

SUNSHINE

E-NEWS LETTER



January 2025 - ISSUE NO 8

From Team Florida

FROM THE DESK OF THE DEPARTMENT PRESIDENT

Greetings members.

Well here we are at the midway point to a great year so far. I hope that each and every one of you had a great Holiday Season. Now it is time for us all to start the final push to help the Amazing Florida Team Shine.

I am so very proud of all the hard work and efforts that you have put in to work our programs and support our Veterans and Families.

I would like to encourage you all to start taking a good look at what you need to complete your year and reports and review your Circle Criteria. You Can Do This! Many of you are already over halfway there.

Updates;

Membership is moving along in the right direction. However, we are not there yet. Did you know that if every Auxiliary paid dues or added 7 members that we would be over 100%? This is awesome news and will take a little effort on all of us to complete by the end of January.

Special Project.

I must say that I am very impressed with the creative ways that you are coming up with to raise donations for an amazing project. The work that they do for our veterans and children is truly outstanding and their list of needs is very real. We will be holding a pass the hat at mid-winter instead of a parade of checks. So, bring your donations with you and let's beat the VFW. You know that this is just for fun and that this is a joint project, and the VFWs are working just as hard to raise donations on their side as well.



So let's all give our best efforts to work on our Program and meet our membership goals as we push on towards June. Good Luck and God Bless each of you.

I leave you all with this.

Remember your why!

"When you have a strong 'why,' you can overcome any 'how'." – Unknown

"Find your 'why,' and the 'how' will reveal itself." – Unknown

"The only way to do great work is to love what you do. And the love comes from knowing your 'why'." - Steve Jobs (adapted)

VFW Auxiliary 7721 Completes "Operation Christmas Card."

This mission was to honor in memory of our auxiliary member Renee Whisner U.S. air force veteran, whose vision it was to make a brighter day for veterans in hospitals, medical facilities which she started as a quadriplegic did herself for over four years.

Many hours and volunteers started in September to personalize Christmas cards for veterans in nursing homes and medical facilities in five states.

Special thanks to those who volunteered meeting on Wednesdays at the post or at their homes to make this project successful. Everyone who volunteered included auxiliary members, nonmembers, post members, and teachers who reached out to students asking them to write special personal notes to be inserted into the Christmas cards.

The 47 boxes were delivered to the Post Office with a special appointment to process.

Special thanks to those who donated monies to cover shipment, Blake Day, Day Adjusting Services and others who donated monies.

NAPLES EDITION

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 14-20, 2024 | NEWS | A23

VETERANS DAY

Honoring a legacy

VFW Auxiliary continues veteran's holiday card mission after her untimely passing

FLORIDA WEEKLY STAFF

A U.S. Air Force veteran who became a quadriplegic and spent a year at a VA hospital made it her mission to send holiday cards to fellow veterans in hospitals and nursing homes.

Sadly, Renee Whisner passed away suddenly on Christmas Day in 2023, although the Naples resident was able to get thousands of cards into the hands of veterans during the past few holiday seasons.

But today, her dream is being continued, thanks to numerous volunteers at Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7721 in the Golden Gate community.

The VFW's auxiliary members have decided to keep it going with a project called "Mission: Operation Christmas Cards for Veterans," in memory of Whisner, who was a member of the VFW.

Whisner, who became a quadriplegic in 2014, started the mission to send holiday cards containing personal notes to fellow veterans after spending a year at the James A. Haley Veterans Hospital in Tampa.

In 2021, the first year she started, 5,000 Christmas cards were sent. The next year, 7,000 cards were sent, and finally, in her last year, Whisner sent 11,000.

Before her passing, Whisner made



COURTESY PHOTOS
Renee Whisner is seen in this 2022 photo.



Renee Whisner's memorial card following her passing on Christmas in 2023.

her mother promise to carry on her mission and to increase the numbers each year. Her mother, Mimi Treadway, is doing just that and asked for the VFW Auxiliary to adopt the project and to increase the goal to 25,000 cards in 2024.

"I promised Renee I would carry on with her mission," said Treadway. "It meant so much to her, and it gave her a wonderful purpose in life, along with being a prayer chaplain at her Unity of

Naples Church. She was a proud veteran and served her country -- we want to keep her mission alive in her honor."

Cards will be mailed to veterans in VA hospitals and nursing homes in Florida, Alabama, Kentucky, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina and possibly one or two more states as funds allow. Requests for cards have come from as far away as South Dakota, and the goal is to mail all by Dec. 1.

The auxiliary is covering the cost of the mission with the support of donations. Postage alone will exceed \$1,000 this year. The auxiliary has scheduled and organized volunteers to stuff the cards with personal notes written by students from over 20 area schools located in Naples, Bonita Springs and Estero. Each student is given index cards to write personal messages to the veterans. The simple act of kindness means the world to a veteran in a hospital bed or a nursing home, said Treadway.

