

MAY/JUNE 2025

VFW

M A G A Z I N E



VFW SERVICE OFFICERS RECOVER **\$14.6 BILLION** FOR VETERANS

VFW CHIEF TELLS CONGRESS
TO **'HONOR THE CONTRACT'**

VFW WASHINGTON
CONFERENCE

80TH OBSERVATION
OF **VE DAY**





HEROES
WITH HEARING LOSS

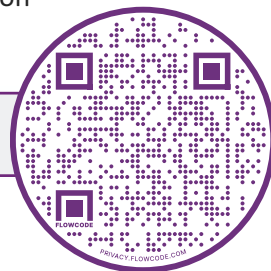
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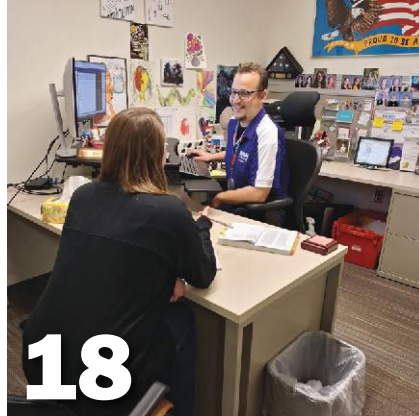
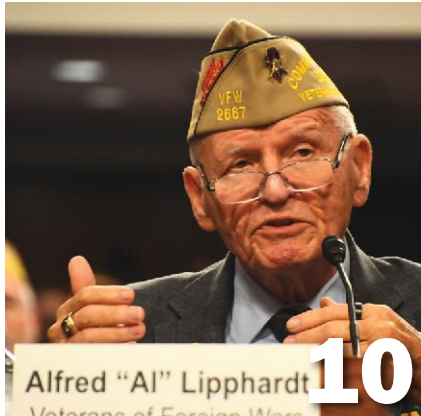
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Check out our digital version at www.vfw.org

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COVER IMAGE: VFW service officers set a record last year by recovering \$14.6 billion in compensation for the veterans they help. This free assistance with filing VA claims is provided by more than 2,000 trained and accredited VFW service officers who helped more than 590,500 claimants last year. *Illustration by Lauren Goldman*

10 CHIEF CALLS ON CONGRESS TO 'HONOR THE CONTRACT'

During his testimony before the joint hearing of the House and Senate VA committees, VFW Commander-in-Chief Al Lipphardt pressed Congress to uphold America's promise to veterans. The Vietnam veteran also took the opportunity to pay tribute to five soldiers he served with, but none of whom made it home. **By Ismael Rodriguez Jr.**

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VFW's vast network of more than 2,000 service officers worldwide helped veterans recover \$14.6 billion in VA benefits last year. Nearly 600,000 veterans are represented by the VFW. **By Ismael Rodriguez Jr.**

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40 REMEMBERING VICTORY IN EUROPE

May 8 marks 80 years since Allied Forces were victorious in Europe during World War II. Some 2.3 million Americans served in the European Theater of Operations during the war. **By Tim Dyhouse**



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



COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF
Al Lipphardt

Remember Their Names

The nation observes Memorial Day on May 26 this year. For veterans and their advocates, this special day is when we remember those who paid the ultimate sacrifice while wearing the nation's uniform.

The best way to memorialize these heroes is to remind people who they were and what their sacrifices and their families' sacrifices mean for our nation. The simplest and most effective method is to remember them by saying their names.

For me, this day is sacred. While I was serving in Vietnam in 1967 and 1968, five of the men in my platoon were killed in action. Whenever I get the chance, I remind people of their sacrifice by stating their names:

- Pvt. Lewis Sloan of East Point, Ga.
- Cpl. Kenneth Adams of Santa Barbara, Calif.
- Cpl. Philip Adams of Croton Falls, N.Y.
- Pfc. Robert Waddell of Batavia, Ohio
- Cpl. Rodney Loatman of Newark, N.J.

They all served under my command in the 2nd Platoon of D Co., 4th Bn., 31st Inf., 196th Light Infantry Bde. Loatman, Waddell and both Kenneth Adams and Philip Adams were killed in a firefight on Nov. 23, Thanksgiving Day, 1967. Sloan was killed a week earlier on Nov. 16.

I have carried their memories with me every day since then. In my role as VFW Commander-in-Chief, I have many opportunities to amplify their sacrifices by stating their names. I did that in my acceptance speech last summer at VFW's 125th National Convention, in March at my address before a joint hearing of Senate and House VA committee members, as well as my many travels around this great country and overseas. Not only do I feel it is my duty to remember these fine men, I consider it an honor.

I encourage all VFW members to recall the memories of the men and women they served with who paid the ultimate sacrifice. Tell people their names, the units they served with and details about who those heroes were. They will always be remembered if we keep those memories alive and vibrant.

Our heroes who died on distant battlefields cannot speak for themselves. The men I served with who did not come home have their names enshrined on the Vietnam Wall in Washington, D.C., but they cannot stand and be recognized. We can, and must, stand for them and tell the world what they and their families sacrificed.

They gave their last full measure of devotion to this nation, acknowledged by the contract we each signed. All of us are obligated to uphold their memories.

RECRUIT FOR
THE VFW



SEE MEMBER
CORNER



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OF THE UNITED STATES

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VFW OBJECTIVES

To ensure national security
through maximum military strength.

To speed the rehabilitation
of the nation's disabled and needy veterans.

To assist the widows and orphans
and the dependents of disabled and needy veterans.

To promote Americanism through education in patriotism and constructive service to the communities in which we live.

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Valorous Awards

My family has seen U.S. military service from the American Revolution to Iraq.

I was pleased with two write-ups in the March/April magazine depicting two displays of valor.

The first was of an F-15 pilot and a weapons systems officer being awarded Silver Stars for action against drones and missiles aimed at Israel. The second was the Vietnam dustoff crews being awarded the Congressional Gold Medal.

BRUCE W. RIDER
FLORESVILLE, TEXAS

I noticed in the March/April *VFW* magazine that Vietnam dustoff crews will be awarded Gold Medals for their Vietnam service. I suggest that Vietnam veterans who are also Gold Star parents — having lost a son or daughter in a later war such as Iraq or Afghanistan — also be awarded the Gold Medal. There are more Gold Star parent-veterans out there than most people know about.

JOSEPH P. NOLAN
WATERBURY, CONN.

I congratulate Maj. Benjamin Coffey and Capt. Lacie Hester on their Silver

Stars. Coincidentally, the first woman to receive the Silver Star since WWII was Army Sgt. Leigh Ann Hester for her actions on March 20, 2005, during an enemy ambush on a supply convoy near Salman Pak, Iraq. She was a machine-gunner assigned to the 617th MP Co., with the Kentucky ARNG. One of my subordinate units, the 1075th Trans. Co., with the Nebraska ARNG, drove into the ambush area as Hester's convoy was under intense enemy fire.

Hester's immediate action to engage enemy combatants in nearby buildings with her heavy machine gun resulted in several enemy killed and wounded, which broke up the ambush. Her actions prevented any of our convoy drivers from being killed and minimized our wounded casualties.

CHARLES BARR
LIBERTY, NEB.

Recognizing Women

Thank you for recognizing women VFW members and Capt. Hester in the March/April issue. I fought hard to just to be in the military since I was a teen. I enlisted after we declared war in Iraq, volunteered for mechanic and recovery school, and eventually drove a wrecker in Iraq for the Minnesota National Guard's 50th Maintenance Support Bn., attached to the 42nd Ind. Div. Twenty years later, I tell everyone it was the "best job I ever had."

CRISTINA FRISBY
GILBERT, ARIZ.

As a 56-year VFW life member, I'm upset that half of the pages in the magazine are advertisements. Yes, I realize the ads support the publication. Can we not get individual articles? I appreciate the piece about the VFW National Home turning 100 right here in

my home state of Michigan (January/February magazine). I also appreciate the recognition of Kimberly Napoleon as the VFW Department of Michigan Commander. She is the first female in our 105-year history of charter to lead us. I suggest every Post spread the word and see what we can do to get material relevant to all of us in the magazine.

GARY HIGGINS
CORUNNA, MICH.



PHOTO BY LAUREN GOLDMAN/VFW

Destination Posts

Thank you for the excellent article and photos highlighting Post 3137 and our sister post in Savannah, Ga., for your Destination Posts write-up. I have received comments from a few of our comrades echoing the same sentiment. I really appreciate the professionalism extended to us. Keep up the great work! My wife was proud to see photos of me, my staff and auxiliary, and kudos from my wife go a long way these days.

BRYAN C. BROOKS
MT. PLEASANT, S.C.

"Mail Call" features letters from our readers in six issues per year. If you have questions, comments or concerns about any subject or article from our most recent issue, letters can be emailed to magazine@vfw.org, with the subject line "Mail Call," or mailed to: VFW magazine, Mail Call, 406 W. 34th Street, Suite 523, Kansas City, MO 64111. Letters must be no more than 200 words, and VFW magazine reserves the right to edit letters for clarity, length and accuracy.

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ASK ABOUT

PLUVICTO



Actor portrayal.

What is PLUVICTO® (lutetium Lu 177 vipivotide tetraxetan)?

PLUVICTO is a radiopharmaceutical used to treat adults with an advanced cancer called prostate-specific membrane antigen-positive metastatic castration-resistant prostate cancer (PSMA-positive mCRPC) that:

- has spread to other parts of the body (metastatic), and
- has already been treated with other anticancer treatments

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

What is the most important information I should know about PLUVICTO?

Use of PLUVICTO involves exposure to radioactivity. Long-term, accruing radiation exposure is associated with an increased risk for cancer.

To minimize radiation exposure to others following administration of PLUVICTO, limit close contact (less than 3 feet) with household contacts for 2 days or with children and pregnant women for 7 days, refrain from sexual activity for 7 days, and sleep in a separate bedroom from household contacts for 3 days, from children for 7 days, or from pregnant women for 15 days.

PLUVICTO may cause serious side effects, including:

- **Low level of blood cell counts.** Tell your doctor right away if you develop any new or worsening symptoms, including:
 - Tiredness or weakness
 - Pale skin
 - Shortness of breath
 - Bleeding or bruising more easily than normal or difficulty stopping bleeding
 - Frequent infections with signs such as fever, chills, sore throat, or mouth ulcers
- **Kidney problems.** Tell your doctor right away if you develop any new or worsening symptoms, including passing urine less often or passing much smaller amounts of urine than usual

Before you receive PLUVICTO, tell your doctor if any of these apply to you:

- You have low level of blood cell counts (hemoglobin, white blood cell count, absolute neutrophil count, platelet count)
- You have or have had tiredness, weakness, pale skin, shortness of breath, bleeding or bruising more easily than

Please see additional Important Safety Information on the next page and Brief Summary of full Prescribing Information on the following page.

