

Veterans & Family Support

The National President's theme this year is ***Banding Together for Our Veterans***. What a perfect way to describe what we do as an organization on a daily basis. We exist because of our veterans and can help each other survive by supporting them. There is a multitude of ways that you can help give whether it be time, services, awareness, knowledge, or monetary donations.

For the Veteran and Family Support Program, there are 3 core goals. They are Veterans and Military Support Programs, National Veterans Services, and Mental Health Awareness & Suicide Prevention.

Veteran and Family Support Programs include

- Unmet Needs
- Military Assistance Program Grants
- Adopt-A-Unit
- Sport Clips© Help a Hero Scholarship Program

Unmet Needs is a grant for up to \$1,500 to help military and their families help pay for unexpected financial hardship for basic needs. Sometimes life throws you a curveball and you are not ready for it. Things like paying rent or buying groceries can suddenly be a hard choice or task if something unexpected comes up. This is only available to eligible applicants whose hardship is a direct result of deployment or injury related to service. To check eligibility or find a grant application, see MALTA under "Member Resources" or vfw.org/assistance and click Financial Grants.

For MAP Grants, your Auxiliary and/or Post can apply for a grant to help put on an event for local military and their families such as troop homecomings, send-offs, or get together. They can be a great way to boost morale for the units and families. The grant can be used for food and drink for the event. Additional info and applications can be found on MALTA under "Member Resources."

With Adopt-a-Unit (AAU), a MAP grant can also be acquired to help cover shipping costs for care packages. If your Auxiliary and/or Post is interested in AAU, you can speak to Auxiliary or Post members or your community to see if anyone has or knows someone who is serving. If not, is there a local National Guard Armory you can help? The Department of Defense releases a weekly list of activated National Guard and Reserves units that you can look into. Lastly you can go to mybaseguide.com for a list of active bases and installations. Make sure you get permission from the unit's Commanding Officer before sending anything. Build those relationships!

The VFW partnered with Sport Clips® in 2013 to create the Sport Clips® Help a Hero Scholarship. The program is about 80% funded by donations and the rest by corporate sponsors. Over 2,000 scholarships totaling \$11.4 million have been awarded to service members and veterans to help pay for education tuition and fees. Applicants can be eligible for up to \$5,000 and can apply each semester. Additional info and applications can be found on MALTA under “Member Resources” or vfw.org/assistance and click Student Veteran Support. Some ways to help out are donations or becoming a patron of Sport Clips®

National Veterans Services (NVS)

The VFW first set up NVS to help navigate confusing or difficult claims with the VA. It is a nationwide network made up of over 2,000 VA Accredited Service Officers that are there to help veterans and their families. VA reports that veterans represented by the VFW have recouped \$11.2 billion in compensation and pension on behalf of veterans and eligible family members in 2022.

Utilize the Resource Rack Cards that are available on MALTA and the National website as a tool to show veterans and their families where to go to find the help they need. There are 20 different organizations listed with their contact information.

To donate:

VFW National Headquarters
Attn: Veterans and Military Support
406 W 34th St, 9th Floor
Kansas City, MO 64111

Mental Health Awareness and Suicide Prevention

This aspect of the program continues to be an important one. Our veterans have often been through a lot and it's not always easy to navigate life back home alone. As a nation we need to continue to stomp out the stigma of mental health as it is a part of many people's life. Since 2018 the number of veteran suicides has been decreasing! Worldwide, mental health is being talked about so much more and the ways to get help is becoming well known. It's not something to bottle up inside, seek help or guide others to do the same.

Veterans Crisis Line- dial 988 and press 1 or text 838255. I urge everyone to save this info in your phones so it is readily available in the case you ever need it for yourself, someone you know, or someone you meet.

A blue teardrop is the Auxiliary's symbol to bring attention and awareness to suicide prevention. Stickers are available on MALTA and the National website. Print them out, wear them, and hand them out as a way to start a conversation and spread the word.

There is also an Auxiliary Suicide Awareness pin available at the VFW store for purchase.

Remember your military caregivers, they are often forgotten about but are a critical resource in a veteran's life. They may need a break from daily tasks or even just acknowledgement that they are doing a great job. You can offer to help in many ways, lend an ear to what they may want to talk about, sit with the veteran for an hour or two so they can get away, take them out for a meal, etc.

There are many national resources to get help, but don't forget about your local ones as well.

Here are some local organizations that help:

- War Horses for Veterans in Stilwell. warhorsesforveterans.org
- Horses and Heroes in Leavenworth. horsesandheroes.org
- Caregivers on the Homefront in Kansas City. caregivers-homefront.org

Here are some national organizations that help:

- VFW Mental Wellness Campaign. vfw.org/assistance/mental-wellness
- The Elizabeth Dole Foundation. elizabethdolefoundation.org
- Veterans Writing Project. veteransvoices.org

There are many other resources, these are just a few examples.

Don't forget that our homeless veterans could also use help. Whether you give them donations, guide them in getting assistance, or even give them a ride, it all helps.

A couple local organizations that are a great resource for getting veterans back on their feet are:

- Kansas Veterans Project in Salina. kansasveteransproject.org
- Veterans Community Project in Kansas City. veteranscommunityproject.org

May is the Month of the Military Caregiver.

September is National Suicide Awareness/Prevention Month.

November is National Military Family Appreciation Month.

Awards

National Awards:

#1 is for the most outstanding activity or event to increase awareness of military suicide and mental health.

- Citation for each Auxiliary that hosts an activity or event to increase awareness of military suicide and mental health.
- Citation and \$25 to one Auxiliary in each of the four Conferences that hosts the most outstanding activity or event to increase awareness of military suicide and mental health.

#2 is for the most outstanding activity or event to increase the support of veterans, service members, and their families.

- Citation to every Auxiliary that hosts an activity or event to increase the support of veterans, service members, and their families.
- Citation and \$25 to the one Auxiliary in each of the four conferences that hosts the most outstanding activity or event to increase the support of veterans, service members, and their families.

For all National Awards, you must fill out an entry form available in MALTA Member Resources.

Department Awards

#1 is a citation for Auxiliaries that donate at least \$10 to each of the following programs:

- National Veterans Services
- Military Assistance Program
- Suicide Prevention and Awareness
- Sport Clips® Help a Hero Scholarship
- Unmet Needs

#2 is a citation to Auxiliaries that host an activity or event to promote and support the 3 Veterans and Family Support program goals of Military Support Programs, National Veterans Services, and Mental Health Awareness & Suicide Prevention.

Remember to report often, but at least twice per year due Nov. 30th and Mar 31st.

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