

MAY 2025

# VFW Auxiliary

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS AUXILIARY MAGAZINE

**MID-YEAR CONFERENCE  
CANCUN**

**VFW'S  
DAY OF SERVICE**

**NATIONAL GUARD  
CANDIDATES**

**VFW'S VOICE OF  
DEMOCRACY &  
PATRIOT'S PEN  
WINNERS**





**VFW**  
AUXILIARY'S

**112<sup>TH</sup>**

# NATIONAL CONVENTION

★  
**COLUMBUS, OHIO**

Reference [vfwauxiliary.org](https://vfwauxiliary.org), the National Facebook page and the National E-Newsletter for the latest details.

## DATES & DEADLINES

*May*

- MAY 1
  - Loyalty Day
  - VAVS forms due to National Headquarters
- MAY 5
  - Young American Creative Patriotic Art and 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contest Department entries due to National Headquarters
  - Illustrating America Art Contest Department entries due to National Headquarters
- MAY 8 V-E Day
- MAY 10 Year-End Reports due in MALTA
- MAY 11 Mother's Day
- MAY 17 Armed Forces Day
- MAY 26 Memorial Day

*June*

- MAY 31 **Deadline for National Convention registration and Delegate registration**
- JUNE 10 New and/or rejoined members due in MALTA for Membership recruitment awards.
- JUNE 14 Flag Day
- JUNE 15 Father's Day
- JUNE 30 End of 2024-2025 Program Year and deadline for all donations

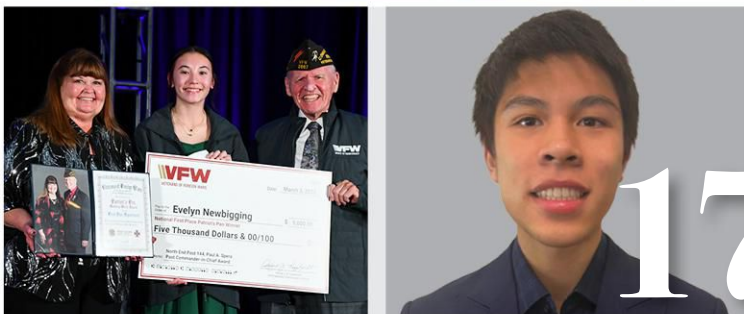
# TABLE OF Contents

MAY 2025 • VOLUME 88 • ISSUE 6

UNWAVERING SUPPORT



FOR UNCOMMON HEROES®



## Features

### 9 2025 Mid-Year Conference

*More than 350 Auxiliary members and guests attended Mid-Year Conference in Cancun, Mexico for business and adventures in the sun.*

### 13 2026 Mid-Year Conference

*Join incoming VFW Auxiliary National President Lois Callahan aboard the Celebrity Reflection sailing roundtrip from Fort Lauderdale with stops in Key West and Bimini, Bahamas.*

### 14 VFW Day of Service

*Help support the VFW's fourth-annual Day of Service that focuses on volunteering for community service projects.*

### 15 National Guard Candidates

*Carefully consider each candidate before casting your vote in August.*

### 17 Patriot's Pen and Voice of Democracy Winners

*Read excerpts from these talented young students' winning entries.*

## In Every Issue

- |                       |                  |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| 3 Get Digital         | 6 Reader's Voice |
| 4 President's Message | 7 My Veteran     |
| 5 Editor's Letter     | 18 HQ Memo       |
|                       | 21 Our History   |

## About the Cover

**About the Cover:** Two National leaders. One mission. VFW Auxiliary National President Brenda Bryant and VFW National Commander-in-Chief Al Lipphardt at the beach in Cancun, Mexico during Mid-Year Conference. All Program Year long, they've teamed up to support veterans and service members.  
*Photo by Nicole Panteleakos*



# CHECK OUT THE EVENTS PAGE

at [vfwauxiliary.org](https://vfwauxiliary.org)

When is National Convention this year and what are the hotel assignments? How do I get registered for Mid-Year Conference 2026? Does the VFW National Home have a summer birthday celebration?

Did you know that you can find the answers to ALL of these questions just by visiting VFW Auxiliary's National website and clicking on the Events tab?

Yes, it's all right there. We have posted confirmed events through 2028. So, take some time to take a look at everything we have coming up for members. You might be surprised by how much you find.

## get SOCIAL



**Instagram**  
[@vfwauxiliaryhq](https://www.instagram.com/vfwauxiliaryhq)



**LinkedIn**  
[VFW Auxiliary](https://www.linkedin.com/company/vfw-auxiliary)



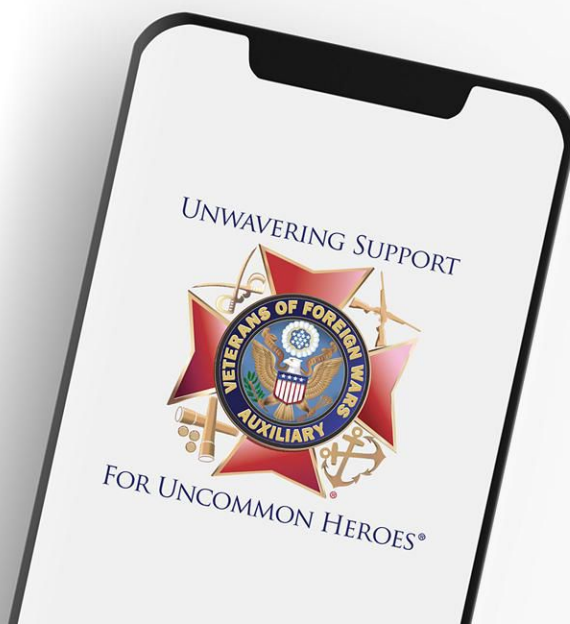
**Facebook**  
[vfwauxiliary](https://www.facebook.com/vfwauxiliary)



**Pinterest**  
[vfwauxiliary](https://www.pinterest.com/vfwauxiliary)



**YouTube**  
[VFW Auxiliary National Organization](https://www.youtube.com/VFW-Auxiliary-National-Organization)





*The more  
members we  
have the louder  
we are, which  
gives us the  
power to help our  
veterans.*

Dear members —

This year has flown by, and the reason is because of all the exciting times I spent with each of you during your Department visits. You went above and beyond to allow me the opportunity to visit with the outstanding Auxiliary and VFW members in your Department. Thank you for giving me this opportunity.

