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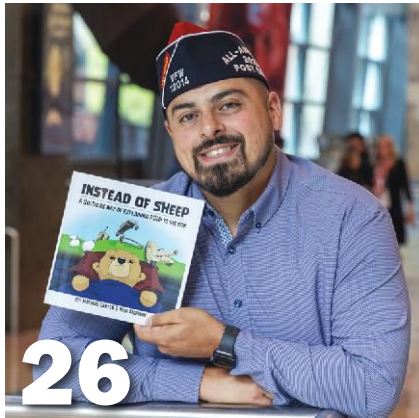


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COVER IMAGE:
From left to right, VFW Dept. of Oregon Service Officer (SO) David Lowe, VFW Dept. of Georgia SO Belinda Boldoe, VFW National Veterans Service Director Michael Figlioli, VFW Dept. of Michigan SO Sidney Love and VFW Dept. of Massachusetts Assistant SO Michael Raymond attend a VFW SO training conference on Sept. 9 in Annapolis, Md. *Photo by Lauren Goldman/VFW*



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VFW's network of more than 2,000 accredited service officers is the best trained force among all veterans service organizations, according to the man who coordinates their efforts. They also do it all free of charge. **By Dave Spiva**

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In an effort to explain his PTSD symptoms to his young son, Iraq War veteran and VFW member Mathius Carter wrote a children's book about the condition. He says it allows children to "see what we go through." **By Ismael Rodriguez Jr.**

30 VFW CELEBRATES BLACK HISTORY MONTH

VFW proudly recognizes the contributions of African American veterans, which date back to the nation's founding. Here are some examples of history-making achievements by black veterans over the past year. **By Janie Dyhouse**

46 NEW POST CHARTERED IN THE PHILIPPINES

VFW instituted its latest Post in October on the Philippines province of Palawan in Puerto Princesa City. VFW's Membership Department says the new Post will serve the "great" numbers of "die-hard VFW members" who live there. **By Janie Dyhouse**

Need help? Veterans Crisis Line: Dial 988, then press 1 or text 838255



COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF
Duane Sarmiento

VFW Celebrates Black History Month and Accolades

During February, VFW proudly observes Black History Month. U.S. history has been profoundly shaped by the contributions of African American citizens, and this commitment is well represented in the U.S. military.

Black veterans have served in every major U.S. military action since the nation's founding, including the Revolutionary War.

While I was on active duty during 1991's Persian Gulf War, I proudly served under the nation's first black chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, former Army Gen. Colin Powell.

Powell, who sadly passed away in 2021, was a VFW life member and recipient of our *Dwight D. Eisenhower Award*. Powell's help in building the mighty coalition of allied nations and his flawless execution of the war brought it to a quick end and a decisive victory.

In this issue of *VFW* magazine, you will see examples of black veterans' more recent historical accomplishments. For example, in December 2022, Brig. Gen. Lorna Mahlock was promoted to major general, the Marine Corps' first black female two-star general. In February 2023, Air Force Maj. Gen. Konata Crumbly became the first black commander of the Georgia Air National Guard.

The bond that all veterans share, regardless of race, gender or sexual orientation, is stronger than the forces that want to pull us apart. Military service shows all veterans that diversity is a strength and, just like the population of the United States, it is what makes our country the greatest on earth.

I want all VFW members to celebrate the power of diversity and reject bigotry of all kinds. It will strengthen the bonds of our great organization.

As I conclude, I also would like to report some outstanding news about the effectiveness of the VFW's assistance to veterans. Both the VFW and the VFW Foundation — the official 501(c)(3) of the VFW — were recently lauded by a national evaluator of non-profit charities.

Charity Navigator, a New Jersey-based firm, awarded both the VFW and the VFW Foundation a four-star, 100 percent rating last November.

When I spoke to VFW Adjutant General Dan West about this award, he told me that he is proud of the recognition because it is a reaffirmation that VFW exists to serve veterans and their families. I agree and add that we do it better than any other veterans service organization.

What this means in practical terms to you as a potential donor to the VFW is stated on Charity Navigator's website: "If this organization aligns with your passions and values, you can give with confidence."

It underscores the VFW motto: "No One Does More for Veterans."



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OF THE UNITED STATES

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VFW OBJECTIVES

To ensure national security
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To assist the widows and orphans
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Vietnam War Veteran Receives Medal of Honor

A former Army helicopter pilot received the nation's highest military award last September at the White House. Larry Taylor of Signal Mountain, Tenn., was awarded the Medal of Honor on Sept. 5 by President Joe Biden for Taylor's actions during the Vietnam War.

On June 18, 1968, then-1st Lt. Taylor, an AH-1G Cobra helicopter pilot serving with D Troop, 1st Sqdn., 4th Cav, 1st Inf. Div., was based at Phu Loi, about 15 miles north of Saigon. At around 9 p.m. that night, Taylor's headquarters received a distress call from a four-man Army recon team serving with F Co., 52nd Inf. (Long Range Patrol), 1st Inf. Div.

The F Company troops were located on the northeast side of Saigon and surrounded by North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong soldiers. According to one of the Americans on the ground, former Sgt. David Hill, they were in "a Custer-like situation."

Taylor and his co-pilot, Chief Warrant Officer 2 J.O. Ratliff, quickly responded. They were joined by Taylor's wingman, Capt. Roger D. Tickler and his co-pilot, Capt. Richard Driggs LeMay Jr., on the rescue mission.

In addition to Hill, the men on the ground were Pfc. Robert Elsner, Spec. 4 William P. Cohn and Cpl. Gerald Patty. They were nearly out of ammunition after an intense firefight, and they prepared for what they believed was an imminent enemy attack.

Unable to spot the U.S. troops in the dark, Taylor told the men on the ground to alert him with a radio call when he was directly overhead. Once located, Taylor told them to mark their position with flares, which brought an intense wave of enemy fire on their position. As the ground troops fired their remaining ammunition, the two helicopters fired from above on the enemy.

With his ammunition almost depleted, Taylor told the ground team to reposition their claymore anti-person-



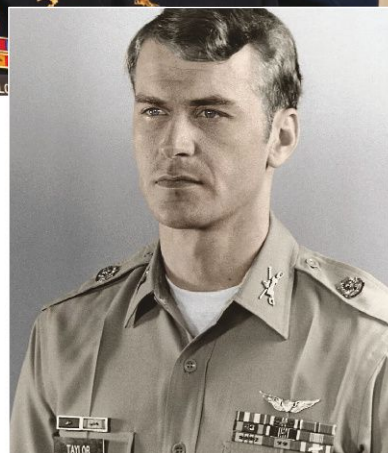
President Joe Biden presents the Medal of Honor to former U.S. Army Capt. Larry Taylor during a Sept. 5, 2023, ceremony at the White House in Washington, D.C. Taylor received the nation's highest military award for coordinating and executing a mission to save the lives of four U.S. long-range recon soldiers who had been surrounded by enemy troops on June 18, 1968, near Saigon.

nel mines toward the northeast and southeast. Taylor then made another pass over the enemy to distract them as the ground troops detonated their mines. These actions allowed the U.S. troops to reach an extraction point Taylor had identified.

Landing amid heavy enemy fire, Taylor's helicopter was on the ground for about 10 seconds. With only two seats in the aircraft, the ground troops clung to the helicopter's exterior skids and rocket launchers as Taylor flew them away to a nearby safe location.

"I finally just flew up behind them and sat down on the ground," Taylor told the *Army Times*. "They turned around and jumped on the aircraft. A couple were sitting on the skids. One was sitting on the rocket pods, and I don't know where the other one was, but they beat the side of the ship twice, which meant 'haul ass,' and we did."

Within a few months after the rescue



U.S. Army Capt. Larry Taylor originally received a Silver Star for his actions in Vietnam on June 18, 1968. That award was upgraded, through the efforts of those he saved that day, to the Medal of Honor.

mission, Taylor would leave Vietnam. By the time he left active duty in 1970, Taylor had been promoted to captain. He flew about 1,200 combat missions, of which he estimated that 1,000 were supporting long-range recon patrols. Army information shows that Taylor's helicopters took enemy fire on 340 of those missions and were forced down five times.

At his Medal of Honor ceremony last September, the 81-year-old Taylor explained his actions succinctly: "You just do whatever is expedient and do whatever to save the lives of the people you're trying to rescue."

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY HENRY VILLARAMA

U.S. ARMY PHOTO

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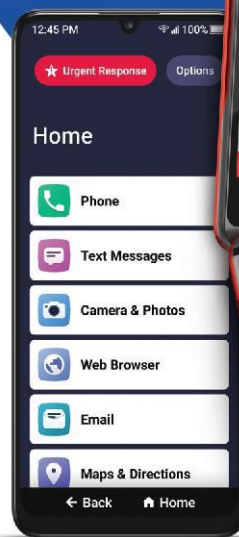
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VFW PRIORITY GOALS FOR 2024

WHERE VFW STANDS ON THE ISSUES

Listed below are VFW's official positions on issues impacting veterans, service members and their families, as well as national defense and homeland security. They are based on national convention resolutions and rated as priorities by direct feedback from VFW members.

BUDGET

To fully fund programs for veterans, service members and their families, Congress must:

- Reform the dysfunctional federal budget process.
- Authorize VA to receive reimbursements from TRICARE and Medicare.
- Never reduce one veteran's benefits to pay for another.

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRANSITION ASSISTANCE

To ensure veterans succeed after leaving military service, Congress, VA, DOD, and DOL must:

- Improve education benefits through increased online student housing allowances, child care stipends, parity for Guard and Reserve members, and elimination of delimiting dates.
- Enhance outreach and counseling to veterans eligible for the Veteran Readiness and Employment program.
- Ensure parity of VA and DOD education programs with other federal programs.
- Expand small business, hiring preference, tax incentives, and entrepreneurship resources for veterans and military spouses.
- Increase funding for HUD-VASH vouchers, grant and per diem payments, and pilot programs to combat veteran homelessness.
- Conduct oversight of VA's Transition Assistance Program to ensure compliance with the law, and require the inclusion of accredited claims representatives.
- Eliminate red tape preventing effective use of education and employment benefits.
- Provide housing relief for surviving spouses.

DISABILITY ASSISTANCE AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

To ensure veterans and their survivors have timely access to earned benefits, Congress and VA must:

- Crack down on unaccredited claims consultants known as Claim Sharks.
- Study all toxic and environmental exposures, and implement programs to ensure health care and benefits are provided to all exposed service members and veterans.
- Properly oversee and update the modernized appeals process and digital claims processing.
- Increase Dependency and Indemnity Compensation benefits for survivors.
- Improve the accuracy of disability compensation claims related to military sexual trauma.
- Increase burial allowances to account for inflation.
- Ensure that earned VA benefits are never offset by the use of other federal benefits.

HEALTH CARE

To ensure service members and veterans receive timely access to high-quality health care without increasing cost shares, Congress, VA, and DOD must:

- Eliminate service member and veteran suicide by addressing both clinical and non-clinical needs.
- Strengthen care and research for mental health and traumatic brain injuries.
- Improve oversight of Vet Centers to ensure adequate staffing, resources, and funding.
- Enhance programs and services for women and underserved veterans.
- Eliminate copayment requirements for preventive health care and medications.
- Research the efficacy of medical cannabis and other alternative therapies.
- Preserve the integrity of TRICARE.
- Properly implement VA and DOD health IT systems.
- Expand nursing home eligibility and long-term care options.
- Enhance services for veterans outside of the United States.

MILITARY QUALITY OF LIFE

To maintain a quality, comprehensive benefits and retirement package that is the backbone for an all-volunteer force, Congress and DOD must:

- End the military retirement pay and VA disability compensation offset.
- Protect and improve on-base quality of life and support programs.
- Eliminate sexual assault and harassment from the military.
- Increase military base pay comparability with private sector wages.
- Ensure that military housing is safe and free of toxic substances.
- Eliminate food insecurity in the military.
- Ensure equity of benefits for Reserve Component service members.

NATIONAL SECURITY, FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND POW/MIA

To fully support service members, and protect our nation's citizens and interests around the world, Congress and DOD must:

- Ensure DPAA is fully funded to perform its personnel recovery mission.
- Expand partnerships with host nations and private/public organizations to achieve the fullest possible accounting of U.S. military personnel missing from all wars.
- Deter threats to our national security by supporting our allies in Ukraine, Israel, Korea, and Taiwan.
- Ensure all service members who served in harm's way, to include foreign nationals, receive the recognition, care, and benefits they have earned.
- Provide recognition and support for Afghan and Iraqi translators and allies.
- Award the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal for operations in Eastern Europe.

