



SUNSHINE E-NEWS

DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS AUXILIARY

HOT OFF THE PRESS EDITION



EXTRA! EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT

Staff Reporter
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Americanism Chairman **Judy Miller**

Ways to educate the public about our Flag include invite the community and youth to events on Patriotic holidays. Make a video about the Flag, its history, flag code, or how we honor it. Post on social media where your members can share. Distribute copies of the flag code. Honor private citizens/businesses that fly the flag daily by giving them a certificate. Department award to the Auxiliary that has the best overall program in honoring the flag flyers in your community. Use the hashtag *#AuxiliaryPatriotism* when posting to social media.

When you click on the hashtag you will see any postings from all over the country that have used

it. It's all about sharing ideas. National will give a citation and \$25 for most outstanding use of the #hashtag. Entries must be in my hands March 31st.

Educators might appreciate help in teaching the Americanism program. Offer your help and tools. Promote all our programs, not just Americanism. How many Post & Auxiliary members have school age kids/grandkids in the area. Invite the families to the post for a fun night, trivia contest, movie, demonstrations such as flag folding with them helping. Say the Pledge. Get scout troops, church youth groups, athletic teams involved. Kids learn by imitation.

Honor our POW/MIAs and Gold Star Families all year. At meetings and special events have a moment of silence for them. Have a Missing

Man table and go through the ceremony other than POW/MIA Recognition day. Keep the table clean and well maintained. Distribute POW/MIA Flags with American flags. Line your sidewalks with both flags. Are there any former POWs at your Post? Include them in your Patriotic events.

Pay annual dues for a potential Gold Star Family Member applying for membership. Include Gold Star Families in special services and celebrations. Tuesday, April 5, 2022, is the Nationwide Gold Star Wives Day. Each Auxiliary recognizing the Star families and submitting an entry will receive a citation from Department. There is an award to the auxiliary with the best overall program.

Auxiliary Community Outreach Chairman Pauline Riddle

There is confusion about this program. If you volunteer with another organization outside of the VFW or Auxiliary programs it is Community Outreach. If you are working with another organization outside of the VFW, which does not include work for veterans or auxiliary programs, the project you do can be reported in Community Outreach. Remember you cannot report it in any other program.

Auxiliaries must vote and approve the event at a meeting, and make sure it is recorded in your minutes, and you must identify yourself with the Auxiliary. You can wear anything you want with the Logo, a hat, button, or even put a sticker on your shirt, as long as it says you represent the Auxiliary.

Although participating in a run/walk event will get you out in the community, it cannot be reported under this program. However,

if you assisted with the race by distributing water or registering participants, you can report that. The difference is that you are partnering with the sponsor organization by working with them instead of being a participant. Check out the VFW Auxiliary Community Outreach Guide that can explain what is reportable and what is not. It is available on both Department and National websites.

Auxiliary members can volunteer for the Project Blue Light, a nationwide project to light up your porch with a blue light in honor of law enforcement who lost their lives while in the line of duty. Members can also volunteer by helping to distribute blue light bulbs with accompanying information sheet. Remember May 15th, 2022, "National Police Week", another fantastic opportunity to reach out to the Community to educate.

In fact, there is a Department award for the auxiliary in each membership class with the most outstanding

photo collage showing Auxiliary volunteering with First Responders. National will give citations to each auxiliary submitting the photo collage. They will give a citation and \$25 to the auxiliary in each conference for the same photo collage. Entries must be in the hands of Department Chairman by March 31.

Three things to remember are that the program must be voted on by the members, you must be identifiable as an Auxiliary member and if you can report it under another program, it cannot be reported under VFW Auxiliary Community Outreach.



Buddy Poppy/National Home Chairman Debbie Thie

National Home has a new Director, Michael Wilson. A retired Army National Guard Command Sergeant Major, he served in Desert Storm and Iraqi Freedom. He spent the last several years working with Veterans and Veteran Organizations to increase Veteran Services and support throughout Michigan.

National Home's help line, 1-800-313-4200, creates connections and gives hope to our struggling military and Veteran families. It is free to veterans and family members. The help line is answered Monday - Friday from 8:00am - 4:30 pm Eastern time.