Donations to help underwrite the costs for additional cards and postage may be sent via check made payable to the VFW Auxiliary (earmarked - Veterans Christmas Cards) and mailed to VFW Post #7721 Auxiliary, 13131 Collier Blvd., Naples, 34119. The auxiliary is a nonprofit organization so donations are tax deductible.

The VFW Auxiliary is one of the nation's oldest veterans' service organizations. Established in 1914, members set out to serve the veterans in honor of the sacrifices and commitment of every man and woman who has served in uniform. Members are the relatives of those who have served in overseas combat.

For more information about VFW Auxiliary membership or additional information regarding the auxiliary, contact Betty A. Bailey by email at bann652@aol.com.



Send your Pictures and Story's for the Sunshine E-Newsletter to: Roger Ingall Shanily.04@gmail.com

Recruiting:

How are you recruiting? Most people today do not have time for small talk, ask for their phone number, then you can text them the QR code, ask for emails so you can send membership applications. Many people especially younger members are more technology savvy and would rather use technology to communicate. Where do you find the QR code? It's in MALTA under membership for a clear copy.

Yes, we MAY use the photo of the headstone as proof of qualifying service, if it is the headstone provided by the Department of Defense (i.e.. the white ones/government issued), not one provided by the family.

In order to receive that headstone, the cemetery/funeral home has to verify the deceased DD214 in order to request that stone. So, we're good on that part. As for dates of service, my advice is to approximate the dates of service as closely as you are able and don't leave the slot blank.

Note:

The Membership QR Code has changed make sure you are using this one for direct access to membership information



**VFW Auxiliary
Department of Florida
Membership
Chairman
2024-2025
Betty Bailey**

Do You fit in the circle around your VFW eligible veteran?
If so, contact us to join the best family veteran support organization in America!



Join us
SUPPORT
VETERANS
and their families

UNWAVERING SUPPORT



FOR UNCOMMON HEROES™



Monthly Program Focus: Membership

VFW Auxiliary Dept of Florida website www.vfwflaux.org, click on member resources, scroll down to VFW Benefit Hub click on and you will have access to information. Have your membership number ready.

Or login to MALTA

<https://vfwauxiliary.org/member-benefits/>

<https://vfwauxiliary.benefithub.com>

<https://vfwauxiliary.amwins.com>

INVEST - SHARE THE BENEFIT INFORMATION WITH OTHER MEMBERS

Stars and Stripes Loyalty Accidental Death Insurance - The Hartford Insurance

The program is called Stars and Stripes Loyalty Accident Insurance Plan. With this plan, you're covered for accidents Your specially arranged premium rate Insurance Plan Coverage: Individual - 30,000-Semi Annual Cost \$34.00 or Family Cost \$54.00. Individual - \$60,000 Semi Annual cost: \$65.00 or Family Cost \$104.00

Covers: Accidental Death, Daily Benefits for Hospital, Recuperation, Outpatient.

For questions, call **800-550-5287** and speak to a VFW Auxiliary Plan Administrator, toll-free, weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time.

AUTO INSURANCE Auto-Compare Side by Side rates Top national carriers, it's easy, just takes a few minutes for quotes: Travelers, Farmers Insurance, Progressive, Foremost Insurance, Infinity, Dairyland, State Auto, Liberty Mutual, Encompass, Stillwater, Clearcover, Safeco Insurance, ASI Progressive call **844.317.4474** Mon-Fri 7am-1am, Sat 7am-11:30am
HOME INSURANCE

Take time to compare rates and find savings: Homeowners, Renters insurance from top national carriers, Travelers, Farmers, Progressive, Liberty Mutual, Universal Property, Safeco, Stillwater, Hippo, Nationwide, Encompass are the national companies who offer discounts to auxiliary members call **844.317.4474** Mon-Fri 7am-1am, Sat 7am-11:30am

Membership Chairperson: – Betty Bailey
bann652@aol.com

VFW Post & Auxiliary 4250 bring the Claus!

On December 7, Post #4250 Auxiliary, New Smyrna Beach of District #19 brought Santa, Mrs. Claus and one of his Elfs to the subdivision surrounding the Post as they have done for many years.

Santa had to leave the Reindeer back at the North Pole to rest up for their big night, so he was driven around on a makeshift sly to visit the boys and girls and Seniors as well, to spread the Christmas Spirit. All the children were given small gifts and candy canes from Santa, Mrs. Claus and Marilyn the Elf.

Some residents came out to the road to thank Santa & company, some just waved from their door, but there was not a child that didn't want to check Santa out. Some wanted to be closer than others, many wanted to pull on his beard to be sure he was the real Santa!!!! And even after Santa stopped by the Post and veterans wanted to sit on his lap and tell him what they wanted for Christmas!!



