

SUNSHINE E-NEWSLETTER

2026-2027 October - Issue # 4

Team Florida



FROM THE DESK OF THE DEPARTMENT PRESIDENT



GROWING STRONGER FOR OUR VETERANS 2026-2027

October 2026

Dear VFW Auxiliary members,

We're feeling a bit of chill in the air to invigorate us for our busy fall schedule. Now is the time to prepare for activities/events on Veterans Day on November 11th. We want all our veterans to feel appreciated for their service to our country.

October 31st is the deadline for submissions to the VFW Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen. Please look at the Scholarship program pages for more ideas on how to promote the contest and help our posts with this patriotic contest.

Don't forget that the Illustrating America contest has a new deadline. Grade K-8 student entries are due to sponsoring auxiliaries no later than December 15, 2026. See the Youth program pages for more information and entry forms.

National Civics Day is October 27th, and this is appropriate because elections will follow on Tuesday, November 3rd. Remind all auxiliary members that voting is a right and a responsibility. Give them the information needed about early voting and offer to give rides to the polls. A resource we all need is VFW Action Corps. This weekly email keeps us up to date with legislation on issues affecting veterans, military members, and their families. This is open to all patriotic Americans who can sign up on the VFW Grassroots Efforts Page or text VFW to 50457.

One of my September highlights was participating in Freedom Walk sponsored by Auxiliary 4127 in Homestead, FL on September 12th. It was so moving to see the community remember the victims of the September 11th, 2001 attacks. There were many youth groups walking and listening to the speakers. It's so important that they hear the truth!

See you at Fall Conference on October 30-31 in Orlando at the Florida Hotel.

Kathy Wright

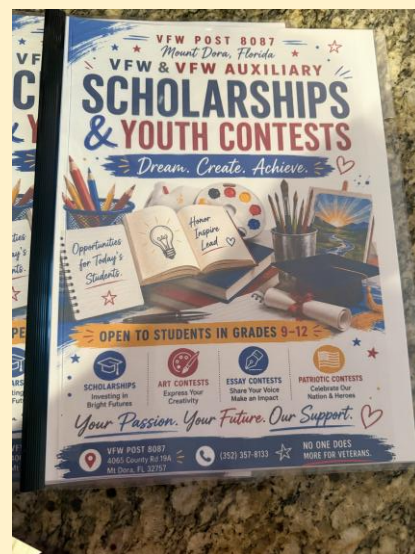
VFWA President



VFW Post 8087 Spreads Opportunity to Local Students

Leadership from VFW Post 8087 and its Auxiliary recently teamed up to support local schools in a fun and meaningful way. Armed with sweet treats and packets of information, the group visited area school staff to share details about VFW scholarships and student contests.

The idea was simple: sometimes opening the door to a great opportunity starts with a folder full of helpful information — and a jar of candy certainly doesn't hurt. By delivering both, Post 8087 aimed to spark conversations that encourage students to express themselves, showcase their creativity, and even earn scholarship funds. This outreach effort reflects a core mission of the VFW and its Auxiliary: supporting schools, empowering students, and investing in the community. With enthusiasm and a little sugar, Post 8087 is helping ensure local youth know about the opportunities available to them — and feel inspired to participate.



VFW Post 7674 Hosts Patriotic Independence Day Celebration

VFW Post 7674 marked Independence Day with a festive and patriotic gathering for members, families, and guests. The celebration featured a spirited ceremony led by the Post Commander, who stepped into the role of George Washington for the occasion. He opened with a rousing rendition of the National Anthem, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and a heartfelt reading of the Declaration of Independence. Adding to the patriotic spirit, the District 1 Commander—appearing as Uncle Sam—joined the festivities and distributed American flags to attendees. More than 100 Post and Auxiliary members, along with friends and families, enjoyed a classic holiday lunch of ribs, hot dogs, coleslaw, and beans, topped off with ice cream cups for a sweet finish. The event brought the community together in celebration of freedom, tradition, and camaraderie—hallmarks of VFW Post 7674's commitment to service.