There are requirements to use the National Home community. There are 3 groups of eligibility; VFW or AUXILIARY members or their child, grandchild, or great-grandchild; a veteran who is honorably discharged or still serving in the National Guard or Reserves; and deploying service members including unaccompanied tours or their spouse with children. Parents or guardians of each group are also eligible.

Becoming a Life Member to the National Home is like joining a family. You create a lasting bond between yourself and the mission of the National Home. VFW and Auxiliary members and organizations are eligible to become Life Members.

Life members can vote for trustees who represent National Home Dis-

tricts. community individual or organization may support the National Home by becoming as "Associate Life Member." Associate Life Members do not have voting privileges. Life and Associate Life memberships cost \$50. Department has an award to the auxiliary in each membership class with the most outstanding promotion encouraging the purchase of a life membership to the National Home. Applications must be in the hands of the Department Chairman by March 31.

Poppies are not just for drives. Always have Poppy Cans around the Post. Take small paper plates put a couple of

(Buddy Poppy/National Home continued)

Poppies on them, have members sign and ask for donations. Hang them around the Post. Use poppies for decorations around the Post. Made displays for promoting poppies. Have contests using poppies.

Department has an award in each membership class for the Auxiliary with the most outstanding Community Education about the "Buddy" @ Poppy and with the most outstanding community education of the Buddy Poppy. National will give a citation to each Auxiliary that uses the Buddy Poppy in another Auxiliary Program and a citation and \$25 to the auxiliary in each conference for most outstanding use of the Buddy Poppy in another Auxiliary Program.



Department President's Special Project Chairman Laura Love

The special project Bed, Bath and Beyond for Veterans Village is just what the name says, to provide bedroom and bathroom supplies for each room. Our main goal is to be able to give each room at the Village a new bed and box spring. We would also like to give them protectors for these. Once we have completed this then we would work on providing desks, lamps, chairs etc. to make their rooms feel like their space. We are asking for donations from the auxiliaries so we will have the funds to do this. Once we have furnished the beds and other items, we will look at other ways to make the Village feel like a home. The dining room could use new tables and chairs. We want to make it homey for our residents. All the funds that are raised through this project will be used for this purpose.

Registries have been set up at Bed Bath and Beyond and Target because we do have some auxiliaries that like to pick out and purchase items for the Village. These were set up to give some ideas of what we are looking for (towels, wash cloths, sheets, etc.) and to make the furnishings somewhat similar. You can get to the registries with first name = VFW and last name Veterans Village. If you use the registry, you can have the items delivered directly to the village.

There are many creative ideas on raising funds for our special project. Use the You've Been Flagged program with proceeds to special projects. You can host dinners, bake sales, raffles, bazaars, walks or runs. Let your imaginations run wild!

Historian/Media Relations Chairman Gail Hadley

We all know that newspapers are not the only way to let your community know about your events and activities. Use social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Tik Tok. Put your events across all platforms to appeal to the widest range of community members. Make sure your Auxiliary has a Facebook page and a webpage. National is giving citations to each Auxiliary that provides verification of their Facebook page and a citation and \$25 for most outstanding Facebook page in each conference. Entries must be in hands of Department Chairman no later than March 31. Take videos and post them on YouTube. You can share posts by using hash tags. Displaying a hash tag will show everyone's posts who have used the hash tag. Take photographs. Many photos! Get candid shots and set up more formal shots. Use the best backgrounds, make sure the people are presentable and are not blurry or photo bombed. The historian of the Auxiliary uses photos for the history of the auxiliary. The photos you do not post, turn into a slide show. Being the historian can be fun!



Chief of Staff/Mentoring for Leadership Chairman Jodi Nerney

The two programs were combined this year because they have a common goal of ensuring the legacy of the VFW Auxiliary through healthy auxiliaries with members who are prepared to take over leadership. The programs use many of the same resources such as the Building on VFW Auxiliary Foundations.