Our year is far from over. This time of the year there are elections and installation of Officers on all levels. **Please do not take this lightly.** The success of your Auxiliary on all levels depends on putting individuals in place that have the organization at heart and once they are installed, **giving them your support.** Auxiliaries cannot put their energy into helping veterans, their families and our communities if individuals are fighting and thinking only of themselves and not the organization. Each year at this point we hear of Auxiliaries that cannot find Officers to take positions. Please reach out to your Auxiliaries and make sure they have the support needed to continue our mission of supporting veterans.

We are also at that point in the year where we must check on all members who have not renewed their membership. It is time to make those in-person visits to make sure they are okay and ask if they need our help. Money from the Relief Fund can be used to help a member who cannot pay their dues. Consider paying the dues of those who are in nursing homes or are elderly. Keep sending in the dues of new members. We should not stop working membership because ending the year with fewer members than we had last year is not acceptable. The more members we have the louder we are, which gives us the power to help our veterans.

Please make sure you have registered for the National Convention in Columbus, Ohio. We are planning an exciting Convention filled with lots of information you will need. I look forward to visiting some of your Department Conventions.

As Booker T. Washington said, "If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else."

Together, we can do this!

Loyally,

BRENDA BRYANT

*National President*



*Stay in the know  
by keeping up  
with not only  
our National  
magazine, but  
also E-News and  
social media.*

Dear members —

While the Program Year is coming to a close in just a couple of months, we still have a lot to look forward to and work toward.

May is a busy month for us! We're turning in National-level Patriotic Art (2-D and 3-D) and Illustrating America entries. We honor our veterans, service members and the heroes we've lost on Armed Forces Day and Memorial Day. We can team up with our Posts for community give-backs with VFW's Day of Service, now in its fourth year. The day is May 3, but you can support events all throughout the month. We're getting registered for National Convention where we will elect and install Officers, including our new National Guard. Read more about our candidates on page 15 and in a future edition of the National E-Newsletter.

Stay in the know by keeping up with not only our National magazine, but also E-News and social media. Each platform has a different twist on content for and about our members, but all have good information and news.

I encourage you all to regularly check our Events page of the National website. That's where our calendar is posted so you can plan ahead. As soon as we have an event confirmed, it goes on this page. Currently we have dates three years into the future.

Keep sending us your feedback on stories you've read or would like to read for our Readers Voice section of this magazine as well as your #AuxiliariesInAction photos to [info@vfwauxiliary.org](mailto:info@vfwauxiliary.org). We want to hear from you!

I look forward to seeing you in person in August for National Convention. Note that Convention is one day shorter than it was last year. In our host city of Columbus, Ohio, we'll be able to meet up with fellow members, make new friends, learn about the upcoming Program Year, recognize members for their achievements and welcome special guests. If you haven't already registered do so in MALTA now. Visit our National Convention web page for more information, including a tentative agenda and brochures from all four candidates for National Guard.

AMANDA COOK  
*Editor-In-Chief*

## VOLUME 88 NUMBER 6

**Editor-In-Chief**  
Amanda Cook

**Contributing Writers**  
Nicole Panteleakos &  
Kris Baker

### VFW Auxiliary Magazine

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### Editorial Office

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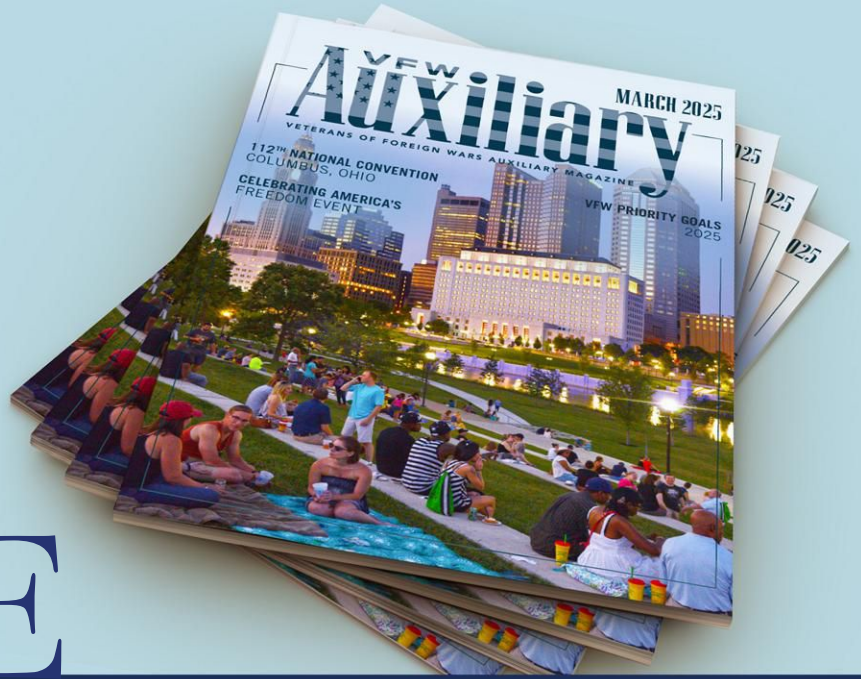
### Change of Address

Forward address changes to: Circulation Department, VFW Auxiliary Magazine, 406 W. 34th St., 10th Floor, Kansas City, MO 64111. Members may also change their own address or email address in MALTA. Or email [info@vfwauxiliary.org](mailto:info@vfwauxiliary.org).

### Website

[www.vfwauxiliary.org](http://www.vfwauxiliary.org)

# READER'S VOICE



This is the space for comments regarding your *VFW Auxiliary Magazine*. Mail your submissions to National Headquarters or email them to [info@vfwauxiliary.org](mailto:info@vfwauxiliary.org), marked "Letter to the Editor." We reserve the right to edit letters for length and clarity. The opinions expressed in Letters to the Editor should not be interpreted as the opinion of the National Organization.

Thank you for featuring our special dedicated member, Lois Bolin (in the March edition of *VFW Auxiliary Magazine* – Member Spotlight).

BETTY A. BAILEY  
AUXILIARY 7721  
Naples, Fla.

**FROM THE EDITORS:** We're seeing a lot of blank space on this page these days, and we are not sure why. Members, this is your page to offer feedback on your National magazine. What did you like? What didn't work for you and why? What would you like to see? Without your letters and emails, there is no Readers Voice. And with nearly 480,000 of you out there, we hope many of you are reading. Do note that we will no longer feature comments in this section about the magazine going digital (as of January 2023). We have responded many times to concerns and have exhausted this line of conversation. We look forward to hearing from you!

## TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!

The editors of *VFW Auxiliary Magazine* want to know what you think about features and articles you see (or would like to see) in the magazine.

We like receiving constructive comments on what you liked, what you didn't like and why as well as what you think we could include that we aren't already covering.

This is your page to voice your thoughts!