VFW Post & Auxiliary Spearhead "Wreaths Across Homosassa"

Homosassa Auxiliary 8189 in cooperation with Homosassa Post 8189, Homosassa 8189 Riders Group, District 7 Riders Group, Amvets Post 89, Gulf Coast Manatee Homeschoolers and Homosassa River Garden Club raised \$10,000 to purchase 750 Christmas wreaths. We made and placed bows on the wreaths and then visited 4 local cemeteries to lay the wreaths at the graves of veterans.



Greater Beaches VFW 3270 Post & Auxiliary Host “Operation Santa Clause”

On Saturday, December 7th, Greater Beaches VFW Post 3270 and its Auxiliary had the honor of hosting a special event, *Operation Santa Claus*, for the families and children of sailors aboard the USS The Sullivans. This ship has been deployed for several consecutive Christmases, and we wanted to show our heartfelt appreciation to the families who have endured so much during these extended deployments.

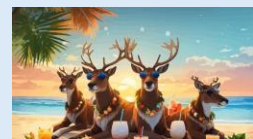
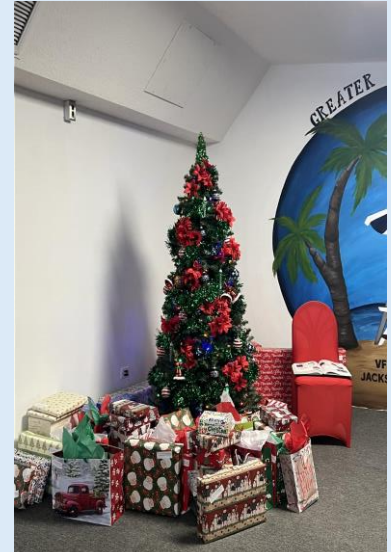
We reached out to the families to gather wish lists for the children. Our Auxiliary and Post purchased and beautifully wrapped gifts, which were distributed by Santa Claus himself (with help from his Veteran Elves - bringing joy, laughter, and holiday magic to the room!

To add even more fun to the celebration, "Captain Character" provided entertainment with balloon creations, engaging games, a cotton candy machine, and a popcorn machine that kept the kids delighted throughout the event.

A delicious catered meal was served for both the children and adults, with sweet treats generously donated by “Dirty Dough St. Johns”. Their incredible cookie donation was so plentiful that families were able to take home boxes of goodies!

For the spouses, our Auxiliary created three raffle baskets, and we received generous gift card donations from local businesses, making the event even more festive and memorable for all in attendance.

We are proud to have shared this evening of joy, community, and gratitude with these deserving families. Thank you to everyone who contributed to making this event a wonderful success. Together, we made a difference in the lives of those who sacrifice so much for our country.





Dates to Remember for 2024-2025

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| • Department Mid-Winter Conference | January 24 - 26, 2025 | Westgate Resorts, Orlando |
| • National Mid-Year Conference | February 1 – 6, 2025 | Hideaway at Royalton Riviera, Cancun |
| • Dept. Presidents Homecoming | March 14 – 15 2025 | Crown Plaza – Indialantic Beach |
| • National President's Visit | February 16 – 19, 2025 | |
| • Veterans Village Picnic | March 22, 2025 | |
| • Planning Meeting for Mike Yates | April 5, 2025 | |
| • Dept. Commanders Homecoming | April 12, 2025 | |
| • Department Judging | April 25 – 26, 2025 | |
| • Department Convention | June 12- 15, 2025 | Renaissance Orlando, FL |
| • National Convention | August 9-14, 2025 | Columbus, OH |

Know your Department Chairmen:

- Americanism – Carol Franker Qcarol4u@gmail.com
- Auxiliary Outreach – Sandi Hendriks sandihendriks@yahoo.com
- Buddy Poppy / VFW National Home – Kelly Barr buddypoppy2425@gmail.com
- Extension Revitalization & Mentoring – Debbie McCollum Ucfnole21@yahoo.com
- Historian / Media Relations – Jeanne F. Laurine Jeannelaurine5@gmail.com
- Hospital – Karen Heikkila Hospitalauxfl@yahoo.com
- Legislative – Melissa McKeon melissamckeon6767@gmail.com
- Membership – Betty Bailey bann652@aol.com
- Scholarships – Ann Batson annbatson@att.net
- Dept. President's Special Project – Pauline Riddle fireballs44@hotmail.com
- Veterans & Family Support – Bob Kabala rkabala@tampabay.rr.com
- Youth Program – Amy DiMauro stavamy@aol.com

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

Send your Pictures and Story's for the Sunshine E-Newsletter to: Roger Ingall Shanily.04@gmail.com