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'Part of the Tradition'

New Post on College Campus is 'Making History'



VFW Commander-in-Chief Brian Duffy installs 12 veterans in October at Post 12158 on the campus of Northeastern University in Boston. The new Post is the second in the country to be chartered at a university, and Max Spahn, the Post's first commander, hopes it can serve as a hub for student veterans and veteran alumni at the university.

In a continued effort to unite student veterans with VFW, Max Spahn, a senior at Northeastern University in Boston, co-founded Post 12158 on the university's campus. Spahn, who last year served as president of Northeastern's Student Veterans of America (SVA) chapter, said bringing the two groups together has obvious benefits.

"VFW state officials approached us and asked if we wanted to be part of making history," Spahn, a 27-year-old former Marine, told *Metro Boston*. "Tying into an organization that's been around for more than 100 years, it has even more resources, be it financial or knowledge based."

When he was approached by Massachusetts VFW State Commander Brian Martin about starting a campus VFW Post, Spahn said he was honored.

"It's very humbling," Spahn said. "I'm honored to be part of the tradition. For me, it's even more impressive that every officer is a student veteran. It shows dedication to the VFW."

The new Post is named for Robert R. Pirelli, who studied criminal justice at Northeastern and served with A Co., 3rd Bn., 10th Special Forces Group in Iraq. He was killed on Aug. 15, 2007. For now, it is still a "paper Post" but Spahn said the group hopes to find a permanent meeting space on campus as soon as possible. The members hold meetings at the recently opened student veterans center on campus.

More than 36 student-veterans joined the Post, and some 12 student-veterans took on leadership roles. Spahn, who served with 5th Bn., 11th Marines in Helmand province, Afghanistan, in 2010, is the Post's first commander. And as former president of Northeastern's SVA chapter—an organization linked to VFW in a formal partnership—Spahn is positioned to act as a liaison for the two groups.

Spahn's introduction to the two groups was gradual. He transferred to Northeastern in 2014 after attending a nearby community college. He said he didn't know anyone and decided to check out the university's veteran lounge. It took him two months, he said, to finally attend a student veteran meeting, but he hasn't missed one since.

"I like to say, 'Misery loves company,'" Spahn said. "We're all non-traditional students. We're much older than our classmates. So it's nice to, once a month, hang out and talk about the things we're going through."

Beyond camaraderie, Spahn appreciated the help offered by

Northeastern's student veterans organization regarding employment and benefits.

The Post is the second in the country to open on a college campus. It hosted the installation ceremony on Oct. 24, 2016, at the campus veterans memorial. The first Post opened on a college campus was the Oregon Ducks Post 12137 in Eugene, Ore., chartered in 2014.

Spahn said the Post wants to "be a parent organization" for [Northeastern's] student veterans organization." Spahn also said a future goal for the Post is to be a space for alumni.

"For now, we are trying to keep [the Post's focus] related to education such as post-9/11 vets and scholarships," Spahn said.

VFW Commander-in-Chief Brian Duffy said that Spahn's generation of veterans is now responsible for those who will follow them.

"This is a very historic event," said Duffy, who officiated the installation ceremony. "The torch has been passed."

Email: kgibson@vfw.org

CHECKPOINT MOVING TO ALL DIGITAL FORMAT

Beginning with the September/October 2017 issue, *Checkpoint* will become an electronic publication. Its more than 20-year history as a paper offering will end, and it will no longer be mailed to its readers in its present form.

Checkpoint will continue to be available online and eventually transition into an e-newsletter. Its content and purpose—to inform the organization's leaders and activists—will remain the same.

At least initially, *Checkpoint* also will be featured as a new section in *VFW* magazine. Check the March/April 2017 issue of *Checkpoint* for more information.

CAPITOL HILL HOSTS VFW

This year's VFW Legislative Conference is Feb. 26-March 2, at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City in Arlington, Va. Housing reservations opened Nov. 7, 2016, and you can make them online at <https://aws.passkey.com/go/VFWHyatt2017> or by calling 1-888-421-1442. Remember to identify yourself with VFW. For a complete schedule, visit www.vfw.org/news-and-publications/events/vfw-legislative-conference.

Here is an abbreviated, tentative agenda of what will take place at the conference.

Feb. 25

- Arrival for Appeals and Time and Place Committees

Feb. 26

- Arrivals for all attendees
- Foundation board meeting
- Life Member Committee meeting
- Committee on Appeals (tentative)
- Briefing for new Legislative Committee members
- Commander-in-Chief Open House for Department commanders

Feb. 27

- National Veterans Service Advisory Committee
- Budget and Finance Committee
- Legislative meeting (all attendees)
- National Council of Administration
- Voice of Democracy Parade of Winners

Feb. 28

- Capitol Hill visits
- VFW/SVA Fellows Dinner (by invitation only)

March 1

- Commander-in-Chief's testimony
- Legislative reception on Capitol Hill

March 2

- Departures

For more information regarding conference or hotel information, please contact Vanessa Kane, CMP, CMM at (816) 968-1198, or by emailing vkane@vfw.org.