Email us at [info@vfwauxiliary.org](mailto:info@vfwauxiliary.org) with Letter to the Editor in the subject line or send your letters to:

VFW Auxiliary Magazine,  
406 W. 34th St., 10th Floor,  
Kansas City, MO, 64111.



# MY VETERAN

The Cunningham Family: Part I



## ALL IN THE FAMILY

HUSBAND AND WIFE AUXILIARY MEMBERS LEARNED OF THEIR FATHERS' SERVICE IN VARIED WAYS

Many influences can build a family. For the Cunningham family, there is almost a regiment full of veterans who have helped shape their lives.

Carrie Cunningham, Auxiliary 358 member in Ballston Spa, New York, remembers hearing her father tell stories of helping kids find food in the Philippines. Her husband Alan never knew his biological father; he had to request his father's military records. Alan was raised by two stepfathers who both served. The first died when Alan was 9; the second he worked side-by-side with at a service station during his high school years.

"Both of these men taught me ethics that I use every day," Alan said about his stepfathers. "My biological father was a mystery."

From going through the requested military records, Alan learned that in 1942 his biological father, Bernard "Bernie" Swartz, enlisted in the U.S. Marines with his brother Charles "Bud" Swartz without their parents' knowledge. Bernie was 16 and his brother forged his birth certificate so they could join at the same time. The military caught up with Bernie and the forged date only after his mother found out they had enlisted. Bernie was stationed in the States until he turned 17, then shipped out and participated in the invasion of Guam where he served until the end of the war.

"I kind of resented him, but looking into his past military history, I understand how a 16-year-old who went into the service and saw combat at 17 could move on to another life," Alan said.

"He just wasn't ready to settle down."

Alan is an ordained minister, Chaplain for VFW Auxiliary 358, Chaplain for the Sons of the American Legion Post 234 and Chaplain for Union Fire Co. #2, all in Ballston Spa. He believes knowing his father's military background has made him a more understanding person. While there are still pieces of father's life that are mysteries, what he has learned has changed his perception of who the man was.

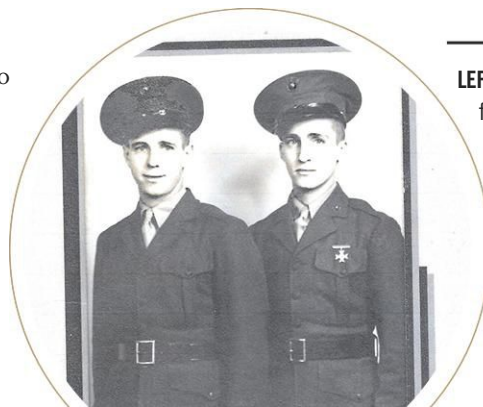
"I'm going to guess he was adventurous, looking to get away from the farm and maybe a dreamer. I feel I follow some of these traits - like father, like son," Alan said.

"Whether he stayed or moved on, I have to thank him, for I am here, the son of a Marine. Semper Fi."

Alan inspired Carrie to request the military records of her father, Willard Hayes, and learn more about his time as a gunner in a B-17.

"Dad didn't talk about combat and what it was like being a belly gunner on a bomber," Carrie said. "He only talked about the kids he could help. I heard the stories over and over; I never tired of listening to him."

To learn more about the Cunningham family's history of service check out the July issue of *VFW Auxiliary Magazine*, in which we will finish telling Carrie's father's story. ♦ KB



**LEFT:** Bud and Bernie Swartz, uncle and biological father of Auxiliary 358 member Alan Cunningham.

**ABOVE:** Carrie and Alan Cunningham at the dedication for a new home for a veteran.



# Coming soon: UPDATED PATRIOTIC ART BROCHURE

National Headquarters will soon be fulfilling Patriotic Art brochure orders that reflect a 2025 revision.

Don't worry – if you have the version with “Revised 6/2023” printed at the bottom of the middle panel on the 2-D side, these are NOT wrong. Do not discard these just to order the newest version.

## WHAT CHANGED?

- You gave us feedback, which we took into account. The type was very, very small, and because criteria can change year to year, which meant adding even *more* words, we were running out of room. In other words, this brochure was trying to say too much for the space it contained. Brochures should be a quick read for students/parents/teachers, primarily non-members, to understand what this contest is, how to apply and who is sponsoring it. So, we enlarged the type and are referring applicants to our website for more details. Another advantage to this is students should be more likely to read and absorb everything they need to know if it is easier to see.
- We've included the Auxiliary Locator. This is important because most applicants have no Auxiliary connection and don't realize how difficult it is to help connect them with a participating Auxiliary close to or on the day of the deadline.
- We're featuring a National first-place winner's artwork on the 3-Dimensional side of the brochure.
- It includes a statement about what this contest is and why we offer it.

\* We will begin sending this out to fulfill brochure orders AFTER we have gone through all of our “Revised 6/2023” copies. That could be right now. Press time was in March.





# 2025

# MID-YEAR

## CANCUN, MEXICO

Attendees to the 2025 National Mid-Year Conference were greeted by the smiles and hellos of National Line Officers, including National President Brenda Bryant, and Val Cooper from Veterans Travel Service (VTS) when they arrived at the Royalton Hideaway in Cancun, Mexico, on February 1, 2025. Before official business got underway, members had time to explore the resort's many restaurants, pools, beaches and bars, check out the spa and hydrotherapy options, visit the small on-site casino, shop for souvenirs and enjoy beautiful weather while catching up with good friends from around the country.

Bryant opened the National Council of Administration meeting on Sunday, Feb. 2 to a packed room of around 350 members, including National District Council Members, National Officers, National Ambassadors, Department Presidents and more. Guests included VFW National Commander-in-Chief Al Lipphardt, VFW Adjutant General Dan West, VFW Quartermaster General Marc Garduno, Past Commander-in-Chief and VFW Foundation Executive Director Hal Roesch, VFW National Home Director Mike Wilson and Chicago-based investment vendor Joe Taiber (who paid his own way to attend). Each of them addressed the membership, highlights of which were Lipphardt's statement, "You've

been supporting us as if we are one organization because we are one organization," West's "Thank you for being the patriots this country needs; thank you for being the patriots our organization needs" and Garduno's reminder that the VFW and Auxiliary "is one team," referring to the Auxiliary as a "force multiplier."