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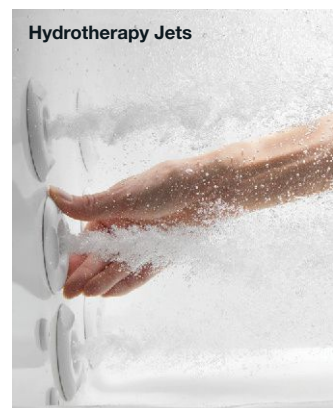
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VFW Says More Work is Needed for Appeals Process

VFW offered testimony in November before the House VA Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs regarding the VA appeals process. VFW Director of National Veterans Services Michael Figlioli also provided insight to Congress on the claims process for veterans who were denied disability claims benefits.

During testimony on Nov. 29, Figlioli said that while VFW approves of the changes to the Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA) in recent years, revisiting and adjusting the process to keep up with changes in regulations is crucial.

Figlioli informed Congress that the passage of the *Appeals Modernization Act (AMA)* in 2019 was a “substantial change” with

the goal to modernize and streamline the appeals process.

“The *AMA* emphasizes increased transparency and more effective communication throughout the appeals process,” Figlioli said. “Veterans are provided with better information about the status of their claims with this streamlined system intending to reduce the backlog of cases in the *AMA* inventory.”

Figlioli told Congress that for BVA to be most effective for the sake of veterans and families, BVA must:

- Maintain a fully staffed and well-trained workforce, as well as fill vital open senior management positions within BVA.

- Be responsive to suggestions and constructive criticism from veterans service organizations.

- Strive for positive outcomes for appellants before the board.

“This will enable the BVA, its organization and mission to be refined to deliver on its promise of faster, clearer, more transparent operations and appeals decisions,” Figlioli said. “Our organization looks forward to contributing to this effort, recognizes the value of our partnership and will continue to make positive changes in our business processes that serve veterans, their families and survivors.”

VFW Chief Honors Veterans at Arlington National Cemetery

The VFW served as the host veterans service organization for the 70th annual National Veterans Day Observance on Nov. 11 at Virginia’s Arlington National Cemetery.

VFW Commander-in-Chief Duane Sarmiento delivered a message on behalf of the more than 1.4 million members of VFW and Auxiliary at Arlington’s Memorial Amphitheater. Sarmiento said that “regardless of their service” veterans “paid the price time and time again” and have defended the U.S. tirelessly and with little fanfare.

“Each page of America’s history is etched with the sacrifice of our armed forces. On each page, the legacy of their accomplishments is written,” Sarmiento said. “As much as we owe a debt to veterans of past conflicts, we owe a tremendous amount to today’s generation of veterans. Thousands of our best and brightest are deployed to all corners of the world, in defense of the freedoms our veterans have earned us. We pray for their safe return and



PHOTO BY ROBERT COUTURE/VFW

stand ready to support their families while they are away.”

VFW Auxiliary National President Carla Martinez also was in attendance, and she and Sarmiento laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

VFW Commander-in-Chief Duane Sarmiento speaks during the 70th National Veterans Day Observance on Nov. 11 at the Memorial Amphitheater at Virginia’s Arlington National Cemetery. Sarmiento delivered remarks on behalf of the more than 1.4 million members of the VFW and its Auxiliary.



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VFW Selects Eight Students for Fellowship

For a decade, VFW has provided student veterans the opportunity to advocate alongside the organization on issues important to veterans, service members and their families.

The VFW-Student Veterans of America (SVA) Legislative Fellowship program allows fellows to meet with the nation's lawmakers and administrators responsible for implementing veterans' policies in Washington, D.C. The fellowship program is a semester and involves researching, coordinating, reporting and advocating on behalf of one of four veterans' policy areas, including:

- Ensuring student veteran success on campus and in the workforce.
- Improving health care and benefits for veterans.
- Easing veterans' transition from military to civilian life.
- Identifying and solving other challenges of service members and their families.

"Veterans advocating on behalf of other veterans, service members and military families bring the kind of credibility we need in Washington," VFW Commander-in-Chief Duane Sarmiento said. "There is more than enough veteran advocacy work to do on Capitol Hill, and I am confident these eight fellows will meet the challenge lying ahead of each of them.

On behalf of the entire VFW and its Auxiliary — congratulations Legislative Fellowship Class of 2023/2024."

The eight fellows selected for this year are:

- **Jason Do**, Air Force veteran, Samuel Merritt University, Oakland, Calif.
- **Bryce Kyle**, Army veteran, University of Texas at San Antonio, San Antonio Texas
- **Lyssa Losa**, Army veteran, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas
- **Alex Ortiz**, Army veteran, Inter American University of Puerto Rico School of Law, San Juan, Puerto Rico
- **Jennifer Ray**, Air Force veteran, Southwestern College, Winfield, Kan.
- **Jamie Springston**, Navy veteran, Marshall University, Huntington, W. Va.
- **Alexander Thymmons**, Army veteran, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, Hawaii
- **Terren Wise**, Navy veteran, Brown University, Providence, R.I.

Student veterans interested in the fellowship can visit www.vfw.org/community/student-veterans-of-america/student-fellowship for more information.

Veterans Home Care Bill Passes House

The House in December passed a bill with the intent to improve caregiver and home-based services for older veterans.

The Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act (S. 141) would give additional support and benefits to caregivers and expand access to home and community-based care programs for elderly veterans. If approved by Congress and President Joe Biden, the *Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act* would require VA to:

- Expand access to a non-VA provider that would furnish all-inclusive care to elderly veterans living in the community.
- Update electronic capabilities to assist veterans and caregivers using long-term health care and support services.
- Start a pilot program that would address homemaker and health-aide services to veterans.
- Give reports and conduct studies on programs that provide medical and health services to elderly veterans in their homes and communities.
- Increase the limit on amounts VA would pay for long-term care provided outside of department facilities.

According to a Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimate in September, the implementation of the *Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act* would cost about \$119 million to implement and increase VA spending by \$82 million from 2023 to 2033.

As of *VFW* magazine's print deadline, the Senate had not passed the bill.

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VFW SERVICE OFFICERS TRAIN TO NAVIGATE VA BUREAUCRACY SO YOU DON'T

From left, VFW Department of Oregon Service Officer David Lowe, VFW Department of Georgia Service Officer Belinda Boldoe, VFW Department of Michigan Service Officer Sidney Love, VFW National Veterans Service Director Michael Figlioli and VFW Department of Massachusetts Assistant Service Officer Michael Raymond discuss service officer training curriculum on Sept. 9 at the 2023 National Veterans Service Accredited Service Officer Skill Level Training Conference in Annapolis, Md.



VFW's VA-accredited service officers undergo extensive training each year and are held to a higher standard than required by VA. It's why the free service offered by VFW's 2,000 service officers is so valued.

BY DAVE SPIVA

Twice each year, hundreds of VFW-accredited veterans service officers from around the world attend a week-long course in Annapolis, Md. The training is necessary for many reasons, but VFW National Veterans Service Director Michael Figlioli said it is important for all VFW service officers to be up-to-date on VA policy changes or new laws passed regarding veterans' benefits.

Figlioli added that VFW service officers attend these training conferences to develop the skills necessary to help veterans obtain their earned VA benefits. VA requires accredited service officers to spend at least 40 hours each year in training.

Figlioli said that he wants his team to be the most qualified team possible. VFW offers up to 80 hours for its service officers each year.

"VFW continues to provide over and above the minimum requirement for accreditation by holding two in-person meetings each year with a virtual option," Figlioli said. "There also is an accountability component as outlined in the NVS Policy and Procedure that VFW-accredited representatives must maintain a 70 percent academic average, which aligns with VA standards for accreditation."

MORE THAN JUST DISABILITY CLAIMS

Figlioli said that VFW's network of more than 2,000 service officers is committed to life-long advocacy for all

VA-accredited service officers from around the world attend the 2023 National Veterans Service Accredited Service Officer Skill Level Training Conference on Sept. 9 in Annapolis, Md. VFW service officers attend the training to develop the skills necessary to help veterans obtain their earned VA benefits.

“VFW will never charge a fee for assisting a veteran, their spouse or family member in filing a claim.”

VFW National Veterans Service Director Michael Figlioli

FIND A SERVICE OFFICER NEAR YOU

VFW's worldwide network of more than 2,000 service officers is available to all military members, veterans and their families. For help with filing a service-connected disability claim, talk to a VA-accredited VFW service officer. Find one at <https://www.vfw.org/service-officers>. Services are available free of charge to everyone filing a VA claim.

VFW's accredited service officers also can be found at 23 different Benefits Delivery at Discharge sites around the world.

veterans who work with one of VFW's VA-accredited service officers.

“Our representatives are representing that client from the moment they file a disability claim, through a review of the VA's decision,” Figlioli said. “VFW also files any appeals necessary for the veteran or family member to receive the maximum benefit allowed.”

Figlioli said VFW service officers' work on disability claims does not end with VA disability claims. Service officers must be knowledgeable on topics such as the GI Bill and VA health care, home loans and other VA benefits



VFW VA Volunteer Services Representative James Moss offers a prayer on Sept. 9 during the 2023 training conference in Annapolis, Md. Veterans can find a service officer near them on VFW's website, <https://www.vfw.org/service-officers>.

and services. Service officers also can help clients with National Cemetery Administration benefits and state and county benefits as well.

"It does not matter if you are a member of the VFW or not — we are here to help" Figlioli said. "VFW will never charge a fee for assisting a veteran, their spouse or family member in filing a claim."

According to a VFW bylaw, Posts are required to appoint a Post service officer. Figlioli said that Post service officers typically are not VA-accredited but are available to assist veterans with disability claims and then turn over the completed paperwork to a Department Service Officer who is required to be VA-accredited. The DSO will then review the records and submit them to the VA.

"Any VFW member who is a full-time employee of their Department is eligible to be accredited as a DSO, assistant service officer or claims consultant," Figlioli said.

'I'M HELPING GUIDE OTHERS'

Belinda Boldoe, an Army veteran, is an appeals officer who assists veterans at the Georgia Department of Veterans Service. She also is the service officer with the VFW Department of Georgia.

Boldoe said it is her goal to explain the process of filing a VA disability claim to everyone she helps. She added

that she assists with about 25 VA disability claims per month.

"We've been seeing a lot more claims due to the passage of the *PACT Act*," Boldoe said. "Most of the claims are respiratory related from veterans of the Persian Gulf War through the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. We also get many claims from Vietnam War veterans who have hypertension related to Agent Orange exposure."

Boldoe recalled when she tried to file a disability claim with VA, that she had no one to help her through the process.

"There was no guidance, and I messed up my claim," Boldoe said. "When I saw the posting for the job I have right now, I knew that's what I had to do. I was able to learn the process for myself, and I'm helping guide other, so they don't make the same mistakes I made filing a claim."

VFW Department of Michigan Service Officer Sidney Love said he became a VFW service officer for a similar reason. The retired Air Force master sergeant said he wanted to become a VA-accredited service officer after VA denied his disability claim related to his cervical spine injury.

"When I read the decision that they didn't see anything in my records for my cervical spine, I knew something was seriously flawed in the process," said Love, a veteran of the Persian Gulf,



LEARN MORE ABOUT THE PACT ACT

The passage of the *Honoring Our PACT Act* in 2022 added a myriad of presumptive conditions caused by exposure to Agent Orange, burn pits and other toxins. To learn more about the *Honoring Our PACT Act*, as well as your eligibility for benefits, visit <https://www.pactactinfo.org> on VFW's website.

As of the end of 2023, the website has had more than 18,000 referrals for *PACT Act* claims.

Afghanistan and Iraq wars. “I was receiving treatment for my lower back and cervical areas three times a week, for the last nine months of service, before I retired from the Air Force in April 2007.”

‘A WONDERFUL DECISION’

Love, who also served in South Korea in 1994 and 2003, said that after receiving the results, he met with a VFW service officer, who Love said “just so happened” to have a job opening for a veterans service officer.

“I was in the process of completing my [master of business administration degree], and I knew if something so obviously flawed happened with my claim, it was likely happening to other veterans with less tangible documented proof,” Love said. “I immediately realized the necessary impact of becoming a proficient [veterans service officer] for my fellow veterans.”

Love said that the decision to become a service officer was “a wonderful decision.” He said his goal is to improve the livelihood for those who served in the military. Love added that he enjoys receiving training from VFW.

“The training over the last four-to-five years has focused on the technical aspects of representing our clients,” Love said. “We learn about VA’s Special Monthly Compensation, grant writing, preparing a claim for the Board of Veteran Appeals and how to counsel an upset veteran, just to name a few.”

Boldoe said she believes VFW training is second to none and that she always learns something new to take back home to help veterans.

“This isn’t just a job for me — it’s an assignment,” Boldoe said. “I believe God put me here to help veterans.” ★

EMAIL dsipiva@vfw.org

Veterans service officers take notes during a presentation on Sept. 9 at the 2023 National Veterans Service Accredited Service Officer Skill Level Training Conference in Annapolis, Md. Per VA standards, veterans service officers must attend training for 40 hours each year to keep an accredited status. VFW offers up to 80 hours of training for service officers.

HOW VFW’s VA-ACCREDITED VETERANS SERVICE OFFICERS HELP

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Here are the issues designated for digital and print over the next two years (2024 and 2025):

Digital issues

January
April
August
October

Printed issues

February
March
May
June/July
September
November/December



We want to make sure that VFW members do not miss out on any digital content, so we need verified addresses.

To make this easy, we have created a QR code (at left) that, when scanned, will direct the person to VFW's OMS so that an email address can be added or updated as needed.



To continue receiving a printed copy of VFW in the mail, call 1-833-839-8387, msc@vfw.org or write to: Member Service Center, VFW, 406 W. 34th St., Kansas City, MO 64111

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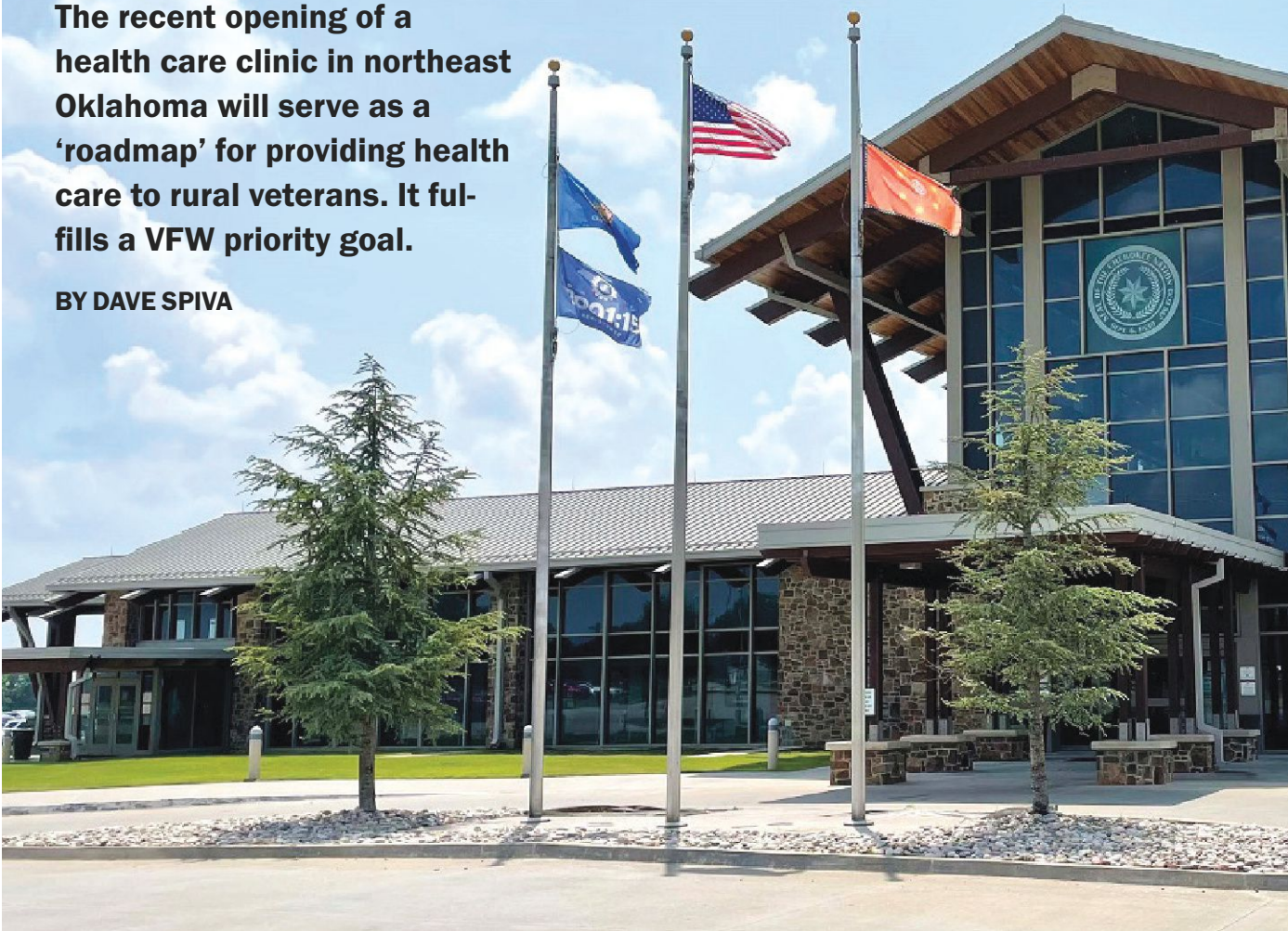
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VA EXPANDS CARE TO UNDERSERVED VETERANS

The recent opening of a health care clinic in northeast Oklahoma will serve as a ‘roadmap’ for providing health care to rural veterans. It fulfills a VFW priority goal.

BY DAVE SPIVA



Late last year, the VA announced that it planned to open several new facilities for veterans seeking health care.

The clinics will serve veterans, service members and families in underserved areas around the world, according to the VA. One of the new clinics is located within Oklahoma's Cherokee Nation.

PARTNERING WITH THE CHEROKEE NATION

The new clinic is located at the Cherokee Nation's Vinita, Okla., Health Center, which serves members of the Cherokee Indian tribe.

Vinita is located 65 miles northeast of Tulsa. Before the opening of the new clinic, veterans in the Vinita area had to travel to Claremore, Okla., for the nearest VA clinic — about 40 miles

away via a toll route.

The VA stated that the Cherokee Nation partnership made the newly established clinic possible. The VA also stated that partnering with the tribe “could be a roadmap for how rural America works hand-in-hand with tribes to provide the best care possible” for veterans.

“For the first time in the Eastern Oklahoma Health Care System history, we are expanding access to health care in partnership within a tribal health care system,” said Kimberly Denning, the executive director of the Eastern Oklahoma VA Health Care System. “As the veteran and tribal population in Eastern Oklahoma continues to grow, this meaningful partnership with Cherokee Nation will enable the Eastern Oklahoma VA Health Care System to meet its needs.”

The Cherokee Nation's Vinita, Okla., Health Center, shown here, accommodates a new 1,300-square-foot VA clinic that will serve about 4,200 veterans in northeast Oklahoma. The VA said that the partnership with the Cherokee Nation "could be a roadmap for how rural America works hand-in-hand with tribes to provide the best care possible" for veterans.



The 1,300-square-foot clinic will serve about 4,200 veterans in northeast Oklahoma and have five VA staff members to provide primary health and mental health care, as well as social work and lab services, according to the VA.

MORE CLINICS AROUND THE WORLD

The VA has established three new Vet Centers and six Vet Center Outstations, which the department said will be community-based counseling centers. The new facilities will provide "social and psychological services" to eligible veterans, military members and their families. No-cost professional services will be available, including counseling for people with depression, PTSD and psychological effects of military sexual assault.

The new locations are:

- **Sierra Vista, Ariz., Vet Center Outstation** (Anticipated to open in 2024.)
- **Solano County, Calif., Vet Center Outstation** (Anticipated to open in early 2024.)
- **St. Cloud, Minn., Vet Center Outstation** (Anticipated to open at the beginning of 2024.)
- **Vineland, N.J., Vet Center Outstation** (Anticipated opening date to be determined.)
- **Clarksville, Tenn., Vet Center** (Anticipated opening date to be determined.)
- **Fredericksburg, Va., Vet Center** (Anticipated opening date to be determined.)
- **Leesburg, Va., Vet Center Outstation** (Anticipated opening date to be determined.)
- **U.S. Virgin Islands Vet Center** (Planned to open by early summer 2024.)
- **Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands, Vet Center Outstation** (Anticipated opening date to be determined.)

The VA stated that the new centers and outstations will "improve access to counseling" for veterans and service members.

"In 300 communities across the country, Vet Centers provide veterans, service members, and their families with quick and easy access to the mental health care they need," VA Secretary Denis McDonough said. "We're expanding this program to make sure [veterans] get the support they so rightly deserve — no matter where they live."

VFW SUPPORTS IMPROVING VA HEALTH CARE

During the 2023 VFW National Convention in Phoenix, VFW members approved many resolutions focused on improving VA health care, including providing sufficient health care services to veterans and suitable health care services to underserved veterans.

VFW's *Resolution 606* notes that the organization will continue to support VA's efforts in treating PTSD and mental health care for veterans.

Resolution 606 states that VFW urges:

- VA to provide appropriate staffing for VA mental health treatment and research programs.
- Congress to dedicate adequate resources to address the alarming rate at which veterans die by suicide to include health treatment and research programs.
- VA to assess what specific treatments or practices are the most effective in helping veterans cope with PTSD.

At the convention, VFW members also approved *Resolution 629*. The purpose of the resolution is to collect data so that VA can assess and address the challenges of any underserved population. This includes not only female, LGBTQ+, racial and ethnic minority veterans, but it also includes young men, who are disproportionately at risk for suicide.

"[VFW calls on] VA to implement favorable changes to the benefit of understanding veterans based on findings of fact and not anecdotal or arbitrary statistics," the resolution states. ★

EMAIL dspsiva@vfw.org

From left, VFW Membership Department's Eligibility Coordinator Ed Stefanak stands alongside two VFW recruits and Apache pilots out of Ft. Riley near Manhattan, Kan., as well as VFW Department of Missouri District 5 Commander Liz Jordan and VFW Post 1829 Commander Tony Jacobs, in front of an Apache helicopter during the "Veterans Helping Veterans" event on Oct. 28 at the National World War I Museum and Memorial in Kansas City, Mo. The event aimed to connect veterans with resources offered by VFW and other groups.

'Let Us Take The Lead'

A VFW District commander in Missouri spearheaded an event that offered information and assistance to veterans. The 'Veterans Helping Veterans' event connected them with specialized help based on their individual needs.

BY ISMAEL RODRIGUEZ JR.

Despite inclement weather and frigid temperatures, more than 100 veterans attended the first-ever VFW Department of Missouri's District 5 "Veterans Helping Veterans."

Held on the manicured lawn of the National World War I Museum and Memorial in Kansas City, Mo., on Oct. 28, the event was hosted by District 5 to help connect local veterans with the VFW and other veterans service organizations in attendance.

District 5 Commander Liz Jordan spearheaded the project after many

encounters with veterans who expressed their lack of knowledge in the resources available at the VFW and elsewhere.

"I got tired of hearing veterans come up to me and say they did not know where there was help or that we could do anything like this [event]," Jordan said. "There are so many fabulous organizations out there. We are the first and the oldest, so let us take the lead and work with these other organizations to help our fellow veterans."

Jordan spent months coordinating with several veterans groups and organizations

to set up booths to provide local veterans with information on what they do. Among those in attendance were the Association of the U.S. Army (AUSA), Heroes on the Water, Wounded Warrior Family Support, Veterans Community Project and the VA.

"There were unfortunately about 20 groups that backed out due to the freezing cold," Jordan said of the event, which ran from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. "But overall, the event did what we expected it to do."

The VFW also provided its own resources in the form of booths with



“We are the first and the oldest, so let us take the lead and work with these other organizations to help our fellow veterans.”

VFW Department of Missouri District 5 Commander Liz Jordan



VFW Department of Missouri District 5 Commander Liz Jordan, left, welcomes a mortar platoon out of Ft. Riley near Manhattan, Kan., to the “Veterans Helping Veterans” event on Oct. 28 at the National World War I Museum and Memorial in Kansas City, Mo.

service officers willing to help any and all veterans who attended the event.