The first step to forming an Auxiliary is the Post must vote to start an auxiliary. Once the proper approval has been obtained, a minimum of 15 new or rejoin members is required to apply for the charter. Members can transfer to the auxiliary once it has been instituted but they cannot count as the 15 new or rejoin. At least 10 members must be present for the institution. This is important so that we do not sign up all family members who live out of state and will not be active or participating in the auxiliary. We do not want to set up a new auxiliary for failure. Auxiliaries are encouraged to have a packet for new member. Auxiliaries can decide what they want to include in the packet.

A must have would be a list of officers and contact information. Other suggestions are program descriptions, Understanding Auxiliary traditions flyer, VFW Auxiliary Acronyms and Common Terminology and Building on VFW Auxiliary Foundations Guidelines. Auxiliaries are encouraged to set up a mentoring program in which the tenured members help the new members understand the Auxiliary. Make the members feel welcome. We all must be kind to each other and work together for the good of the Auxiliary.

The best way to prepare future

(Chief of Staff/Mentoring continued) leaders are to prepare them to be good, knowledgeable members. If a member knows what we do and why, it becomes a part of them. They will want to be leaders. Successful Auxiliaries have willing leaders. No one is expected to know everything about an office before they enter. Rely on our resources such as building on VFW Auxiliary Foundations to help understand the duties. Auxiliaries are encouraged to go over these duties before elections so the members can decide if they are a fit for the office. Once the elections happen, the officer-elect can talk with the current officer to ask specific question and get some idea of what is expected that is not in the guide. This system works well for those who are willing to learn.



Hospital Chairman Jerri Osborne

The week of Valentine's Day is National Salute to our Hospitalized Veterans. Show them how much we care and love them for their service. Make and distribute Valentines or have Valentine parties for the hospitalized veterans.

Members, non-members, and youth can be volunteers. Check with the facilities to learn the rules for youth volunteers. Present youth volunteers with Patriotic Awards. Member volunteers can earn Hospital Service Hour Pins. Non-members can earn a one-time volunteer pin for 100 hours. You can also recognize all volunteers with a luncheon, award presentation, token

(Hospital continued) of appreciation or recognize them in the media. Be creative in recognizing these valuable volunteers.

One of the goals is Women Veterans Health Care. There is now VA healthcare for our female veterans, they now have a comprehensive Primary Care especially for women and women related specializations such as reproductive health. Check out the hashtag: #bringwomenvetshome2va. Get the work out to women veterans that this program is available to them.

Members can visit the hospitals VA and Non-VA facilities and ask them if they have a Honors Escort program in place to honor our Veterans at their time of death. Offer to train them on the proper procedure to show respect to the veteran and the family members who may be present- the bedside ceremony and walk down the hall to their resting place. They can volunteer their services and donate flags for this honorable procession from their room.



Legislative Chairman Shirley Bonds

Legislative Priority goals can be found on the VFW website www.vfw.org or www.vfwauxflorida.org under legislative resources. There is a printable version for the brochure. Each year the priority goals is updated. We need to keep up with the updates. Hand the brochures out to the community. Go to a town meeting and distribute the brochure there. The locals need to know what and who are pulling for our veterans, families, and community. Veterans and military issues need to be supported by more than the veterans.

Action Corps is a grassroots advocacy network. The group stays up to date on issues. The Action Corps Weekly is an electronic newsletter to let everyone know what is happening with veterans' issues and highlights the VFW's advocacy efforts. It is highly informative. Anyone can go to the VFW website and sign up... just visit Vfw.org/advocacy/grassroots-efforts or votervoicenet/VFW/register.

When you sign up for Action Corps, the VFW will send out an email for you to act on any bills which need our attention. Click on the link in the email and you put in your info. The email will be sent to your representative and/or senators.

Any time you attend a function with a Politician whether local mayor or council member, county mayor or council member, state legislators or Congressman report it as a personal contact. It begins with our local representatives.

Scholarship Chairman Sandi Hendriks

The Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen Contests deadline has passed, the Local, District and Department judging is done, the Department first place entries have been submitted to National. The Celebration of Achievement Banquet will honor all District Voice of Democracy winners and Department top 3 Patriot's Pen winners. Department winners will be announced with the 1st place winning entries reading their essays. The National winners will be announced at the National Parade of Winners held during the Legislative Conference held February 27 - March 3.