The National Council discussed official business, including whether to start charging members credit card fees (the consensus was no, the organization should not do this, as the credit card payment option is intended as a service to members) and how to address rising air fares and ever-increasing postage. It was requested by National leadership





# CONFERENCE

that those hoping to win awards at National Convention this year save some room in their suitcases to bring them home, cutting down on shipping. Reports were given by a number of committees and alarm was raised about the skyrocketing number of disciplinary actions reaching the National level, many of which stem from issues that could have been solved through mediation if promptly and adequately addressed at a lower level. Toward the end, National Secretary-Treasurer Ann Panteleakos announced that fundraising for the Janice Criswell Department of Kansas Scholarship (for the Young American Creative Patriotic Art Contest) was complete, and starting in the 2026-2027 Program Year there will be \$4,000 awarded on a National level to a deserving student winner in her name.





It takes a one-time gift of \$100,000 to create a named scholarship at this level.

After the meeting's close, 2025-2026 National Guard candidates from the Eastern Conference were invited to address the membership. They are Lee Berrier of Massachusetts, Cynthia Davis of Maryland, Stephen Doherty of Rhode Island and Kathie Fleischauer of Connecticut. (Their brochures are available on the VFW Auxiliary [website](#).) National Ambassadors also spoke, sharing the successes of the year thus far with excitement and pride.

"Keep moving forward," said Veterans & Family Support Ambassador Evan Smiley, noting that we are all "committed to the same mission – it's good!"

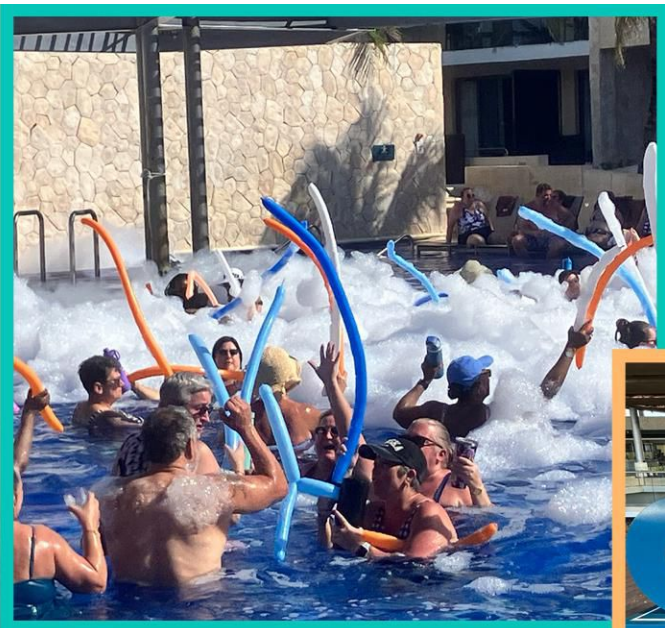
When asked "Who's in the lead?" for membership percentages, National Membership Ambassador Linda Roloff quipped, "The veterans!" earning chuckles and applause.

In addition to the Council of Administration Meeting, two official receptions were held; one on the beach to welcome attendees and one indoors to say goodbye. Plus Bryant held a fun and funny team-building get-together with her Department Presidents which started with brainteaser games and ended with Presidents from across the country cheerfully sharing some of the wonderful work going on in their states. In South Dakota, members have been handmaking baby blankets to be gifted along with their Operation Bottom Cover (Bryant's special project for the year) diaper donations, while Vermont members gave diapers to National Guard members' families who were "so excited" to receive them.

"It's just amazing what you guys are doing," said Bryant, visibly moved. As of the mid-point, "Our members are shining; they are doing things for our veterans that are just outstanding."

"I feel like I'm ready to start, now that I know what I'm doing!" half-joked Massachusetts President Kelly Durkee-Erwin.

During a vendor fair one evening, members milled about, examining beautiful, beaded bags, hand-carved flamenco dancers, glow-in-the-dark sugar skulls, summery clothing and pottery painted in the colors most associated with Mexican art – vibrant pinks, peacock blues and a bright yellow-orange. Among those "window-shopping" were Irma Soliz and Gerald



**THIS PAGE LEFT:** Auxiliary members and fellow resort guests enjoyed the foam party in the pool. **RIGHT:** National Line Officers took a break from greeting arriving guests to pose for a quick picture behind the resort's giant Cancun sign (from left, Guard Janey Feher, Conductor Sandra Uzell, President Brenda Bryant, Senior Vice-President Lois Callahan, Junior Vice-President Donna Mills, Secretary-Treasurer Ann Panteleakos and Chaplain Kim Harney).



Spradlin, Texas' Department President and Conductor. They, and their state's delegation, saw the Mid-Year Conference as a wonderful time to connect and learn.

It was "very much worth" attending, said Soliz, as members "learn here what (they) won't out there." Spradlin agreed, adding that getting to know each other better is key to the organization's success. "If you build relationships, you get so much more accomplished. That's why the I-factor is so detrimental."

"It's we," emphasized Soliz.

Free-time activities included parasailing, which our National President tried and survived (yay!), a catamaran tour, canoeing, shopping, dancing, swimming, a foam party in the pool, karaoke, reading on the beach and other excursions. Many of those in attendance treated the two free days as their vacation and made the most of their time by having fun in the sun while bonding with fellow members. It was a wonderful way to build camaraderie and relax together in the middle of a year of tireless work for our veterans, youth and communities.

Those in attendance had a few words of wisdom for the overall membership, too.

"The best part of the VFW Auxiliary is that we are all family," said Sharonda Lewis, Department of California President.

"You'll never regret choosing kindness," noted National Chief of Staff Betty Arnold.

"Don't just make a difference, BE the difference," Commander Lipphardt advised. With a sly smile, he added, "And some of you are really different!" 🌟 NP

**PAGE 9:** A sunrise in Cancun. **RIGHT:** Bryant laughs during an attempted photobomb on the beach.

**PAGE 10, TOP:** Resort entertainment included everything from traditional Mexican dances to 50s big band music to a trio of women singing classics by Selena, and more. **RIGHT:** Members from the Department of O-H-I-O, including Department President Jessie Gardner, made sure to strike a pose by the ocean. **BELOW:** Department Presidents gathered on the beach for the "welcome" cocktail party with Bryant, center (in black and red).

**THIS PAGE:** A warm reception with family roots. Uzell, far left, enjoyed the sun and sand with attendees, including her daughter, Mona, second-from-right, member Carmelita Jones of Idaho, far right, and Jones' sister, Marizel Fitzpatrick. **BELOW:** National Ambassadors were all smiles while gathered on the stairs during the cocktail party. *Photos by Nicole Panteleakos and a few Auxiliary shutterbugs.*





# MID-YEAR CONFERENCE 2026

## KEY WEST · BIMINI, BAHAMAS



We're sailing from sunny Fort Lauderdale, Florida, stopping at the southernmost city in the United States and cruising on to the Bahamas for incoming VFW Auxiliary National President Lois Callahan's 2026 Mid-Year Conference February 9-13 aboard the Celebrity Reflection.