HONOR THE VFW WITH A GIFT IN YOUR WILL

When it comes to your will and estate plans, we agree that your loved ones should come first. After your family has been taken care of, we ask you to evaluate the VFW's place in your overall plans. If you're interested in supporting the VFW and your fellow veterans with a gift in your will, please contact the VFW Planned Giving Office for more information at (816) 968-1119, email plannedgiving@vfw.org or visit www.vfw.org/plannedgiving.

MEDICAL ALERT DEVICES SAVE LIVES

Each year, one in three older adults will experience a fall. A personal medical alert device can help you remain independent in your own home by alerting emergency services, neighbors or loved ones in the event of any emergency. With a medical alert system, help is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week with just the press of a waterproof help button.

For additional information about a medical alert system, contact VFW's Member Benefits Department at 1-800-821-2606, option 1, or visit the Member Benefits website at www.vfw.org/MemberBenefits and click on Medical Services.

Bob Wallace, Adjutant General

VFW Introduces Mobile App



I read recently that there are more than 2 billion smartphone users worldwide. That number is expected to hit 2.5 billion by 2019.

That's why I'm happy to announce that the VFW launched a mobile app on Veterans Day. Now, mobile users have the power of the nation's largest organization of combat vets at their fingertips. The VFW app is available for both Apple and Android users.

Debra Anderson, Quartermaster General

VFW Store Supports Veteran Programs

Now that we've wrapped up another year, I want to thank you for your dedication to the VFW and its members, who are the reason the VFW continues to succeed.

The dynamics of the VFW are continually changing, but we stand strong in our commitment that "No One Does More for Veterans." A reliable revenue stream is vital to ensure our efforts will be adequately funded for years to come. A significant revenue source continues to be the VFW Store.

As you know, the VFW Store (and licensed vendors) is the only legal source to purchase emblematic apparel and other merchandise featuring VFW branding and the Cross of Malta.

Purchasing knock-off items is not only a federal offense and contrary to VFW's national bylaws, but it takes resources directly from the national organization and each Department. It impacts VFW's ability to serve our nation's veterans, active-duty service personnel and their dependents.

The VFW national bylaws allow each Department to receive a rebate from VFW National Headquarters, based on the amount of sales in its respective state. So the more you support and promote the VFW Store, the more your Department and the entire

You can now have instant access to VFW's assistance programs such as *Unmet Needs* and *Help A Hero Scholarship*.

You also can easily locate VFW service officers based on your location, or quickly identify Posts by using the app. Members traveling around the country or abroad can count on the app to point them in the direction of a VFW Post.

Another great feature is the quick-renew function. It's now easier than ever to renew a membership or upgrade to life member status. You only need a member number and a name. No login is required.

To keep users up-to-date on current news impacting veterans and their families, the "News" section is especially helpful. It spotlights the good activities the organization's thousands of Posts are engaged in daily.

The VFW mobile app can be found by searching "VFW" in the Apple App Store or Google Play Store. I encourage everyone to download the app and spread the word.

organization benefits.

As a 1991 Persian Gulf War veteran, I am pleased to see the VFW Store offer merchandise commemorating the 25th anniversary of the conflict.

Additionally, the VFW Store has many new products at competitive prices.

To expand the product line, the VFW Store recently partnered with Medals of America, which offers an extensive line of military-affiliated merchandise. Many of its products can be customized with the VFW logo and your personal information.

VFW receives a portion of all sales if you purchase items through the link at www.vfwstore.org. Click on Partners & Licensed Vendors,

under Medals of America, click "SHOP NOW." You also may view other authorized vendors under "Partners & Licensed Vendors."

Your support of the VFW Store helps all levels of the VFW assist veterans, military personnel and their families.

If you have any questions, contact Sonja Cutright, manager, VFW Store, Emblem & Supply Department, scutright@vfw.org or 816-968-1161.



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Correspondence can be sent to the editor at VFW National Headquarters.

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VFW
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SERVICE OFFICERS

'The Only Thing I Live For'

Service Officer Says 'You've Got to Love What You're Doing'

George Davis has been a service officer for three years and said it's what he is meant to do.

"I wanted to do what I could do to give back," said Davis, a member of Post 629 in Fairmont, W. Va. "Now, I really believe that this is God's calling for me to do. It's my mission, and I work it seven days a week."

In addition to becoming a VFW service officer, Davis is involved with the Vietnam Veterans Association, American Legion, OV-1 Mohawk Association and is the adjutant/treasurer of Disabled American Veterans Chapter 45, among other responsibilities.

He enlisted in the Army in 1967 and served with the 131st Military Intelligence Co. (Aerial surveillance) in Vietnam. He was transferred to D Troop, 17th Cav., from March to October 1972. After his tour, he continued to serve in the Army until his retirement in 1987.

