

NOVEMBER 2023

VFW Auxiliary

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS AUXILIARY MAGAZINE

NATIONAL CONVENTION
PHOENIX, ARIZONA

2023-2024
NATIONAL GUARD
SANDRA UZELL

SECOND-ANNUAL
VFW DAY
OF SERVICE



IT'S TIME TO FILE YOUR 990-N FORM

Treasurers, please remember your 990-N (e-Postcards) must be submitted to the IRS no later than November 15, 2023. This is important because it allows Auxiliaries to maintain their tax-exempt status. So, if you haven't already, take action to get this filed now to avoid problems later.

Note that the IRS does not accept paper forms.

Smaller charities that are eligible and choose to file the Form 990-N, Electronic Notice for Tax-Exempt Organizations (e-Postcard), must sign in to the IRS modernized authentication platform using either their active IRS username or create an account with ID.me, the current IRS credential service provider.

Form 990-N submissions may be made on the [IRS website](#).



DATES & DEADLINES

November

- NOVEMBER 11 Veterans Day
- NOVEMBER 15 Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen Post judging complete
- NOVEMBER 23 Thanksgiving
- NOVEMBER 30 See the *2023-2024 National Program Book* for Membership awards deadlines.

December

- DECEMBER 7 Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
- DECEMBER 15 Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen District judging complete
- DECEMBER 25 Christmas
- DECEMBER 31
 - Circle of Excellence goal: Paid Officers – Auxiliary Officers **MUST** have dues paid by this date.
 - New Year's Eve

For more information on awards, see the *2023-2024 National Program Book* online in Member Resources behind MALTA login.

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About the Cover: FROM LEFT: 2022-2023 Wyoming Department President and Circle of Excellence inductee Crystal Allgaier, Rebecca Darnell, Jan Miller and Wyla Cotton, all of Wyoming, capture a moment of elation at National Convention.

DIGITAL GET

Auxiliaries, are your members going to be recognized for all of the hard work they're doing to support veterans, service members, their families and communities?

There's a form for that – by Program. Awards begin at the Auxiliary level. Visit MALTA Member Resources to find the forms and do follow the instructions. In order for members to get credit for their work and receive awards, these forms must be properly submitted.

In MALTA Member Resources you'll also find entry forms and information sheets for Auxiliary contests and scholarships. It is important that you use the most current form, as awards, scholarships and contests details and rules change from year to year.

Help us help you by submitting the correct forms to Department leadership.

get SOCIAL

 **Instagram**
[@vfwauxiliaryhq](#)

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[vfwauxiliary](#)

 **YouTube**
[VFW Auxiliary National Organization](#)

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UNWAVERING SUPPORT

FOR UNCOMMON HEROES®



I've had so many truly unforgettable and once-in-a-lifetime experiences thanks to your warm hospitality.

Sisters and Brothers—

Now several months into the Program Year, I've been hitting the tarmac full speed ahead.

I have enjoyed visiting with those of you who are able to make it to the events your Department President and/or Visit Chairman has set up for everyone to do.

I've had so many truly unforgettable and once-in-a-lifetime experiences thanks to your warm hospitality. To name just a few, you'll see more in my Official Visit stories featured in our E-Newsletter the second and fourth Thursday of every month, I was honored to plant a tree in honor of veterans we lost too soon, saw a hot air balloon race and was stunned by Alaska's serenity. I was also blown away by the natural beauty you've shown me in your state, both landscapes and wildlife, and the many more amazing visits to historical sites and memorials. The best part was enjoying this with you, our members.

In addition to the traveling, I would like to thank all who came to the Celebrating America's Freedom Event (CAFE) in Promontory Point, Utah. This is where the transcontinental railroad was completed and we were able to see a reenactment of the two trains meeting along with the golden spike being driven to complete the railroad. It was a beautiful day in an equally beautiful location surrounded by the mountains in the high desert, looking much like it did in 1869. We were fortunate to learn together about a chapter in America's history complete with replica Victorian locomotives and a full cast of reenactors dressed in period costumes. You could almost forget it was the 21st century with their presentation.

We were privileged to hear from VFW Commander-in-Chief Duane Sarmiento and Park Superintendent Brandon Flint during our CAFE presentation, and VFW Adjutant General Dan West even played a part in the reenactment as the General. Look for more about CAFE in the next issue of [VFW Auxiliary Magazine](#).

My theme of ***Banding Together for Our Veterans*** is to bring awareness to suicide. Even one is too many and so I hope that you all will help me spread the word about how our military and their families can get help both before and after a suicide. The VFW Auxiliary has the new three-digit Veterans Crisis Line number 988 on our website. We are also looking into ways the family and veteran can get assistance. Remember, it is not only the veteran who is committing suicide; sometimes it is the family member, including our children.