Our floating home for four days is a beautiful ship in the Solstice class that offers an elevated luxury experience, spa-inspired amenities and a bevy of dining and entertainment options.

### KEY WEST: CLOSE TO PERFECT · FAR FROM NORMAL

Get ready to soak in this quaint city known for its delicious Key Lime pie and Bohemian vibes. Located closer to Cuba than to Miami, Key West is Florida's irreverent, subtropical paradise; a unique blend of history, climate, natural beauty, cultural diversity, architecture and unabashed romantic appeal. Palm-lined streets with gingerbread mansions and tin-roofed conch houses were home to Ernest Hemingway, Tennessee Williams, Elizabeth Bishop, Robert Frost and Jimmy Buffett, a few of the famous people who discovered solace and inspiration in the island city, whose heritage in large part was inspired by Bahamian wreckers, commercial fishermen, spongers and Cuban cigar makers. (Source: [The Florida Keys & Key West](#))

### BIMINI: THE ISLAND OF LEGENDS

Known for its warm, turquoise waters, laid-back island charm, wild dolphins and magical history, this Caribbean spot once lured explorer Juan Ponce de Leon to South Bimini

on his search for the fabled Fountain of Youth. And then there's Atlantis.

"Off Bimini's norther coast lies a curious underwater rock formation known as the Mysterious Bimini Road; giant boulders, neatly laid. Rumor has it the stones were once part of the legendary Lost City of Atlantis."

Bimini is also a deep-sea angler's paradise and its coral reefs and shipwrecks foster a "Kingdom of the Sharks," enticing adventure-seeking divers who just might find themselves inches away from a hammerhead.

(Source: [The Islands of the Bahamas](#))

Join us: Contact Veterans Travel Service at (800) 325-9377. Visit our [National website](#) for the event flyer and fillable buy-in form. 🇺🇸 AC





# DAY OF SERVICE: JOIN THE MOVEMENT

## BE A PART OF THE 4TH ANNUAL DAY OF SERVICE

VFW Day of Service kicks off Saturday, May 3, 2025, and you can participate ALL month!

Taking place across the nation and around the world, VFW Day of Service showcases veterans banding together to make a difference in their communities. By combining resources, gaining media support and dedicating the entire month to service, we spotlight the ongoing commitment of veterans who continue to lead lives of service.

“Veterans are driven by a profound sense of duty that extends beyond their time in uniform,” said VFW National Commander-in-Chief Al Lipphardt. “Their commitment to service carries on as they return to their communities where they continue to give back, uplift and inspire, embodying the true spirit of selfless dedication. The VFW #StillServing initiative shines a light on its many Posts and all veterans who continue to live a life of service.”

What started as a campaign became a movement as veterans across the country stepped up to share stories of how they are still serving.

Since its launch, 5.7 million people have engaged with the campaign through the website, videos and social channels. Additionally, 3,000 veterans have shared their personal stories of sacrifice and service, and more than

1,000 veteran stories have been covered by media outlets worldwide.

The VFW and VFW Auxiliary are asking veterans of every stripe — patriots like YOU — to host a community service event during the month of May. It doesn't matter how big the event is — we want to know about it. We can join forces on these projects! VFW members should register their event here and Auxiliaries can click on this [link](#) to learn more about VFW's 2025 Day of Service.

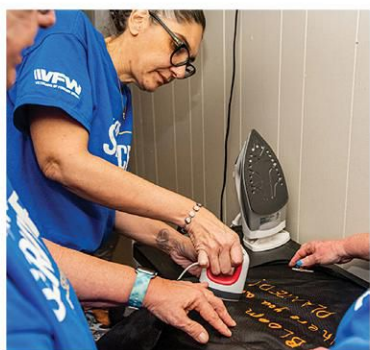
Also think about how Auxiliaries can report Day of Service hours as they relate to VFW Auxiliary Programs. See 2024-2025 National Program Book for reporting criteria.

We need you and your Post on board! Sign up today and let's show the nation how veterans are #StillServing in their communities.

Auxiliaries, don't forget to share your VFW Day of Service photos with National Headquarters! Email [info@vfwauxiliary.org](mailto:info@vfwauxiliary.org) with the subject line Day of Service. We'd love to feature some of your photos in upcoming editions of *VFW Auxiliary Magazine*, our National E-Newsletter and on social media.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT VFW DAY OF SERVICE,

CONTACT - [info@todaysvfw.org](mailto:info@todaysvfw.org).



VFW DAY OF SERVICE

# 2025 NATIONAL



**LEE BERRIER**  
MASSACHUSETTS

## WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO RUN FOR NATIONAL GUARD?

I was still a teenager the first time I attended a National event. It was the Statue of Liberty's birthday party. There was an incredible sense of connection between everyone because of our shared involvement in the event.

The pageantry, spectacle, camaraderie, parade of Flags and speeches left a lasting impression on me. That impact set the foundation for my entire career in the Auxiliary. Through the next four decades, I observed the dignity and honor of the National Presidents who have guided this organization while I have advanced through the various Chairs and Chairmanships at each level. I have worked diligently toward my goal of someday being the one to guide this organization.

## HOW CAN WE BEST POSITION OUR ORGANIZATION FOR CONTINUED SUCCESS?

I am aware that technology is integral to our operations, communication and messaging. I recognize that membership growth is important for increasing our influence within communities and legislative bodies. Our ongoing support for veterans and their families remains more crucial than ever, and our Programs offer numerous volunteer opportunities to achieve that. It is important to attract the younger generation in a way that sparks their interest and involvement. I recently met a VFW Auxiliary member who joined because of a youth award they received 25 years ago. We must remember that everything we do makes a difference! Continued success hinges on our collective efforts to balance these multiple functions effectively. Additionally, I believe that my 20 years of experience as a budget analyst, and 45 years of active VFW Auxiliary membership, have prepared me well. Through prudent financial decisions and actions based on my enduring commitment to this organization, I am optimally positioned to ensure our continued success.



**CYNTHIA DAVIS**  
MARYLAND

## WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO RUN FOR NATIONAL GUARD?

I first became acquainted with the VFW Auxiliary through our Hospital Program. My brother Jerome Fleming, a Vietnam War veteran, was a patient in the VA health care system. Through the outstanding care that my brother received, I was able to witness first-hand how caring and nurturing our VFW Auxiliary hospital volunteers are. Through not

only the medical care, but just as importantly the love and care he received from hospital volunteers from the VFW Auxiliary, I witnessed the spark of hope return to his eyes. Seeing my brother return to his former self touched my heart and sparked

a desire in me to join this great organization to pay it forward, to honor Jerome's service and to show respect and honor to our nation's heroes who sacrificed for us.