A chance for more everyday VICTORIES.

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PLUVICTO plus standard therapy
(551 men evaluated)

15
MONTHS

Standard therapy alone
(280 men evaluated)

11
MONTHS

The VISION trial measured OS. Median OS is the length of time half of the men in the study were still alive. Results have been rounded. Men treated with PLUVICTO plus standard therapy lived a median of 15.3 months vs 11.3 months with standard therapy alone.

It also measured **ORR**, which measures the impact of PLUVICTO on tumors. **30% of men saw their tumors shrink or disappear compared to 2% with standard therapy alone.** ORR includes Complete Response (CR) and Partial Response (PR).

- CR: 6% with PLUVICTO + standard therapy vs 0% with standard therapy
- PR: 24% with PLUVICTO + standard therapy vs 2% with standard therapy

In the trial, 831 men with PSMA+ prostate cancer that spread outside their prostate were evaluated. PLUVICTO was given once every 6 weeks in up to 6 doses to one of two groups evaluated.

Talk to your
doctor



Scan to see the
discussion guide.

mCRPC, metastatic castration-resistant prostate cancer; ORR, overall response rate; OS, overall survival; PSMA+, prostate-specific membrane antigen positive.

*Standard therapy was chosen by a doctor from among existing approved treatments and did not include chemotherapy, immunotherapy, systemic isotopes like radium-223 (²²³Ra), or drugs still being studied.

normal or difficulty stopping bleeding, or frequent infections with signs such as fever, chills, sore throat, or mouth ulcers (possible signs of myelosuppression)

- You have or have had kidney problems
- You have or have had any other type of cancer or treatment for cancer, as PLUVICTO contributes to your long-term cumulative radiation exposure
- You are sexually active as:
 - All radiopharmaceuticals, including PLUVICTO, have the potential to cause harm to an unborn baby
 - You should use effective contraception for intercourse during treatment with PLUVICTO and for 14 weeks after your last dose
 - PLUVICTO may cause temporary or permanent infertility

Before administration of PLUVICTO, you should drink plenty of water in order to urinate as often as possible during the first hours after administration.

The most common side effects of PLUVICTO include:

- Tiredness
- Dry mouth
- Nausea
- Low red blood cell count
- Loss of appetite
- Changes in bowel movements (constipation or diarrhea)
- Vomiting
- Low blood platelet count
- Urinary tract infection
- Weight loss
- Abdominal pain

These are not all of the possible side effects of PLUVICTO. Call your doctor for advice about side effects. You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Please see Brief Summary of full Prescribing Information on the following page.

 **NOVARTIS**

Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation
East Hanover, New Jersey 07936-1080

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 **PLUVICTO**[®]
lutetium Lu 177 vipivotide tetraxetan
INJECTION FOR INTRAVENOUS USE

Summary of Important Information

What is PLUVICTO® (lutetium Lu 177 vipivotide tetraxetan)?

PLUVICTO is a radiopharmaceutical used to treat adults with an advanced cancer called prostate-specific membrane antigen–positive metastatic castration-resistant prostate cancer (PSMA-positive mCRPC) that:

- has spread to other parts of the body (metastatic), and
- has already been treated with other anticancer treatments

What is the most important information I should know about PLUVICTO?

The use of PLUVICTO involves exposure to radioactivity. Long-term, accruing radiation exposure is associated with an increased risk for cancer.

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 - Bleeding or bruising more easily than normal or difficulty stopping bleeding
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- Urinary tract infection
- Weight loss
- Abdominal pain

These are not all of the possible side effects of PLUVICTO. Call your doctor for advice about side effects. You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

What should I tell my doctor before receiving PLUVICTO therapy?

Before you receive PLUVICTO, tell your doctor if any of these apply to you:

- You have low level of blood cell counts (hemoglobin, white blood cell count, absolute neutrophil count, platelet count)
- You have or have had tiredness, weakness, pale skin, shortness of breath, bleeding or bruising more easily than normal or difficulty to stop bleeding, or frequent infections with signs such as fever, chills, sore throat, or mouth ulcers (possible signs of myelosuppression)
- You have or have had kidney problems
- You have or have had any other type of cancer or treatment for cancer, as PLUVICTO contributes to your long-term cumulative radiation exposure
- You are sexually active as:
 - All radiopharmaceuticals, including PLUVICTO, have the potential to cause harm to an unborn baby
 - You should use effective contraception for intercourse during treatment with PLUVICTO and for 14 weeks after your last dose
 - PLUVICTO may cause temporary or permanent infertility

Before administration of PLUVICTO, you should drink plenty of water in order to urinate as often as possible during the first hours after administration.

How will I receive PLUVICTO?

- There are strict laws on the use, handling and disposal of radiopharmaceutical products. PLUVICTO will only be used in special controlled areas. This product will only be handled and given to you by people who are trained and qualified to use it safely. These persons will take special care for the safe use of this product and will keep you informed of their actions
- The recommended dose is 7.4 GBq (gigabecquerel, the unit used to express radioactivity)
- PLUVICTO is given approximately every 6 weeks for a total of 6 doses
- PLUVICTO is administered directly into a vein

- Your nuclear medicine doctor will inform you about the usual duration of the procedure
- If you have any questions about how long you will receive PLUVICTO, talk to your nuclear medicine doctor
- Your nuclear medicine doctor will do blood tests before and during treatment to check your condition and to detect any side effects as early as possible. Based on the results, your nuclear medicine doctor may decide to delay, modify or stop your treatment with PLUVICTO if necessary
- An overdose is unlikely. However, in the case of an overdose, you will receive the appropriate treatment
- If you miss an appointment for an administration, contact your nuclear medicine doctor as soon as possible to reschedule

After administration of PLUVICTO, you should:

- Remain hydrated and urinate frequently in order to eliminate the product from your body
- Limit close contact (less than 3 feet) with others in your household for 2 days or with children and pregnant women for 7 days
- Refrain from sexual activity for 7 days
- Sleep in a separate bedroom from others in your household for 3 days, from children for 7 days, or from pregnant women for 15 days
- The nuclear medicine doctor will inform you if you need to take any special precautions after receiving this medicine. This may include special precautions for you or your caregiver with regard to toilet use, showering, laundry, waste disposal, emergency medical assistance, unplanned hospitalization or traveling. Contact your nuclear medicine doctor if you have any questions

General information about the safe and effective use of PLUVICTO

Talk to your nuclear medicine doctor about any concerns. You can ask your nuclear medicine doctor for information about PLUVICTO that is written for healthcare professionals.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Sport Clips Haircuts Donates \$1.3M to VFW for Help A Hero Scholarship Program

For the ninth year in a row, VFW received a donation of more than \$1 million from Sports Clips, a national sports-themed haircutting franchise based in Georgetown, Texas. The donation supports the Help A Hero Scholarship Program, which gives active-duty troops and veterans support for education after their G.I. Bill funds have been exhausted.

“We’re proud to partner with Sport Clips and its team members in making a positive difference in the lives of veterans,” VFW Commander-in-Chief Al Lipphardt said. “The VFW recently announced that 161 student veterans, including those who serve on active duty and in the Reserves, received a total of \$741,000 in Help A Hero Scholarships for the current semester. This is proof these funds are hard at work supporting those who’ve served.”

The Help A Hero Scholarship Program, which VFW administers, began in 2013. Since that time, it has awarded \$15.8 million in scholarships to more than 3,227 student veterans.

“Help A Hero recipients tell us these



PHOTO BY SENIOR AIRMAN OLIVIA GIBSON

Sport Clips founder and chairman Gordon Logan (in cowboy hat) presents a \$1.3 million donation for VFW’s Help A Hero Scholarship fund in January at VFW Post 1 in Denver. Accepting the donation was VFW Assistant Adjutant General Brian Walker (left of Logan) and VFW Foundation Executive Director Hal Roesch II (right of Logan).

scholarships lighten the financial burden of additional education following their service and allows them to focus more on their studies and less on financial concerns,” said Gordon Logan, an Air Force veteran, VFW life member, and founder and chairman of Sport Clips.

“It’s one of the primary reasons Sport Clips started the program. It’s something we hear from numerous grateful veterans, even though the gratitude is ours for their sacrifice and service.”

For more information, visit <https://SportClips.com/hero> or vfw.org/Scholarship.

Register Now for National Convention in Columbus, Ohio



VFW’s 126th National Convention will be held Aug. 9-13, 2025, in Columbus, Ohio, and now is the time to register. The convention will be conducted at the Greater Columbus Convention Center.

Housing for the convention opened March 18. As a reminder, *Sect. 222 of VFW’s Manual of Procedure* states that each Post will pay, in advance, a national convention registration fee of \$25. This entitles the Post to a convention packet, materials and one registered delegate for the VFW National Convention.

Each additional delegate will pay a \$10 fee if the Post has paid the mandated \$25 advance registration fee. All advance registrations should be mailed to:

VFW National Headquarters
406 W. 34th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111.

You also can register online by logging into the Online Membership System.



PHOTO BY BOB KNUDSEN

VFW Chief Tells Congress to ‘Honor the Contract’

The highlight of VFW’s annual Washington Conference featured a testimonial from VFW Commander-in-Chief Alfred “Al” Lipphardt to House and Senate VA committee members.

BY ISMAEL RODRIGUEZ JR.

On March 4, VFW Commander-in-Chief Alfred “Al” Lipphardt testified before a joint hearing of the House and Senate VA committees at the Dirksen Senate Office Building chamber during the 2025 VFW Washington Conference.

Lipphardt opened his testimony by expressing his honor in representing more than 1.4 million members of the VFW and its Auxiliary. He then reached into his pocket and unfolded his DD Form 4, calling on the joint committee members to ‘honor the contract.’

“This is not charity,” Lipphardt stated, following his recitation of the contract that binds veterans and their

country in perpetuity. “Everyone who served honorably, like every member of the VFW, has upheld our end of the contract. We call on our leaders to do the same.”

CLAIM SHARKS

Lipphardt testified about the VFW’s ongoing efforts to advocate against unaccredited, predatory claims consultants — also known as claim sharks — who charge veterans for assistance with VA disability claims.

“The VFW and other accredited VSOs provide this service at no cost, as required by statute,” Lipphardt said. “Unfortunately, criminal penalties for

unaccredited claims agents were eliminated from the United States Code nearly 20 years ago, providing a loophole through which these predatory claims agents built this market sector.”

Lipphardt called for Congress to pass legislation to reinstate these penalties and urged the committee to advocate for passage.