Thank you all for all the hard work you are doing every day to help our veterans, their families, service members and communities.

Loyally,

CARLA J. MARTINEZ
National President



We really can do so much good by giving these gifts of thoughtfulness and company.

Dear members—

'Tis the time of year when many of us are planning for the holidays, however we may celebrate them. We're shopping for gifts, getting our grocery lists together, preparing our homes to welcome family and looking forward to a season filled with cheer, good tidings and religious observances.

The end of the calendar year can also be an especially difficult time for our veterans and fellow members who might be alone or separated from loved ones. Remember to keep them in your thoughts, and let those thoughts about our veterans, service members and our extended Auxiliary and VFW family become actions of spending time together. You might be surprised how much a card or visit can do to brighten their lives. We really can do so much good by giving these gifts of thoughtfulness and company. Let's also be mindful of promoting the 988 (then press 1) Veterans Crisis Line emergency number, especially this time of year. We know that heightened feelings of isolation and depression can contribute to thoughts of suicide. Prevention and awareness of suicide are a special emphasis of National President Carla Martinez this year. Let's do our part to ensure that we support this very important need for help.

It was wonderful to see many of you at Golden Spike National Memorial Park in Utah for our 11th Celebrating America's Freedom Event. You read about this awesome event in the October 12 National E-Newsletter. Look for a feature story detailing this journey back in time to the joining of the transcontinental railroad in the next edition of [*VFW Auxiliary Magazine*](#).

We hope you enjoy this issue of [*VFW Auxiliary Magazine*](#) that includes more National Convention coverage, a story about the history of Christmas at the VFW National Home and much more.

AMANDA COOK
Editor-In-Chief

VOLUME 87 NUMBER 3

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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, 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.

It's great to have full-color photos of the art contest entries and various scenes. But perhaps you could stop placing solid color background blocks so the magazine wouldn't be so expensive for us to print at home. Just a thought. Please consider.

MARYELLEN CROWE DESFORGE

Albany, N.Y.

Auxiliary 8692

From the Editor: Maryellen, thank you for the suggestion, and we will make an effort to minimize color density when and where we can. We have made adjustments to this issue to go easier on the ink!

Congratulations to the Department of New York and Kayla for your first-place winning entry in the 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contest. We are all so proud of you.

RUTH HUBER

Little Valley, N.Y.

Auxiliary 8734

REMINDER: Make sure your email address is current in MALTA and encourage fellow members to do the same so they can receive not only the National Magazine delivered directly to their inboxes, but also our National E-Newsletter and other important offers and information.

Mention this at your Auxiliary meeting and encourage members to double-check their email addresses or, if they haven't done so, establish their MALTA profile. Just click the MALTA Member Login from the National website home page and follow the instructions: <https://vfwauxiliary.org/>.

Don't miss crucial information and event details. Follow the steps above to ensure you receive all the valuable information from Auxiliary Headquarters.

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.

While we have appreciated receiving all of your feedback about the National magazine going digital, we also look for constructive comments on what you liked, what you didn't 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 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

Wilbert "Tex" Dettmann

On December 7, 1941, bombers from the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service launched a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, located off the coast of Hawaii's capital city of Honolulu on the island of O'ahu. The attack on Pearl Harbor came in two consecutive waves; by the time it was over, more than 2,400 Americans had been killed and another 1,178 were wounded, including both service members and civilians.

Only 335 servicemen survived.

One of these was Wilbert "Tex" Dettmann of Texas. The 22-year-old had enlisted two years earlier.

He had just gotten off one submarine and was being assigned to another, so he was at the naval base, waiting. When the attack started, he was "On his way to church in his dress whites," says daughter, Cheryl Hurley of Auxiliary 5446 in Plainfield, Connecticut.

"He ended up pulling bodies out of the water... for two days without any sleep," says Hurley. "They ended up burning their uniforms because (of the) ash and blood; (they) were totally destroyed."

At first, Dettmann was erroneously listed Missing in Action. He earned a Purple Heart, a Bronze Star, a World War II Service Medal and other accolades for his service. He would later serve in the Korean Conflict.

Dettmann did not speak about what he had experienced on that day which would live in infamy. Upon returning home, he suffered from post-traumatic stress.

"You couldn't come up behind him," says Hurley. "And a loud noise would send him to the floor." She grew up knowing her father had served, but didn't understand the extent of what he had been through or how survivors had suffered until she learned more about the attack in school as a teenager.

