

VETERANS & FAMILY SUPPORT AMBASSADOR

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A rising tide lifts all veterans to success!

As a spouse of a recently retired soldier from the Army and as an Army employee myself, I am passionate about ensuring that every service member, family member and veteran/retiree feels valued, supported and celebrated as much as possible. **You can say that I'm always charting a course to help our veterans!**

Our veterans have sacrificed so much for us, and it's our time to do our part to give back to them. This year, our main focal points will be:

- VFW-Based Veterans Assistance Programs
- Veterans' Mental Health Awareness
- Veteran and Veteran Spouses Employment

Veterans and Military Support Programs and National Veterans Service

The VFW takes care of those "here," who took care of us "there," regardless of where "there" may have been. We have Veteran Service Officers in every Department, dedicated to helping our veterans obtain the benefits they sacrificed so much for. Additionally, there is a plethora of other programs such as Unmet Needs and Military Assistance, designed to help provide a bridge over the hard times and help our veterans get back on their feet in times of need.

Other tangible means of assistance include supporting units during all phases of deployment. Whether your local National Guard unit is mobilizing and traveling for pre-deployment training, has deployed downrange and needs some homespun holiday cheer or are headed home and need some snacks as they go through their homecoming processing, there are multiple ways to thank them and ensure they receive the support they deserve. The VFW has financial grants that are available to help with events held by our Auxiliaries and Posts to support and recognize our troops. Never forget that the troops serving today, along with their families, will be the next wave of members!

For more information, visit the VFW website at: vfw.org/assistance

Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Awareness

Many combat veterans are still at war... with a mind and heart struggling to process what they have seen and had to do. We must remember that the battle isn't over when they unlace their boots. In fact, when those boots come off for good is when the fight truly begins for a large percentage of veterans. The Auxiliary can never stop ensuring that people are aware of the warning signs of ANYONE possibly considering ending their life. Always promote that help is a call or text away at 988 (Press 1)!

Employment Assistance for Veterans

Once a service member separates from the military, they are walking away, not only from a job but a whole very structured lifestyle. They need to adapt to the civilian world and it's not always easy. Quite often, their spouse experiences the same difficulty because they either have had to continuously change jobs due to military

relocation or they just remained out of the job market and now they must reenter it. Regardless of why, the veteran and/or their spouse must adapt to the current market. Consider working with local employers to host a job fair or job skills seminar for your local veterans and their spouses. It's vital they see that we stand ready to assist them!

So, let's celebrate our service members, veterans and families as they've never been celebrated before. Let's show the world that a **rising tide lifts all veterans to success!**





VETERANS & FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM

VFW National Veterans Service • VFW Veterans & Military Support Programs

Assist Veterans, Service Members and their Families

Promote Veteran & Military Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Awareness

Spread the Word about National Veterans Service (NVS)

VA Claims & Separation Benefits

The VFW's **National Veterans Service (NVS)** was established to help all veterans, service members, their families and survivors. NVS consists of a nationwide network of VFW Accredited Service Officers and Pre-Discharge Representatives who are experts in navigating VA processes and are the key to your success. VFW Accredited Service Officers are with America's veterans every step of the way once they're ready to file a claim. This is a service the VFW is proud to offer — **FREE OF CHARGE** — to anyone seeking assistance with the claims process.

Pre-Discharge

The VFW Pre-Discharge program was established in 2001 through a cooperative initiative with the Pentagon and the Department of Veterans Affairs. This program ensures separating and retiring active-duty military personnel receive assistance in obtaining their VA entitlements and benefits upon discharge. Pre-Discharge offices are located on or near major military installations across the country.

Additional information, links and forms are located on the VFW website:

<https://www.vfw.org/assistance/va-claims-separation-benefits>

Military Assistance Program (MAP)

The VFW Military Assistance Program (MAP) is the outstretched hand between the local VFW and military community, offering support around the world. Since 2005, MAP has sponsored events supporting service members and their families.

A large part of MAP is the **Adopt-A-Unit** program, providing VFW Posts with the opportunity to adopt hundreds of military units around the world. Adopt-A-Unit's goal is to develop supportive relationships with units before, during and after deployments to help deliver the vast network of resources the VFW has available to the military. Unfortunately, VFW Auxiliaries will no longer be eligible to request this money. This does not affect the VFW Auxiliaries' ability to request Foundation grants.

Additional information, links and forms are located on the VFW website:

<https://www.vfw.org/community/troop-support>

Student Veteran Support Grant

The VFW recognizes that both funding and support for our student veterans and dependents at institutions of higher learning can often be difficult to find. The **VFW's Student Veteran Support Grant** offers much needed assistance to support specific student veteran events. The grant, administered by the VFW Washington Office, focuses on supporting the overall student veteran population within the community, which consists of many student veterans at campuses across the country that are not affiliated with an Student Veterans of America chapter. The grants will be disbursed to a VFW Post or Department that has submitted an application, to support the student veterans at the university or college.