“Commander Jordan did an amazing job coordinating with several veterans organizations and the Posts within her District to give local veterans *PACT Act* information, as well as helping them file VA claims,” said Ed Stefanak, a national eligibility coordinator with VFW’s national Membership Department.

Stefanak, who represented the national VFW headquarters in Kansas City, joined Jordan in making the

rounds throughout the event, helping spread the gospel of the VFW.

“Events like these allow us to tell non-members what we do on Capitol Hill to expand benefits for veterans,” Stefanak said. “It helps us share that all veterans, regardless of being eligible or not for the VFW, can have our veterans service officers help them file VA claims without paying a dime. It is our way of letting them know they have a friend here in the VFW.”

Jordan added that despite the weather having an effect on the turnout, the

event provided a blueprint for future events. She is adamant about her District joining forces with more and more veterans groups and service organizations to provide help to veterans based on their individual needs.

“We as the VFW do a lot of stuff for veterans, but sometimes what they need is something more personal, which working with other veterans organizations allows us to direct them to. Something that maybe we cannot do,” Jordan said. “So, we can work with and partner with other organiza-

From left, VFW Department of Missouri District 5 Commander Liz Jordan joins KCTV 5 reporter Jiani Navarro and VFW Membership Department's Eligibility Coordinator Ed Stefanak for a selfie during the "Veterans Helping Veterans" event on Oct. 28 at the National World War I Museum and Memorial in Kansas City, Mo. Jordan spearheaded the event.

tions to host events and turn veterans in the right direction."

The District 5 commander already has plans for 2024, which include growing upon "Veterans Helping Veterans." She is working on hosting two job fairs and the second "Veterans Helping Veterans" event, though the dates are tentative as of the publishing of this article.

"We are hoping to partner with more groups to build a community of joining in to help our fellow veterans," Jordan said. "We are still serving, so let us show them what that really means." ★

EMAIL irodriguez@vfw.org



NOW HEAR THIS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6



Louisville, Ky., is the site of VFW's 125th National Convention. Housing reservations will open in March this year instead of February.

VFW 125th National Convention Housing Opens in March

With the 125th VFW National Convention in Louisville, Ky., just months away, VFW announces that convention housing is opening in **March** this year.

Specifically, convention housing will open Monday, March 18. Housing reservation information will be located on the convention website accessed through the main VFW website at <https://vfw.org/convention>.

The convention website also will have general convention information, including the registration form and links to other convention-related information for Louisville, Ky., July 27-Aug. 1. The website also will have a tentative agenda.

VFW looks forward to welcoming its members from around the world to the "Gateway to the South," home of the renowned Kentucky Derby.

REUNIONS



To publicize your unit's reunion, email magazine@vfw.org. Submit at least four months in advance of reunion date. VFW members only.

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USS Albemarle AV-5/USNS Corpus Christi Bay T-ARVH-1, including Army Veterans: Steven Nye; srn820@verizon.net
 USS Rich DD/DDE-820: John Szabo (440) 729-7285; jands7370@roadrunner.com or www.ussrich.org
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CLAIMS

Readers are urged to help these vets seeking claim substantiation statements. Respond directly to the person listed at the end of the claim assistance request. This service is provided for VFW members who are in the process of filing a VA claim. Please email your claim to magazine@vfw.org.

Army

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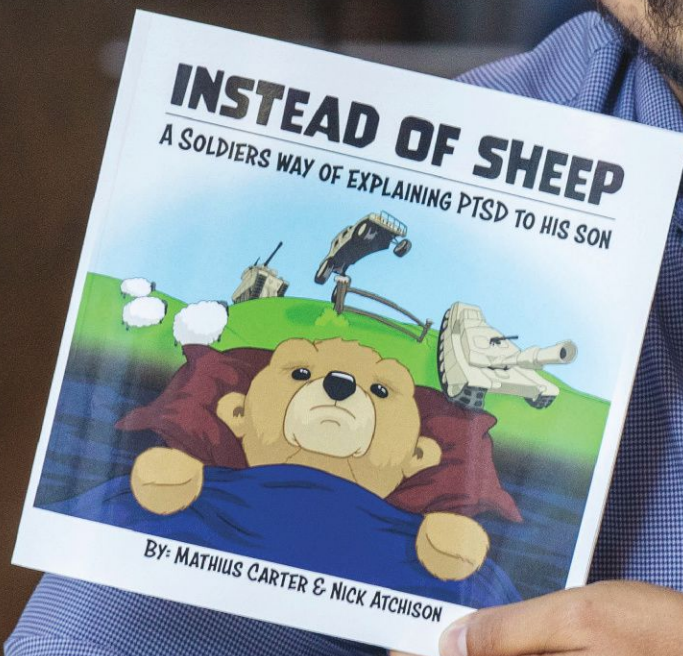
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INSTEAD OF SHEEP: A SOLDIER'S WAY OF EXPLAINING PTSD TO HIS SON

A VFW member from Illinois wrote a children's book to help veterans teach their young children about their struggles with PTSD in an age-appropriate manner.

BY ISMAEL RODRIGUEZ JR.



Iraq War veteran Mathius Carter showcases his children's book, "Instead of Sheep: A Soldier's Way of Explaining PTSD to his Son," during the 124th VFW National Convention at the Phoenix Convention Center in Phoenix last July. Carter also is a commander of VFW Post 12014 in Crystal Lake, Ill., as well as a senior vice commander for the Department of Illinois' District 5.



With the weight of his son on his shoulders, Mathius Carter walked down to the hockey rink inside a crowded Allstate Arena for the Chicago Wolves' opening ceremony on Military Appreciation Night in March 2022.

The Wolves' staff had told him it was a spectacle, selling his 5-year-old son on the idea of a great time.

When the loud and sporadic sounds of fireworks began, like gun blasts that crackled and fizzled, Carter felt it coming on. He braced himself, the weight of his son on his shoulders.

"It was the worst panic attack I had had in years," said Carter, an Army veteran who deployed with the 32nd Signal Bn., 3rd Inf. Div. to Iraq in 2003. "I sensed it could be triggering, but my son asked me to stay. I am a father first, so I gutted it out and paid the price."

After the pyrotechnics display, Carter walked back with his son to a booth his employer had set up at the Allstate Arena in Rosemont, Ill. As an outreach coordinator for Road Home Program at Rush, a Chicago-based mental health clinic for veterans, Carter often felt the need to hide his own inner battles to help others.

"That night was different," said Carter, the commander of VFW Post 12014 in Crystal Lake, Ill., as well as a senior vice commander for the Department of Illinois' District 5. "One of my co-workers manning the booth with me asked if I was all right, and I remember telling her I was definitely not OK. It was hard for me to admit because how am I supposed to help people if I myself need help?"

The Iraq War veteran, who suffered two traumatic brain injuries after a mortar attack on his truck in 2003, had started his quest to help veterans in 2020 as a case manager at Veterans Path to Hope, a nonprofit in Crystal Lake.

"It was there that I began to realize the long-term cost of war," said Carter, who left the service in 2005. "When three veterans in my caseload and a good friend from Iraq all committed suicide, I realized that I, too, was not OK mentally."

Contemplating his own demise toward the end of 2021, Carter sought help in a hurry, and the only place that provided the timely relief was Road Home.

"I reached out for help and found a lifeline with the Road Home Program," Carter said. "They got me out of a dark place, so when a job opportunity opened up there, I signed on as an outreach coordinator."

Then two weeks later, Carter suffered the panic attack at the Chicago Wolves' hockey game.

'WE KNEW WHAT WE WANTED TO SAY'

Following the panic attack, Carter scheduled an appointment with his clinician the next day and told him about the episode he had suffered in detail. The clinician listened to him confess he never wanted his son to see him struggle with his emotions.

"I told my therapist I always hid them," Carter said. "Then my therapist made a face and suggested I needed to figure out an age-appropriate way to teach my son what I was going through."

Carter took the advice from his clinician and delved into online research on ways to do so. There were no age-appropriate books, according to Carter, that captured his exact mood when going through a PTSD attack.

“When I am going through an episode, I am somewhere else,” Carter said. “I am vacant and quiet and sad, and it is not at all how I am normally. So I had to try and find a way to explain this to my son.”

The epiphany crept in in the form of a children’s book. To do this, Carter’s first resource was his longtime friend, Nick Atchison, a gifted illustrator and Iraq War veteran who served with Carter in the same unit and has five children himself.

“He loved the idea,” Carter said. “We knew what we wanted to say and that is how we wrote and illustrated it. We consider it a tool for Army dads like us to talk about PTSD to little ones who don’t always understand what is going on.”

Carter and Atchison self-published “Instead of Sheep: A Soldier’s Way of Explaining PTSD to his Son” on Nov. 8, 2022, and the book has since garnered 4.9 stars on Amazon, as well as more than 20 positive reviews.

“I have gotten feedback from people I know who have not had a way to have that conversation with their children on what they went through and how they feel,” Carter said. “But we have also received feedback from people who were not in the military and who are not fathers. It has allowed them to see what we go through as well.”

‘I REALIZED I WANTED TO BE HERE’

For Carter, however, the challenges brought on by 2022 had not ended.

On Dec. 28 that year, the Iraq War veteran was once again tested. This time, the feeling that gripped him was not panic but a heart attack.

“I know this might sound strange, but I was in a way glad that I had a heart attack,” Carter said. “Being a man, a veteran and parent, those are all groups of people that care about other people but not always take care of themselves. I realized then that I wanted to be here, wanted more time to continue to do my work in helping other people but also myself.”

Since the heart attack, Carter has doubled down on his health as much as he has on his two commitments to family and veterans.

A recently appointed VFW National Aide-de-Camp,



Mathius Carter watches his son read from “Instead of Sheep: A Soldier’s Way of Explaining PTSD to his Son” at The Other Side coffee shop in Crystal Lake, Ill., last November. Carter wrote the book to share his struggles with PTSD in an age-appropriate way with his son, and he and his partner, Army veteran and illustrator Nick Atchison, are currently working on the second iteration of “Instead of Sheep” for a release later this year.

Carter continues to carry his newfound outlook on life with him throughout outreach missions with Road Home, as well as his duties as a VFW officer and published author.

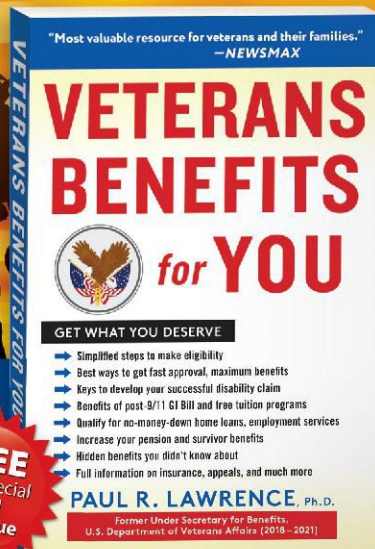
Over the past year, Carter has conducted public readings of “Instead of Sheep: A Soldier’s Way of Explaining PTSD to his Son” at the Pritzker Military Museum & Library in Chicago, as well as the Kohl Children’s Museum in Glenview, Ill.

The children’s book author and his partner, Atchison, have also begun working on the next iteration of “Instead of Sheep,” which they see as a potential series.

“For our second book, we are aging up the characters to target older kids, between six to 12-year-olds,” Carter said. “We will talk about moral injury and survivor’s guilt and things that might be a little heavier than what we shared in the first book.”

The second iteration of “Instead of Sheep,” according to Carter, is slated to be published later this year. For more information on the book, visit <https://insteadofsheep.net>. ★

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Then-1st Lt. Vernice Armour, a Super Cobra pilot with Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 169, is seen here on Feb. 6, 2003, at Camp Pendleton Air Station, Calif. Armour became the first black woman to serve as a combat pilot in the U.S. military. She also was the first African American female naval aviator. Today, Armour is an inspirational speaker.



VFW Celebrates Black History Month

February is set aside to recognize African Americans for their achievements both past and present. VFW wishes to salute Black veterans for their integral roles in every VFW-qualifying war.

BY JANIE DYHOUSE

As the nation celebrates Black History Month, VFW commemorates black veterans for their military service throughout history. Here are a few stories of black men and women who made history in the military.

MARINES NAMES FIRST BLACK FEMALE MAJOR GENERAL

In December 2022, President Joe Biden appointed Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Lorna Mahlock to the grade of major general. The appointment made Mahlock the first black woman to serve as a two-star general in the Corps.