In 1991, she decided to organize a memorial event to be held for the 50th anniversary of the attack. This was not only an opportunity for the Post, Auxiliary, community and local high school students to come together and learn about Pearl Harbor while recognizing these heroes, it was a therapeutic experience for the men themselves. This became an annual event, growing each year. In addition to her father,



Pearl Harbor survivors and VFW Post members Leo Verranault, Cecil "Mac" McCloud and Clifford Smith were among those who were usually

present. Like Dettmann, they rarely, if ever, spoke about their experiences.

But during one ceremony, "(Plainfield First Selectman) Paul Sweet asked what they did that day and these guys started talking like nobody else was there," Hurley reminisces, emotion palpable in her voice. "The families just sat there like wow, we never heard any of this before. It was eye-opening."

Twelve years ago, Dettmann passed away. His last act of service was as Grand Marshall of the V-J Day Parade. He left behind a legacy of service, not only through his own volunteerism, but through his family. Hurley is not the only member to have joined the VFW Auxiliary under Dettmann. His wife, Arlene, served as Auxiliary President, while daughters Judy Gilkenson and Linda Franzitta are Auxiliary members, as is granddaughter Amanda Deojay, Hurley's daughter. Great-granddaughter Lauren joined under Hurley's husband, Past Post Commander Michael Hurley, making her a fourth generation Auxiliary member, and great-granddaughter Emma, not yet 16, helps at the Post's steak suppers.

Hurley was born on the fifth anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. She was her parents' firstborn and from then on, helped to brighten her father's darkest day.

"The worst day of his life turned out to be a good day," says Hurley. "That's what he always said." ★ NP

TOP: Cheryl Hurley, center, with Dettmann and fellow Pearl Harbor survivors at a memorial event in the 1990s. **BELOW:** Dettmann, right, beside VFW Post 5446 Commander Ed Bergman (2009-2010) at the 2009 event honoring Pearl Harbor survivors (photo appeared in Norwich Bulletin)



My MALTA

WHAT IS MALTA?

MALTA stands for Membership Auxiliary Leadership Technology Access. It is an online database on which members can pay their dues, change their addresses, convert to a Life Membership, find Auxiliary report forms, purchase a bond for your Auxiliary, watch training videos, access Member Resources and more! From the initial announcement regarding MALTA in 2017: [MALTA](#) is a system designed with YOU in mind the whole time. Not only does National Headquarters want to be more efficient but we also want to engage with every member through MALTA.

Q: How do I create a login?

A: Easy! All you need is your member ID, your Auxiliary number and ZIP code. Go to malta.vfwauxiliary.org to enter your information. You can do this on a desktop computer, smart phone or tablet. You could also go to vfwauxiliary.org and look for "MALTA Member Login" at the top of the page. Follow the instructions on-screen to get started.

Q: What should I do first?

A: First, look at your profile and update any information we may be missing. The more we know about our members, the better we can serve them. Next, if you are an annual member, pay your dues! Get it done quickly and efficiently. We will mail your membership card, but a digital version (a picture) will be available in MALTA right away. From MALTA as proof of membership.

Q: If I change my address in MALTA, will that change my address with the VFW National Home?

A: No, you must contact the National Home directly to change your address with them.

Q: How can I learn more about how MALTA serves me?

A: Visit the Online Auxiliary Academy and select MALTA: vfwauxiliary.org/online-auxiliary-academy.



NATIONAL CONVENTION

EXIT

VFW AUXILIARY
110th NATIONAL CONVENTION
PRESENTATION OF FLAGS
2023-2024 Department Presidents



PHOENIX, ARIZONA

VFW AUXILIARY'S 110th

NATIONAL CONVENTION

The heat was on in Phoenix, Arizona for National Convention. So was Auxiliary business, reward and recognition, training and welcoming special guests in the Valley of the Sun.

We talked about the heat. The daytime temperature outside didn't dip much below 115 degrees the entire week. Inside a much cooler convention center, more than 1,200 attendees

got to work, beginning with recognizing 38 Circle of Excellence inductees. These Department Presidents were celebrated as top-achieving leaders, and will be in the Circle forever for their dedication to achieving organizational goals. To learn more about the Circle and how your Department can make the cut, see the *2023-2024 National Program Book* in [MALTA Member Resources](#).

RIGHT: Amber Silcox of Auxiliary 12087 in Utah and current Department Senior Vice-President is all smiles with Padme, her husband's (Heath Silcox, Department of Utah Commander) service dog.