Davis said he is 100 percent disabled, and it took him "a long time" to attain that status.

"Finally the VA granted me a 100 percent disability for PTSD and various other things that are almost all Agent Orange related," Davis said, "and so I wanted to become more active in the veterans organizations here in this area."

Davis, who has been on chemotherapy for 14 months, said he was diagnosed with Agent-Orange related chronic lymphocytic leukemia in 2013, in addition to other health issues. He's had 12 surgeries over the past 15 years.

"It's been kind of a rough road the last several years, but I get so much out of helping the veterans," Davis said. "It's like the only thing I live for. As much as I've got wrong with me, I'm going to do what I can while I can."

In one of his biggest monetary victories, Davis helped an Afghanistan War veteran receive a 100 percent disability rating.

"He got his knee blown out in Afghanistan," Davis said. "He didn't think he'd get much beyond the 30 percent he got for that. After we talked several times, he ended up getting 100 percent [because he] had PTSD a lot more than he was willing to admit."

Davis, who mostly deals with Agent Orange and PTSD claims, said he can identify with Vietnam veterans and "develop a rapport with them fairly quickly," while his son's service in Afghanistan allows him to connect "with the younger vets."

The Vietnam veteran said the appreciation from veterans he has helped is the most rewarding part of his job.

"When they get their award, they call me up, and you can tell in their voice how happy they are," said Davis, who handles about three cases per week.

In offering advice to any future service officers, he said, "Don't just be a paper pusher."

"I take a very personal interest," Davis said. "You've got to love what you're doing."



Service officer George Davis assists Post 629 Adjutant Joe Hall. Davis has been a service officer for the Fairmont, W. Va., Post for three years and also is involved with the Vietnam Veterans Association and American Legion, among other responsibilities.



George Davis enlisted in the Army in 1967 and served with the 131st Military Intelligence Co. (aerial surveillance) in Vietnam.

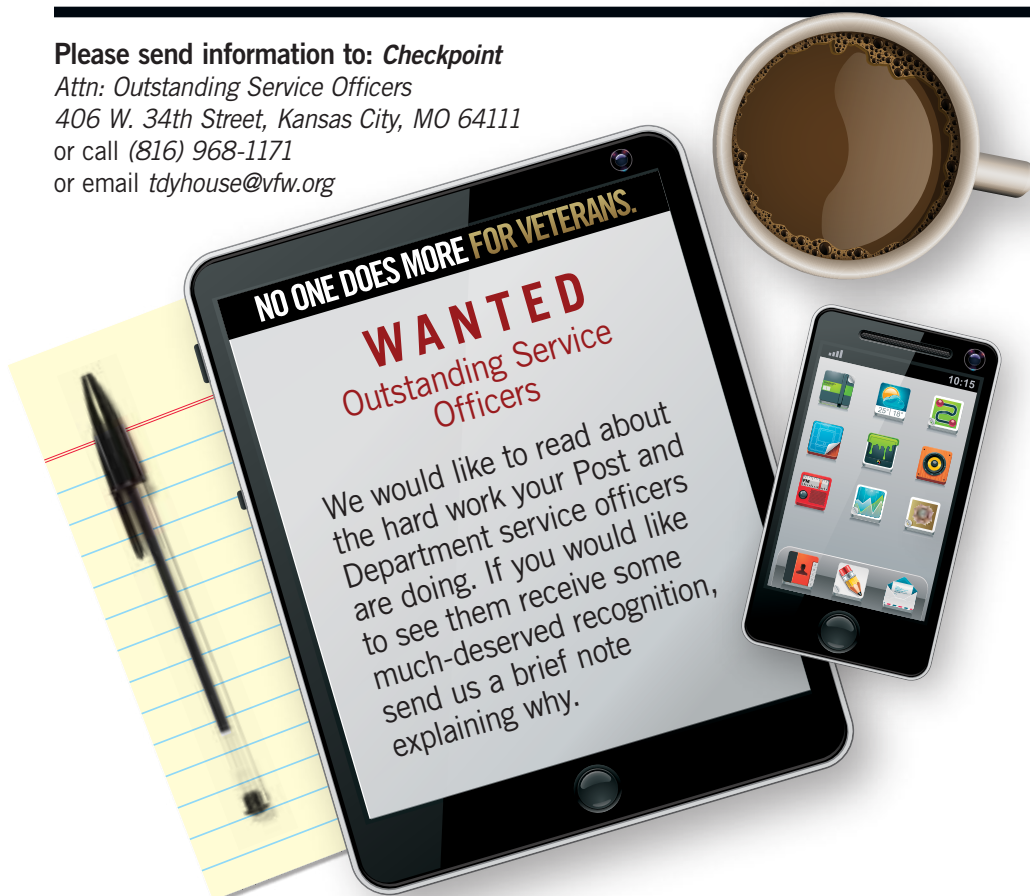
PHOTOS COURTESY OF GEORGE DAVIS

Understanding what the veterans dealt with while serving is essential, according to Davis.