Additional information, links and forms are located on the VFW website:

<https://www.vfw.org/assistance/student-veterans-support>

VFW Foundation Grants

- **VFW #StillServing Grant**
The #StillServing Grant is offered exclusively to VFW Posts, Districts and their Auxiliaries to offset expenses incurred while doing community service projects.
- **Uniting to Combat Hunger Grant**
The Uniting to Combat Hunger & Homelessness Grant is a limited matching grant available to VFW Posts or Auxiliaries for monetary, food, or item donations to local food banks, pantries or homeless relief organizations in their communities.
- **Post Assistance Grant**
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.

More information about VFW Foundation Grants is located on the VFW website:
<https://www.vfw.org/community/community-initiatives/post-grants>

Disaster Relief

The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. is accepting donations to help veterans, service members and military families impacted by natural disasters. The VFW's Disaster Relief Fund provides our organization with the opportunity to react quickly with immediate relief to those in the affected areas.

Uniting to Combat Hunger

In 2018, the VFW and Humana created Uniting to Combat Hunger (UTCH) to actively address food insecurity across America with an emphasis on the military community. VFW Posts and Auxiliaries are integral to making a positive dent in food insecurity and veteran homelessness.

For more information about UTCH, please contact the VFW Foundation at foundation@vfw.org.

VFW Mental Wellness Campaign

The purpose of the project is to educate VFW and VFW Auxiliary members, veterans and communities about the important topic of mental health and wellness and offer proven tools to intervene on behalf of veterans in crisis.

In order to raise awareness, foster community engagement, improve research and provide intervention for those affected by invisible injuries and emotional stress, the VFW has teamed up with the nationwide organizations **Give an Hour** and the **Campaign to Change Direction, One Mind, PatientsLikeMe** and the **Elizabeth Dole Foundation** to combat this critical issue.

Find links and learn about resources and support to change the stigma surrounding mental health on the VFW website:
<https://www.vfw.org/assistance/mental-wellness>

Veterans Crisis Line

The Veterans Crisis Line connects veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat or text. Veterans and their loved ones can dial 988 then press 1, chat online, or text 838255 to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Donations can be made online or by mail.

Donate online at vfw.org/ways-to-help, select the program you would like to donate to and click "Contribute."

Donate by mail by sending a check to:
Veterans of Foreign Wars, Processing Center
P.O. Box 2002
Milford, NH 03055-2002
<https://vfw.org/donate/your-support-matters>

Please remember to earmark your check your donation will be immediately directed to the VFW programs where your support is most urgently needed.

Other Resources

The VFW and VFW Auxiliary helped pass the Deborah Sampson Act that will enhance and improve VA programs and health services for women veterans and ensure they receive the care and support they need and have earned. It includes an expansion of the Women Veterans Call Center to include text messaging capability.

Women Veterans Call Center:

Call or text: 855-829-6636 or 1-855-VA-WOMEN

Women Veterans Health Care:

<https://www.womenshealth.va.gov/>

VETERANS & FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM AWARDS

Awards for Auxiliaries:

1. Most outstanding activity and/or event to celebrate/assist service members and/or veterans in the community. To include veterans job fairs, unit homecomings, mental health-related stand downs, etc.
 - Citation and \$25 to one VFW Auxiliary in each of the 10 Program Divisions that hosts the most outstanding activity and/or event to celebrate/assist service members or Veterans in your community.

Entry form is required and available in MALTA Member Resources.

VFW Auxiliaries must send the required entry form to the Department Veterans & Family Support Chairman by March 31, 2026 for judging.

The Department Veterans & Family Support Chairman must sign and send a copy of the completed Department-winning entry form to the National Veterans & Family Support Ambassador by April 30, 2026 for judging.

Citations will be mailed directly to winning VFW Auxiliaries from National Headquarters and money will be deposited into the VFW Auxiliary account after the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.

Awards for Departments and Department Chairmen:

1. \$25 VFW Store gift certificate to one Department Veterans & Family Support Chairman in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the best promotion of resources to assist veterans, service members and families.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah.

2. \$25 VFW Store gift certificate to one Department Veterans & Family Support Chairman in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the most outstanding activity and/or event to increase the support of veterans, service members and their families.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah.

3. The Outstanding Performance Award and Second-Place Outstanding Performance Award will be awarded in each of the 10 Program Divisions based on the criteria listed on page 5 and for the promotion of the Program goals listed at the top of page 59.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah.