

# SUNSHINE E-NEWSLETTER

New Year's Edition

January 2026 Issue NO 7

Team Florida



## Building Bridges For Veterans



### FROM THE DESK OF THE DEPARTMENT PRESIDENT



Greetings,

I hope everyone had a joyous New Year. As we begin this New Year, let's reflect on what we as a department accomplished. We have helped our Veterans by electing representatives who will support legislation that makes their lives and their families more comfortable every day. We have done a great deal to support our Veterans.

Every journey begins with the first step, and we, as an auxiliary, have taken many first steps. We encourage each member to consider doing more, whether by volunteering time, supporting our programs, or helping raise awareness within our community. You strengthen communities through volunteer work, advocacy, and patriotic education.

Together, we can ensure that our veterans receive the support, respect, and opportunities they deserve by supporting programs that uplift veterans, active-duty service members, and their families. You may think our work goes unseen, but it never goes unfelt. We have steady hands that will keep the promise that no one who has served or their families will be forgotten. Thank you for your commitment and for standing alongside those who have served and are serving.

As we move forward in the New Year, we'll continue Building Bridges for Our Veterans by strengthening our programs and supporting our communities, promoting patriotism, and continuing to Bridge the Gap for Our Veterans. We will continue to Be the Lighthouse in Somebody's Storm.

Thank you all for your fantastic job working Membership!!!

Michael Yates  
President



# **MARK YOUR CALENDARS**

**Dept. Commander & President  
Joint Homecoming**

**March 13 - 14, 2026**

**Florida Hotel - Room rates \$139**



**1500 Sand Lake Rd.  
Orlando, Fl.**



**Phone: 800-588-4656**

**(Must mention VFW Homecoming)**

**Hotel Reservations Cut-off**

**February 16, 2026**

**Reservations for Banquet on March 14, 2026**

**Must be sent to Debbie Tilley**

**904-460-9345 or cell 904-495-3622**

**[dktilley@comcast.net](mailto:dktilley@comcast.net)**

**cut-off February 27, 2026**

## VFW Post 7674 Auxiliary Honors Veterans with Full Day of Community Engagement

VFW Post 7674 Auxiliary marked Veterans Day with a series of heartfelt community activities, celebrating and honoring veterans both past and present. The day began with a solemn visit to the local cemetery, where members paid tribute to fallen heroes. The Veteran's Bell Tower rang out in remembrance, while a community wreath was assembled to honor those still with us.

Following the ceremony, Auxiliary members joined the local Veterans Day parade, engaging with a sizable crowd by distributing American flags and patriotic treats. The festive atmosphere reflected the community's deep appreciation for its veterans.

The celebration concluded with a luncheon at the post, where the Post Commander delivered a moving speech on the significance of Buddy Poppies and paid tribute to all who served. He also read touching letters from elementary school children, expressing gratitude to veterans. The event closed with a presentation by high school students who have launched an initiative to collect essential items for homeless veterans—an inspiring reminder of the next generation's commitment to service.

## VALENTINE WEEKEND MID -WINTER CONFERENCE

*Florida Hotel & Conference Center  
1500 Sand Lake Road, Orlando, Florida 32809*

*February 12-15. 2026*

*Phone: 407-859-1500*

*Room Rate: \$145 .00 plus tax*

*(Mention Veterans of Foreign Wars Mid-Winter Meeting)*

*Complimentary Self-Parking*

*CUT OFF DATE - Wednesday - January 21, 2026*

### Friday- February 13, 2026

8:30 AM - 10 AM Floor Practice & Officers March

10:00 AM: Dept. Chairmen's Meeting (*closed meeting*)

10:45-12:00 PM: District Presidents Meeting (*closed meeting*)