ABOVE: Members can always count on the beautiful sound of patriotic music at Convention from our Soloists and Musicians, including Willa Watts, 2022-2023 National Assistant Soloist and this year's National Soloist.
LEFT: 2022-2023 Chief of Staff Sharon Connolly presents Reape with her Past National President's pin.

Also on Saturday, the Auxiliary announced and showcased top National winners of the Young American Creative Patriotic Art Contest, the inaugural 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contest (then-National President Jane Reape's special project) and Illustrating America. If you missed the gallery in the exhibit hall at Convention, you can find this year's National winners [here](#). Later in the week, members were wowed by amazing video renditions of the "Star-Spangled Banner" from Get Excited for the Red, White and Blue! winners Kinsey P.* (K-8 division) of the Department of Virginia and Jake M*., also of the Department of Virginia (9-12 division).

Sunday's big events were the National Programs Seminar, during which members heard from 2023-2024 National Ambassadors about their areas of focus this year, and the VFW's First-Time Attendee Welcome Orientation open to VFW and Auxiliary members.

On Monday at the Joint Opening, then VFW Commander-in-Chief Tim Borland presented Reape with the VFW's Gold Medal of Merit. Later that day, the Auxiliary Opening Session kicked off a week of daily business meetings, training and information sessions.

Tuesday ended on a sweet note with a little pie and a little more help from Reape's friends at the VFW's Patriotic Celebration; a grand finale of Reape and Borland's friendly competition to raise funds for student scholarships.

NATIONAL CONVENTION

In total, members from the VFW and Auxiliary raised more than \$63,000 for the Voice of Democracy Scholarship Program, \$37,000 of which was brought in by the Auxiliary...which meant that Borland received a pie in the face from Reape at the rally. But in the spirit of camaraderie and good fun, Reape sat for a pie in the face after Borland.

Members enjoyed remarks and presentations from special guests – Reape chose Preston Sharp to receive this year's Better World Award and a \$9,000 donation for his work to honor veterans. Sharp founded Veterans Flags & Flowers, a nonprofit he was inspired to create when he was just a child way back in 2015. Since then, he has organized the placement a U.S. Flag and flower on more than 300,000 veteran headstones across the nation. Other guests included representatives of Dignity Health Cancer Institute, St. Joseph's Medical Center in Phoenix who accepted \$50,000 from the Auxiliary for cancer research (an additional cancer research donation went to Golisano Children's Hospital in New York); the VFW National

Auxiliary member GinaMarie Doherty, who was invited to speak about Military Women Across the Nation; she serves as that organization's National President.

In her final speech as National President, Reape reminisced and expressed thanks.

"Where has the time gone? It seems like only yesterday I was being installed by Doc and yet a wonderful year has elapsed. It has been such an honor and a privilege to have served as your National President," she said.

"You, the members, have given me memories that will last a lifetime. I have met so many wonderful, kind and caring VFW and Auxiliary members this year. Let it be known



TOP RIGHT: Reape delivers a pie in the face to Borland at the Patriotic Celebration.



RIGHT AND BELOW: Circle of Excellence inductees and fellow members turn up the fun after the ceremony.



that our success this year is solely your success. You, the members, have done the work and I admire your efforts. There are no words to express my sincere appreciation.”

For members who were unable to travel, Convention was available via livestream courtesy of Amwins, the Auxiliary’s benefits provider. New this year was a picture-in-picture feature that allowed us to show more of the action. While the livestream is a wonderful way for members to access Convention proceedings from afar, it is not a replacement for attending in person because it can’t capture every single moment from every angle.

During official business, members considered Resolutions and Bylaws changes.

- Resolution 1: Treasurer Resolution from Committee 2023 Convention – **ADOPTED AS AMENDED**
- Resolution 2A: Dues Increase – **ADOPTED AS AMENDED**
- Resolution 2B: Incremental Dues Increase – **NOT ADOPTED**
- Resolution 3: Dues Increase DAL – **ADOPTED AS AMENDED**
- Resolution 4: Incorporation – **ADOPTED**

The voted-upon resolutions also included a change of the title of the office of "Conductress" to "Conductor" and Delegates voted to change the current bullet point system in the *Bylaws* to an alpha-numeric one, which required reformatting all 120-plus pages of the document. For full results, visit [MALTA Member Resources](#), National Convention.

Delegates elected Sandra Uzell, Department of Ohio, as National Guard. Read her story on page 16. All National Line Officers, led by National President Carla Martinez, were installed with all appointed Officers. To learn more about 2023-2024 National Officers, [click here](#).