"You have to be able to withstand some horrific stories," Davis said. "Some of these guys, what they went through, it's mind blowing. So you have to be compassionate about understanding what they went through."

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Please send information to: **Checkpoint**
Attn: Outstanding Service Officers
406 W. 34th Street, Kansas City, MO 64111
or call (816) 968-1171
or email tdyhouse@vfw.org



NATIONAL VETERANS SERVICE

Do you need help filing a claim?

VFW's National Veterans Service has a VFW Department service officer locator on its website. To find a service officer near you, just follow these easy steps:

1. Visit www.vfw.org/nvs.
2. Select "ASSISTANCE" from the menu.
3. Select "NATIONAL VETERANS SERVICE" from the pull-down menu.
4. Locate the "FIND A SERVICE OFFICER" box on the right-hand side of the screen.
5. Select your state and hit "GO".

FIND A SERVICE OFFICER

State

GO >>

Post Collaborates with VA to Host Stand Down for Homeless Veterans

Dianne Diekman has participated in the Sioux Falls, S.D., stand down event for two years. Diekman, who is the commander at Post 628 in Sioux Falls, said the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of homeless veterans is key to what VFW means.

“That’s what we do,” Diekman said. “We take care of veterans.”

Diekman, who served as an aeronautical maintenance duty officer with the Navy from 1972-2004, was part of the color guard for the stand down’s opening ceremony.

The daylong event is a collaborative effort. The Sioux Falls VA organizes the event, but it is held at the VFW Post. VFW volunteers fix a meal, paid for by Goodwill. Various community programs and businesses provide resources and donations for the homeless veteran attendees.

In 2016, Diekman said, the Post tried to focus on helping female veterans.

With the assistance of a \$1,000 grant courtesy of VFW National Headquarters, the Post purchased gift certificates to hand out.

“The donations, socks and underwear, are often for men,” Diekman said. “It’s hard to find things appropriate for women, so we gave them gift cards.”

According to VA representatives, the stand down event has gone on for 15 years. The Post has hosted it for the past 13 years. Approximately 200 people participated in 2016.

Veterans in attendance received coffee while they waited to check in for a free meal, haircuts, flu shots and cold-weather apparel.

“The homeless veterans in town are often under the radar, so this is the opportunity for VA and different organizations around town to get together to take care of the homeless,” Diekman said.

Email: kgibson@vfw.org

Sub Zero Mission

Ohio VFW Members Offer Warmth for Homeless Veterans

Al Raddatz and Del Bethel have a mission. After reading statistics on homeless veterans, the Marine Corps veterans and life members of Post 7939 in Leroy, Ohio, dedicated their lives to keeping homeless veterans warm on freezing nights.

In 2009, Bethel and Raddatz started delivering cold-weather items to homeless veterans. In 2011, the duo formally gained 501(c)(3) status for the program Sub Zero Mission. Organizers find homeless veterans and provide them tents, sleeping bags and cold-weather clothing. While veterans are Sub Zero Mission’s main focus, the nonprofit group helps anyone in need of warmth.

Sub Zero Mission hosts “Stuff the Bus” events, where community groups fill the bus—named “Gemma”—with donations. Then Sub Zero Mission volunteers deliver those goods to homeless people.

“We do this because nobody should freeze to death in America,” the website, subzeromission.org, states.

Bethel, who served with Headquarters Co., 2nd Marines, during the 1991 Persian Gulf War, said the group has informational cards it hands out to veterans encountered on the street. These cards point homeless veterans in the direction of local VA services and programs providing assistance.

“It is an amazing feeling to know you are helping someone who might not feel that there is anyone out there who cares,” Bethel said. “The gratefulness of most of the individuals is such a reward, and the quiet bus ride home after a mission is always a reflection of what we have accomplished.”

“Knowing that you may have helped someone survive a zero degree night and tomorrow may be the day things turn around for them is one of the

best feelings you can imagine.”

Raddatz recalled one encounter with a homeless veteran that reminded him how rewarding Sub Zero Mission’s work can be.

“We found a veteran one night in near-zero degree temperatures,” Raddatz said. “His shoes were worn through. His socks were wet and dirty. The smile that he had when the only pair of boots we had on the bus actually fit him was priceless. It makes the hard work in the off-season completely worthwhile.”

By word of mouth and use of social media, Sub Zero Mission has expanded rapidly in eight years.

“We grew very fast, but once we set some guidelines around what we had already and conditions and goals around how and where we would expand, it got a little easier,” Raddatz said. “Currently, we are delivering in more than 20 cities and four states. Our next expansion will be decided by where we have supporters who are looking to take our model and run with it.”

As the program has grown, Sub Zero Mission has recruited board members to spread the word and make the mission more manageable.

“Spreading some of the workload and getting some new fresh ideas and perspectives is really helping step it up this year,” Bethel said. “All of us work full time jobs and have families, so the bigger we grow, the more help we need to spread the load of collecting, sorting, fundraising and distributing.”