At the National Security Agency at Fort Meade, Md., Mahlock is the deputy director of cybersecurity for combat support. In 2018, Mahlock was nominated to the grade of brigadier general, becoming the first black woman to achieve that rank.

Since then, she has served as the Marine Corps' chief information officer and director of command, control, communications and computers.

According to the *Marine Corps Times*, Mahlock has earned multiple degrees, including two master's degrees in strategic studies from the U.S. Army War College and the Naval Postgraduate School.

The *Marine Corps Times* also reported that only three women in the Corps' history have attained the rank of lieutenant general, and all of them are retired.

MONTFORD POINT MARINES RECOGNIZED

At 101 years old, George J. Johnson was honored last February for his service as a Montford Point Marine. He was presented with the Congressional Gold Medal at the African American Research Library and Cultural Center in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., surrounded by family and friends.

Another Montford Point Marine, Moses Williams, was posthumously awarded the Congressional Gold Medal during the ceremony.

Montford Point Marines were the first black men to become Marines after President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued an executive order in 1941 prohibiting the armed services from barring African Americans from military service.

Montford Point in Jacksonville, N.C., was their segregated training base. It would be eight years before the U.S. military would be fully integrated.

"They had to fight for the right to fight," James T. Averhart, national president of the Montford Point Marines Association, said during the ceremony last February.

Pamela Y. Williams, the daughter of Moses Williams, accepted



PHOTO BY DALTON S. SWANBECK/MARINE CORPS



NORMAN'S PHOTOLAND/COURTESY OF MALLORIE BERGER

TOP: Then-Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Lorna M. Mahlock, right, speaks in 2020 to Marines during a tour of Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif. In 2022, President Joe Biden appointed Mahlock to the grade of major general. The appointment made Mahlock the first black woman to serve as a two-star general in the Corps.

BOTTOM: Retired Army Maj. Gen. James W. Monroe, left, presents former Marine Cpl. George J. Johnson with a certificate of service from the National Montford Point Marine Association last February in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. One of the esteemed Montford Point Marines, Johnson also was presented the Congressional Gold Medal during a ceremony. He died just months later at the age of 101. Montford Point Marines were the first black men to become Marines after the ban prohibiting African Americans from military service was lifted.

the medal on her father's behalf. She said that while she knew her father was a Marine, she was not aware he was one of the storied Montford Marines.

"I can only imagine what types of hardships they had to go through," Pamela said. "But I know that they had no idea that they were making history — which is exactly what they did."

Johnson, whose health was failing at the ceremony, died in July at the age of 101. His cousin, Grace King, said that while Johnson was not able to speak much, he would get excited when



Then-Spec. 5 Andrea Motley Crabtree sits in the Mark V deep sea dive suit in 1985 at Fort Rucker, Ala. Crabtree was the Army's first female deep-sea diver and the first black female deep-sea diver across all U.S. military services. Crabtree served from 1977-1998, with four of those years as a deep-sea diver.

someone spoke of the Montford Marines.

"When you mention Montford Point, he does light up," King told the *Marine Corps Times* at the ceremony. "It's almost like (Johnson) was a star because everybody wanted to take a picture with him."

When Montford Point closed in 1949, about 20,000 men had served there. Nearly 2,000 of them saw combat in the 1945 Battle of Okinawa alone.

OTHERS HAD TRIED, 'BUT DIDN'T SUCCEED'

Now-retired Army Master Sgt. Andrea Motley Crabtree made history in 1982 when she became the Army's first female deep-sea diver, and the first black female deep-sea diver across all U.S. military branches.

According to the *Army Times*, Crabtree was the only black person and the only woman among eight soldiers, and more than 20 others, in her 1982 class at the U.S. Navy Deep Sea Diving and Salvage Training Center at Panama City Beach, Fla.

Furthermore, she was one of only two soldiers and nine sailors to earn the coveted diver badge.

"I was happy to be there, happy to be in that suit," Crabtree told CBS News, adding that her service was inspired by her father and grandfather, both veterans. "I always wanted to be in the military, but a lot of people didn't think the military was a good thing for women."

Crabtree served from 1977-1998, four of those years as a deep-sea diver despite being told she did not belong.

"I was Army, going to a predominantly Navy environment," Crabtree said. "I'm female to a predominantly male environment. I'm black, in a predominantly white environment. There is no real reason why any woman who was able to do the job shouldn't have been able to do it. Or any reason why I should have been the first in 1982 to be a female diver for the Army. There were other women who had tried, but they didn't succeed."

'I'M THE FIRST THAT WAS GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY'

Maj. Gen. Konata Crumbly made history when he was named the first black commander of the Georgia Air National Guard last February.

Following the promotion, Crumbly told Channel 2 in Atlanta he is focused on always having the troops combat-ready.

"I'm not the first African American qualified, but I'm the first that was given the opportunity," Crumbly said.

"Obviously, the world threats haven't gone away. You got China, Russia, North Korea and Iran, and you obviously got violent extremists' organizations. We've gotta be ready every single day."

Crumbly also said that he is concentrating on changes to include the replacement of the J-STARS aircraft based in the state. It was the U.S. Department of Defense's main airborne battlefield command and control platform during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. It's now being replaced by a multi-faceted battle management system also based in Georgia.

Previously, Crumbly was part of the ROTC at Florida A&M University. He also served as an Army helicopter pilot before moving to the Air Guard and piloting the J-STARS.

FIRST BLACK FEMALE COMBAT PILOT IS INSPIRATIONAL SPEAKER

In March 2003, Vernice Armour became the first black woman to serve as a combat pilot in the U.S. military. She flew with HMLA-169 during the Iraq invasion. She served two tours in

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Maj. Gen. Konata Crumbly, left, briefs Brig. Gen. Christopher R. Amrhein, commander of Air Force Recruiting Service, last June at the Clay National Guard Center's Joint Operations Center in Marietta, Ga. Crumbly was named the first black commander of the Georgia Air National Guard last February. At the time, Crumbly said he was not the first African American qualified to hold the esteemed position, but that he was the first "that was given the opportunity."

Iraq during the Iraq War.

Prior to that, Armour earned her wings at Naval Air Station Pensacola, Fla., in 2001, where she graduated first in her class of 12.

After serving in Iraq, Armour was assigned to the Manpower and Reserve Affairs Equal Opportunity Branch as program liaison officer.

Since her retirement from the Marine Corps in 2007, Armour is a professional speaker, traveling the country inspiring others to reach their life goals.

Armour, whose nickname is "FlyGirl," has been an inspirational speaker for 16 years. She told 72 Hours, an online news outlet, that she loves showing people that not only is there another way in life, but inspiring them to go after that other way.

"What I enjoy most is when someone comes up to me afterwards and says, 'You don't know this, but I had been considering suicide, and now I know that I can create a difference in my life,'" Armour said. "Or someone who was going to quit their job, and

they tell me, 'You know, I'd given up, but you gave me insight on how I can create a breakthrough in my life.' I've had people send me a picture of them graduating with their cap and gown three years after one of my talks, because they had been inspired to go back to school."

Armour recalled being a young girl and seeing a black woman in an Army flight suit and thinking how she had never thought of that before then.

"When I was a kid, the philosophy of my family had a profound impact," she said. "My dad always talked about how thoughts become things and things become outcomes."

Armour's father was a retired major in the Army Reserve, and her stepfather was a Marine Corps sergeant who did three tours in Vietnam. Her grandfather was a Montford Point Marine.

While February is set aside annually to recall the contributions of African-Americans, VFW celebrates black veterans, as well as veterans of all races, every day.



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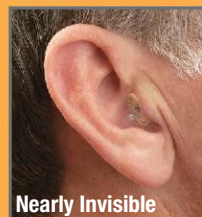
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'PRESERVING THE OF LONG ISLAND



MEMORY'S KIAS

A marathon and race series on Long Island benefits multiple veterans causes. In 2023, four VFW Posts were the recipients of grants to be used in the community.

BY JANIE DYHOUSE

Runners of the Suffolk County Veterans Half Marathon offer a wave and smile last October on Long Island, N.Y., as they embark on the race to honor the island's KIAs. Proceeds from the half marathon, marathon, and other races throughout the weekend fund the Suffolk County Grant Program. Groups such as VFW Posts can apply for a grant to be used to help veterans or in other areas of community service.

Four VFW Posts on Long Island, N.Y., were selected this year to receive grants from the Suffolk County Grant Program. The grants are funded through the Suffolk County Veterans Marathon & Half Marathon, which just celebrated its eighth year.

Lindenhurst Post 7279, Rocky Point Post 6249, Sayville Post 433 and Huntington Station Post 1469 each received a grant for the work the members do in the community.

In Rocky Point, for example, Post members consistently give back to the community in a variety of ways. For instance, they support the Long Island State Veterans Home and provide a hand up to families who need it and make frequent visits to the area schools.

Most recently, the Post celebrated the grand opening of its Suffolk County WWII and Military History Museum. Located in the former Rocky Point train depot across the street from the VFW Post, the museum aims to tell the stories of Long Island war veterans.

VFW Post 6249 Commander Joe Cognitore said the museum helps fulfill the Post's mission of educating youth by introducing them to the wartime experiences of their local veterans.

According to then-Suffolk County Veterans Services Director Tom Ronayne, more than \$1 million has been raised over eight years and has directly benefited veterans' groups on Long Island.

"We have raised \$1.1 million since this all started," said Ronayne, a Navy veteran and life member of VFW Post 1469. "Every nickel has gone back to the veterans' community, and we have done this with zero cost to the government."

Ronayne said that organizations such as VFW Posts submit grant applications that are then reviewed by a committee. He noted that grants cannot be used to fund capital improvements. Instead, the committee selects those groups looking to better their communities by, for example, working on youth programs or hosting ward parties in hospitals and nursing homes or organizing coat drives.

With more than 1.5 million residents, Suffolk County has more veterans than all of New York state's 62 counties. For that reason, Ronayne said the county works very hard to deliver the "highest level of service possible" to veterans and active-duty troops, as well as National Guard and Reserve troops.

Ronayne added that former Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone made veterans a priority during his tenure. Bellone, an Army veteran, finished his 12-year term as county executive on Dec. 31.

"Suffolk County is home to the largest population of veterans in New York state, and as such, we feel a strong obligation to provide them with the best services and support possible when they return home," Bellone said. "That is exactly what the Suffolk County Marathon is all about — raising money for local veterans' services. I am extremely proud that we were able to surpass our goal of raising \$1 million to support our nation's heroes."

Gold Star parents Janet and Tim Scherer visit with then-County Executive Steve Bellone, center, last year in Suffolk County, N.Y., at the “I Did the Grid” race. This particular race is part of the nine-race Suffolk County Veterans Run Series on Long Island. The Scherers’ son, Christopher, was a Marine killed in action on July 21, 2007, in Iraq. Tim is a co-founder of the Suffolk County Marathon as well as creator, with Janet, of the “Team Chris I Did the Grid” race that honors their son.

Ronayne said that in addition to VFW Posts, the Veterans Yoga Project and Warrior Ranch are among the groups supported by the marathon’s competitive grant program.

“The race entirely pays for itself in addition to providing significant financial support to the community,” Ronayne said.

‘A POWERFUL LEGACY’

The marathon grew out of the Veterans Race Series, which consists of nine other races that are “military or veteran centric” in Suffolk County.

“Each race serves as an opportunity to provide information and awareness of both the services and resources available to veterans in Suffolk County,” Ronayne said. “We have experienced significant growth in the participant numbers as the race series has expanded.”

On the marathon weekend, which is typically in October, a Family Fun Run and Freedom Fest also takes place. Veterans’ employment counselors, the local VA, food merchants and live musicians turn out to make the Freedom Fest a success, according to Ronayne.

“The marathon also features the Road of Remembrance,” Ronayne said. “It is one mile of the race where we have photos of each of Suffolk County’s KIAs. It is a solemn mile. There is no cheering or hydration stations.”

One of the races in the series is the Lt. Michael Murphy Run Around the Lake. Murphy was born and raised on Long Island, where he served as a lifeguard at Lake Ronkonkoma. After graduating from Penn State University, he joined the Navy SEALs.

In June 2005, Murphy was killed in a firefight along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border during Operation Red Wings. He was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

Ronayne said over the years, the marathons and the race series have engaged the community in a new way, while also supporting veterans.

“I love that this is such a powerful legacy issue,” Ronayne said. “It preserves the memory of these men we have lost. Wouldn’t it be awesome if some folks reading this would replicate this model?”