We hope to see even more members in Louisville, Kentucky for National Convention in 2024. ✨ AC

*Last names omitted for privacy.

LEFT: Members enjoy a Q & A session with National Officers, Ambassadors and Conference Coaches at a meet & greet.



RIGHT: "Buddy"® Poppy Child Layla addresses the Delegation.



RIGHT: Preston Sharp shares how his nonprofit, Veterans Flags & Flowers, honors veterans. He received the Better World Award.

NATIONAL CONVENTION

TOP AND BELOW LEFT: Reape addresses the VFW after receiving her Medal of Merit from Borland. Reape and Borland pose for a photo to commemorate the moment. **BELOW RIGHT:** "Buddy"® Poppy Child Layla receives a state pin from Pam Griffin, current Utah Department President.



BELOW: 2023-2024 National Line Officers, From left - Chief of Staff Penny Hurt, Conductor Kim Harney, Secretary-Treasurer Ann Panteleakos, Senior Vice-President Brenda Bryant, President Carla Martinez, Junior Vice-President Lois Callahan, Chaplain Donna Mills and Guard Sandra Uzell. *Convention photos by Tavit Daniel, Amanda Cook and and Bob and Nicole Knudsen.*



NATIONAL WINNERS:

GET EXCITED FOR THE RED WHITE AND BLUE!



RIGHT: High school junior Jake and sixth grader Kinsey win first place at the National level for vocal talent singing the national anthem.



Congratulations to Jake M. and Kinsey P. whose singing talent impressed the Delegation at National Convention. Attendees were treated to these students' renditions of "The Star-Spangled Banner." The two youth, Jake in the 9-12 division and Kinsey in the K-8 division, both coincidentally from the Department of Virginia, took first place in the Auxiliary's national anthem singing contest. O Say, Can YOU sing? Click [here](#) to learn more about this contest and to see their videos.



Your gifts were used to create a welcoming space for veterans in our Veteran and Family Resource Center

View photos of the renovation at



VFW NATIONAL HOME

THANK YOU VFW AUXILIARY!



HANDS *that* SERVE, HEARTS *that* CARE

AWARD



Cynthia
VINCENT

of Auxiliary 3137 in South Carolina did not set out to win the *Hands that Serve, Hearts that Care* Member Recruiter Award, she merely

spent the 2022-2023 year doing

what she does well: inviting potential new members into her Auxiliary and helping them join.

“Cynthia is a very nice person (with a) great personality (and) easy to work with,” says Jane Fox, Department Treasurer and fellow member of Auxiliary 3137. But Fox says Vincent is also “shy” and “a little embarrassed” by the attention her recruitment efforts have earned. Since she is reluctant to toot her own horn, Fox happily did it for her, noting “it’s not easy being Treasurer” at their Auxiliary, an office Vincent held for the 2022-2023 Program Year. With an average of 30-40 new members each month, it means a lot of paperwork and effort required by both the Treasurer and the investigating committee.

“I talk up the VFW Auxiliary quite a bit when out and about,” says Vincent, who joined the Auxiliary under her father, Gerald Jon Perry, an Air Force veteran who served during the Korean Conflict. “I tell people all about our organization and what we do.”

“It’s a good deal of work,” notes Fox. By the year’s end, Vincent had recruited 100 members to Auxiliary 3137. She volunteered at a recruiting event with many other members early in the year, but mostly focused her efforts at the Post home. How is it possible to find so many new members?

As they say in the world of real estate, “location, location, location!”

Post 3137 is located on Isle of Palms, an island believed to be more than 25,000 years old, known for its six miles of pristine beaches and clear blue ocean. During the Revolutionary War, the inlet between Isle of Palms and Sullivan’s Island was the final resting place of thousands of British soldiers intent on attacking the Continental Army, and it was also a battle site during the Civil War, when the Union sank a Confederate ship, the remains of which were only recently discovered.

For those who do not live right on one of South Carolina’s most beautiful beaches, recruitment might not involve as many people coming to you, but you can use many of the same approaches, like getting out into the community, talking to people, being knowledgeable about Auxiliary eligibility and Programs and being as welcoming as possible.

“As a recruiter, you need to just ask everyone,” says National Conductor Kim Harney, who also has an abundance of experience as a member recruiter. “You should ask everyone,

because the worst you can be told is no. You never know who might be a potential member!”

“Never treat anybody like a stranger,”

adds Senior Vice-President Brenda Bryant.

“Everyone is a friend.

You might not want to ask a

stranger about their family

(to learn whether they are eligible),

but you’ll ask a friend!”