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.**

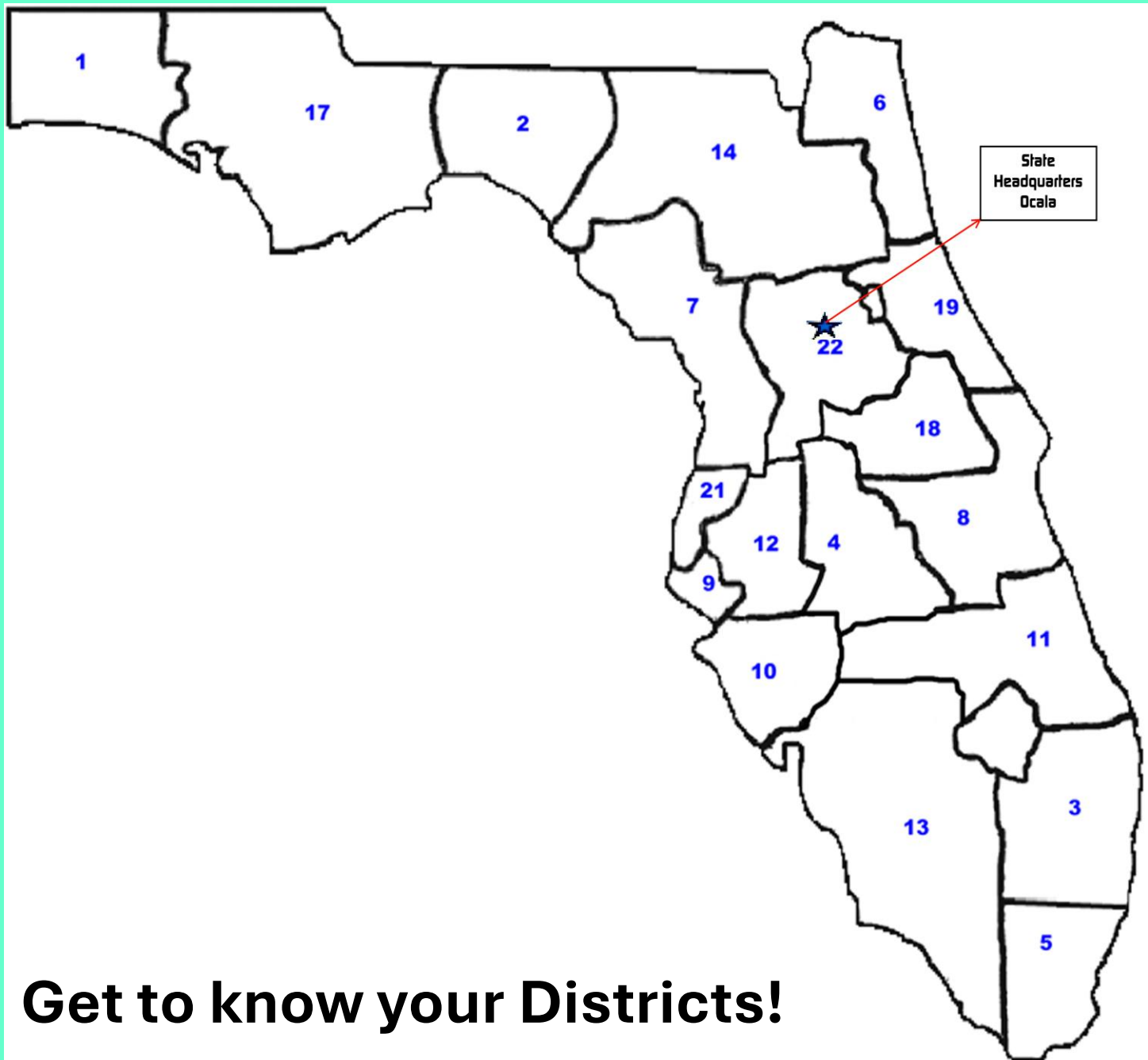
****Checks payable to the Dept. of Florida**

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 Auxiliary Post 4252 Supports Hernando Elementary with \$1,200 Donation

On September 1, 2026, the VFW Auxiliary to Post 4252 in Hernando proudly presented a \$1,200 check to Hernando Elementary School in support of their School Closet Program. This initiative helps ensure students have access to essential items that support their comfort, confidence, and success in the classroom.