Email: kgibson@vfw.org



Upper Left: A Sub Zero Mission volunteer helps a homeless veteran try on new shoes. The group, founded by VFW members Al Raddatz and Del Bethel, collect cold-weather gear and distribute the donations to homeless veterans during the winter months.



Lower Left: Sub Zero Mission uses its bus, Gemma, to transport goods throughout the community. The group hosts “Stuff the Bus” events, where area businesses can bring donations.



Below: Employees of an Ohio business stand in front of their donations before volunteers with Sub Zero Mission distribute the clothes to homeless veterans in the community.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF DEL BETHEL

What Sub Zero Mission Accepts:

- Coats (adult sizes L – 4XL)
- Hats (winter)
- Gloves
- Sleeping bags
- Boots (on some occasions and only if they are clean and serviceable)
- Socks (new only)

Homeless Demographics

- 51% of individual homeless veterans have disabilities
- 50% are age 51 or older
- 45% of homeless veterans are African-American or Hispanic
- 11% of the homeless population are veterans
- 39,471 veterans are homeless on any given night

(Source: *National Coalition for Homeless Veterans*)



VFW Posts 'Change Direction' on Mental Health

More than 150 VFW Posts held events in October to help kick off VFW's national mental wellness campaign.

"A Day to Change Direction" is part of an overarching initiative launched by Give an Hour, a nonprofit group that offers the volunteer services of mental health professionals to troops and their families. The Oct. 8 event aimed to "change the greater culture" surrounding mental health.

It was part of VFW's greater initiative to destigmatize mental wellness. The campaign, which includes the organizations One Mind and PatientsLikeMe, officially kicked off in September.

VFW's goal for the day was to make the public "aware of the five signs" of emotional suffering – personality change, agitation, withdrawal, poor self-care and hopelessness.

Some 179 Posts hosted events in their communities or displayed information regarding mental health awareness on "A Day to Change Direction."

For example, VFW National Headquarters employees volunteered at the

Leavenworth VA for efforts coordinated by Post 56. In the morning, an Esprit de Corps Buddy Team Challenge was held, with the top team earning a prize.

Volunteers and Post members also cleaned up a park near the Leavenworth VA, after which they attended a discussion on mental health resources, VFW programs and the five signs.

Lynn Rolf, VFW programs director, said nearly 40 people attended, including headquarters staff, community and Post members, along with Give an Hour staff and a local representative.

Rolf said there was "great dialogue" between the organizations that were represented. A lot of people "just don't know all the resources out there," he said. The event allowed VFW members to learn about local resources at the VA, and for the VA to learn about what VFW provides.

Other events around the country included hosting seminars or benefit races. For more coverage of VFW's mental wellness campaign, read the January issue of *VFW* magazine.

Email: kwilliams@vfw.org

PHOTO BY LAUREN GOLDMAN, VFW



A key component of the A Day to Change Direction campaign is to make the public aware of the five signs of mental and emotional suffering, which are personality change, agitation, withdrawal, poor self-care and hopelessness.



Nickie Silverstein, of Give an Hour, speaks as VFW Programs Director Lynn Rolf displays a poster featuring the five signs of mental and emotional suffering in October at Post 56 in Leavenworth, Kan. More than 150 Posts nationwide participated in the campaign in an effort to reduce stigmas surrounding mental health.



A Day to Change Direction events held around the country at VFW Posts on Oct. 8 featured speakers discussing the five signs of mental and emotional wellness. Other activities included community service and athletic activities.



Johnathan Duncan, deputy director of administrative operations at VFW National Headquarters, and Lynn Rolf Jr., clean up a park in October near the Leavenworth (Kan.) VA hospital as part of the A Day to Change Direction initiative. The program is meant to help reduce the stigmas surrounding mental health and offer opportunities for community service.

Molly Fields and Harold Pederson, who served in the Army from 1977 to 1996, join VFW National Headquarters employees and VFW Post 56 in Leavenworth, Kan., in their community service efforts during A Day to Change Direction in October.

Connecticut Veterans Honor Medal of Honor Recipients

The community of Cheshire in southwest Connecticut is home to two Medal of Honor recipients. Civil War veteran Eri Davidson Woodbury called Cheshire home following the war. Harvey C. Barnum Jr., was born and raised in Cheshire and received the nation's highest honor for valor during the Vietnam War.

Vietnam veteran and lifelong Cheshire resident John White has made it a "personal mission" to make sure Woodbury and Barnum are forever memorialized in the town.

Commander of Post 10052, White said there is not another town in the U.S. with a population less than 30,000 that can boast having two Medal of Honor recipients.

This is why in 2015, Route 10, the main highway running through Cheshire, was named the Medal of Honor Memorial Highway. There is a sign on each end of the 1.5 miles of road going through town.

"This highway takes drivers right past all of our town's efforts to recognize these men," White said. "The support from our community has been unwavering."