And, perhaps most importantly, heed these words from Harney: “Always carry an application!” ★ NP



ABOVE: Auxiliary with a view: Isle of Palms naturally attracts new members.

2023-2024 NATIONAL GUARD

SANDRA UZELL

This year's National Guard has traveled the world. Sandra Uzell was a nurse who took leave from her job in Cincinnati to pursue her career and intensive language studies in Italy. She had hoped to get stationed there with the U.S. military, but life took her on a different journey.

She was an executive designer and event planner known for creating "wonders with balloons" for parties thrown by royalty in the Middle East. The American Embassy was another client. And when she shares the story of her life and path to the National Chairs, it is evident that among the things that mean the most to her in the world is the value of freedom we find in America.

"Most of you have already heard my story of my experience during the Gulf War," she said. "It was a difficult time for me and my family. Living aboard with my children when conflict occurred taught me even more lessons. Most importantly, what it means to live in America and value our customs. But I was not alone facing the horrors of war. Our American military were there. What I learned is to value the needs of others and offer up help when and if possible. The Veterans of Foreign Wars and our VFW Auxiliary offer me the opportunity to reach out and proactively help when a situation or event occurs that affect veterans and their families."

Uzell, of Moreland Hills, Ohio and Life Member of Al Santos Lyndhurst Auxiliary 7536, which is named after her father, joined the organization on the eligibility of her husband, Clayton, a Vietnam veteran who served in the U.S. Navy. Together she and her husband have a family of three daughters, three sons, nine grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Uzell said she has always worked for veterans, that this is in her heart. It is a calling she embraces.



"I was brought up to understand the importance of active-duty men and women and the sacrifices made by American veterans by my father," she said. "Even while living in the Middle East during the Gulf War, I had the opportunity to assist our veterans. It gives me reason and a purpose. I want to make a difference; that is what inspired me to run for National Guard. I feel more enthused and alive when I am able to do more for our VFW Auxiliary, our veterans and their families. At every level, together we can accomplish many things when we are passionately involved."

"I knew that I had more to give of myself for our great organization and I want to be able to continue to work at every level, hands on, uniting those working together for our veterans. It's not what I want to do, but who I want to be."

She noted that she looks forward to putting what she learns into practice in ways that will move the organization forward.

"I'm excited to learn how other Departments conduct their meetings and promote the Programs, to learn new methods and share that knowledge with others. Sharing these ideas allows our organization to grow, evolve, improve and benefits all members," she said.

"Now that I have been elected, I look forward to meeting Auxiliary members, talking with them, listening to their voices, hearing their wants and needs. I will try encouraging our members to speak up and offer their insights along with trying to answer their questions. I am looking forward to traveling to different Departments, learning new ways on how to promote our Programs to our members by sharing ideas and networking together. Keeping my focus on never forgetting why we are here...for our veterans." ❄️ AC



ABOVE: Uzell and one of her sons, Sammy Abdul Hadi, who joined her at National Convention. TOP: Uzell and family.

VFW YEAR DAY OF SERVICE: 2

VFW and Auxiliary members across the nation and around the globe joined forces to focus on what they could do for their communities through service, a collective give back called Day of Service.

Year two was a great success with more Posts and Auxiliaries participating year over year and more members joined the VFW as a result; 125 new members were recruited with additional prospects still in consideration.

"I'm very pleased with the turnout in participation this year, the visibility it's brought to the organization and the positive impact VFW and Auxiliary members made through this event," said VFW National Commander-in-Chief Duane Sarmiento. "This event reaffirms our commitment to our communities and demonstrates why VFW Posts are so often the pillars of local support."

VFW's second-annual Day of Service kicked off in May, a nationwide and worldwide initiative led by VFW members that invited VFW Posts and Auxiliary members, veterans of every stripe and local advocates to unite to host a community service event throughout the month.

Whether collecting goods for food drives, caring for a memorial or providing resources to those in need, Day of Service projects helped many.

VFW Day of Service is an outgrowth of the organization's #StillServing campaign launched in 2020 to recognize the ongoing dedication of veterans and service members who continue to serve their communities. VFW Day of Service, led by veterans and in concert with other organizations and civic groups, is open for anyone to participate.



WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT IS GOING OUT IN THE COMMUNITY AND DOING SOMETHING TO HELP VETERANS, TO ASSIST THEM."



WE ARE HERE TO SERVE. WE SERVED IN UNIFORM AND NOW WE'RE OUTSIDE THE UNIFORM. IT'S IMPORTANT THAT WE GIVE BACK."