“Several of these predatory companies have made statements that there is no avenue for them to seek VA accreditation, but this is false,” Lipphardt said. “There are no restrictions for these consultants to be accredited by VA, but they refuse to do so because they would no longer be able to charge exorbitant fees.”

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TOXIC/ENVIRONMENTAL EXPOSURES

Lipphardt expressed gratitude for the passing of the *Honoring Our PACT Act* (P.L. 117-168) in 2022 and for what it has accomplished for many veterans. However, he emphasized that this historic passage is not the end of the journey for all veterans and their survivors.

“The *PACT Act* also included an enduring framework to guide VA’s continuous evaluation of toxic exposures not included in the legislation,” said Lipphardt, who served in the Army from 1965 to 1979, which included two tours in Vietnam. “This is referred to as the Presumption Decision Process, and oversight of this process is where we are currently focusing efforts.”

Lipphardt mentioned several examples of military installations where toxic exposure has impacted veterans with serious health conditions that fall outside the coverage of the *PACT Act*.

“The military is an inherently hazardous profession,” Lipphardt said. “We must take care of our K2 veterans, those who served at Fort McClellan, veterans exposed to radiation, ‘forever chemicals,’ and others. The VFW urges Congress to conduct oversight of VA’s presumptive process because veterans cannot keep waiting.”

THE TRANSITION FROM MILITARY TO CIVILIAN LIFE

Lipphardt then detailed some of the challenges that service members encounter when transitioning from military to civilian life and emphasized the crucial role of the Department of Defense and the VA in actively supporting them.

He urged Congress to pass legislation such as the *TAP Promotion Act* and establish a position in the DoD to ensure service members have every opportunity to thrive during their transition.

“The VFW urges Congress to establish an Under Secretary of Defense for Transition,” Lipphardt said. “This position is essential for effective manage-

ment and accountability. Improving transition has the potential to enhance recruitment and retention, lowers risk for suicide and sets veterans on a path to success.”

STRENGTHEN CARE AND RESEARCH FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Lipphardt segued from securing a smooth transition for his fellow veterans into civilian life with another cause for alarm — mental health. He addressed concerns, which included the VA’s tendency to overprescribe medications, particularly antidepressants.

This led to a call for Congress and the VA to fund research on alternative treatments and solutions to help break the cycle of dependency and overmedication.

“The VFW acknowledges that there is a growing need for alternative PTSD treatments, and we have a resolution that speaks to the need for this important exploratory research,” Lipphardt said. “Our goal is to identify more tools for the veteran community to address suicide and mental health instead of simply continuing to spend money without tangible results.”

PARITY OF SERVICE BENEFITS

Lipphardt also advocated on behalf of members of the National Guard and Reserve. He mentioned their high rates of overseas deployments since Sept. 11, 2001, and how they are denied the same VA educational benefits as their active-duty counterparts.

“The time is long past for parity,” Lipphardt said.

To address this inequity, Lipphardt

“Everyone who served honorably, like every member of the VFW, has upheld our end of the contract. We call on our leaders to do the same.”

asked Congress to pass the *Guard and Reserve GI Bill Parity Act of 2025*, which would allow any day spent in uniform for which military pay is received to count toward *Post-9/11 GI Bill* eligibility.

Lipphardt addressed a key VFW legislative priority: the *Major Richard Star Act*, which aims to provide full concurrent receipt for deserving veterans. He also noted that Congress recently passed the *Social Security Fairness Act*, eliminating an unjust offset for Social Security recipients.

“It is time to correct this injustice for our military retirees,” Lipphardt said. “The VFW calls on Congress to fix this now.”

A REMINDER OF THE SACRIFICES

Lipphardt concluded his testimony on a personal note. He stood before Congress and named five soldiers he served with during the Vietnam War: Pvt. Lewis Sloan of East Point, Ga.; Cpl. Kenneth Adams of Santa Barbara, Calif.; Cpl. Philip Adams of Croton Falls, N.Y.; Pfc. Robert Waddell of Batavia, Ohio; and Cpl. Rodney Loatman of Newark, N.J.

“I would ask these men to stand and be recognized, but they can’t,” Lipphardt said. “Their names are on the Vietnam Wall along with all those who gave the last full measure of devotion to this nation acknowledged by the contract we each signed.”

Lipphardt went on to add, “Our nation must never forget our warfighters.”

To listen to Lipphardt’s entire testimony, visit <https://www.vfw.org/media-and-events/2025-vfw-washington-conference>.



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Learn More

VFW Recommends \$194.8 Billion for 2026 VHA Budget

The VFW, Disabled American Veterans and Paralyzed Veterans of America published the latest edition of *The Independent Budget (IB)* in February, recommending \$194.8 billion for the VA's Veterans Health Administration (VHA) in 2026.

The Independent Budget recommendations for the Department of Veterans Affairs for Fiscal Years 2026 and 2027 is an annual report that provides lawmakers with a clear roadmap to ensure adequate funding for the VA to serve veterans and their families. The VFW believes that the recommendations outlined in *The Independent Budget* will be essential in guiding future spending decisions by Congress.

Some of the major line items of the *IB* include:

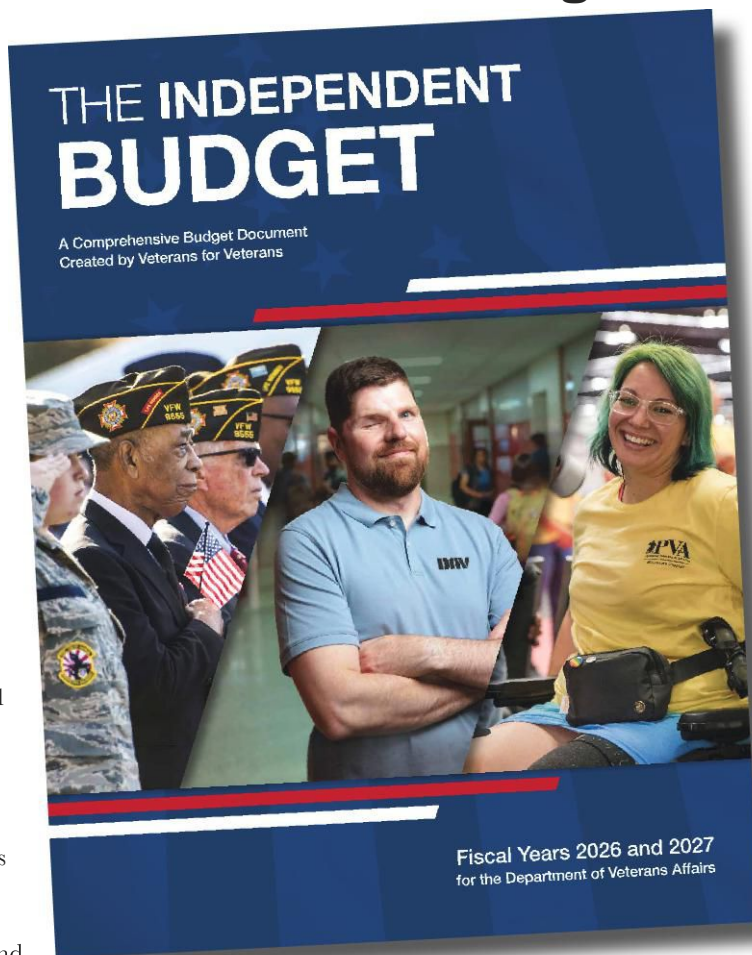
- Medical care, \$132.7 billion
- Medical community care, \$33.7 billion
- Construction projects, \$9.6 billion
- Information technology, \$8.2 billion
- Veterans Benefits Administration, \$6.5 billion
- Prosthetic and medical research, \$1.2 billion
- Electronic health records modernization, \$921 million
- National Cemetery Administration, \$620 million

VFW Washington Office Executive Director Ryan Gallucci believes the budget increase could address some of the institutional challenges plaguing veterans needing VA assistance.

"The authors of the *IB* recommend a substantial increase in infrastructure funding to ensure veterans and the health care workers who care for them have up-to-date, modern and safe facilities to perform this vital mission," Gallucci said. "VA infrastructure has been woefully underfunded and underprioritized for decades. There have been transformative expansions of care and benefits in the past few years, but this expanded enrollment in VA without improved infrastructure inevitably leads to fractured care. That is why VA's investment in its capital infrastructure is critically important."

The report requests a \$1 billion increase to support the rising number of new veterans needing VA care. It also asks for:

- \$531 million to enhance dental services for veterans needing them.
- \$462 million to hire 3,000 new clinical social workers.
- \$300 million more for emergency and urgent care, essential for timely acute care.



- \$179 million for mental health and suicide prevention programs.

For the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), the IBVSOs advocated for a total of \$6.5 billion for fiscal year 2026 — a roughly \$1 billion increase over the projected 2025 levels — and \$296 million for the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA). These include:

- \$200 million to address the backlog of more than 235,000 pending veteran claims.
- \$32 million more to implement VA's Transition Assistance Program (TAP).
- \$10 million more to support Veteran Readiness and Employment.

To read the full report, visit <https://www.independentbudget.org>



FOR MORE INFORMATION about specific legislation or VA benefits, contact VFW's Washington Office at vfw@vfw.org. A member of VFW's National Veterans Service staff will respond as soon as possible.

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PSCW25

VFW Presents Congressional Award to U.S. Representative from Wisconsin

In March, VFW Commander-in-Chief Al Lipphardt presented Congressman Derrick Van Orden (R-WI) with the VFW Congressional Award at the VFW Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C.

As a member of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, Van Orden has been a pivotal figure in championing VFW's goals to improve the quality of life for veterans and their families.

"In Rep. Van Orden, we have found a devoted, passionate and determined advocate for our military and veteran communities," Lipphardt said. "His resolve for accountability and action on some of our most pressing issues is clear, and we could not be more thrilled to have him in our corner, not only as a member of Congress but also as a VFW life member."

A disabled Navy veteran, Van Orden retired after 26 years as a Navy SEAL Senior Chief Petty Officer with multiple combat tours. He understands the VFW's concerns about the underfunded VA system and its impact on veteran care.

Van Orden was first elected to the House of Representatives in 2022. Quickly assuming the role of chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, he addressed topline veteran and service member issues like the military Transition Assistance Program (TAP) and veteran suicide prevention.

As the originating sponsor of the VFW-supported *TAP Promotion Act*, he continues to advocate for service members' equal access to VA-accredited claims representatives in TAP classrooms. Moreover, he co-authored last year's bipartisan



VFW Commander-in-Chief Al Lipphardt presents Congressman Derrick Van Orden (R-WI) with the VFW Congressional Award on March 5 at the VFW Washington Conference in Washington, D.C.