Blue Auxiliary Shirt/Black Pants/Black Skirt

1:00 PM: Council Meeting and

Opening Ceremonies Mid-Winter Conference

### Saturday, February 14, 2026

Blue Auxiliary Shirt/Black Pants/Black Skirt

8:00AM JOINT OPENING

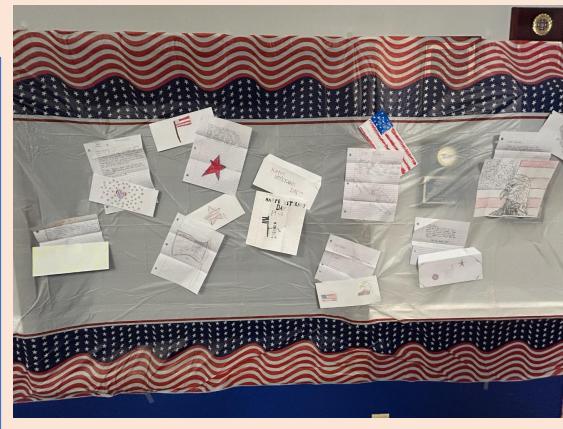
9:30 - 1:00 PM

Mid-Winter Conference

### Saturday Evening

*Celebration of Achievement Banquet Tickets only available from  
Department VFW Headquarters More Information to Follow  
Dressy - Semi-Formal*

*NOTE: THIS IS A TENTATIVE AGENDA – ALL TIMES SUBJECT TO CHANGE*



**Share Your Stories,  
Share your Light -  
Sunshine E  
Newsletter Fall  
Conference Video**

# 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

## VFW Auxiliary 2550 Spreads Holiday Cheer at Bay Pines VA Community Living Center

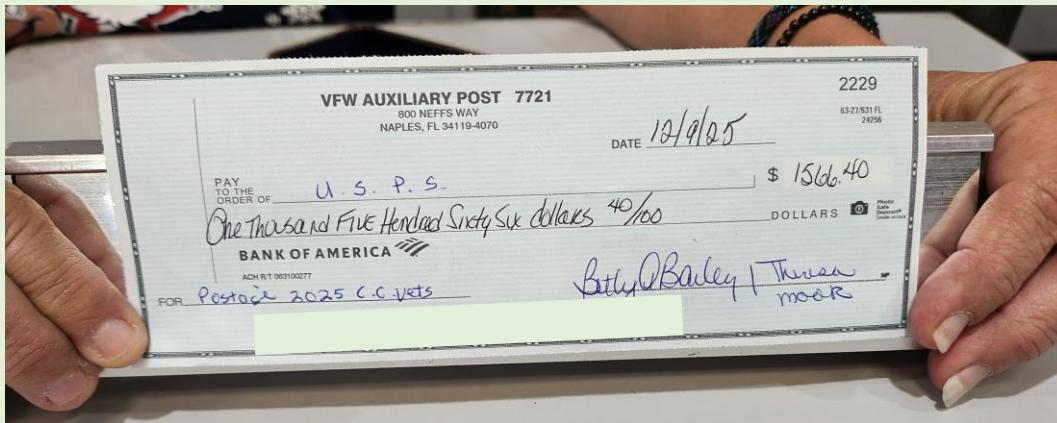
Members of the Department of Florida VFW Auxiliary 2550, representing the SPC Zachary L. Shannon Memorial Post in Dunedin, recently brought warmth, joy, and holiday spirit to the Bay Pines VA Community Living Center (CLC). During their heartfelt visit, the Auxiliary delivered cookies, gifts, and smiles to all 73 residents, many of whom are veterans receiving long-term care.

Each veteran was gifted a cozy robe, puzzle books, and other thoughtful items, all chosen to bring comfort and entertainment during the holiday season. The residents expressed deep gratitude for the visit, and the Auxiliary members were equally moved by the opportunity to give back to those who served.



## Holiday Cheer Delivered by VFW Auxiliary 7721

In a heartwarming display of holiday spirit, over 250 packages of Christmas cards—nearly 20,000 in total—were sent to VA facilities across 10 states, thanks to the dedicated efforts of VFW Auxiliary 7721. Each card was hand-stamped and accompanied by a handwritten 3x5 note, adding a personal touch to every message of cheer. The entire process took just under three hours, with volunteers working diligently for 2 hours and 45 minutes to prepare the packages. “I wish we could see the joy these cards and special notes bring,” said Betty A. Bailey, President of VFW Auxiliary 7721, reflecting on the impact of their labor of love. The initiative stands as a testament to the power of community and compassion during the holiday season.