Those efforts include a Medal of Honor Plaza in a park near the center of town. There, a monument is engraved with the names of Woodbury and Barnum.

Their names also appear on bronze plaques in front of Town Hall. Woodbury's Medal of Honor is on display in the Cheshire Historical Society, and his grave is highlighted at the St. Peter's Episcopal Church cemetery. A street sign was installed to direct passersby to the site. Across the street from that cemetery is Cheshire Academy, where Woodbury was headmaster following the Civil War.

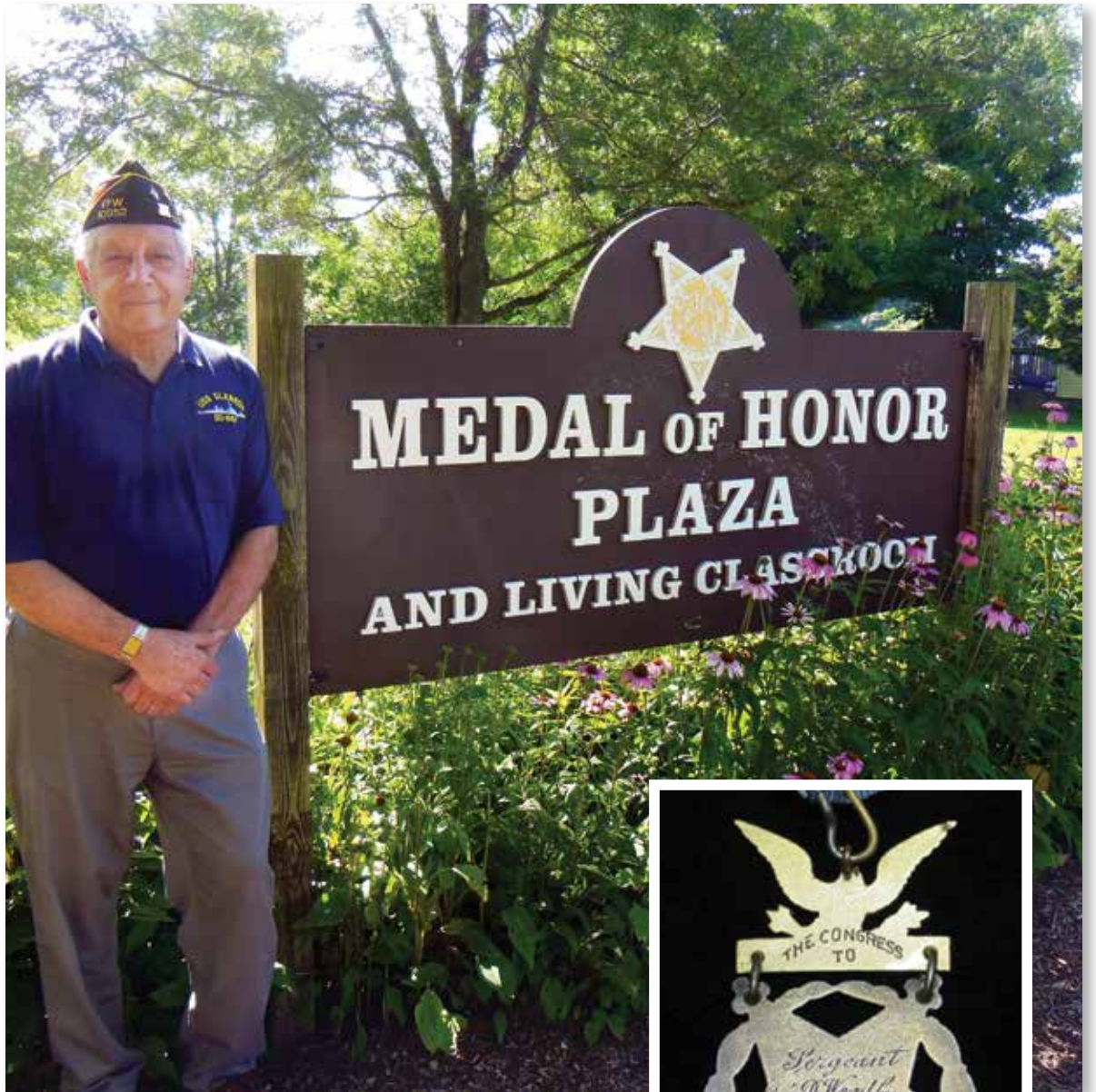
White, a Navy veteran, said the Cheshire Veterans Council has been the driving force in memorializing these "heroes." The Council is made up of the VFW, American Legion, DAV AMVETS and Army Air Force Round Table.

Incidentally, the Council has invited Barnum to speak at Cheshire High School, where his photo is on the Wall of Fame for school graduates. Barnum, who now lives in Virginia, also spoke at the highway dedication.

White said he hopes his Post will one day be able to sponsor a college scholarship in Barnum's name.

"My gratefulness to be an American, and my pride in being a veteran finds its focus in honoring these men," White said.