House Concurrent Resolution commemorating the VFW's 125th Anniversary.

Van Orden is a life member of VFW Post 1530 in La Crosse, Wis.

"We are eager to continue working with Rep. Van Orden and his staff to ensure we get to the root of economic-related barriers facing veterans and transitioning service members," Lipphardt said. "His tenacity and resistance to accepting the status quo resonates deeply with our members, and we are proud to bestow upon him this year's Congressional Award."

Collins Confirmed as VA Secretary

The U.S. Senate confirmed Navy veteran Doug Collins as the 12th secretary of the VA on Feb. 4, following President Donald Trump's inauguration.

A former U.S. representative for Georgia's Ninth Congressional District from 2013 to 2021, Collins also has been an Air Force Reserve chaplain since 2002.

He informed lawmakers during his confirmation hearing that his military experience provided him with insight into the needs of veterans, specifically those of the Global War on Terrorism.

"I understand burn pits, because I slept next to one for many months," said Collins, a member of VFW Post 5080 in Rex, Ga., who deployed to Balad Air Base in Iraq in 2008. "I understand this generation — that went for time and time again, deployment after deployment, in a

different way than we'd seen many times before in our past wars — and the needs that they have."

Among the first to contact Collins after his nomination was VFW Commander-in-Chief Alfred "Al" Lipphardt, who wrote him a letter in November to both congratulate and urge him to implement much-needed changes to the VA.

"Doing the same thing over and over is truly the definition of insanity," Lipphardt wrote.

"Routine leads to complacency, complacency to mediocrity, and mediocrity to failure. The VFW has changed. Everything we do, we do for veterans. We know that VA is overdue for change. Our goal is to help you craft your vision for this critical change. Future generations are counting on us."



VFW Commander-in-Chief Al Lipphardt speaks with newly appointed VA Secretary Doug Collins during VFW's Washington Conference in March in Washington, D.C.

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'WE DO THIS DAILY, AND WE

PHOTO COURTESY OF JEFFREY COWELL

VFW Veterans Service Officer Jeffrey Cowell helps a fellow veteran with her VA claim at Fort Snelling, Minn., in October 2024. Cowell, a VFW service officer since 2018, helps about 35 veterans per week file their claims.



ALWAYS DO IT FOR **FREE**

VFW's National Veterans Service helped veterans recover more than \$14.6 billion in VA benefits last year.

BY ISMAEL RODRIGUEZ JR.

VFW's National Veterans Service and its network of more than 2,000 service officers worldwide reached a new record last year, helping veterans recover \$14.62 billion in 2024.

Since its inception 123 years ago, National Veterans Service has assisted veterans and their families in filing VA disability claims and securing earned benefits at no cost. Today, VFW service officers represent more than 590,500 veterans.

Michael Figlioli, director of VFW National Veterans Service, believes the recipe for this continued growth is the network's trustworthiness and excellent customer service by its highly trained professionals.

"Every single person that touches a claim is accredited by VA, which means they are trained to the standard set by VA for preparing claims and accessing VA data systems," Figlioli said. "When you work with one of our reps, the organization's name is behind the filing and the expertise and training of the individual."

Figlioli also noted that VFW service officers are dedicated to ensuring that every veteran, whether a VFW member or not, receives complete assistance during the entire process, from filing the claim to its review by the VA and any necessary follow-ups or appeals to secure the maximum benefits permitted by law.

"If there's any after-action work to be done, such as an appeal, the VFW is there to represent the veteran, family member or survivor all the way through to the end, unlike unaccredited bad actors who are just stealing money," Figlioli said. "It has been proven that those who seek assistance from an accredited representative will likely receive a better rating than those who pretend to know what they're doing."

Figlioli added that VFW operates 26 pre-discharge claims sites across the U.S. and abroad, with locations in Europe, Guantanamo Bay, and Korea being covered remotely by service officers based in the U.S.

'THIS IS TRULY THE MOST FULFILLING JOB I HAVE HAD'

VFW life member Jeffrey Cowell of St. Paul, Minn., is among the more than 2,000 VA-accredited service officers within the VFW's network. As a VFW Department of

Minnesota Service Officer since 2018, Cowell sees an average of about 35 veterans a week.

With the signing of the *Honoring Our Pact Act* on Aug. 10, 2022, Cowell's caseload shifted from musculoskeletal claims to exposure-related claims, often varying in respiratory issues such as rhinitis, asthma and sinusitis. These conditions can range from post-9/11 veterans exposed to burn pits to Vietnam War veterans dealing with Agent Orange.

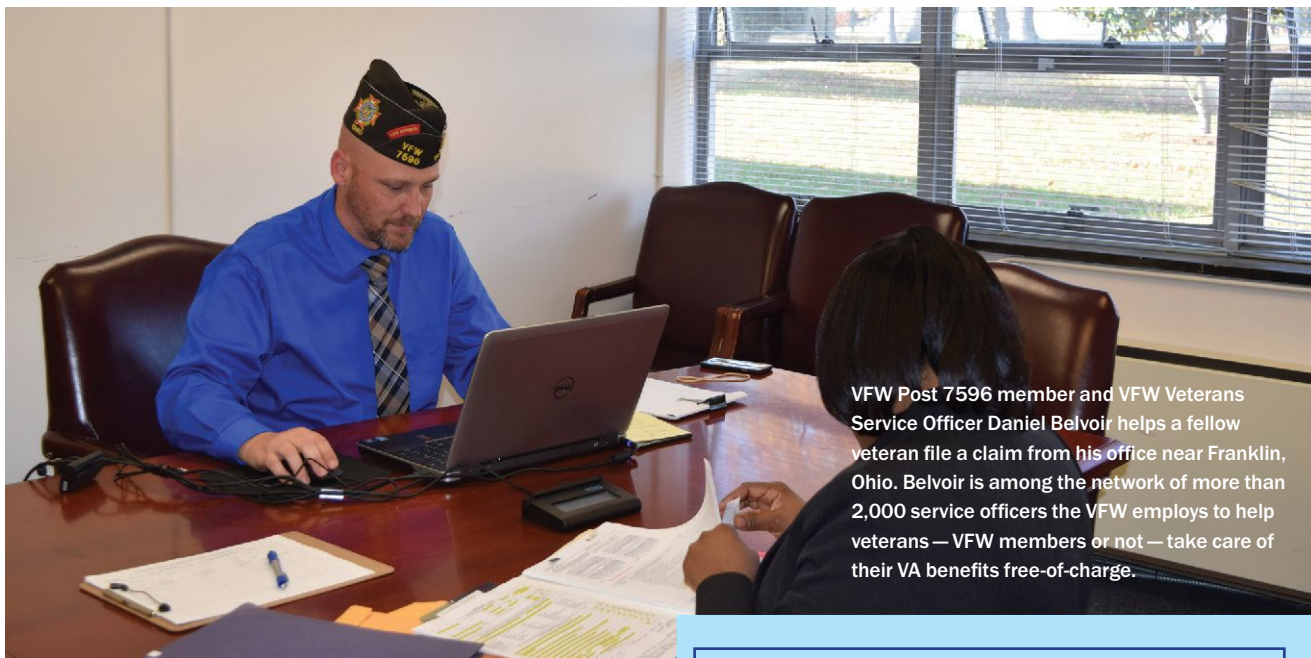
Cowell said his work impacts veterans from all walks of life and enriches his life with a purpose.

"I am grateful for the opportunity to assist veterans and their loved ones, and it gives me a chance to serve people," said Cowell, who first earned his VFW eligibility in 2003 during a deployment with the Minnesota Army National Guard in support of Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom. "However, the most rewarding part is seeing the tangible changes VA benefits can have on spouses filing their survivor's benefits in a difficult time, helping unhoused veterans achieve stability, and providing relief through medical care. This is truly the most fulfilling job I have had."

Cowell, who himself was medically separated in 2007 and awarded 20 percent for his disabilities, understands the

VFW's VA-ACCREDITED VETERANS SERVICE OFFICERS HELP BY:

- Providing a lifetime of advocacy from the time a veteran files an initial claim, to helping survivors understand their benefits.
- Explaining benefits and helping veterans navigate the often-bureaucratic maze of procedures and paperwork.
- Guiding and supporting veterans through months or even years of claims processing.
- Helping veterans prepare necessary documents and evidence, monitoring cases and updating claimants on recent developments in their cases.
- Assisting veterans who cannot personally get to VA regional offices.



VFW Post 7596 member and VFW Veterans Service Officer Daniel Belvoir helps a fellow veteran file a claim from his office near Franklin, Ohio. Belvoir is among the network of more than 2,000 service officers the VFW employs to help veterans — VFW members or not — take care of their VA benefits free-of-charge.

importance of seeking help from a knowledgeable source like those of VFW service officers.

“It was not until I got the job as a VFW claims examiner in September 2017 that I pursued any new claims or increases of my own,” Cowell said. “Assigning the VFW as your representatives ensures competent representation from step one all the way to the BVA. VFW’s training is top-notch. No one should file their claims on their own, and no one should have to pay for their rightfully earned benefits.”

‘THERE IS NO MAGIC BULLET’

Like Cowell, Figlioli stresses the countless hours veterans service officers devote to learning every detail and law at the federal and state levels to help veterans succeed in filing claims.

For VFW’s service officers, training can include up to 80 hours each year to maintain their qualification to represent veterans filing disability claims with the VA. Figlioli noted that only 40 hours of training annually are required by the VA, and that VFW’s service officers work tirelessly on behalf of veterans every day.

“There is no magic bullet for a VA claim other than being thorough and knowledgeable about the law and what can be claimed,” Figlioli said. “This is why we interview claimants and go through all their medical records so we can submit the best claim the first time and not have to go back time and again and unnecessarily prolong the process.”

Figlioli also reinforces his belief in the VFW’s policy of always remaining true to the veteran, regardless of the quick but false promises made by claim sharks.

“VFW-accredited reps tell claimants what they need to know and not what they want to hear,” Figlioli said. “Every claim submitted to VA goes to the same places for processing. For claim sharks to continue the old and tired narrative that they have some magic formula is an outright lie, and then they

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 26 different Benefits Delivery at Discharge sites worldwide.

charge the veteran, family member or survivor for that lie.”

Figlioli emphasizes that VFW service officers yield to the side of ethical practice, cautioning veterans on the nefarious agendas of several private firms known to blatantly steal benefits from claimants who entrust them with power of attorney.