ABOVE: Auxiliary and VFW members unite on Day of Service for a beach cleanup. THIS PAGE AND PREVIOUS PAGE: Post and Auxiliary members roll up their sleeves, grab paint brushes and pick up shovels and rakes to help during VFW Day of Service events, including Post 1535 in New York, Post 7775 in North Carolina, Post 5995 in Oregon and Post 9617 in Connecticut.



THIS IS A GREAT WAY TO LET COMMUNITIES KNOW THAT THE VFW IS A VERY IMPORTANT PART OF THEIR PRIDE. IT'S A WIN-WIN FOR ALL INVOLVED."

Auxiliaries may \$3,000 in VFW

2023-2024 Grant Opportunities for Auxiliaries and Posts:

The VFW Foundation is currently offering a total of **three grants**. All grants are reimbursement based. Applicants will need to do a project and then submit an application with proof of how the funding was spent. Applicants are highly encouraged to contact the VFW Foundation prior to starting a project to ensure it qualifies. All grants will be available until June 1, 2024, but could close sooner if funding is exhausted prior to the deadline. The VFW Foundation encourages applicants to reach out to jcouch@vfw.org beginning in the spring to ensure funding is still available.

#StillServing Grant -

Application available at www.vfw.org/grants. The #StillServing Grant is offered exclusively to VFW Posts, Districts and their Auxiliaries to offset expenses incurred while doing community service projects. Projects require direct involvement by the applying organization's members with members of their community to qualify. Both a VFW Post and its Auxiliary, and a District and its Auxiliary, can receive funding of up to \$1,500, but each applicant organization must have its own unique project. Applicants are limited to receiving a total of \$1,500 during the cycle.

Applicants can receive an additional \$500 by working with local affiliates of select VFW National corporate partners in commission of their project. A list of qualifying partners can be found at www.vfw.org/grants-supporters.



Uniting to Combat Hunger Grant -

Applications Available at www.vfw.org/utch. The Uniting to Combat Hunger Grant is a matching grant of up to \$1,500 available to VFW Posts and Auxiliaries for monetary and food donations to local food banks and pantries in their communities. The VFW Foundation will provide a \$1 match for every pound of food or dollar donated to food insecurity organizations. A Post or its Auxiliary may receive this grant but not both. As part of UTCH, applicants can receive \$500 for purchasing materials to construct a victory garden at their Post home or in another public space accessible by their community. Applicants may submit multiple requests but may only receive a maximum of \$1,500 during the grant cycle. Each request must be for a minimum of \$500.

qualify for up to Foundation Grants



Post Assistance Grant –

Application available at www.vfw.org/grants.

The Post Assistance Grant is offered exclusively to VFW Posts to offset expenses incurred for building repairs and equipment that enhances or restores the applicant organization's ability to serve veterans and their community. Auxiliaries, Districts, Departments and other VFW subordinate organizations, etc., may not apply. VFW Posts may receive up to \$1,500 in reimbursement for qualifying projects. Applicants are limited to receiving this grant once every three years, with 2023-2024 being the inaugural year.

Detailed guidelines can be found on the application forms of each grant. All grants opened in October and are scheduled to close on June 1, 2024.

Grants may close sooner if all budgeted funding is exhausted before the deadline. Questions? Contact jcouch@vfw.org.

AUXILIARY RELIEF FUND



DID YOU
KNOW THAT
EVERY VFW
AUXILIARY
HAS A
RELIEF FUND?

While this fund that comprises “Buddy”® Poppy distribution proceeds and other contributions is restricted, what you may not know is how versatile it is.

There is so much good you can do with it!

Some ways you can help others with this fund:

- Aid to Auxiliary members who need financial assistance. You can make a difference by using the fund as a resource. Some examples – paying a member’s current year’s dues or utility bill.
- Monetary gifts to the VFW National Home – Health and Happiness, letter seals, or a gift of a National Home Life Membership to your Auxiliary President, for example.
- Invest in hospital work for veterans, military personnel, Auxiliary members and their families. Bring cheer and fun with activities and visits.
- Make a contribution to the Cancer Aid & Research Fund.
- Perpetuate the memory of deceased veterans and comfort their survivors. Some ideas – purchasing memorial flowers or a funeral dinner.
- Foster patriotism through historical and educational programs. Promote the Young American Creative Patriotic Art, 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art, Illustrating America, Get Excited for the Red, White and Blue! and Voice of Democracy and Patriot’s Pen scholarships and contests; recognize community members or businesses with an Americanism Award that is available at the [VFW Store](#).

Members can put Relief Funds work to help our veterans, service members, their families and youth! Consider how your funds can best benefit your communities.