## From the Desk of the Program Chairman

Did you know you can look at last year's reporting on the Dashboard to see how your Auxiliary did their reporting? This could be a great training tool for new members who want to learn how to write a report.

Simply go to the Dashboard, change the upper left corner to read Auxiliary , put your Aux number in and select 2025 instead of 2026. Remember: To make the Circle of Champions you MUST be reported in Americanism, Hospital, Legislative and Veterans & Family.

## Spreading Holiday Cheer: A Heartfelt Thank You from Auxiliary 4206



This year's **Christmas Dinner Food Drive & Snack Table** was a heartwarming success, thanks to the incredible support and generosity of our community. We are thrilled to share that we were able to provide **62 dinners** to those in need—an achievement that wouldn't have been possible without each and every one of you who contributed.

The event was filled with joy, laughter, and meaningful moments. One particularly special highlight was meeting a Veteran who is nearly **101 years old**—and full of life and stories! He shared his secret to longevity: drinking **Fellsmere water**, which he credited as his personal fountain of youth. His spirit and humor were truly inspiring.

We're already looking ahead to next year, hoping to expand our reach and provide even more meals. Donations toward this cause are welcome **year-round**, and every contribution helps us make a bigger impact.

On behalf of **Jennifer Koether, Auxiliary 4206 Secretary**, and everyone involved—**thank you** for making this season brighter for so many.



# Monthly Program Focus: Membership

A new bridge building tool for our Auxiliaries... The 2026 Auxiliary Applications have been emailed to all Auxiliary Presidents and Treasurers.

These new Membership Applications must be used for all New Members, Rejoins, and Transfers that are processed beginning January 1, 2026.

This will be the only Membership Application accepted starting 1/1/26.

**Obsolete Forms:** All previous versions of the Membership Application must be destroyed and are no longer valid.

During the 2025 VFW National Convention, Resolution One, was adopted. This is a must-read resolution for all Auxiliaries as it affects our current membership. Please take the time to go to M.A.L.T.A. under membership resources, National Convention, and read the resolution.

**What Holiday events does your Auxiliary have planned? Be sure to encourage your members to invite guests to these events and have membership applications available, let's share what we are all about!**

## How can your Auxiliary Invest in your membership? Great question... just a few suggestions.

1. Recognize your Auxiliary members who volunteer. Give them a complimentary dinner coupon to one of your Auxiliary dinners or events. Print Good Job Awards off M.A.L.T.A. and present at a meeting. Send out personal thank you cards.
2. Recognize your Officers – Are any of your officers' annual members? Maybe offer to have your Auxiliary convert them to life. Take your officers out for a nice lunch or dinner as a thank you.
3. Review your old annual members who let their membership lapse, can you attempt to reinstate? Offer to pay for their first year so they can see what your Auxiliary has to offer.
4. Organize an event to say thank you to all your Auxiliary Volunteers, holidays are coming our way and several opportunities available to plan a nice lunch, happy hour or dinner.



Holly Evans  
Hadams1221@hotmail.com  
Auxiliary 3233 Sarasota  
Membership & Mentoring



# Monthly Program Focus: Scholarship

## CONTINUING EDUCATION

## BUILD THE FUND

**Treasurer's How To Make a Gift:**  
In MALTA under duties, select  
“Make a Gift” then “National  
President’s 2025-2026 Project

**This one is for US** (and your spouse and children age 21 and older)

**Deadline: 15 February**

Email to National Headquarters at [info@vfwauxiliary.org](mailto:info@vfwauxiliary.org) Or Mail to VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters, 406 W. 34<sup>th</sup> Street 10<sup>th</sup> floor, Kansas City, MO 64111 Attn: Program Awards Administrator

Remember to Report about your fund raising event and donation for increasing the fund.

<https://vfwauxiliary.org/scholarships/continuing-education/>

## YOUNG AMERICAN PATRIOTIC ART AND 3-D ART

**U.S. Flag:** commonly used in artwork. When promoting to the schools and other organizations, provide a copy of the Federal Flag Code and encourage close attention to the U.S. Flag.