The presentation brought together representatives from the Auxiliary, school staff, and community supporters. The donation reflects the Auxiliary's commitment to supporting local students and strengthening the community.





WHY DID WE JOIN THE VFW AUXILIARY?

SERVICE BEFORE SELF - RESPECT BEFORE RUMORS - MISSION BEFORE PERSONALITIES

At some point, each of us made a choice to become a member of the VFW Auxiliary. We should occasionally stop and ask ourselves one important question: **Why did I join?**

We did not join to bicker, point fingers, spread gossip, create division, or tear down another member. We did not join to compete for recognition, titles, or control. **We joined because of our Veterans.**

Our eligibility for this organization exists because someone in our family served this country and sacrificed for the freedoms we enjoy today. That connection should never be forgotten.

Our purpose is to honor Veterans, support their families, serve our communities, promote patriotism, and strengthen the mission of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

There are Veterans struggling with loneliness, illness, financial hardship, and the challenges of returning to civilian life. There are military families who need encouragement and support. There are children who need to learn what our flag represents and why freedom should never be taken for granted. There are Veterans who simply need someone to sit beside them, listen, and remind them that their service has not been forgotten.

Those are the important issues. Every hour spent gossiping, arguing, pointing fingers, or creating unnecessary conflict is an hour that could have been spent helping a Veteran, supporting a family, strengthening our Auxiliary, or serving our community.

We will not always agree. We have different personalities, backgrounds, and opinions. But disagreement does not require disrespect.

Before we criticize another member, perhaps we should ask:

What have I done today to make our Auxiliary stronger?

What have I done to help a Veteran or their family?

Am I contributing to the mission - or distracting from it?

Leadership is not about having the loudest voice. Membership is not about choosing sides. Service is about working together toward something greater than ourselves.

Let us put personalities aside. Let us stop the gossip and finger-pointing. Let us communicate respectfully, solve problems together, and remember the privilege and responsibility that come with being a VFW Auxiliary member.

Our Veterans have already done the hard part. They served. They sacrificed. They stood for us. Now it is our responsibility to stand for them.



**NEVER FORGET WHY WE JOINED.
WE ARE HERE FOR OUR VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES.**

District 7 Meeting Saturday, August 29, at VFW Post 4252, Hernando.



VFW Auxiliary 8189 Takes Home the District 7's Traveling 7 for having the most members at the district meeting.



Auxiliary 10084 Project Update

Steven Viger, President of Auxiliary 10084 Lake Panasoffkee, pressure-washed and installed an American flag and a POW/MIA flag on the tank on September 18 and 19. He also pressure-washed and repainted the propeller, and installed a dusk-to-dawn solar light.

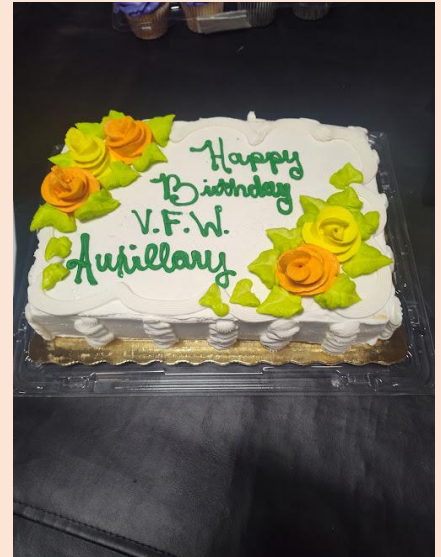


Auxiliary to VFW Post 4252 Celebrates 112 Years of Service

The Auxiliary to VFW Post 4252 in Hernando proudly celebrated the 112th anniversary of the VFW Auxiliary on September 15, 2026. For more than a century, the organization's mission has remained steadfast: to improve the lives of veterans, service members, their families, and the communities they call home.