FOR MORE INFORMATION about the Auxiliary Relief Fund, refer to Page 94 in the Booklet of Instructions in the *VFW Auxiliary 2024 Podium Edition: Bylaws and Ritual*.

Our HISTORY

CHRISTMAS JOY STEEPED IN TRADITION AT THE VFW NATIONAL HOME.

Colorful lights hang from evergreen trees as families at the VFW National Home sleep at night waiting for Saint Nick to deliver boxes full of surprises and joy.

Christmas is a long-cherished holiday at the National Home; beginning when their doors first opened in 1925, almost 100 years ago. Their celebration parties have been sponsored by the Military Order of the Cootie since the very beginning.

Although Christmas has changed to keep up with the times, it remains steeped in tradition.

“There has always been a tree, a Santa, music, food, gifts and joy,” National Home Executive Director Mike Wilson said. “As the population grew, festivities were held off campus and moved back onto campus in 2008 as facilities could accommodate the larger group.”

At the National Home, holiday celebrations begin in early December with a Cootie Christmas Party and a Santa Firetruck Delivery. Teams of Mr. and Mrs. Claus go door-to-door around the neighborhood on firetrucks, delivering presents to all the children.

“Every family at the National Home receives a Christmas tree and decorations when they move in; there are Christmas house-decorating contests, a Veteran Tribute Tree in our Tribute Park and a Santa Shop where children can redeem Community Service points they earn throughout the year to buy presents for their friends and family,” said Meghan Mitchell, VFW National Home public relations and events coordinator. According to both Wilson and Mitchell, the National Home’s focus is on veteran families and helping to uphold the VFW’s motto of honoring the dead by serving the living.

Christmas is a holiday about sacrifices, and who understands sacrifice more than the veteran,” they said.

A recent holiday memory that the staff at the National Home reflected on was when they connected a homeless veteran with his family from Utah this past December.

“Pulling together with the Department of Utah, the National Home quickly got the veteran and his family to the National Home just in time for Christmas,” Mitchell said. “When they arrived, their van and U-Haul were

frosted over with snow, and they had driven through many states and snowstorms to make it to us. But when they arrived, they walked into a fully furnished home with a decorated Christmas tree with presents for everyone underneath.”

Through all the stress and driving, the family was able to celebrate the holiday in a warm home surrounded in joy and comfort.

While this is the story of a century of Christmases at the [National Home](#), it is also a place for all religions and they encourage families to celebrate any way they want.

★ SM



ABOVE LEFT: Santa Claus investigates the nursery at the VFW National Home in 1952 with his bag of presents. **ABOVE CENTER:** A family gathers around a Christmas tree to finish decorating in 1969.

CLICK TO SHOP ONLINE!



Men's

Ladies'

RED/WHITE POLO 60/40 moisture wicking polyester/cotton. Men's cut, three-button, flat-knit collar. Ladies' cut, stylized open placket, curved back yoke with center pleat.

7892 Men's S-4XL \$37.00 7891 Ladies' S-3XL \$37.00



ROLLING TOTE Locking pull-up handle with in-line skate wheels. Multiple pockets. Spacious main zipper compartment. 600D polyester with screened VFW Auxiliary. Not for checked luggage. 13½ x 18 x 8". \$51.95
1129 Black 1134 Teal



JOURNAL/PLANNER Black faux leather with debossed Auxiliary Emblem. Magnetic closure. Spiral bound weekly planner has a 4½ x 6½" writing pad, 3 business card slots, plus 1 window slot. 8¾ x 6⅜ x 1¼". 1221 \$22.95



HEATHER CHARCOAL TOTE BACKPACK

Polycanvas, with dual handles and padded back straps, padded main compartment sleeve for tablet, two open pockets and zippered front pocket. Top has frame to keep the bag open and zipper closure. Screen printed Auxiliary Emblem. 10½ x 15 x 6". 1690 \$45.95



AUXILIARY MEMBER AND MILITARY VETERAN PIN 7/8". Rubber back. 1709 \$6.00



PEN SET Twist-action ballpoint pen and two-piece rollerball pen. Black ink, metal barrels with metal clips. Navy blue with grey engraved VFW Auxiliary and accents. Gift boxed. 1142 \$32.95



WEEKLY CALENDAR 13-month, one-week at-a-glance format. For daily planning, appointments and daily records. Pages for addresses and phone numbers. 3⅝ x 6½". 1282 \$8.00



12 OZ. TUMBLER 12 oz. double wall, vacuum sealed, stainless steel with copper lining. Press-in, drink-thru clear slider lid. Hand wash. 3140 \$15.95