## HOW CAN WE BEST POSITION OUR ORGANIZATION FOR CONTINUED SUCCESS?

One way to strengthen our organization is to become more family-friendly. It's time to develop ways to draw in prospective younger members by providing activities that cater to their interests and needs, and that align with our objectives, whether it be educational programs, recreational activities or providing a platform for them to share their ideas. We need to make sure we are relevant to them. I feel it may be time to examine our current National Programs to emphasize the activities we have for the younger demographic and incorporate activities targeted to interest our youth and younger members. By doing this, we can help plant the seeds of involvement in the VFW Auxiliary while they're still young. When we make our organization welcoming to families, we help ensure that our values and mission are passed on to future generations.



# GUARD

## Candidates



**STEPHEN DOHERTY**  
RHODE ISLAND

### WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO RUN FOR NATIONAL GUARD?

Many encouraging words from mentors and members from several Departments throughout the organization and my desire to do more for my fellow veterans.

When the Auxiliary allowed men into the organization and because I

had been volunteering at VFW events, I felt like I was already part of the team.

Soon after joining I found myself in leadership positions within the Department and National. It was... and... it is... an exciting time in my life. My desire is... to help move this organization forward.

My inspiration for running for National Guard is that every day we, the Auxiliary, are always finding ways to support our veterans and their families, in good times and not so good. We are here for them with activities, our National Programs, functions and donations of goods when needed.

### HOW CAN WE BEST POSITION OUR ORGANIZATION FOR CONTINUED SUCCESS?

Continuing success should be the goal of every Auxiliary member!

Ask the younger eligible veteran families what will make it worthwhile for them to come into our Posts and find out what we are all about. Learn what will inspire them to help our organization and to support our veterans.

This will bring continued success with new ideas from our younger generation as they get involved with our mission, participate in the National Programs and share with others to do great things for the men and women that served this great country.



**KATHIE FLEISCHAUER**  
CONNECTICUT

### WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO RUN FOR NATIONAL GUARD?

My "inspiration?" or "motivation?" would be veterans of course. The veterans in my life. From my grandfather buried at Arlington National Cemetery, my eligible veteran, Bill Fleischauer, a Vietnam Veteran, to my son, an Iraqi War Veteran, and my father, a Korean-era Army soldier serving in Alaska where I was born.

My VFW Auxiliary career spans over 20 years through Auxiliary 7666 Chairs, District, Department and Eastern Conference.

I enjoy learning new things and spreading that knowledge to others. I wanted to continue to serve our veterans and our Auxiliary members in the greatest veterans organization.

### HOW CAN WE BEST POSITION OUR ORGANIZATION FOR CONTINUED SUCCESS?

Membership as always is our number one priority. Members are out there. We have to continue to learn how to approach the newer and younger ones as we also continue to mentor and nurture our faithful longtime members. We are the families of veterans. Remember to reach out to our family members. Teach our children about our "Whys" as we remember them ourselves. Our numbers are SO important on Capitol Hill to help our veterans where it is needed most. Let our members know this. My youngest family members are 16 and 18. Let's share the love of this wonderful organization with them. That's how we continue the success of this organization. Share our enthusiasm for our love of the organization, our veterans and each other.

**CLICK HERE**



to read each candidate's brochure before casting your vote in August.

# 2024-2025 VFW

## VOICE OF DEMOCRACY & PATRIOT'S PEN

# winners



**Tri Vu**  
**MANCHESTER, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

**\$35,000**

First-place VFW Voice of Democracy (VOD) winner Tri Vu was sponsored by New Hampshire Post 8214. The Voice of Democracy theme for 2024-2025 was "Is America Today Our Forefathers' Vision?" and his moving speech answered

this question succinctly and fairly using a combination of his personal experience as an immigrant and his knowledge of both American history and America today.

The Manchester, New Hampshire high school student moved to the United States from Vietnam with his parents and brother 12 years ago, seeking freedom, opportunity and an escape from communism.

He did not know English or much about American culture, but as he wrote in his speech, "The journey we've taken from a country where our voices were stifled to one where we are empowered to speak, vote and participate is living proof that America still upholds the ideals set forth by its founders. America's core values of democracy, freedom and opportunity remain true even if the country has evolved significantly since its founding. Based on my family's experience, I can state with confidence that America still embodies the ideals of our founding fathers: a nation where everyone has the opportunity to follow their ambitions within a system that protects their rights, regardless of background."

He was awarded a \$35,000 scholarship.



**Evelyn Newbigging**  
**LANCASTER, SOUTH CAROLINA**

**\$5,000**

First-place VFW Patriot's Pen winner Evelyn Newbigging, sponsored by South Carolina Post and Auxiliary 12136, read her speech to the crowd. The middle schooler addressed the theme "My Voice in America's Democracy" by

focusing on the ways people can be informed and get involved in the democratic process before they are old enough to vote.

"As a teenager living in the U.S., I'm starting to realize how important my voice is in our democracy. I believe democracy is about people having a say in important topics, and that includes me. Even though I'm not old enough to vote, there are still plenty of ways to get involved and make a difference. My voice in American democracy means using my opinions, ideas and actions to help shape the future for myself and others. Even though at my age I can't vote yet, I can still advocate for the issues that matter to me. I can push for change doing things like writing a letter to my local representatives, raising awareness through social media, or even starting a petition."

She was awarded \$5,000.

To learn more about the VFW's VOD and Patriot's Pen for which students compete to win thousands of dollars in college scholarships, [click here](#). Also find next year's theme.



# HQ MEMO

## AUXILIARY BUSINESS

- **May 31, 2025: REGISTRATION CLOSES** for all National Convention events and for National Convention Delegates and Alternates. Delegates may be entered in MALTA, sent by mail, fax or email to [info@vfwauxiliary.org](mailto:info@vfwauxiliary.org). **Important note! Only members attending National Convention will receive packet materials. Packets will NOT be mailed after Convention. Do NOT register if you do not plan to attend. Members must be present at time of registration to receive packet, but on-site registrants are not guaranteed printed Convention packet materials.**
- **Before June 30, 2025:** Input Reports of Installation of 2025-2026 Auxiliary, District and Department Officers online.
- **By August 31, 2025:** The 2025-2026 bond payment for President and Treasurer of Auxiliary, County Council and District is due to National Headquarters. Department bond for its Treasurer is also due. Auxiliary Presidents and Secretaries may input this information online or send via mail to National Headquarters.