Members gathered at Post 4252 for a cheerful celebration led by Auxiliary President Bill Pepito. Adding to the festivities, Betty Noice, Auxiliary Conductor and Patriotic Instructor, provided cake and cupcakes for everyone to enjoy. Among those eager for a slice was Oksana Salinas, who joined in marking this milestone occasion.

The event highlighted the Auxiliary's long-standing commitment to service, patriotism, and community support—a tradition that continues strong into its 112th year.



Monthly Program Focus: Buddy Poppy

FIND YOUR HOMETOWN HEROES

OUR NATIONAL PRESIDENT DONNA MILLS THEME: "SERVING AMERICA'S HEROES"

NOT ALL HEROES WEAR CAPES "OURS WEAR BOOTS"

FIND YOUR HERO IN YOUR POST OR COMMUNITY & THEN HONOR THEM HEROES ARE EVERYWHERE! SELECT ONE or MORE HEROES WHO MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE.

Honor them with a lunch or dinner.

Use the "Buddy" poppies to make corsages or boutonnieres for your Heroes.

Wrap Silverware with the "Buddy" Poppy and decorate with them.

Plan a program and Invite children to sing patriotic songs.

Hold a special game night with 25 cent bingo just for fun -give slippers or puzzles or books.

Give them a spa day, haircut or pedicure.

Create a wall of heroes with their pictures / Honor them with a Thank-you for your Service coin.

With so many Heroes you may want to make this a quarterly event.

It's up to each of you and your auxiliary to honor these Heroes!

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

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 BuddyPoppy.
- (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.

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.

MARY CONKLE

"Buddy" Poppy Chairman

mmac2123@comcast.net



Bonus Monthly Program Focus:

Historian & Media Relations

Historians in VFW Auxiliaries serve a critical function: they are the keepers of our shared history, diligently recording our past, documenting our present, and shaping how our future generations will understand our contributions. More than just archivists, they are the storytellers, communicators, and advocates for the VFW Auxiliary's mission.

Capture the essence of our activities, achievements, and the unwavering dedication of our members in serving veterans, their families, and our communities.

Remember to use the **5 W's**: Who – What – When – Where – Why. By addressing each aspect, we can paint a complete picture and communicate effectively with others, fostering understanding and collaboration. This approach not only enhances the quality of our analyses but also builds trust and credibility with our audience.

Historians employ a variety of media to chronicle the Auxiliary's journey:

Pictures: Capturing the moments of service, camaraderie, and community impact. From event photos to portraits of dedicated members, visuals bring our history to life.

Videos: Documenting events, interviews, and testimonials. Videos provide a dynamic and engaging way to showcase the Auxiliary's work.

Words: Crafting narratives that capture the essence of our activities. This includes writing reports, articles, and stories that highlight the Auxiliary's contributions and the individuals who make them possible.

Songs: Preserving the spirit of patriotism and the service through music. Whether it's documenting traditional songs or composing new ones, music can be a powerful way to connect with our history and values.

In today's digital age, historians should use and adapt to various media platforms to share and celebrate the contributions of their Auxiliaries and Programs. This includes:

- **Social media:** Utilizing platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Pinterest to share photos, videos and stories about the Auxiliary's activities and impact. Reels can be used to showcase snippets of photos and video to get the word out about our Auxiliaries and what we do.
- **Newsletters:** Creating informative newsletters that keep members and the community informed about the Auxiliary work. (digital/printed)
- **Local Media:** Build a relationship with local newspapers, radio stations and television channels to promote the Auxiliary's activities and achievements.