Email: jdyhouse@vfw.org



John White, commander of VFW Post 10052 in Cheshire, Conn., works to preserve the legacy of two Medal of Honor recipients from the community. The town's Medal of Honor Plaza is one such tribute to Civil War veteran Eri Davidson Woodbury and Vietnam vet Harvey C. Barnum Jr. A recent endeavor by the Cheshire Veterans Council, on which White serves, was the renaming of the state's Route 10, which traverses Cheshire. It is now called the Medal of Honor Memorial Highway.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN WHITE



2,258 Recognized to Date

World War II Veterans Leading VFW Posts from Coast to Coast

The *Checkpoint* staff extends a hearty "thank you" to all our World War II Post leaders, members and veterans. And we want to recognize those who still devote time and energy to VFW causes.

Listed at right are eight WWII veterans who serve VFW Posts in official capacities. *Checkpoint* has recognized a total of 2,258 such Post leaders since the January/February 2009 issue. We will continue to feature this section in subsequent issues until every WWII Post leader whose name is submitted is recognized.

If you would like to recognize a WWII veteran who currently serves your Post, please send us his or her name, official Post position and your Post's location.

Send information to:

Checkpoint

Attn: WWII Leaders

406 W. 34th Street

Kansas City, MO 64111

E-mail: tdyhouse@vfw.org



Name	Position	Post/Location
Joseph DeCristofaro	Surgeon	Post 550, East Hampton, N.Y.
Dane Guisbert	Honor Guard	Post 582, Ortonville, Mich.
Gordon M. Livingston	Commander	Post 9447, Jamestown, R.I.
Alfred J. Nezoslosky	Sr. Vice Cmdr.	Post 5199, Oceanside, N.Y.
Robert Prather	Sr. Vice Cmdr.	Post 9395, Loogootee, Ind.
Robert Quinn	Commander	Post 2339, Pawtucket, R.I.
J.D. Smith, Jr.	Trustee	Post 1198, Coalgate, Okla.
Raymond Welch	Commander	Post 306, Pawtucket, R.I.

Homeless Veterans Shelter Includes Space for Families

In Prestonburg, Ky., VFW Post 5839 is doing everything it can to combat veterans homelessness. Members diligently raised the funds to break ground last April on the VFW Post 5839 Walter Karr Bowling Veterans Emergency Housing Center.



It will be for homeless veterans and families of veterans who have lost their homes due to fire, flood or other disaster or for those needing help during rough times.

The shelter, which is expected to open by this summer, sits next to the Post home. It is 6,000 square feet and will temporarily house up to 24 veterans. It will include a kitchen, computer room, laundry room and three community bathrooms. Each bedroom also has a private bathroom. It is connected to the VFW Post by a covered breezeway.

The Post broke ground on the shelter last April, after the Post collected \$100,000 in seed money, namely from Bingo.

“One hundred thousand, that is a nice chunk to add,” Post 5839 Commander Paul Edwards told a Floyd County news station at the time. “It will help us a whole lot.”

According to Calvin Howell, project manager, veterans with families also will be welcomed at the shelter.

“Several of the bedrooms will have adjoining rooms to make space for families,” he said. “There are a lot of families who need help.”

Howell said that his Post has been helping homeless veterans for several years by working with other groups to find housing for those who need it.

“We help find jobs for the unemployed,” he said. “We take them and get them enrolled in the VA if they will do it. Our service officers help to see if any of them are entitled to benefits they might not know about.”

The shelter is privately funded so there will be no restrictions on veterans staying there. Howell said most of the shelters in surrounding communities are reserved for people who have alcohol or drug problems. So for people down on their luck,

suddenly unemployed, there is not a lot of help.

“When we realized some of the restrictions in place, we knew we wanted to do something like this,” Howell said.

Several businesses have donated materials to the shelter, according to Howell. Concrete, gravel, building

blocks and even ground spray for termites was donated. A construction company reduced the fee to install the steel structure for the project. Another construction company donated the labor and equipment for the excavation of the building site.

Although the Post has just 200 members and the vast majority are WWII and Korean War vets, Howell said members are doing as much of the construction work as possible. Additional labor is provided by Floyd County jail inmates and students from Carl D. Perkins Job Corps.

“I have been qualified to transport prisoners from jail to the work site,” he said. “They all want to come help out, but I can only fit so many in my vehicle.”

The project board consists of Edwards, Post Quartermaster Larry Sexton, Post member Larry Shipley and Howell.

For more information on the shelter, contact Howell at tjh5734@hotmail.com.

Email: jdyhouse@vfw.org

Employment Help Tops Wish List

Here's how homeless veterans responded when asked what they need most.