### FOR REVIEW

- **Bring your plastic membership card to Convention** or access it on your phone in the MALTA app. Note that metal membership cards will add time to your registration because they cannot be scanned.
- **National Guard candidate interviews** on Page 15. Consider their comments carefully before casting your vote for the VFW Auxiliary's next National Line Officer.
- **Ritual revisions and proposed resolutions** to the National Bylaws to be presented at the 112<sup>th</sup> National Convention. Find these in MALTA.
- **Your email address:** If it is not correct in MALTA, please log in and update your profile, contact National Headquarters at 816-561-8655 or email [info@vfwauxiliary.org](mailto:info@vfwauxiliary.org).

A nighttime photograph of a city skyline with a prominent bridge illuminated in purple and white. In the foreground, there's a modern, curved architectural structure. A large orange banner with white text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

# 2025 NATIONAL CONVENTION SCHEDULE

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

*All meetings are held in the convention center unless otherwise noted. **Times for various functions are subject to change.** Meeting rooms will be posted closer to meeting dates and are subject to change. Check the National website and the shared VFW/Auxiliary Convention app for updates as we get closer to Convention.*

LS = Livestream

### FRI, AUG. 8

9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Early packet pickup at atrium between the Hyatt Regency Columbus and Hilton Columbus Downtown hotels.

### SAT, AUG. 9

8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Exhibit Hall Open/Registration

10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m. Conference Meetings

Noon-1:30 p.m. 45-Plus Club Luncheon  
(Reservations required)

5:00 p.m.- 6:00 p.m. Circle of Excellence Ceremony (LS)

### SUN, AUG. 10

8:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. Exhibit Hall Open/Registration

8:30 a.m.- 9:30 a.m. Joint Memorial Service

10:45 a.m.- 11:30 a.m. National District Council Member Training

11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Past Councilors' Club Luncheon

1:00 p.m.- 4:30 p.m. Programs Seminar (LS)

### MON, AUG. 11

8:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. Exhibit Hall Open/Registration

8:00 a.m. - Noon Joint Opening Session

1:00 p.m.- 5:00 p.m. Auxiliary Opening Business Session (LS)

5:30 p.m.- 10:00 p.m. VFW Awards Banquet, Battelle Grand Ballroom, convention center. Register online by [clicking here](#).

### TUE, AUG. 12

8:00 a.m. - Noon Exhibit Hall Open/Registration

8:00 a.m. - Noon Auxiliary Business Session (LS) *(Last day for exhibits/registration)*

1:30 p.m.- 2:30 p.m. Amwins Presentation

6:00 p.m.- 8:00 p.m. VFW Patriotic Celebration

### WED, AUG. 13

7:45 a.m. - 8:00 a.m. Presentation of Department Presidents with Colors (LS)

8:15 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Officer Election, Installation and Closing Session (LS)

1:00 p.m.- 3:00 p.m. National District Council Meeting, Hyatt Regency Columbus

4:00 p.m.- 6:00 p.m. Joint Reception for Commander-in-Chief and National President *(Ticketed event)*, Convention Center



## REGISTRATION FORM

☐ **National Convention: Advance Registration \$25**

☐ **45-Plus Luncheon** (Complimentary)  Year Member Joined

Name  Membership No.

Address  City  State  ZIP

Department  Phone  Email

☐ Check enclosed ☐ Money order enclosed ☐ Credit card

**DO NOT SEND CASH.**

Credit Card No.  ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard

Name on card  ☐ Discover ☐ American Express

Billing address for card

City  State  ZIP

Expiration date

3-digit CVV code on back of card (Visa, MasterCard, Discover)

4-digit CVV code on front of card (Amex only)

(Cardholder's signature)

(Date)

**This form and all payments must be received at National Headquarters by May 31.**

**No exceptions or refunds after this date.**

**DO NOT ENCLOSE DELEGATE LISTS WITH THIS FORM.**

## SAVE \$15!

**Advance registration is \$25.**

**On-site registration is \$40.**

Register in MALTA, pay with a credit card (form above) or mail a check to:

**VFW Auxiliary**

406 W. 34<sup>th</sup> St., 10th Floor,

Kansas City, MO 64111

Attn: National Convention Registration

**Registration must be received by May 31.**

**Registrations received after May 31 will be rejected.**

**Member must be present at time of registration to receive packet.**

## 45-YEARS PLUS CLUB LUNCHEON

**Have you been a member for 45 years or more?**

Come join the 45-Years Plus Club at National Convention.

The luncheon will be at noon on Saturday, Aug. 9 at the Convention Center.

Register online or fill out form (above) and mail to National Headquarters. Registration is required to attend.

**Note: To register for the 45-Years Plus Club Luncheon, you must have been a member prior to June 30, 1980, and maintained continuous membership since that date.**

# Our HISTORY

## GUNFIRE, THE RED SCARE AND THE BIRTH OF A NEW HOLIDAY

From May 1 to May 4, 1886, protests, strikes and demonstrations advocating for the eight-hour workday took over the city of Chicago, forming a pivotal moment in the history of labor rights. Tragically, these events climaxed when a bomb was detonated in Haymarket Square; this would become known as the Haymarket Affair. From then on in America, this part of the calendar would become a symbolic time to address workers' rights. As our history has shown, symbols like these can be used in a lot of diverse ways.

After the revolution in Russia in 1917 when the first Red Scare hit America's shores, the domestic fight for labor rights would get swept up in the anti-communism wave. The long-observed holiday of May Day, which has also become known as International Workers Day since the Haymarket Affair, was now being associated with communism. This is when the VFW and VFW Auxiliary decided to take the day back.

It was a chilly day in New York City on May 1, 1923. VFW Auxiliary member Bessie Hanken of Boston (and future Auxiliary National President) was preparing to

speak to the assembled VFW and Auxiliary members. They were there protesting the Communist May Day Celebration that was happening at the same time. In attendance was U.S. Congressman Hamilton Fish of New

York, who had built his career on anti-communist policies. Before she went on stage, Fish saw that Hanken was cold and offered her his coat. She accepted and he draped it over her shoulders.

Suddenly, gunshots rang out. Three bullets flew into the crowd on stage. People began to scatter; a would-be assassin had taken aim at Fish as well as the other speakers. As the commotion began to subside, Hanken looked down. While nobody had been injured, Hanken saw three bullet holes in the sleeve of the coat she had just put on. The shooter was never apprehended.

Despite how close she had been to violence, Hanken was not deterred. The following May, the VFW and the Auxiliary let their voices be heard as they marched in the Boston Common.

Hanken submitted her application for the event that was now to be called Loyalty Day. Communist protesters had earlier petitioned to march on Boston Commons that day, so when both groups arrived more violence broke out. Auxiliary members' white uniforms were ripped at.