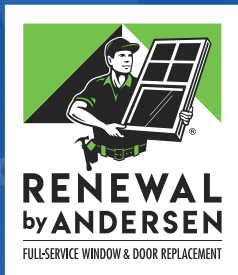
“We are subject to fines and, in some cases, even imprisonment if we were to defraud claimants the way these bad actors do,” Figlioli said. “If you want to file a claim and have not received a VA Power of Attorney, be very careful. You may be about to share your Personally Identifiable Information with someone who could defraud you or worse.”

To avoid missteps or fraud, Figlioli encourages veterans — VFW members or not — to contact a VFW claim site and begin working with a VA-accredited veterans service officer free of charge.

“We do this daily, and we always do it for free,” Figlioli said. “Neither the VFW nor any of our representatives take any portion of a claimant’s award. All \$14.62 billion we recovered last year went to the rightfully entitled persons.”



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STORMING THE

VFW members from across the country visit with lawmakers on Capitol Hill to advocate on behalf of veterans everywhere.

BY ISMAEL RODRIGUEZ JR.

For more than a century, VFW's legislative advocacy on Capitol Hill has been unparalleled. During this time, the VFW has played a crucial role in nearly every piece of veterans' legislation signed into law.

At the grassroots level, the VFW Action Corps enables more than 300,000 VFW members and patriotic supporters to stay informed on issues facing the veteran and military communities and stand ready to email, write,

call or visit the nation's lawmakers to make their voices heard on Capitol Hill.

Since 1949, VFW members have gathered on Capitol Hill for the annual Legislative Conference. On a set day each year, they visit the offices of their state lawmakers, discuss the VFW's legislative goals and answer questions. On this day, more than any other, the VFW's message as advocates for veterans echoes across the halls of Congress and the Senate.

VFW Department of Michigan Commander Kimberly Napoleon and her team of six VFW life members were among the legions that "stormed the Hill" this year, visiting with representatives Lisa McClain (R-Mich.), John Moolenaar (R-Mich.), and Jack Bergman (R-Mich.).

With several VA-accredited veterans service officers among them, Napoleon and her team led discourse focused on several VFW-priority goals. These



VFW's Department of Michigan members gather around U.S. Congressman Jack Bergman (R-Mich.) to discuss and advocate on behalf of veterans on March 3 at the Cannon House Office Building in Washington, D.C.

HILL

included unaddressed toxic exposures, the transition from service, exploring alternative PTSD treatments, predatory claim sharks, GI Bill parity and retirement for veterans.

"If we are asking for something, we should know what we are asking for," Napoleon said of her unwavering focus on these specific issues. "I have a great supporting cast, but we all must know our talking points. You only get 15 minutes and must show them why they need to care."

From discussions with senior aides to representatives themselves, Napoleon and her team approached each public servant the same way. Each conver-



PHOTO COURTESY OF JOSHUA STARKS



PHOTO COURTESY OF SARAH WEEDE

TOP: From left, VFW Department of Oklahoma's Chris Rauschenstein, Adam Perkins, past state Commander Dan Fuller, VFW Legislative Committeeman Joshua Starks, Isaac Fields and John Sherrill meet with Sen. James Lankford (R-OK), center, in the Hart Senate Office Building on March 4 in Washington, D.C.

BOTTOM: Members of the VFW Department of Texas and its Auxiliary pause for a photo opportunity in March in Washington, D.C., after talking with Henry Kull, third from left, legislative correspondent for Rep. Nathaniel Moran (R-Texas) of the 1st Congressional District of Texas. The Texas VFW representatives joined hundreds of other VFW members during the annual trek to Capitol Hill during VFW's Washington Conference. The Texas delegation included, from left, Karen Toomer of the Texas VFW Auxiliary; Sarah Weede, commander of VFW Post 2466 in Lubbock, Texas, and the Texas Women Veteran's chair; Shenna Lawless, VFW National Legislative Committee member; Lynn Toomer, past Department of Texas commander; Alexis Howe, VFW Auxiliary member; and VFW Department of Texas Junior Vice Commander Benny Guerrero. The Texas delegation made its way through the halls of Congress to tout VFW's Priority Goals, which include veterans exposure to toxins and predatory claims sharks.

sation carried a blend of candor and extensive research, drawn from countless hours filing claims on behalf of veterans in Michigan, which holds one of the largest number of accredited VFW service officers in the country at 16.

For Napoleon, the highlight of opening day was the final meeting with Bergman, a retired Marine Corps lieutenant general and VFW life member from Michigan. Bergman, who also serves on the House Veterans Affairs Committee, bypassed formalities and delved into each talking point his VFW cohorts introduced.

"Everyone opened their door and heard what we had to say, but something felt different about Bergman," said Napoleon, who presented Bergman with one of her pink-themed Department commander shirts at his request. "This last meeting with him, the in-depth discussions, leaving the door open for future talks, was a great success."

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PHOTO COURTESY OF RYAN GRAHAM

Members of VFW and its Auxiliary snap a photo with Rep. Grace Meng (D-N.Y.), center, in March during a visit to Capitol Hill as part of the VFW Washington Conference. Pictured is VFW National Legislative Committee Member Ryan Graham in the forefront. Back row, from left, are Veterans & Foreign Policy Aide to Meng, Max Harris; VFW Department of New York State Photographer Barbara Bishop; VFW Department of New York SVO Chairman John Wenig; VFW National Legislative Committee Member Ann-Marie Hogancamp; VFW Department of New York Madison Fletcher; and Department of New York VFW Auxiliary President Darleen Baker. Meng was the first co-sponsor of the VFW-supported *Honoring Our Pact Act*.

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ILLINOIS VFW POSTS SERVING COMMUNITY NEEDS

The “Windy City” attracts millions of visitors each year. Not far from the city are two vibrant VFW Posts waiting to welcome travelers through the doors.

BY JANIE DYHOUSE

This month, *VFW* magazine continues its “Destination Post Series.” The series features 125 Posts located in sought-after tourist destinations. Featured VFW Posts are those that make a real difference in the communities in which the Posts are located. This month’s article takes *VFW* magazine readers to two Posts located near “Chi-Town.”

A little more than 30 miles south of Chicago is VFW Post 311 in Richton Park. Not only is the Post a favorite

spot in town to gather for a little fun, but it also is a community advocate.

VFW Post 311 Commander Aretha Spurlock said helping homeless vets is something of which the Post members are especially proud. The Post hosts an annual Veterans Stand Down and also supports the Midwest Shelter for Homeless veterans through clothing drives.

“We find ourselves in a great position to support our veterans through stand downs and resource fairs,” Spurlock said. “Thanks to a local

woman, we provide equine therapy at the stand downs. She brings her horse for the vets to experience. We are very proud to be able to offer this.”

Spurlock said the Post also provides scholarships for high school students and supports career days at schools. For the past nine years, VFW Post 311’s emphasis on higher education has led to more than \$30,000 in scholarships awarded to high school seniors with family ties to veterans in Richton Park.

What began in August 2014 with



DESTINATION POST SERIES

VFW Post 311 Jr. Vice Commander Ericka Hilliard distributes Buddy Poppies with her daughter and a friend last year in Richton Park, Ill. Situated about 30 miles south of Chicago, VFW Post 311 is a Post to check out on a visit to the "Windy City."

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

If you have visited any of the Posts mentioned in this article, we want to hear from you, or let us hear from you after your visit. Email communications@vfw.org and tell us about your visit. We look forward to hearing from you, our valued readers.

three \$1,000 scholarships, the Benjamin O. Davis Post 311 Commander's Scholarship program has since awarded up to six \$1,000 scholarships a year to more than 30 recipients.

On the second and fourth Fridays at the Post, veterans and military affiliates are invited to attend "Coffee Chats." Spurlock, who is the first female Post commander in her District, said these twice monthly events are hosted by VFW member Nekohl Johnson.

Coffee is provided by VFW member

and Army vet Melissa Farmer Hill, who has her own coffee company, Sip Nation.

Spurlock said that several of the Post's older veterans have died throughout the past year. A member asked the commander about having professional grief counseling for VFW members. That led to a "Grief and Loss" series at the Post presented by Dr. Renee Dickerson.

The series focused on understanding the effects of grief on the mind, body and spirit, among other topics.

"I take my position as Post command-



ABOVE: Past District Commander and Post 311 member William "Bill" Thomas speaks at a VFW Post 311-sponsored Veterans Day event in 2023 in Richton Park, Ill. Whether it is providing scholarships to high school students or hosting twice-monthly "Coffee Chats" for vets, the Post remains a staple in the community.

BELOW: Eva Marie Duff prepares to ride Herbert last year at VFW Post 311 in Richton Park, Ill., during the Post's annual Veterans Stand Down. Equine therapy is provided at the yearly Stand Downs thanks to Tiffany Grey, Herbert's owner.

Members of VFW Post 1197 in Batavia, Ill., conduct a Memorial Day ceremony last year at their Post home located on the banks of the Fox River. The Post's six-acre property is used by local Scout troops for annual camping events. The VFW and Scouts also partner to conduct flag retirement ceremonies.



ILLINOIS VFW POSTS BENEFIT COMMUNITIES

"The Prairie State" boasts 244 VFW Posts. Here is just a small of those Posts doing the good work of the VFW.

VFW Post 342

211 N. Main St.
Rockford, IL 61101
Commander Gary Holmes

VFW Post 755

2211 Old Jacksonville Rd.
Springfield, IL 62704
Commander Joshua Seed
<https://www.facebook.com/VFWLaForeLockPost755>

VFW Post 976

123 W. Market St.
Troy, IL 62294
Commander Anthony Avers
<https://www.facebook.com/TroyVfwPost976>

VFW Post 1117

415 N. Long St.
Caseyville, IL 62232
Commander Robert Wilson
<https://www.facebook.com/vfw-post117>

VFW Post 2245

164 Hawley St.
Grayslake, IL 60030
Commander Michael Magnetta
<https://www.facebook.com/GrayslakeVFWPOST2245>

VFW Post 2955

11385 2nd St.
Roscoe, IL 61073
Commander Billy Graves
<https://www.facebook.com/VfwRoscoeIllinois>

VFW Post 3480

5020 State St.
East Saint Louis, IL 62205
Commander Valerie Young
<https://www.facebook.com/p/Veterans-of-Foreign-Wars-Post-3480-100071138411894>

VFW Post 4183

1516 Old Highway 158
Belleville, IL 62221
Commander Seth Miller
<https://www.facebook.com/VFW-Post4183>

er seriously," said Spurlock, who is in her third year in that role. "We are a service organization, and we are here to serve veterans and the community. If they walk in, hopefully they will want to join us or support us in some sort of way."

WORKING 'HARD AT SERVING'

Among the good times had at VFW Post 311 are First Friday events. Food trucks and live music are two of the ways the Post celebrates the first Friday of each month.