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PHOTO COURTESY OF TOM RONAYNE



PHOTO COURTESY OF TOM RONAYNE

Then-Suffolk County Veterans Services Director Tom Ronayne, third from left, and current Suffolk County Veterans Services Director Marcelle Leis, far right, gather in December on Long Island with VFW members from four Posts that received grants from the Suffolk County Grant Program.

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WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

This month, *VFW* magazine launches a series about VFW's past Commanders-in-Chief. Each month, we will feature two past chiefs, and look at their time since they held the organization's highest office.

BY JANIE DYHOUSE



Past VFW Commander-in-Chief Larry Rivers and his wife, Judy, on Oct. 19, 2022, in Obidos, Portugal.

LARRY RIVERS, 1988-1989 VFW POST 1736, ALEXANDRIA, LA.

Following his tenure as the second Vietnam veteran to take the helm as VFW Commander-in-Chief, Rivers was named executive director of VFW's Washington Office and later, adjutant general. He then moved back to Washington, D.C., where he worked for a time with the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial Foundation.

An attorney since 1974, Rivers remained in the nation's capital where he worked as a consultant and lobbyist. He and his wife, Judy, moved from D.C. to central Florida in 2006, where they still call home.

Though Rivers is not "fully retired," he and Judy travel as often as they can whether it be soaking up the sun in Cabo or walking the ancient streets of Portugal. And when they are home, they enjoy spending time with their family.

Rivers said there are many highlights as his time as chief, but one of particular interest was the "beginning of the thaw" of relationships with Vietnam.

"Agent Orange legislation passed and relations in Vietnam were opened," said Rivers, who served in Vietnam as an infantry platoon commander with both the 1st and 3rd Marine divisions and as a company commander with the 3rd Combined Action Group during 1969-70. "I have since been back to Vietnam eight or nine times. I have nothing but good thoughts about my VFW experiences."



Past VFW Commander-in-Chief Bob Wallace and his wife, Dr. Katherine S. Wallace, visiting Ireland in 2017.

BOB WALLACE, 1991-1992 VFW POST 9503, BAYVILLE, N.J.

At the conclusion of his year as Chief, Wallace was nominated by President George H.W. Bush to be Assistant Secretary for Veterans Employment and Training. Prior to joining the VFW staff in Washington, D.C. in 1996, Wallace served as Executive Director of the New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission.

He served as Deputy Executive Director of the VFW Washington Office from October 1996 until February 2001, when he was appointed Assistant Adjutant General and Executive Director.

Wallace also served as the Adjutant General of the VFW from 2016 to 2017. While he retired from the VFW in August 2019, he later accepted a special appointment with the VFW in November 2021, serving once again as Executive Director of the VFW Washington Office. He served in that position until March 2023.

These days, Wallace is an executive consultant in Washington, D.C. He and his wife, Dr. Katherine S. Wallace, reside in Alexandria, Va.

For Wallace, among the highlights during his time as Chief was representing and, also, meeting VFW and Auxiliary members around the world.

A Vietnam veteran, it was especially poignant for Wallace to be the first VFW national officer to visit Vietnam since the war to advocate for the fullest possible accounting for America's POW/MIA's.

"It was a truly exceptional year for me personally," said Wallace who served with 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, 1st Marine Division, from November 1967 to June 1968, and received three Purple Heart medals for wounds sustained during combat. "But, more importantly, it was an exceptional year for the VFW."

Wallace served as Chief at the peak of VFW membership of more than 2.1 million veterans.



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‘We Pride Ourselves in the Work We Do’

A VFW Post in California created a free service for veterans in need of tree and brush removal. Last year, they helped turn 20 tons of lumber into firewood.

BY ISMAEL RODRIGUEZ JR.

When Evan Tyler Cruz became active with VFW in 2022, the first thing he inspired in his fellow Post 904 members in Loomis, Calif., was to find new ways to serve veterans.

A skilled arborist with experience in managing sick and fallen trees, Cruz joined Post 904 Senior Vice Commander and Service Officer Shawn Simmons in establishing two work parties that would deploy when needed by veterans around the county.

Nestled between rural communities 30 miles to the northeast and Sacramento about 25 miles to the southwest, Post 904 members soon found themselves with many opportunities to serve veterans across Placer County, Calif.

“It is very labor-intensive but just like when we were in the military, it has built strong bonds and camaraderie,” said Simmons, an Air Force veteran with deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. “We pride ourselves in the work we do and seeing the smiles and hearing the ‘thank-yous’ that come from a job well done is of immeasurable satisfaction to us.”

The work parties vary based upon weather, intensity of the job, length of the job and availability. They are made up of five to eight VFW members organized by Simmons and often deploy with an assortment of equipment that includes wood splitters, dump trailers, quads, chains, ratchet straps, axes, ladders, weed eaters and chainsaws.

“We use chainsaws to cut fallen trees and split the rounds into firewood for use by the veteran property owners,” Simmons said. “In some cases, if the veteran doesn’t need the firewood, we load it up and haul the firewood to



PHOTO COURTESY OF SHAWN SIMMONS

From left, VFW Post 904 Chaplain John Akin, kneeling, member Jon Cullifer and Senior Vice Commander Shawn Simmons split firewood in Newcastle, Calif., to donate to veterans in and around Placer County, Calif., last October.

other veterans who can use it during the winter.”

Throughout 2023, Post 904’s work parties have assisted more than 25 veterans and removed more than 20 tons of lumber from their properties. They also have provided power chairs, downed trees, made dump runs, conducted lawn and house maintenance, repaired equipment and cleaned up trash at veterans’ properties.

“They are always amazed when we show up with our team,” Simmons said. “California is notorious for people hustling people, so they are often surprised

when we show up free of charge, in good spirits, and get it done.”

Simmons added that the Post hopes to continue providing service opportunities every week to 10 days, though the work “ebbs and flows” depending on the need.

“We also try and keep in touch with those we help for further assistance,” Simmons said. “Our goal is not just to provide a service but to build quality friendships that will hopefully last a lifetime.”



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Like millions of older Americans, I struggle with mobility. For years, I watched my quality of life slip away, as I was forced to stay home while friends and family took part in activities I'd once enjoyed. I thought I'd made some progress when I got a mobility scooter, but then I realized how hard it was to transport. Taking it apart and putting it back together was like doing a jigsaw puzzle. Once I had it disassembled, I had to try to put all of the pieces in the trunk of a car, go to wherever I was going, and repeat the process in reverse. Travel scooters were easier to transport, but they were uncomfortable and scary to drive, I always felt like I was ready to tip over. Then I found the **So Lite® Scooter**. Now there's nothing that can hold me back.

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Life Insurance Offers Financial Protection

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LIFE INSURANCE 101

Think about all your monthly expenses, such as rent or a home mortgage, utilities, car payments, groceries, loans, kids' tuitions, etc. It is hard making ends meet as it is, and it feels like some of these expenses never end. However, have you ever asked yourself, "Would my family be able to cover these costs if I were to pass away?"

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available in the insurance market. Each product is meant to protect you and your spouse through all stages of your life. Whether you are still employed or living in your retirement years, you are guaranteed acceptance.

LIFE INSURANCE PLANS

Learning what each product has to offer is the first step toward helping protect your loved ones. Life plans include:

- Term Life Insurance
- Senior Term Life Insurance

These plans could supplement any existing insurance you may have and reinforce a safety net that has diminished in value because of inflation as you get older. Often, these plans have benefits that might help you with important expenses such as mortgages, medical bills or final expenses.

Life insurance plans can vary based on the plan that the insurance provider has set up. Some plans offer guaranteed acceptance regardless of if you have had health problems in the past, while other plans might have you take a medical exam and answer health questions to determine if you qualify for coverage.

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The listing of military reunions is a free service provided to VFW members **ONLY**. The contact person or the coordinator **MUST** be a VFW member. Otherwise, the notice will not appear in the magazine. Illegible or incorrectly completed forms will be discarded without notification. Reunions must be submitted at least four months in advance of the reunion date. VFW's reunion coordinator will run a reunion notice only **ONCE** in the magazine.



VFW Post 12224 Commander Roscoe McGlynn, left, and VFW Commander-in-Chief Duane Sarmiento celebrate the opening of VFW's newest Post on Oct. 22 in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan, Philippines. Located about 360 miles south of Manila, it is the first VFW Post in the city or the province.

'There Are So Many Veterans There We Can Service'

The Philippines has a new VFW Post in Puerto Princesa City. It is named for a Marine who survived a Japanese massacre in World War II.

BY JANIE DYHOUSE

A new VFW Post located in Puerto Princesa City in the Philippines province of Palawan bears the name of Glenn Weddell McDole, a WWII veteran, now deceased, who experienced what some would consider a living hell as a prisoner of war after the fall of Corregidor in 1942.

The Glenn W. McDole VFW Post 12224 was instituted on Oct. 22, with VFW Commander-in-Chief Duane

Sarmiento in attendance. According to VFW Post 12224 Commander Roscoe McGlynn, this is the first VFW Post in Palawan. It is part of VFW District 7.

The Post had 27 charter members at its formation and has since added a few more to its roster.

McGlynn said he is excited for the new Post and is making plans for members to be involved in Puerto Princesa City.

"We are planning some community service projects with the city," he said.

"The first one is to restore the Plaza Cuartel where the World War II prisoners were held here."

One of the American POWs to survive the slaughter at Palawan was McDole, who served with the 1st Separate Marine Battalion, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment. (See sidebar.)

Interim-VFW Director of Membership Corey Hunt said he credits the folks on the ground there for getting this Post running successfully,

WWII POWs Massacred in the Philippines

The following is a compilation of excerpts of articles published by the National World War II Museum. It describes the events leading up to Marine Pfc. Glenn Weddle McDole's escape from a Japanese POW camp in the Philippines.

In August 1942, the Japanese sent 346 American POWs from the Manila area to a compound known as Camp 10-A on Palawan to build an airfield at Puerto Princesa.

Escape attempts brought summary executions. The POWs suffered frequent beatings and mistreatment from their Japanese guards, food was the barest minimum, and disease and injuries went untreated.

On the morning of Dec. 14, 1944 the Japanese guards at Camp 10-A roused the POWs around 2 a.m. The prisoners noticed additional guards in the camp, but most shrugged that off as a response to the recent air raids. The POWs were soon at the airfield filling bomb craters.

About 11 am, however, the Japanese soldiers signaled the POWs to stop working. The Americans were marshalled to one side of the runway. There, Lt. Yoshikaza Sato announced, "Americans, your working days are over!" Following that statement, the guards herded the men into waiting trucks which returned them to camp.

A little while after the trucks reached Camp 10-A, the air raid siren, an old church bell, sounded when two American P-38 Lightnings were sighted. The planes were at high altitude and moving away, and the POWs did not take them seriously. The alarm sounded again, and then a third time. Sato screamed, "They're coming!" He added, "Planes — hundreds of planes!"

The men were quickly herded into three air raid bunkers they had built several weeks before. Each shelter held about 40 to 50 men and consisted of a long trench, about five feet deep, covered with logs, palm fronds and soil. Each had a small access opening at one end. Another small shelter was constructed for the four American officers in the camp.

Guards angrily struck any prisoner who tried to look out, clubbing them with rifles or prodding them with bayonets or swords.

According to the later testimony of one of the guards, "Captain Kojima appeared and announced it was necessary to kill the POWs." The commander of the garrison company, Lt. Sho Yoshiwara, ordered the Japanese soldiers to fix bayonets and load five rounds, the capacity of a standard magazine.

He then personally positioned his soldiers and "ordered those with rifles and machine guns to kill any POW who came out of the air raid shelters."

Suddenly, five Japanese soldiers doused the first shel-



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT

Marine veteran Glenn McDole speaks in 2000 at Jefferson Barracks in Lemay, Mo., regarding his experiences as a POW in the Philippines during WWII. He was one of only 11 Americans to escape a massacre on Dec. 14, 1944.

ter and the tunnel entrance with buckets of high-octane aviation fuel, and two others threw torches to ignite the fuel. The small bunker with the four American officers was similarly set alight.

As Americans attempted to break free, guards fired their rifles into the shelter. Yoshiwara yelled, "Shoot them, shoot them!" Dead and wounded blocked the escape of others. With his clothes burning, Lt. Carl Mango, an Army Medical Corps officer, ran forward, pleading for the Japanese to stop. He was machine-gunned down.