How many members truly know the origins of their Auxiliary — when the first seed was sown, who planted it, and who nurtured it through the years? Every Auxiliary began with a handful of dedicated individuals who believed in service, sacrifice, and community. They tended the earliest roots, watered the mission with their time and passion, and helped the organization grow into the strong tree it is today. As we move forward with new tools and new ways to capture the present, the Historian ensures that the story of those early caretakers — the ones who built our foundation — is never forgotten.

We do this so today's members can understand where we stand by learning where we began — and carry that knowledge forward with purpose. Because when we know our origins, we strengthen the roots that guide every step we take today.

YEAR END AWARD

One award in each membership class for the most unique digital record of your Auxiliary history since being established and **MUST** publish it to a digital platform for future members of their Auxiliary.

Entry form is required and available is available on the Dept. Website under Programs – Historian/Media Relations and also in MALTA under Member Resources.

VFW Auxiliaries must send the required entry form to the Department Historian & Media Relations Chairman by March 31, 2027 for judging.

Kathy Ingall Historian/Media
Relations Chairman
vfwauxflhistorian25.26@gmail.com



VFW Post 8189 Marks 25th Anniversary of 9/11 with Community Tribute

Veterans, first responders, families, and community members gathered at VFW Post 8189 for a Patriot Day ceremony honoring the 25th anniversary of the September 11 attacks.

The memorial service recognized fallen military members and first responders, giving attendees a moment to reflect on the lives lost and the sacrifices made since 9/11.

Crystal River High School JROTC, led by CW5 Rivera and Chief Bryksa, and the Crystal River High School Choir, directed by Shelby Crane, participated in the program. Musical performances by Gina Grune added to the evening's message of unity and remembrance.

VFW Post 8189 thanked all who attended and volunteered, with special recognition to Post Quartermaster Kevin Gilbertson for organizing the event.

Post members said the strong turnout shows the community's continued commitment to honoring 9/11 and preserving its significance for future generations.

The message of the evening: We Will Never Forget.

VFW Post 8189 — One Post • One Mission



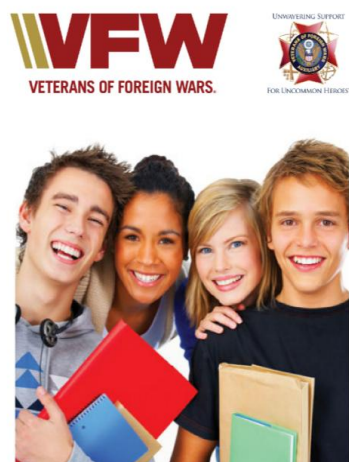
VFW Post 8189 Members Enjoy VFW Day at Tampa Bay Rays Game

On Sept. 20, 55 members of VFW Post 8189 traveled to watch the Tampa Bay Rays take on the Boston Red Sox during VFW Day.

Veterans, Auxiliary members and families enjoyed a day of baseball, camaraderie and fellowship, celebrating both the game and the organization that supports them.

Post leadership thanked everyone who joined the trip and helped make the outing memorable. For those who made the trip, the day was simple: great friends, great memories and a great ballgame.

Go Rays!



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
- Hospital – Karen Heikkila hospitalauxfl@yahoo.com
- Legislative – Betty Bailey Bann652@aol.com
- Membership & Mentoring – Holly Evans hadams1221@hotmail.com
- Scholarships – Stoney Lawrentz-Edwards stoneylawrentz@gmail.com
- Dept. President’s Special Project – Becky Kieffer bkiso2012@gmail.com
- 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

2026-2027 Department Chairman Growing Stronger for Our Veterans!