**Common Mistakes:** Not enough stars and stripes, appearance of someone standing on the flag, or something written or lying on it.

## RECOGNIZE, REPORT!

- Voice of Democracy and Patriots Pen are in and judging completed – Hopefully, you **REMEMBERED** to **RECOGNIZE** the students. Top 3 and all participants – and encouraged participation next year.

**REPORT** how you recognized the students – remember details matter (who, what, why, when, where).

## \*\*Auxiliary Award\*\*

Most creative and/or unique activity and/or event educating their community about the scholarship opportunities in the VFW and the VFW Auxiliary. Look for the entry form on the National Website under MALTA, Member Resources, Scholarships. Entry form due to Department Chair by 31 March 2026.



Carrie Messer  
messerca@gmail.com  
Auxiliary 4833  
Milton  
Scholarships

National VFW Auxiliary Scholarship



## Department Officers 2025 – 2026

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### Know your Department Chairmen:

- Americanism – Michelle Butler [American.patriotic.2526@gmail.com](mailto:American.patriotic.2526@gmail.com)
- Auxiliary Outreach – Becky Kieffer [bkiso2012@gmail.com](mailto:bkiso2012@gmail.com)
- Buddy Poppy / VFW National Home – Jennifer Holland [Jenniferholland72@comcast.net](mailto:Jenniferholland72@comcast.net)
- Extension Revitalization & Mentoring – Sherri Golder [sherrigolder@gmail.com](mailto:sherrigolder@gmail.com)
- Historian / Media Relations – Kathy Ingall [shanily.05@gmail.com](mailto:shanily.05@gmail.com)
- Hospital – Viki Stripling [vikiplottsdistrict11@yahoo.com](mailto:vikiplottsdistrict11@yahoo.com)
- Legislative – Pamela Monroe [Anamcarax2@icloud.com](mailto:Anamcarax2@icloud.com)
- Membership & Mentoring – Holly Evans [hadams1221@hotmail.com](mailto:hadams1221@hotmail.com)
- Scholarships – Carrie Messer [messerca@gmail.com](mailto:messerca@gmail.com)
- Dept. President's Special Project – Kelly Barr [Flpresproject2526@gmail.com](mailto:Flpresproject2526@gmail.com)
- Veterans & Family Support – Ryan Harris [ryan.harris.cisa@gmail.com](mailto:ryan.harris.cisa@gmail.com)
- Youth Program – Lanaie Reed [lanwileth@gmail.com](mailto:lanwileth@gmail.com)
- Program Advisor - Debbie Tilley [dktilley@comcast.net](mailto: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](mailto:dktilley@comcast.net) or call 904-460-9345**

**DO NOT USE THE CONTACT US BUTTON!"**

# Dates to Remember for 2025 – 2026

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



## VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS AUXILIARY NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

### MEMO

Date: December 15, 2025

To: Department Senior Vice Presidents  
Department Secretaries  
Department Treasurers

From: VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters

RE: 2026-2027 Program Year

When we moved the VFW Auxiliary Senior Vice Conference from January to March, it was agreed that National Headquarters would inform Departments of any Program or major Budget changes in December.

#### Here are the changes for the 2026-2027 year:

There will no longer be an Auxiliary Outreach program. However, there will still be eleven (11) programs because Buddy Poppy and National Home will be their own programs.

There will not be a Celebrating America's Freedom Event (CAFÉ). Therefore, no money will need to be budgeted for this.

We will put a stipend in National budget to help the Department Presidents attend the VFW Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. in March 2027.

Following the National Convention in Reno, the Department of Pennsylvania will have a Celebration for newly installed National President Donna Mills, on Thursday, July 30, 2026. The VFW Auxiliary National Council of Administration meeting will be that morning, July 30, 2026..

Illustrating America deadline dates will change: Student entry will be due to Auxiliaries December 15<sup>th</sup>; due to Departments January 15<sup>th</sup>; due to National Headquarters January 31<sup>st</sup>.



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



Scan the above QR Code to submit stories & photos of your Auxiliary.