Within seconds, the Japanese guards ignited the second large shelter in a similar manner. Japanese soldiers threw grenades into the shelter entrance. The men in the final shelter had a few seconds warning.

Marine Sgt. Rufus Smith shouted out that the men in the first trench were being murdered. As that happened, more than 30 Americans in the third shelter desperately managed to dig themselves out.

They benefitted from a fissure at the back of the trench that they had concealed when constructing it. Escaping the shelter, many slid down the face of the cliff to the rocky beach below. Others tore through the barbed wire and scrambled for concealment.

At nightfall, some of those who somehow survived wandered into the jungle, and others attempted to swim across Puerto Princesa Bay. Marine Pfc. Glenn McDole hid in the camp garbage dump.

A handful of survivors of the massacre swam across the bay to the Iwahig Penal Colony. The distance was about five miles, but battling the current in the bay, some had to swim farther.

McDole made the swim after three days of hiding. Exhausted, he had been clinging to a fish trap in the bay until he was picked up by a sympathetic fisherman who called, "Hey, Joe, you a POW?" McDole answered, "I was, but no longer."

McDole was one of 11 Americans to survive the massacre. He died in 2009 at the age of 88.

“This new Post is exciting for membership because any time we charter a new Post, it means we are involved in the community.”

Interim-VFW Director of Membership Corey Hunt

including Department of Pacific Areas Commander Alexander Forez.

“This new Post is exciting for membership because any time we charter a new Post, it means we are involved in the community,” Hunt said. “It means we are doing what our mission is for veterans.

Both of VFW’s overseas Departments do very well. It also is exciting for VFW to flourish especially in the Philippines, because we know there are so many veterans there we can serve.”

Hunt said that the Department of Pacific Areas is unique in that there

are great numbers of retirees and U.S. nationals who live in the Philippines.

“They do well because the members are active and most are life members,” he added. “They don’t have to chase people around for membership renewals. These are diehard VFW members.”

Hunt reminded that chartering a new Post requires at least 25 members, 10 of whom must be new members to the organization. The other 15 can come from other VFW Posts or lapsed members who come back into the organization.

Once the numbers are there, Hunt said, an application is filled out to petition for a new Post to be established.

“There is a strong membership team in the Philippines, and it is due to great leadership in the Department of Pacific Areas,” Hunt said. ★

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Thousands of Americans are rediscovering normal freedom of movement thanks to a “miracle oil” capsule that’s outperforming hemp in promoting joint comfort.

According to the official figures from the CDC, more than 58 million Americans are living with joint discomfort. This epidemic has led to a search for alternative approaches – as many sufferers seek relief without the harmful side effects of conventional “solutions.”

Anti-aging specialist Dr. Al Sears is leading the way with a new formula he calls “the most significant breakthrough I’ve ever found for easing joint discomfort.”

The capsule is based on a “miracle oil” historically treasured for its joint health-supporting properties. Marco Polo prized it as he blazed the Silk Road. And to this day, Ayurvedic practitioners rely on it to promote optimal joint health.

Now, with a modern twist backed by science, Dr. Sears is making this natural solution for joint health available to the public.

Your Body’s Hidden “Soothing System”

Joint health research changed forever with the discovery of the endocannabinoid system (ECS) in 1992. Up until that point, research on cannabinoids focused on psychoactive effects. Now, scientists were looking at a new way to fight occasional aches and pains.

Your ECS serves as a central “signaling system” that tells your body how to react to things you do every day. It controls several critical bodily functions such as learning and memory, sleep, healthy immune responses – and your response to discomfort.

A recent study revealed a direct link between the ECS and creaky, sore joints. Researchers at the University of Edinburgh studied the aging of mice with endocannabinoid deficiencies versus “normal” mice.

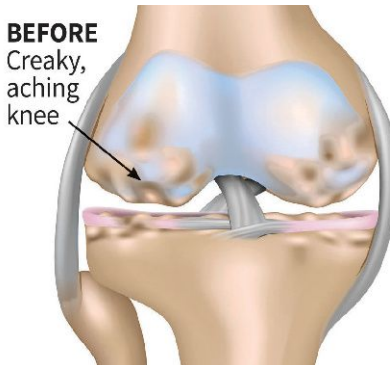
As they aged, the deficient mice had a whopping 60% more joint degeneration than the mice with a healthy ECS.

As the name suggests, the ECS responds to cannabis. At the time it was discovered, scientists assumed that was the best way to support it. But thanks to Dr. Sears’ all-natural solution, you can power up your ECS without marijuana.

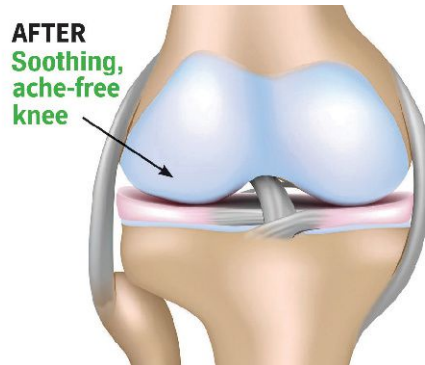
“Calling it the ‘endocannabinoid system’ was a misnomer from the very beginning,” Dr. Sears explained. “Modern research reveals that you don’t need cannabis to activate this incredible system. You don’t need to ‘get high’ to get joint relief.”

A scholarly review found that plants and herbs that don’t produce mind-altering effects can support the ECS and help it maintain its healthy functions.

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The active ingredient in Mobilify soothes aching joints in as little as 5 days

This includes common foodstuffs, such as kava, chocolate, black pepper, and most significantly – the star ingredient to Dr. Sears’ own **Mobilify** formula – frankincense.

Modern scientists say this natural ingredient meets “cannabinoid tetrad” – the signs used to determine if something supports the ECS. While it doesn’t produce a “high” like cannabis does, it binds to the same receptors to support a healthy response to discomfort.

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Indian frankincense, the chief ingredient in **Mobilify**, has been shown to provide all the benefits of cannabis without any feelings of sluggishness or sleepiness.

And studies show that users don’t have to wait long for the comfort they’re looking for.

In a study published in the International Journal of Medical Sciences, 60 patients with stiff knees took 100 mg of Indian frankincense or a placebo daily for 30 days. Remarkably, Indian frankincense “significantly” supported healthy joint function and relieved discomfort in as little as five days.

Additional research linked regular use to lasting comfort.

In another study, 48 participants were given an extract made from frankincense for 120-days. When the results came in, researchers determined the extract strongly supported joint comfort – especially in the knees.

These results were all achieved without marijuana. Research continues to back up the idea that you can support smooth, strong, and healthy joints naturally – without tiredness or sluggishness.

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One user even reported getting results the same day it was used.

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Larry M, another user, compared taking **Mobilify** to living a completely new life.

“After a week and a half of taking **Mobilify**, the discomfort, stiffness, and minor aches went away...it’s almost like being reborn,” he said.

Dennis H. said it helped him get back to his favorite hobby.

“I can attest to **Mobilify** easing discomfort to enable me to pursue my golfing days. Definitely one pill that works for me out of the many I have tried,” he said.

How to Get Mobilify

Right now, the only way to get this powerful, unique **Mobilify** formula that clobbers creaking joints without clobbering you is directly from Dr. Sears. It is not available in stores.

To secure your bottle of this breakthrough natural joint discomfort reliever, buyers should call with Sears Health Hotline at **1-800-333-2567**. “The Hotline allows us to ship the product directly to customers.”

Dr. Sears believes in this product so much, he offers a 100% money-back guarantee on every order. “Just send me back the bottle and any unused product within 90 days, and I’ll send you your money back,” said Dr. Sears.

The Hotline will be taking orders for the next 48 hours. After that, the phone number may be shut down to allow them to restock. Call **1-800-333-2567** to secure your limited supply of **Mobilify**. If you are not able to get through due to extremely high call volume, please try again! Call NOW to qualify for a significant discount on this limited time offer. To take advantage of this exclusive offer use Promo Code: **VETMB124** when you call.

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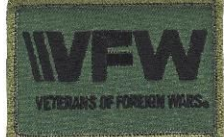
8231 Past Commander



8235 ARMY



8268 Flag



8284 VFW Logo



8233 Commander



8238 USMC



8218 Flag



8333 VFW Logo



8234 Quartermaster



8237 NAVY



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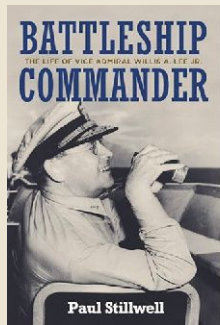
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STAFF PICK



Battleship Commander: The Life of Vice Admiral Willis A. Lee

By Paul Stillwell

This is the first-ever biography of Vice Admiral Willis A. Lee Jr., who served a key role during World War II in the Pacific. Recognizing the achievements and legacy of one of the war's top combat admirals has been long overdue until now.

Battleship Commander explores Lee's life from boyhood in Kentucky through his eventual service as commander of the fast battleships from 1942 to 1945. Paul Stillwell draws on more than 150 first-person accounts from those who knew and served with Lee from boyhood until the time of his death. Said to be down-to-earth, modest, forgiving, friendly and with a wry sense of humor, Lee eschewed the media and, to the extent possible, left administrative details to others. Stillwell relates the sequential building of a successful career, illustrating Admiral Lee's focus on operational, tactical and strategic concerns. *Naval Institute Press*

The Chronicles of Pain

By Jason Goodman, VFW Post 1463, Lititz Springs, Pa.

In *The Chronicles of Pain*, author Jason Goodman writes about his own life and the pain encountered along the way. A Vietnam veteran with more than 45 medical interventions to date, Goodman captures the moments before and after each intervention, his bouts with chronic pain, multiple surgeries and hospital stays, as well as doctor relationships built over time. The memoir is laden with pain dating back to his being a 2-year-old and being run over by his father, but, according to the author, there is much to learn from pain. *Self-Published*

Meant for Each Other

By Lou Schulist, life member, VFW Post 3256, Montague, Mich.

This memoir by Lou Schulist tells of a love story spanning 80 years. In countries separated by 4,000 miles of land and ocean, the story captures the serendipitous nature of the author and his future wife's encounters tied through a series of seemingly random events in their lives. Brought together eventually, the author writes about their love and all the obstacles they had to overcome to continue to share a life of growing faith and adventures. *Self-Published*

Fighting Viet Cong in the Rung Sat

By Bob Worthington, VFW Post 10124, Las Cruces, N.M.

The Vietnam War was not going well in 1968. The January Tet Offensive — a tactical defeat but strategic victory for North Vietnam — showed the U.S. military and the American public that the enemy remained determined, no nearer defeat. Americans grew war weary while politicians and military leaders could not agree on how to win or how to withdraw.

This memoir describes the author's participation in the fiercest fighting of the war, on the Cambodian border, where he almost died of hookworm and was shot in a night operation. In Saigon to recuperate, he was tasked with creating an advisory team to train South Vietnamese commandos to conduct raids in the swamps south of Saigon, the Rung Sat Special Zone. For seven months, they were successful, with Worthington receiving seven combat decorations. *McFarland & Company*

Mercy's Heroes: The Fight for Dignity in the Bangkok Slums

By Tom Crowley, life member, VFW Post 5633, Potomac, Md.

In *Mercy's Heroes*, a Vietnam veteran battling with PTSD turns from the business world to life as a volunteer, helping to rescue and protect street kids in Bangkok's biggest slum. Author Tom Crowley details the children's efforts to survive abuse and the struggle for dignity waged by the poorest of families. Interwoven throughout, the author's combat experiences and pain highlight the question of how to find personal reconciliation amid the struggles of abused children in the slums. In his efforts to help others, he gains a spiritual understanding worth much more than his financial loss. *Koehlerbooks*

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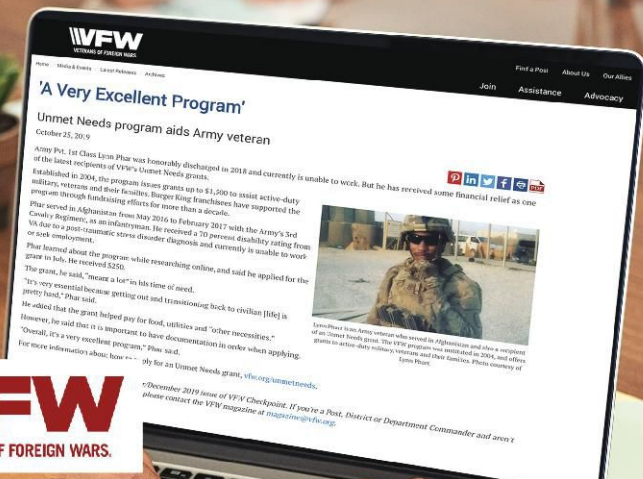
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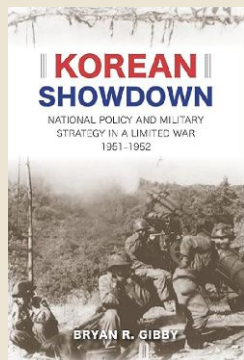
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STAFF PICK



Korean Showdown: National Policy and Military Strategy in a Limited War, 1951–1952

By Bryan Gibby

Winner of the 2023 Andrew F. Krepinevich Jr. Writing Award, this nonfiction book by Bryan Gibby takes a holistic and integrative approach to strategy, operations and tactics during the Korean War's stalemate period and demonstrates how these matters shaped each other and influenced, or were influenced by, political and strategic policy decision-making.