Continuing Education Scholarship, a needs-based scholarship, is open to Auxiliary members, their spouses, and children over the age of 18. The scholarship pays \$1,000 in each conference. Submit an essay of 300 words or less and mail the essay and application to National Headquarters by February 15.

Young American Patriotic Art Contest is open to students grades 9 - 12 in public, private, home schooled and chartered schools. Students need to fill out the application, attach a typed entry of 250 words or less to their masterpiece and submit it to their local Auxiliary by March 31st. The artwork can be 2 dimensional on canvas or paper or 3 dimensional such as paper, papier mâché, pottery, metal work, fabric, wood. No jewelry, photography, or digital art. All artwork must be in the hands of Department Chairman by April 15th. National 1st Place winner wins \$15,000.

Department has a special award for the most outstanding promotion of the Young American Creative Patriotic Art. National will give a citation to every Auxiliary that promotes this contest

(Scholarships continued) and a special citation and \$25 to the most outstanding promotion in each conference. Forms for the citations must be in the hands of Department Chairman by March 31. National will not accept forms sent directly to them.

The goal of National President's Special Project, Fund the Artist, is to give more money to students either by more scholarships or larger amounts of scholarships. The goal is to increase the Patriotic Art Contest from 12 to 20 or more winners and increase the Continuing Education scholarship from \$1,000 to \$2,500. Department has a special award of \$25 to the Auxiliary in each class that contributes the most to Fund the Future.

Ways to donate to the Fund are through Malta; writing a check to National VFW Auxiliary Headquarters and earmarked Art Contest or Continuing Education; establishing a Patriotic Art Scholarship.



Veterans and Family Support Chairman Jean Lockwood

The United to Combat Hunger program partnering with VFW and Humana is ongoing to provide food to the veterans and military facing food insecurity. Grants are available for money and hours donated to food banks and soup kitchens.

National Service Officers program assists veterans and their families to obtain the benefits they deserve. They help veterans navigate the VA system. Donations are needed to continue their work. Department is giving a 1st, 2nd and 3rd award for the most outstanding fundraiser for the National Service Officers.

The VFW Veterans and Military Support program encompasses 3 programs: Military Assistance builds bonds with troops through Adopt-a-Unit programs, sending care packages, Readiness Group Events; the Unmet Needs provides grants for families of deployed military who have an unexpected need due to deployment; and the "Sports Clips Help a Hero Scholarship" where Sports Clips gives scholarships to our heroes. Auxiliaries who donate must report. There is a Department award for the most unique fundraising activity for Veterans and Military Support.

The Veterans Crisis Line connects veterans in crisis, their families, or friends with qualified responders through a confidential hotline, online chat, or text. Auxiliary members can purchase the Auxiliary Suicide Awareness Prevention pin through the VFW Store. It is a great ice breaker to discuss the Auxiliary's concern about military suicide. Auxiliaries can support the Homeless Veterans program by participating in Stand Downs which provide food, clothing, and health screenings to the homeless and at-risk veterans. Auxiliaries can support VA homeless programs or assist with food and clothing drives, job fairs, housing, and assistance programs.

(V&FS continued)

Department awards available to the auxiliary in each membership class for activities for the Homeless Veterans program. National will give citations to each auxiliary that hosts an event to increase homeless veterans awareness and a citation and \$25 to the most outstanding in each conference.

Caregivers, motivated by love, give comfort and care that knows no bounds, but they tend to neglect themselves. Know the signs of Compassion Fatigue, a term used to describe the chronic stress and unpleasant feelings concerning the care they are giving. Recognize the signs in yourself if you are a caregiver or in others. Know how to combat the signs. Give caregivers time for themselves to do errands, visit a friend or grab a cup of tea. Be there to talk or listen. Department award to the auxiliary with the most unique program for Caregivers of Veterans. National will give citations to each auxiliary that hosts activity for caregivers with a citation and \$25 to the most outstanding in each conference.