This did not stop Hanken and her Auxiliary, they returned every year to celebrate on May 1. This continued as Hanken was elected National President in 1928 and then in 1929. In Boston in 1931, Hanken was again joined on stage by Congressman Fish to speak about Loyalty Day to the large assembly of VFW and Auxiliary members in attendance, as well as the more than 250 police officers on guard.

By then Loyalty Day was being celebrated across the United States with parades, rallies and speeches reaffirming belief in democracy. Sometimes these events were called Americanism Day, but the goals were the same. In 1958, after years of legislative lobbying led by the Auxiliary and the VFW, Congress officially designated May 1 as Loyalty Day. The creation of this holiday was the direct result of the work done by a brave Past National President and all the members of the Auxiliary and VFW.

## LOYALTY THROUGH THE YEARS

Though there is a lot of competition for association with May 1, Loyalty Day has carved out its own lasting history with the day. On the day in 1930, 10,000 VFW members staged a rally at New York's Union Square to promote patriotism. From 1937 to 1938, Loyalty Day was seen as an important part of the Auxiliary's battle against Nazism and fascism.

After being declared a legal holiday, in 1959 President Dwight Eisenhower issued a proclamation on Loyalty Day. Since then, it has become a tradition for every president, no matter party affiliation, to issue a similar proclamation for this sometimes-overlooked holiday. In his 2024 proclamation on Loyalty Day, President Joe Biden said, "We all came from somewhere, but we are all American — loyal not to a person or a place but to an idea: We are all created equal and deserve to be treated equally throughout our lives. This idea is our nation's North Star. While we have never fully lived up to it, we have never stopped pursuing it. This Loyalty Day, we promise to always keep fighting for a more perfect union."

**PREVIOUS PAGE:** National President Bessie Hanken (1928-1930).

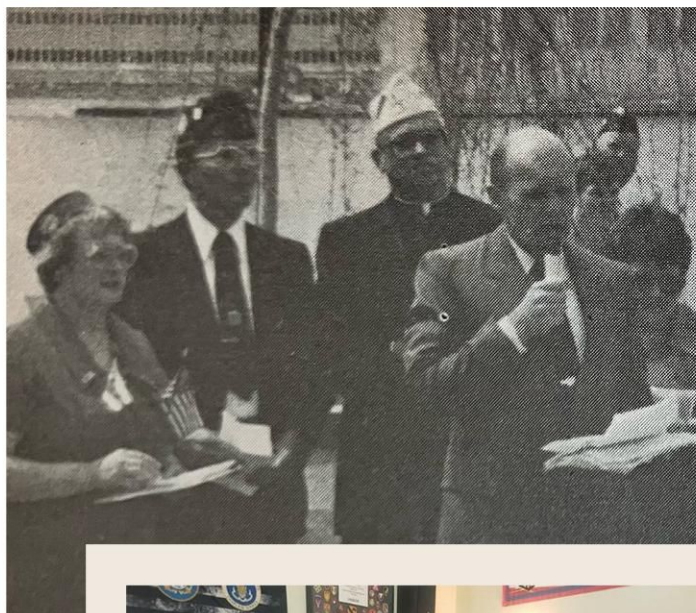
**RIGHT TOP:** County Council Auxiliary President Carolyn Rhodus joins a Loyalty Day program in the early 1980s in Toledo, Ohio that concluded with a lift off of 1,000 red, white and blue balloons. Many of the balloons contained coupons redeemable for an American Flag or Flag desk set.

**RIGHT BELOW:** Members of Auxiliary 76 in San Antonio, Texas celebrate Loyalty Day in 2023. The group makes banners for every patriotic holiday, including those that are lesser known.

## LOYALTY AND THE AUXILIARY

For the Auxiliary, Loyalty Day remained its own Program for a while before falling under Americanism in the late 1960s.. VFW Posts and Auxiliaries created Loyalty Day pageants where a Loyalty Day Queen would be selected and sometimes scholarships were awarded.

Today, some Auxiliaries struggle with attendance to events like Loyalty Day parades. However, the Auxiliary stance is that it does not take a large group to honor this observance, and can be done one person at a time, with a simple recitation that begins "I pledge allegiance, to the Flag..." ♦ KB



# MEMORIAL DAY

**GRAVE MARKERS** For use with 3/8" dowel flag. Flag is sold separately. Made in the USA.



5 1/2" cast aluminum emblem with 24" rod.  
3200 \$50.00



4 3/4" rugged plastic emblem with 16" rod.  
3505 \$14.00



**GRAVE MARKER FLAG** 12 x 18" flag. For use with the above grave markers. Made in the USA.

2493 1-11 \$15.00 each  
12-49 \$14.00 each  
50+ \$13.00 each



**WREATH** 20". Made in the USA.  
9221 \$48.00

# VFW

VFWSTORE.ORG

CLICK TO SHOP ONLINE!



## ON SALE! ROYAL BLUE RHINESTONE T-SHIRT

100% cotton. Ladies' cut. Full color 8" VFW Auxiliary Emblem in sparkling rhinestones.  
7878 S-5XL ~~\$22.95~~ **NOW \$15.00**  
*While quantities last!*



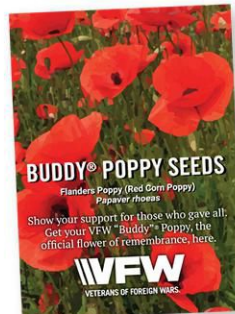
Front

## ON SALE! ROYAL BLUE T-SHIRT

100% cotton. VFW Auxiliary Emblem screened on back. Emblem and slogan on front left chest. Unisex. 7597  
M-XL ~~\$12.95~~ **NOW \$8.00**  
2XL ~~\$15.95~~ **NOW \$10.00**  
3XL-5XL ~~\$18.95~~ **NOW \$12.00**  
*While quantities last!*

## ON SALE! BLUE/WHITE AUXILIARY POLOS

88/12 polyester/elastane. UPF 50 sun protection. Four-way stretch. Moisture wicking. Side vents. Men's three-button placket. Ladies' V-neck placket. VFW Auxiliary embroidered in white on left chest. **Ladies' runs small**  
7923 Ladies' S-3XL ~~\$55.00~~ **NOW \$40.00**  
7924 Men's S-4XL ~~\$55.00~~ **NOW \$40.00**  
*While quantities last!*



**NEW**

## NEW! POPPY SEEDS

Grow your own red corn poppies. This annual can grow to 12" to 30" tall. Plant in full sun. Approx. 350 seeds per packet.  
1250 \$3.00

Prices valid through 8/31/2025

Plus Shipping & Handling

1.833.839.8387

VFWSTORE.ORG