- Finding employment 42%
- Locating affordable housing 38%
- Assistance with rent 30%
- Transportation needs 19%
- Clothing 18%
- Food 17%
- Job training 13%
- Medical Care 13%

Source: National Coalition for Homeless Veterans

Post Named for Pearl Harbor Vet

Post 5839 is named in honor of Walter Karr Bowling Jr., a 17-year-old West Prestonburg, Ky., native killed on Dec. 7, 1941, at Pearl Harbor. He was stationed aboard the *USS Arizona* when it sank.



The VFW Post 5839 Walter Karr Bowling Veterans Emergency Housing Center is being constructed next to the Post home in Prestonburg, Ky. It is being built with donations of money, materials and labor. Because there is no government funding, there will be no restrictions on veterans staying there. Post members hope to have the facility complete and open this summer.

PHOTOS BY THELMA HOWELL

A 'United Voice' Works for Missouri Veterans

Post 5608 Commander Mike Barlar and Post 6280 Commander Eric Surles speak with Kristen Wright, a staff member for Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.), in April 2016 at a "Veterans Affairs Day" event in Dent County, Mo. Surles said he and Barlar talked with Wright about the need to expand the hours at the VA clinic in Salem, Mo.

"Right now, the clinic is open only three days a week," said Surles, an Army special operations veteran of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. "It serves veterans in about five counties, so there is a real need to keep it open at least five days a week."

Surles said veterans advocates worked for about three or four months to obtain some 5,700 signatures on a petition to accomplish such an extension. The petition was eventually presented to staff at the VA medical center in Poplar Bluff, Mo., some 115 miles southeast of Surles' Post in Salem and about 150 miles southeast of St. James, Mo., where Barlar's Post is located.

Surles said the petition action, along with McCaskill's help, persuaded VA to agree to eventually expand the clinic's hours. He added that the experience taught him a lot about the process of working with government officials.

"It's better to do things as a group," Surles said. "Lawmakers pay more attention to a large, united voice. You can get more accomplished."



PHOTO BY ANDREW SHEELEY, COURTESY OF THE SALEM NEWS

JANUARY | FEBRUARY 2017

CHECKPOINT

VFW NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS • PUBLICATIONS
406 WEST 34TH STREET, KANSAS CITY, MO 64111

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Posts with the Most

VFW POSTS OF 1,000 MEMBERS OR MORE AS OF DEC. 15, 2016

Rank	Post No.	Location	Members	Rank No.	Location	Members	Rank No.	Location	Members
1	1503	Dale City, VA.....	2,609	11	4647 North Highlands, CA.....	1,314	22	4809 Norfolk, VA.....	1,132
2	27	Wiesbaden, Germany	2,530	12	10047 North Las Vegas, NV.....	1,286	23	6873 Abilene, TX.....	1,104
3	1114	Evansville, IN	1,971	13	76 San Antonio, TX.....	1,273	24	10097 Fort Myers Beach, FL.....	1,093
4	9972	Sierra Vista, AZ	1,901	14	63 Boise, ID.....	1,257	25	7968 Apache Junction, AZ.....	1,091
5	8862	Vicenza, Italy	1,728	15	9342 Ansbach, Germany.....	1,252	26	2111 Chula Vista, CA	1,070
6	4709	Conroe, TX	1,679	16	4372 Odessa, TX.....	1,228	27	549 Tucson, AZ	1,056
7	9785	Eagle River, AK	1,653	17	6506 Rosedale, MD.....	1,210	28	10216 Songtan-Si, Korea.....	1,051
8	392	Virginia Beach, VA	1,631	18	7234 Ocean View, DE.....	1,205	29	972 Terre Haute, IN.....	1,033
9	2485	Angeles City, Philippines	1,628	19	2391 Saint Augustine, FL.....	1,199	30	2503 Omaha, NE	1,031
10	10692	Grafenwoehr, Germany	1,516	20	628 Sioux Falls, SD.....	1,150	31	7686 Alamogordo, NM	1,029
				21	1146 St Clair Shores, MI.....	1,149			



PHOTO BY POST 6709 ADJUTANT LARRY DUER, COURTESY OF VFW WISCONSIN NEWS

Promoting the Pledge in Wisconsin

VFW members John Williamson, Frank Mesa and Merle Schouten lead a class of kindergartners in the Pledge of Allegiance in May 2016 at the Central Wisconsin Christian School in Waupun, Wis. Mesa, commander of Post 6709 in Waupun, says Post members have been promoting the Pledge of Allegiance at local schools for about six years.

"Each year we go to a different school's kindergarten class because that's when they are first learning the Pledge," said Mesa, an Army vet of Vietnam who has served as Post commander for eight consecutive years. "We explain to the students the meaning of the Pledge and its importance. Afterward,

we present each student with a signed certificate for learning the words to the Pledge and a Pledge of Allegiance pencil."

Mesa says that Schouten, who serves as Post chaplain, is in charge of the program. He adds that such an endeavor is an effective method for a Post to promote itself within the community while offering a valuable service to the students.

"They learn what VFW represents and why the military is important to the nation," Mesa said. "More Posts should be involved in something like this and more kids should be exposed to the Pledge's meaning."