Youth Activities Chairman JoAnn Kradel

Illustrating America is the patriotic art contest for students in grades K-8 to encourage students' artistic abilities with a patriotic theme. Kindergarten students are now eligible to participate. There are three grade divisions: K-2, 3-5, and 6-8. Students must submit their art entry and entry form to a Local Auxiliary by March 31. Auxiliary's first place winner in each grade division is due in the hands of the Department Youth Activities Chairman by April 15. Contest rules, eligibility and entry forms are on the National or Department website. The Department winner will be sent on to National where the winners in each division can win gift cards: \$100 for first place, \$50 for second place and \$25 third place.

Patriotism through Literacy is a program where Auxiliaries promote and support reading among youth. Auxiliaries can introduce children to historical figures and events in our nation's history through books. Suggested book lists for the different age groups are on the National website. Auxiliaries can donate books to schools, libraries, youth centers, bookmobiles, or individual children. Auxiliaries can volunteer to read to children at local schools or libraries. Get older children involved to host read-a-thon. Award prizes for most books read or hours spent reading.

Youth are invited to sing in the Get Excited for the Red, White, and Blue! national anthem

(Youth Activities continued)

singing contest. Open to youth in grades K-12 with two grade divisions of K-8 and 9-12, students submit a video of their solo vocal performance of "The Star-Spangled Banner" in the genre of their choice along with entry form must be submitted to a Local Auxiliary by March 31. Auxiliaries promote the singing contest to schools and throughout the community especially with church and school youth choir directors. Entry forms with eligibility requirements and contest rules are on the National and Department websites. Auxiliary's first place winner in each grade division must be in the hands of Department Chairman by April 15. National awards in each grade division are gift cards: \$500 for first place, \$300 for second place and \$200 for third place \$200.

Asking youth to help with writing Valentines for Veterans program is way to get them involved. They can assist auxiliaries with all programs, all we have to do is ask. Most youth need community service hours to earn merits in their units, for their admittance applications or to qualify for scholarships. Youth can assist with Patriotic Holiday ceremonies, hand out flags, lay memorial wreaths, help distribute "Buddy" Poppies, assist with food/clothing drives, and help with food boxes/care packages for the food insecure. Youth are also teaching older members technology. By including youth in service to veterans you are including the entire family and by doing so you just may get a new member or two in your organization.

**Membership Chairman
Ann Batson**

In overall averages we are on point. As of Wednesday, January 19, 2022, Department of Florida VFW Auxiliary membership is 99.64%. Retention is down this year compared to last year. The National membership goal for each Auxiliary is to retain 90% of annual members and obtain 100% plus by June 30, 2022, will receive \$50 from National. Auxiliaries that retained 90% or more of their annual members by December 31 were entered into a drawing... the winner TBD.

New members are easy to recruit. Talk to everyone you meet. Wearing shirts, hats, pins or anything with the emblem can help initiate conversation. Sometimes it's a simple "DID YOU KNOW?". Let them know you are a member of the VFW Auxiliary and then ask if they have family in the military or have had direct family that were military. From there on the conversation just gets easier. All you have to be is passionate about what you are talking about. New members help strengthen an existing auxiliary.

You need to look everywhere for new members. By making conversation at a bingo parlor, you will find eligible members. Always carry a membership application in your purse or wallet. Look across the street, at the supermarket, at any event held at your Post that is open to the public. Give out information and applications. You can attend community events and talk up the Auxiliary. Make presentations

(Membership continued)

to local groups such as Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, Kiwanis, Women's Club, PTA, church groups to let them know what we do.

Each member that signs up new members are eligible for awards from National. Sign up 5 new or rejoin members to receive the Cardinal Puzzle pin. Signing up 20 new members will earn you the National Membership Achievement Award. And if you really go all out you may be eligible to receive the Soaring Above and Beyond Award which is awarded to the one member throughout the country who recruits the most new or rejoin members. Department goal is 100% with a big plus after that. Department has membership awards for Auxiliaries that make 90%, 100% and when they reach 100% + 3 members they have met the membership requirement for the Circle of Champions.





Working Programs