In February, the community turned out for a pre-Valentine's Day celebration with a catered meal and live entertainment.

Movie nights are held at the Post on a monthly basis. It is one of many free-of-charge events at the Post.

Spurlock said the Post markets its events on Facebook and also by text message chains. For those who are regulars to the Post, but not eligible for membership, there is a Friends of Post 311 group she texts. This group of supporters had a cornhole tournament in April to raise funds for the Post.

Spurlock likens entering the doors of Post 311 to entering the bar "Cheers" from the TV sitcom. She said everyone seems to know everyone, and if they don't, they make sure to "warmly wel-

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come” all visitors.

“The goal is that we work hard at serving,” Spurlock said. “So we want to enjoy ourselves just as hard. After all, tomorrow is not promised.”

COMMUNITY IS KEY AT BATAVIA POST

Just outside downtown Batavia, Ill., on the banks of the Fox River is a picturesque six-plus acres resembling a park. VFW Post 1197 owns the park-like property.

VFW Post 1197 Commander Steve Hunter said the Post is “heavily” involved in the community, and likewise, the community supports the Post.

“Being out and visible in the community will make or break your Post,” Hunter said. “A few short years ago, our parking lot was in disrepair, and we were on the verge of closing. But with the past couple of commanders and our quartermaster, we have revitalized this place and pushed a real youth community.”

At nearly 300 members strong, Post 1197 hosts twice-a-year blood drives to benefit the Versiti Blood Center of Illinois.

“The blood bus comes to our parking lot, and we make it a huge success,” Hunter said.

A Persian Gulf War veteran, Hunter said that most events planned at the Post are aimed at families, which, he added, has helped in overall recruiting.

“Iraq and Afghanistan members are getting very involved,” Hunter said. “Families and young kids come hang out at the Post.”

At all levels, the Boy Scouts have a partnership with Post 1197. They annually camp out on the Post grounds on the weekend closest to Veterans Day in November. During the weekend, the Scouts, alongside Post members, retire U.S. flags.

“Our members teach the Scouts how to properly dispose of flags,” Hunter said. “In doing this, we also are instilling patriotism in these youngsters. We have a true partnership with the Scouts.”

Another way Post 1197 supports its community youth is by issuing a community service award to a member of the Bulldog Moving Company. The Bulldogs are high school football players who help out at the Post when the need arises.

FIELD MUSEUM



CHICAGO'S MUST-SEE SITES

The Windy City has something to entice travelers of all ages and interests, which may be why Frank Sinatra crooned “Chicago is a town that won’t let you down.” Here are some of the most treasured places to visit while you are in Chicago.

Shedd Aquarium

1200 S. DuSable Lake Shore Dr.
Chicago, IL 60605

<https://www.sheddaquarium.org>

National Veterans Art Museum

4041 N. Milwaukee Ave.
Chicago IL 60641

<https://www.nvam.org>

Adler Planetarium

1300 S. DuSable Lake Shore Dr.
Chicago, IL 60605

<https://www.adlerplanetarium.org>

DuSable Black History Museum

740 East 56th Place
Chicago, Illinois 60637

<https://www.dusablemuseum.org>

Field Museum

1400 S. DuSable Lake Shore Dr.
Chicago, IL 60605

<https://www.fieldmuseum.org>

360 Chicago

875 N. Michigan Ave., 94th Floor
Chicago, IL 60611

<https://www.360chicago.com>

Chicago Maritime Museum

1200 W. 35th St.
Chicago, IL 60609

<https://www.chicagomaritimemuseum.org>

Willis Tower Skydeck

233 S. Wacker Dr.
Chicago, IL 60606

<https://www.theskydeck.com>

Navy Pier

600 E. Grand Ave.
Chicago, IL 60611

<https://www.navypier.org>

During the school's Military Appreciation Night in the fall, the Post awards a trophy to a Bulldog for his commitment to service. Inside the trophy case in the school, there is a plaque for this award, and each year, the new winner's name is added.

Each spring, around Easter, Post 1197 Auxiliary plans and executes a Touch-A-Truck event at the Post. From fire trucks to garbage trucks, kids get an opportunity to get up close and personal.

Given the holiday, the Easter bunny shows up to help spearhead the hunt for thousands of Easter eggs.

"The kids really love this," Hunter said. "We have gift certificates in some of the eggs, and of course, candy. After the hunt, they come inside for more fun."

In addition to the Batavia American Legion that meets at the VFW Post, a fly-fishing group uses the Post given its proximity to the river.

TRIVIA, ART AND MUSIC

The Post is open every day except Monday. There is a full-service bar complete with multiple billiard tables and dart boards.

On the fourth Friday of each month, everyone shows up to hear live music. When the weather cooperates, an outdoor patio with picnic tables and umbrellas can be enjoyed.

The Post has monthly trivia. One month you might test your knowledge of all things related to "Friends" (sitcom) and the next share your smarts about 80s music.

If trivia is not your thing, the Post has paint nights where for a fee, guests come to the Post and get creative. Supplies are provided.

Hunter said the Post offers a bit of something for everyone. Due to the Post's high visibility in Batavia, recruiting is usually successful.

"We know that when we bring in a new member, it is important to give them a little responsibility," Hunter said. "Find out what their interests are and give them a chance to continue serving, but in an area they enjoy. When new members get involved, they stick around."

✉ jdyhouse@vfw.org



PHOTO BY LAUREN GOLDMAN/VFW

VFW Post 311 Commander Steve Hunter points out one of the plaques on the Flag Day Monument last November in downtown Batavia, Ill. Several VFW members were involved with the committee to get the monument built. As the birthplace of the Flag Day celebration, Batavia holds a celebration each June. The groundbreaking for the Flag Day Monument took place on June 14, 2022. On Oct. 1, 2023, it was dedicated after nearly eight years of fundraising.



PHOTO BY LAUREN GOLDMAN/VFW

Members of Post 311 in Batavia, Ill., gather last November at their Post home located about 40 miles from Chicago. In addition to the multitude of community service endeavors by Post members, VFW Post 311 also is a hangout for locals. They offer monthly trivia events, paint nights and live music.

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'IT'S ALL ABOUT THE CAMARADERIE'



MILITARY SALUTE REGATTA CELEBRATES VETERANS

In May 2025, the community outreach efforts of Veterans on Deck expand further as it becomes the new organizing body for the Military Salute Regatta. The regatta was initiated five years ago by the Charleston Ocean Race Association (CORA) to get active-duty military and veterans out for a day on the water. The weekend of events includes the race and a 300-passenger viewing boat for those who don't want to sail, as well as a post-race party.

Due to the strength of its outreach among local veterans and active-duty bases, this fund-and friend-raising event will now be run by VoD. The organization looks forward to getting even more veterans involved in the race in 2025 and in future years.



Volunteers with Charleston, S.C.-based Veterans on Deck (VoD) gather on a sailboat last October. VoD uses therapeutic sailing to assist veterans with PTSD. Two VFW members from South Carolina are on the VoD board of directors.

VFW members in South Carolina help vets overcome PTSD in the open waters through a sailing program.

BY JANE BLUMENTHAL MARTIN

For veterans with PTSD, lingering social issues such as withdrawal and isolation can remain, even after successful medical treatment. Enter Veterans on Deck (VoD), a nonprofit organization in Charleston, S.C., that uses therapeutic sailing to help veterans work through the continuing effects of PTSD.

Originally developed by Dr. Ron Acierno, then-director of the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Program at the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center in Charleston — in conjunction with other civic leaders who were military veterans — sailing was identified as an ideal way to provide opportunity for social gathering, teamwork and a certain amount of social stress.

“Getting the social reintegration and getting integrated with the veterans seemed like a good idea,” said Paul Jacques, VoD President/CEO and Chairman of the Board. “So [Dr. Acierno] started taking them out on his boat and studied the camaraderie that developed.”

Fifteen years later, this volunteer-run organization continues its mission, which is “to prevent and treat the invisible wounds that affect members of our armed forces, during and after their service, through a sailing program that offers holistic support and resiliency training.”

In the beginning, Acierno and his medical colleagues documented decreased depression and anxiety through pre- and post-sailing assessments of their patients. The group no longer does formal medical assessments, but “the benefit is still there,” Jacques said.

WHAT YOU NEED TO ‘PERK YOU UP’

Veterans on Deck’s dedicated board members agree, citing connections, teamwork and the group’s welcoming nature as just a few of the benefits of this hands-on therapy.

“It’s all about the camaraderie,” said Michelle Pierce, VoD board member and life member of VFW Post 3137 in Isle of Palms, S.C. “When you get the military folks together, they start talking about their military service. Once you get on that boat, we are discussing, talking and just being out on the water. Sometimes that’s what you need to perk you up a little bit.”

John Watson, a VoD board member and life member of VFW Post 3433 in Somerville, S.C., concurs.

“One of the things we talk about is the shared experience and being a part of something bigger than yourself,” Watson said. “Sailing a 30–35-foot boat requires people working together and working in a shared experience. I think that’s one of the things we retired military people miss.”

By 2011, the group was approved as a nonprofit organization and a community partner of the local VA. To this day,



Veterans participating in a Veterans on Deck journey last October in Charleston, S.C., prepare to set sail for a day of camaraderie. Veterans taking part in the sailing program say they enjoy the teamwork it takes for a successful sail.

VoD continues to connect with veterans through referrals from the Charleston VA. Services also are available to any veteran suffering from PTSD, and the group attracts newcomers through grassroots community outreach.

VoD has two sailboats that can hold six to eight people for each sail. With multiple outings offered three days each week, plus additional races throughout the year, the group sailed more than 200 times in 2024. Sailing groups include men's empowerment, women's empowerment and an all-comers sail.

"With the number of people out there, that comes to 1,257 sailing experiences in one year," Jacques said. "All those rides encompassed 250 individuals."

VoD has been intentional about its work as it has expand-

ed over the years, building a strong network of volunteers to provide training and spreading the word. It also has been thoughtful about more common challenges veterans face and has gone to lengths to ensure the therapeutic sails remain inclusive for those with limited mobility or gait problems from previous injuries.

"We acquired the J105 [boat] with a low water line so that it sits close to the dock. It's a small step up to get on and off, so anyone can participate," said Jacques, who shared success stories of veterans young and old who have garnered hope from VoD's therapeutic sails.

Just a few success stories include:

- A young veteran with PTSD who is partially blind and has mobility issues. When he first returned to Charleston, his mother was taking care of him in her home. He now sails regularly with the men's empowerment group and lives independently.
- A widower who was grieving the loss of his wife. The widower says VoD saved his life and is now one of the organization's biggest advocates.
- Two veterans who moved to Charleston to live on their own boats anchored out in the river. Both of them were isolated and never sailed their boats. After learning how to handle the boats, one veteran weighed anchor and sailed down to Florida. The other veteran used his newfound knowledge to make his way down the intercoastal waterway.