This volume serves as a cautionary analysis of the limits of force, the necessity to understand an adversary, and the importance of strategic consensus. It also offers an effective case study on an underappreciated period of civil-military tension during the Cold War and on how civilian politicians and military leaders must collaborate to determine a realistic and effective strategy. *The University of Alabama Press*

German & Spanish Military Rings: A Historical Perspective

By Stephen Shaw, life member, VFW Post 1690, Lancaster, Pa., with Mike Lovell
German & Spanish Military Rings is a nonfiction book that spans World War I and II, the Spanish Civil War and the rise of the Nazi party. In this book, both the new collector and avid enthusiast will find a rich variety of rare and spectacular rings — each connected to a geographic area, a campaign, an ideology, a unit, a memorable event or accomplishment. Superb illustrations and informative text about the medals and tokens awarded to German and Spanish combatants provide a unique and compelling look at military history. *Kollektor Press*

When Called to Serve: A Family's Struggle Over Vietnam

By John Horan-Kates, life member, VFW Post 10721, Minturn, Colo.

When Called to Serve is the story of the visceral tensions of anger and violence set within the complexities of the '60s Cold War era. A distinguished three-generation military family struggles with the agonizing patriotic, moral and spiritual dilemmas of the Vietnam War. The politicians and military leaders claimed it was crucial to honor commitments around the world, whereas the protesters challenged the "system," arguing that authority was corrupt and immoral. The narrative by John Horan-Kates exposes the tensions between the principled notions of service, dedication and loyalty set against the injustices of discrimination, economic inequality and government secrecy, plus the suppression of human rights. The protagonist, Richard O'Brian, is a navy chaplain who fights to keep his family together with an alternative worldview that acknowledges the situation is an argument without end. *Xlibris US*

I Flew with Heroes

By Thomas Waldron, VFW Post 7401, Chandler, Ariz.

This memoir by Tom Waldron captures his time as a combat pilot in Vietnam, Thailand and Laos. The author recounts the details of the Son Tay Raid from the cockpit of an Apple 3-mission gunship. The book also recounts several rescue missions flown by H-3 and H-53 rescue helicopters during 1969-1970. Among the stories is that of the author's involvement in a rescue mission that kept many out of POW prisons on June 3, 1970. *Self-Published*

A Kentucky Boy in the U.S. Navy (1958-1961)

By Charles Bogart, life member, VFW Post 4075, Frankfort, Ky.

This book is an autobiographical account of Charles Bogart's experiences in the Navy, from 1958 to 1961, and consists of five sections written over a period of years, plus some articles he has written for various publications. Most of the photos used in this book were personally taken by the author with a small Kodak camera and processed at various locations and at different times. In this book, the author shares his time through boot camp, radar school and assignment to the *USS Dennis J. Buckley (DDR-808)*, as well as WESPAC voyages, encounters with Navy showers and mess halls, ending with his eventual discharge from the Navy. *Self-Published*

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Karen James is a noted journalist and expert in relationships.

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Ask The Expert

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The Amazing Bedroom Secret Of Older Italian Men!

A Secret Any Man Can Use...

This month I got a letter from a reader in Texas about a "little secret" that's made her love life with her husband absolutely explosive!

Tina writes: Dear Karen,

For years my husband and I had a great love life, but when he reached his 50s, he just lost his spark in the bedroom. He tried every product available, but nothing worked.

Well, last month he returned from a business trip in Europe and shocked me with more energy and passion than he's had in years. He took me in the bedroom like newlyweds and we had a night I'll never forget! It was incredible, and has been ever since. So here we are, closer and more intimate than ever... in our 50s!

On his trip, my husband stayed next to an Italian couple and heard them passionately making love every night. He figured they must be in their twenties, but when he saw them in the hallway, he realized they were in their 70s!

My husband couldn't help himself, so later he asked the man his secret. A nutritionist by trade, the older man told him after 38 years of marriage, their love life was better than ever! Then he took a small pack of tablets from his satchel, gave it to my husband and said "These come from a small village north of my town and are made from naturally pure extracts, packed with rich sexual nutrients. They will give you powerful erections and you'll perform in the bedroom even better than you did as a young man. Then he laughed and said, "You'll become an Italian Stallion - like me!"



"My husband shocked me with more energy and passion than he's had in years. He took me in the bedroom like newlyweds and we had a night I'll never forget!"

Karen, that Italian nutritionist was right! But now the pack is almost empty and we desperately want more. Do you know about these European tablets and how to get them in the States?

Sincerely,

Tina D., Fort Worth, TX

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Provarin is surprisingly inexpensive, but I only know of one importer here in the States. A spokesman told me they were proud to produce the highest quality brand for men and offered any of my readers a one-time double-discount, plus free shipping and 2 free bonus packs!

Wow, so there you go, Tina - and the rest of you readers! Just give them a call today before they sell out. The number is **1-800-958-9785**.

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Karen

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Ear Protection May Prevent Worsening Hearing Loss

Veterans serving in overseas deployments are more likely to have hearing loss.

BY JANICE PHELAN

Hearing loss is common in older adults and even more prevalent among veterans, especially those involved in overseas deployments, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

According to the VA, hearing problems — including tinnitus, which is a perceived ringing or other type of noise in the ears — are by far the most prevalent service-connected disability among veterans. Additionally, a study by South Texas VA researchers and colleagues found that tinnitus more than tripled in service members from 2001 to 2015.

The causes of hearing loss vary and include damage to the inner ear, often a result of:

- aging and exposure to loud noises
- a buildup of earwax
- ear infections
- unusual bone growths or tumors
- a ruptured eardrum

Some risk factors for hearing loss are unavoidable — age, heredity, or illnesses such as meningitis that can impact the inner ear — but taking steps to protect your ears from loud noises can prevent hearing difficulties and also help hearing loss from worsening, said Mayo Clinic experts.

Officials at the Mayo Clinic, based in Rochester, Minn., recommend protecting your ears by avoiding loud noises or by wearing plastic earplugs or glycerin-filled earmuffs if your workplace is loud or when you are around loud machinery or tools. Turning down the volume when listening to music also is helpful.

Anyone suspecting a hearing loss is encouraged to visit their doctor, said Tyler Smith, brand manager at Lipo Flavonoid, a Kent, Ohio-based company producing over-the-counter ear-health supplements.

“Only a doctor can diagnose a med-



ical condition, and we encourage any treatment to be verified by your doctor first,” Smith said. “More often than not, the best way to know if you have hearing loss is to talk to the people in your life, as they are usually aware.”

Around 44 million Americans suffer from hearing loss, Smith added, with close to 22 million exposed to hazardous noise levels at their workplace.

In veterans, the VA reported in 2021 that the likelihood of screening positive for PTSD, depression or anxiety is increased for those reporting moderate to severe tinnitus.

Employing more than 1,370 audiologists, 410 audiology health technicians and 450 speech-language pathologists, the VA is the largest employer of audiologists and speech-language pathologists in the U.S.

For individuals with hearing loss, several devices are available to help them better hear others and participate in

daily activities. These include hearing aids, now available over the counter for adults 18 and older, as well as assistive listening devices such as telephone amplifiers, according to the CDC.

People with severe hearing loss can benefit from cochlear implants, which are implanted via surgery and stimulate the auditory nerve.

To help compensate for hearing loss, the CDC recommends making a point to look at the person speaking and determining the best spot for listening. For example, this could be placing yourself across the table from someone to better hear at a restaurant.

Using closed captioning when watching television, movies or online videos is also encouraged, as well as alerting others of your hearing challenges. ★

EMAIL magazine@vfw.org

Janice Phelan is a freelance writer based in Lee's Summit, Mo.



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VFWDayOfService.org



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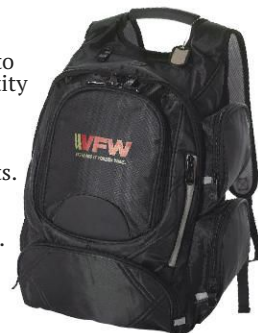
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TWISTED X



'It Has Blossomed From There'

A VFW member from Michigan was sworn in as the new president of the Second Indianhead Division Association during the group's 100th reunion last September. The Korea service vet said it is an honor to lead those who served in the famous infantry unit.

BY ISMAEL RODRIGUEZ JR.

Ben Tiseo joined more than 90 members of the Second Indianhead Division Association who convened on Sept. 23 at the Embassy Suites Hilton in Colorado Springs, Colo., to celebrate the association's 100th anniversary.

Tiseo, a 77-year-old a native of Italy, had attended several of the organization's birthdays since joining in 1999, but the centennial birthday was a personally special one. It marked his first as president of the Second Indianhead Division Association, an organization of veterans who served in the Army's 2nd Infantry Division since World War I.

"It was quite an honor because there is a camaraderie amongst all of us that served and wear the patch," said Tiseo, a VFW Post 345 member in Redford, Mich., who served with the "Second to None" division in Korea from November 1966 to December 1967. "I was humbled, too, because we did not serve to be recognized, but because we were called or had a calling to serve."

The journey to becoming president spans decades for Tiseo, who first heard about the organization three decades after returning from Korea, where he was assigned to Headquarters Battery, 6th Bn., 37th Field Arty at Camp Pelham.

Tiseo first heard about the Second Indianhead Division Association while working on an assignment on behalf of his architectural firm, Tiseo Architects, which he has owned and operated for more than 43 years.

"I was doing a job in Michigan, where I'm from, and I ran into a fellow member who was a contractor, and he convinced me to join as a life member in 1999," said Tiseo, who also taught at his alma mater Lawrence Technological



PHOTO COURTESY OF BEN TISEO

Members of the Second Indianhead Division Association's executive committee, from left, Bill Schultz, Scott Coe, Ben Tiseo, Mike Alexander and Joe Marcil celebrate Tiseo's new term as president during the conclusion of the 100th reunion on Sept. 23 at the Embassy Suites Hilton in Colorado Springs, Colo.

University in Southfield, Mich., for 38 years. "I would get phone calls to attend funerals in Michigan and I did, but I never really went to the national conventions because I don't think I was ready to share my experience at the time."

Then in 2017, Tiseo attended his first national convention in Washington, D.C., after his family urged him to go and see for himself.

"My family kept asking me more about my service at the time, and so I decided to attend," Tiseo said. "I ended up really enjoying the camaraderie, the laughs and the sorrows. It felt like a healthy experience. There was just a great connection there."

Tiseo also began sitting in on the business sessions the organization had open to its members. Tiseo said it helped him form his vision for the future of the Second Indianhead Division Association.

"It is a tendency I have, to make comments and add suggestions," Tiseo

said. "This was noticed, and they asked me to join as a board member first, and then-President Scott Coe asked me to join him as his vice president. It has blossomed from there."

Since becoming president at the annual reunion in 2023, Tiseo has dedicated himself to several goals for the Second Indianhead Division Association, which include growing its membership by recruiting younger generations of veterans and continuing to grow the organization's resources.

"I have helped raise membership numbers and money to continue to lead the organization to flourish," said Tiseo, whose presidency ends in 2025. "But I am also hoping to add to the services we currently provide to our membership. We help with VA benefits now, but we want to grow our scholarship program and further expand our social media presence to connect with younger warriors, among other things." ★

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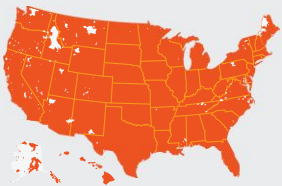
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