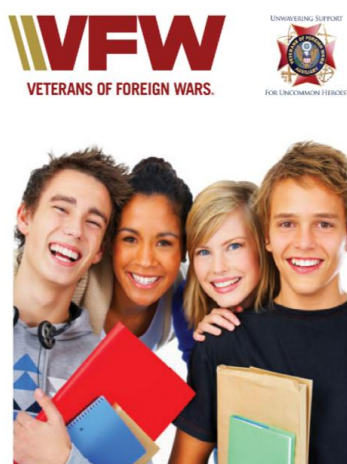
Tomato is the quintessential staple of summer gardening and arguably offers the most seed diversity among all seasonal fruits. Available in every possible color, shape, and size, tomato is a high-bait and full sun favorite that thrives from container and patio gardening. Along with cucumber and summer squash, the tomato plant is one of the most productive, hardy, and heavy fruiting crops of the season.

SOWING AND GROWING:
Tomato is a warm weather crop best if started indoors about 6-8 weeks prior to final spring frost. Plant 2-3 seeds 1/4" deep per individual cell in fertile, humusy, and well-drained soil with a pH of 6.0-6.8. Germinates in 5-14 days, transplanting starts to 1 per pot or 18-36" apart in the garden depending on variety. Before sowing, know whether the seed is determinate or indeterminate, as each will have different grow habits. Determinate varieties mature to a predetermined size, producing all of its fruit at once with only minor need for staking. Indeterminate varieties grow indefinitely through the season, produc-

HARVESTING:
Smaller varieties such as the cherry are ready to harvest at about 80 days from sowing while larger varieties like the beefsteak may require a few extra weeks. Although vine-ripened fruit is always preferred, tomatoes can just as easily be harvested early and ripen indoors by being stored in a paper bag or box along with a banana for its ethylene gas. Ripest tomatoes may be pulled from the vine by hand, while more firm ones should be clipped with shears.

ing non-stop fruit while requiring heavy trellis support.

TRUELEAFMARKET.COM



Patriots Pen & Voice of Democracy 2026-2027 Theme:
"What a Veteran Taught Me About America"

Deadlines:

Local Post Submission:
October 31, 2026

District VFW Chairman:
November 15, 2026

Department VFW Chairman:
December 15, 2026

Digital Submission Transition:
VFW National has updated promotional materials and flyers with QR codes directing students to submit their essays and audio recordings electronically via the Scholarship APP platform.

Department Officers 2026 – 2027

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Know your Department Chairmen:

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- Buddy Poppy – Mary Conkle mmac2123@comcast.net
- VFW National Home – Jeanne Laurine Jeannelaurine8@gmail.com
- Extension Revitalization – Debbie McCollum Ucfnole21@yahoo.com
- Historian / Media Relations – Kathy Ingall vfwauxhistorialn25.26@gmail.com
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- Scholarships – Stoney Lawrentz-Edwards stoneylawrentz@gmail.com
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- Veterans & Family Support – Kelly Barr Kabarr66@msn.com
- Youth Program – Sherri Golder flyouth2627@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

DO NOT USE THE CONTACT US BUTTON!”



Video:
Sunshine E Newsletter –
Passing the Torch.

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!

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.



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