Giving the gift of hope through therapeutic sails resonates deeply with VoD volunteers. Yet it became clear that each volunteer finds the work incredibly rewarding.

"It's nice being part of something bigger than you but that you're all part of the same club," Watson said. "You have some shared experiences. They may be a little different, but it's still working for a common purpose. We have that common bond [of being veterans] and we're all avid sailors, because we're out there all the time. There's a close connection."

Pierce added: "It brings me joy to help other people. We teach them how to sail with us. It's nice and relaxing. Everybody's just enjoying life. And they're learning things — it gives them a purpose."

Jacques said he enjoys the "sharing of life's trials and tribulations," and how people share their solutions or try to resolve the problems.

"It takes a coordinated effort to sail a boat," Jacques said. "When we go out on the therapeutic sails, we have a skipper and first mate but when we get out there, everybody wants to get involved. It's fun to see that in action. Once we're out in the open harbor, we let anyone take the helm. It's fun to see their faces light up."

Jacques said the group welcomes additional support of time, talent and treasure. For more information, go to <https://veteransondeck.org>.



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VFW CONVENES IN 'ARCH CITY'

This year marks only the second time in VFW's history that members will convene in the city of Columbus, Ohio, to conduct the business of the organization. It also happens to be the birthplace of the VFW.

BY JANIE DYHOUSE

For the first time since 1938, VFW will convene in Columbus, Ohio, where the organization was formed on Sept. 29, 1899. The 126th VFW National Convention will take place from Aug. 9-13 at the Greater Columbus Convention Center in downtown Columbus.

While the convention's main purpose is to allow VFW delegates to vote on resolutions, attend workshops and hear from prominent speakers, it also offers time for camaraderie. Below is just a small sampling of all that the city of Columbus — the birthplace of the VFW — has to offer those attending this year's convention.

Be sure to check out <https://www.vfw.org/media-and-events/126th-vfw-national-convention> for the latest on convention news.

FRANKLIN PARK CONSERVATORY AND BOTANICAL GARDENS

1777 E. Broad Street
Columbus, OH 43203

<https://www.fpcconservatory.org>

A botanical landmark just 2 miles east of downtown Columbus, Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical

Gardens features exotic plant collections and displays, seasonal exhibitions, outdoor gardens (including community and culinary gardens) and a variety of educational programming, all set within the 88-acre Franklin Park. Inspired by horticulture, Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens elevates quality of life and connects the community through educational, cultural and social experiences.

NORTH MARKET DOWNTOWN

59 Spruce Street
Columbus, OH 43215

<https://northmarket.org/location/downtown-market>

North Market, which traces its heritage to 1876, is a destination that serves over one million guests each year and is consistently ranked as one of the top public markets in the country. It is an authentic Columbus experience that highlights the diversity and vibrancy of the community, both economically and culturally, by promoting and incubating "best in class" local, independent businesses.

COLUMBUS MUSEUM OF ART

480 East Broad Street

Columbus, OH 43215

<https://www.columbusmuseum.org>

The museum's collection includes outstanding late 19th and early 20th century American and European modern works of art. It also houses the world's largest collections of works by local artists Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson, Elijah Pierce and George Bellows. A commitment to contemporary art, folk art, glass and photography continues the museum's dedication to showcasing art of our time.

WHETSTONE PARK AND COLUMBUS PARK OF ROSES

3923 N. High Street

Columbus, OH 43214

<https://columbusrecparks.com/parks/whetstone-park-and-columbus-park-of-roses>

One of the largest municipal rose gardens in the U.S., this 13-acre park features more than 11,000 rose bushes and specialized gardens for herbs, daffodils and perennials.

KELTON HOUSE MUSEUM AND GARDEN

586 E. Town Street

Columbus, OH 43215

<https://keltonhouse.com>

With more than 80 percent of the artifacts originating with the Kelton family, the museum offers a unique experience focusing on the Underground Railroad, local history and decorative arts. Open to the public for tours, programs and events, the Kelton House is a good place to visit in the heart of the Town Street historic district.

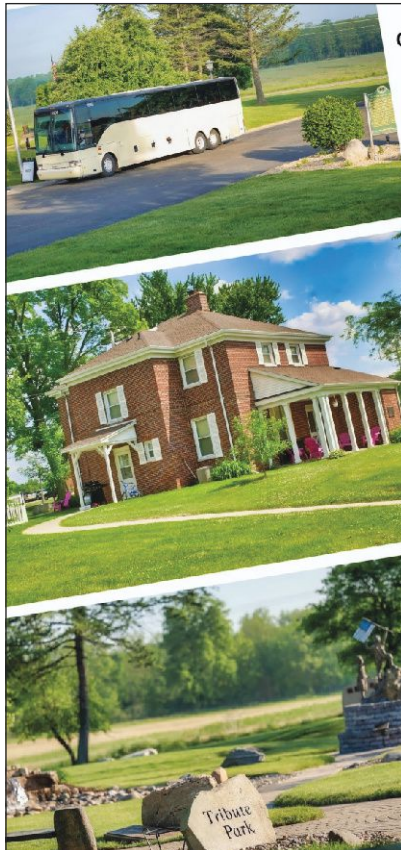
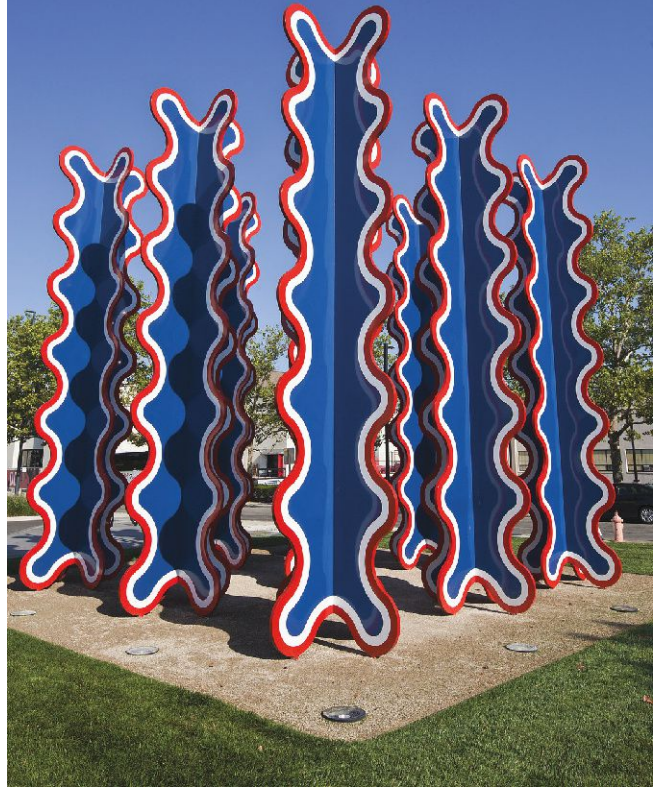


EMAIL jdyhouse@vfw.org

3RD ANNUAL CORNHOLE TOURNAMENT SET FOR COLUMBUS

Presented by the veteran-owned KC Crew, the largest adult sports league in Kansas City, Mo., the 3rd Annual VFW National Convention Cornhole Series will take place on Sunday, Aug. 10 and Monday, Aug. 11. All proceeds from the competition go to VFW PACT Act benefit assistance. For more information and to sign up for this event, which was an instant hit when it was introduced at the convention in Phoenix, visit <https://kccrew.com/leagues/vfw-cornholetournament>.

COLUMBUS MUSEUM OF ART



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VFW NATIONAL HOME



VICTORY IN EUROPE DAY 1945-2025

May 8 marks the 80th recognition of Victory in Europe for Allied Forces in World War II.

Of the more than 16 million Americans who served in uniform during World War II, about 2.3 million deployed to the European Theater of Operations. As they joined VFW, World War II veterans would become the organization's largest portion of members when the VFW hit its biggest membership tally of more than 2 million members in 1992.

Army Maj. Gen. H.F. Krammer (left), commander of the 66th Infantry Div., accepts the surrender of German Lt. Gen. Wilhelm Fahrmbacher, commander of German troops in the Lorient Pocket, on May 9, 1945, at Cordau, France. The official surrender (below) occurred two days before, on May 7, at Reims, France, ending the fighting in western Europe. Combat in eastern Europe would last until May 8. U.S. Army Gen. Walter Bedell Smith, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower's chief of staff, signed for the Allied Expeditionary Force at Reims and demanded, per Eisenhower's orders, that the surrender be unconditional.



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★ A FINAL SALUTE ★

VFW magazine presents this memorial listing in tribute to 25 U.S. troops who died overseas in 2024. All of the following fatalities happened in non-hostile incidents.

GUAM

AIR FORCE

Senior Airman Roque Ray Cruz Santos, 36th Logistics Readiness Sqdn. — Guam

IRAQ

ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

- **Spc. Owen James Elliott**, 1st Bn., 118th Field Artillery Regt. — Twin City, Ga.
- **Capt. Eric Richard Hart**, Headquarters and Headquarters Bn., 38th Inf. Div. — Indianapolis, Ind.
- **Spc. Travis Jordan Pameni**, 1st Bn., 121st Inf. Regt. — Douglasville, Ga.

INDIAN OCEAN

NAVY

- **Gunner's Mate 3rd Class Elijah Riddle**, *USS Halsey (DDG-97)*, 7th Fleet, Loma Linda, Calif.

ISRAEL

ARMY

- **Lt. Col. Orlando Bandeira**, 3rd Bde., 94th Training Div. — Tampa, Fla.

JAPAN

AIR FORCE

- **Master Sgt. Justin Sweat**, 38th Air Defense Artillery Bde. — Jacksonville, Fla.
- **Staff Sgt. Tristen Wright**, 27th Special Operations Logistics Readiness Sqdn. — Palm Bay, Fla.

ARMY

- **Spc. DaJuan Cornish**, 1st Bn., 1st Air Defense Artillery Regt., 38th Air Defense Artillery Bde. — Jacksonville, Fla.
- **Spc. Ro David Ganzon**, 1st Bn., 1st Air Defense Artillery Regt., 38th Air Defense Artillery Bde. — Fair Oaks, Calif.