Dates to Remember for 2026 – 2027

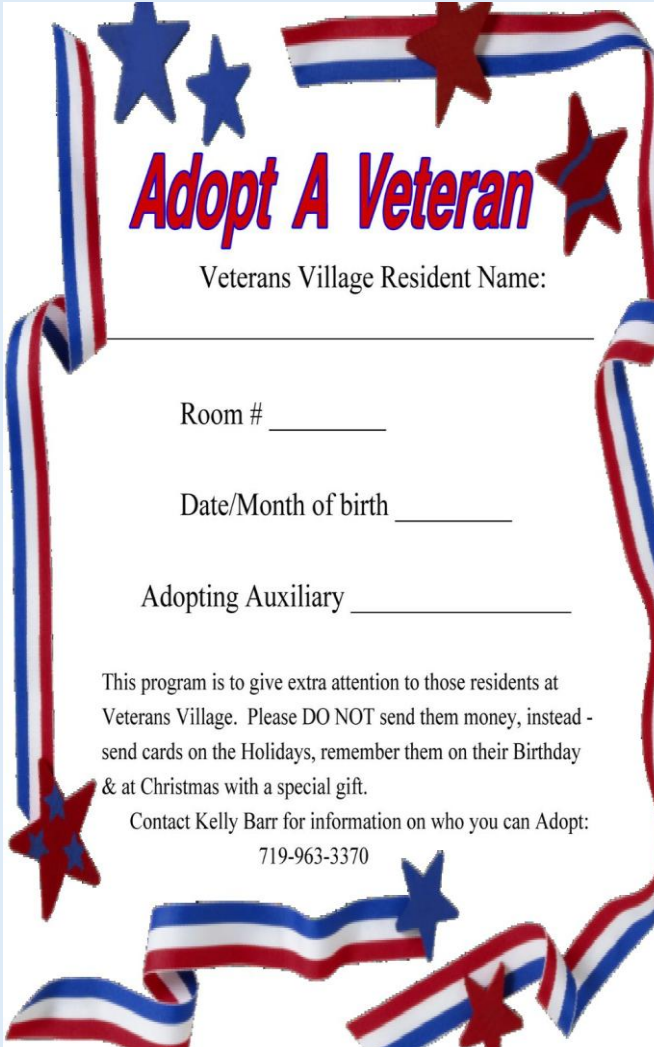
• <u>National Convention</u>	<u>Reno, Nevada</u>	<u>July 24 – 30, 2026</u>
• <u>School of Instruction</u>	<u>Florida Hotel, Orlando FL</u>	<u>August 14 – 15, 2026</u>
• <u>Department Fall Conference</u>	<u>Florida Hotel, Orlando FL</u>	<u>October 30 – 31, 2026</u>
• <u>Southern Conference</u>	<u>Montgomery, Texas</u>	<u>October 22 – 25, 2026</u>
• <u>National Mid-Year Conference</u>	<u>Cruise – Majestic Mirage D.R.</u>	<u>February 2 – 7, 2027</u>
• <u>Department Mid-Winter Conference</u>	<u>Florida Hotel, Orlando FL</u>	<u>February 4 – 7, 2027</u>
• <u>C.A.F.E National</u>	<u>Washington D.C.</u>	<u>February 28 – March 4, 2027</u>
• <u>National Sr. Vice Conference</u>	<u>Kansas City Mo</u>	<u>March 18-21, 2027</u>
• <u>National Presidents Visit</u>		<u>March 18-21, 2027</u>
• <u>Auxiliary Presidents Homecoming</u>		<u>April 10, 2027</u>
• <u>Department Commander Homecoming</u>		<u>April 17, 2027</u>
• <u>Veterans Village Picnic</u>	<u>Fort McCoy, Florida</u>	<u>March 20, 2027</u>
• <u>Planning Meeting for Margaret Rementer</u>		<u>April 3, 2027</u>
• <u>Department Judging</u>		<u>April 29-30, 2027</u>
• <u>National Jr. Vice Conference</u>	<u>National Home Eaton Rapids, Mi</u>	<u>May 13-17, 2027</u>
• <u>Department Convention</u>	<u>Renaissance Orlando, FL</u>	<u>June 17-20, 2027</u>
• <u>National Convention</u>	<u>Milwaukee, Wisconsin</u>	<u>July 31- August 4, 2027</u>

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.

vfwauxflssnl@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