MARINE CORPS

- **Lance Cpl. Blake Dominguez**, 3rd Marine Logistics Group — Canton, Ga.
- **Lance Cpl. Avery Wayne Leverette**, III Marine Expeditionary Force Support Bn. — Houston, Texas

NAVY

- **Petty Officer 2nd Class Cuyler Burnett Condon**, *USS George Washington (CVN-73)* — Boerne, Texas
- **Seaman Dimitri Isacc Morales**, *USS George Washington (CVN-73)* — Great Lakes, Ill.

JORDAN

ARMY

- **Spc. Breonna A. Moffett**, 718th Engineer Co. — Savannah, Ga.
- **Sgt. William J. Rivers**, 718th Engineer Co. — Carrollton, Ga.
- **Spc. Kennedy L. Sanders**, 718th Engineer Co. — Waycross, Ga.

KUWAIT

ARMY

- **Lt. Col. Troy E. Bartle**, 3rd Medical Command (Forward), 1st Theater Sustainment Command — Alton, Ill.

LITHUANIA

ARMY

- **Spc. Austin Dishmon**, 8th Cavalry Regt., 2nd Armored Bde. Combat Team, 3rd Inf. Div. — Fort Stewart, Ga.

RED SEA

NAVY

- **Aviation Machinist's Mate 2nd Class Oriola Michael Aregbesola**, Helicopter Maritime Strike Sqdn. 7 — Miramar, Fla.

SOUTH KOREA

AIR FORCE

- **Senior Airman Saniyya Smalls**, 8th Security Forces Sqdn. — North Charleston, S.C.
- **Airman Basic Kye Vang**, 8th Security Forces Sqdn. — Elk Grove, Calif.
- **Tech. Sgt. Jacob Venegas**, 8th Maintenance Group — Los Banos, Calif.

ARMY

- **Sgt. Dorian Baker**, 4th Attack Bn., 2nd Combat Aviation Bde. — Columbia, S.C.
- **Pfc. Edwin Thomas**, 3rd General Support Aviation Bn., 2nd Combat Aviation Bde., 2nd Inf. Div. — Eagan, Minn.

Editor's note: If there are other troops missing from this memorial listing, send their name, unit information, hometown and cause of death to magazine@vfw.org.



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Veterans More Likely to Suffer from Migraine Disease

National Migraine and Headache Awareness Month in June focuses on migraine, considered to be an ‘under-diagnosed’ chronic disease.

BY JANICE PHELAN

Due to the invisible nature, migraine and headache disease can remain in the shadows when it comes to awareness, treatment and research.

“Whether civilian or military, this is an under-diagnosed, under-treated, under-funded disease that has such a disabling impact on so many lives,” said Susan Lane Stone, CEO and executive director of the National Headache Foundation. “This is a chronic disease, and today there is no cure.”

National Migraine and Headache Awareness Month, which takes place during June, was developed to shine a light on this chronic neurologic disease with the National Headache Foundation and the Coalition of Headache and Migraine Patients (CHAMP) collaborating on the annual recognition. This year’s theme is “Path to Better Days” with the event seeking to enhance awareness for a mainstream audience.

“For 2025, we will focus on people recognizing the symptoms they might be experiencing,” Stone said. “And if these resonate, then maybe beyond searching on Google — recognition that something more is going on, and they deserve to learn more and should seek a dedicated headache appointment with their primary care provider.”

Both symptoms and any contributing factors or triggers are a good place to start, she added.

“No one wants to admit that they can’t cope,” Stone said. “So many are told that it isn’t real, that they can power through or tough it out. But that’s not the best pathway.”



Among veterans, approximately 36.9 percent reported a history of migraines, according to the National Headache Foundation, compared to 12.7 percent of non-veterans.

“Veterans with migraine also reported significantly worse general health, more pain and had a higher reported prevalence of neurological and psychiatric conditions,” Stone said, “with a noted association to specific environmental exposures during military service.”

This year’s Migraine and Headache Awareness Month includes a special commemoration with the installation of thousands of flags at the National Mall in Washington, D.C., to symbolize the impact of headache and migraine. The effort is led by the Alliance for Headache Disorders Advocacy and will include around 30,000 flags, Stone said, to be displayed June 1-14. The design incorporates 25,000 purple flags — the official headache awareness color — as well as 5,000 U.S. flags interspersed to connect the display to the military community.

“About 42 million people are impacted in the United States with headache

disorders,” she said, “of which about 6.8 million of those are veterans.”

Stone added that the National Headache Foundation leads headache community interactions with the military population and is proud to showcase *Operation Brainstorm.org* during this event. Operation Brainstorm is the Foundation’s health resource initiative developed for veterans, active-duty military and loved ones living with migraine disease and headache disorders. It includes online education and awareness with navigation to a care hub featuring tools and resources customized for military personnel and veterans.

“Our veterans and family deserve to get the care they need and get as many symptom-free or reduced-symptom days back as possible,” Stone said.

For more information about the National Headache Foundation and Operation Brainstorm, visit <https://www.operationbrainstorm.org> ★

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



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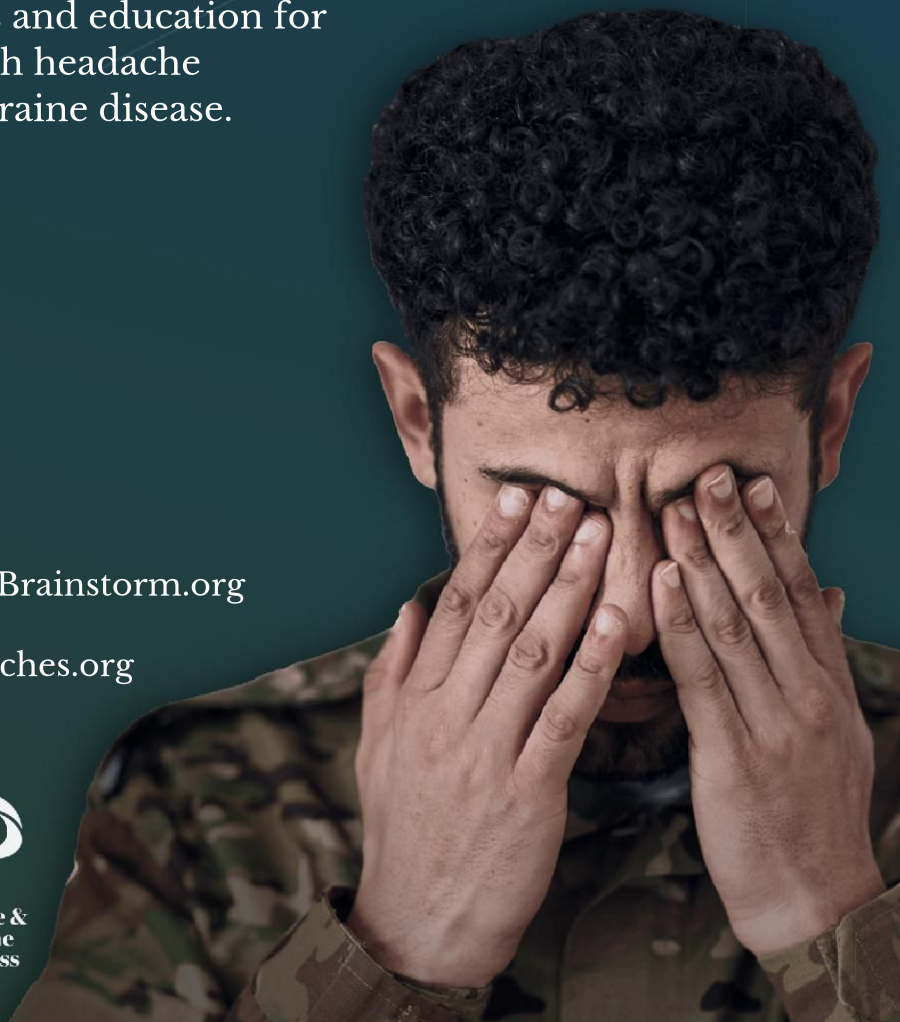
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VFW MEMBERS DISTRIBUTE THE 'FLOWER OF REMEMBRANCE'

While Memorial Day is an important time to hand out VFW Buddy Poppies, the red flowers can be distributed any time.

BY JANIE DYHOUSE

Since 1922, the VFW has distributed poppies, making the red flower of remembrance the official flower of the VFW. In 1924, the VFW secured trademark rights for the name Buddy Poppy, ensuring no other organization, firm or individual can legally use the name Buddy Poppy.

VFW Posts take pride in conducting Buddy Poppy drives, especially around Memorial Day. However, some Posts distribute Buddy Poppies other times of the year as well.

Here is a look at how VFW and Auxiliary members in Pennsylvania and New York did just that. ★

EMAIL jdyhouse@vfw.org

RIGHT, ABOVE: New York State 28th District Assemblyman Andrew Havesi receives a VFW Buddy Poppy from Markas Pogozelski on Sept. 15 in Middle Village, N.Y. Markas, the son of VFW Post 551 Auxiliary member Paul Pogozelski, collected \$110 in donations for Post 551. Markas was inspired to hand out Poppies during the community street cleanup after hearing his dad talk about the number of homeless vets in the U.S. "We wish to outlaw the term 'homeless vet' as these brave souls risked their lives for our freedom and country," Paul said. "The least we can do is provide them a safe home to lay their heads at night."

BELOW: Members of VFW Post 3460 and its Auxiliary in Media, Pa., distribute VFW Buddy Poppies on Sept 14 during the annual Rose Tree Park Community Day in Upper Providence, Pa. Members set up a VFW booth from which they handed out Poppies, U.S. flags, pins and information on the VFW and Auxiliary. The community day provided an opportunity for local organizations to showcase their good work.



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‘Any Member Can Be a Recruiter’

VFW’s Membership Department says the push is on to hit the organization’s membership goal. To help in achieving that goal, the membership team offers training tools.

BY JANIE DYHOUSE

As the end of the membership year draws near, the VFW Membership Department encourages all members to keep pushing toward the 102 percent membership goal.

“More than 7,000 VFW members have recruited more than one person this year,” said Assistant Membership Director Matt Nute. “We ask that all members get out and keep recruiting so that we can easily achieve our goal.”

According to Nute, at press time the VFW was expected to meet its 102 percent membership goal.

“For the second year in a row, we are projected to show real growth in our membership,” he added.

To assist members in recruiting, Nute said that the VFW Membership Department offers a multitude of recruiting tools and tips, including videos on best recruiting practices. Scan the QR code shown on this page to access the Membership Training Video Playlist.

A visit to the VFW Membership Facebook page offers a look at past sessions of Membership Monday training seminars, which occur once a month via Zoom. Nute said the training sessions are available for all members to attend.



Members of VFW Post 10380 in Green Township, Ohio, man a VFW booth in September at the annual Harvest Home Fair in Cheviot, a suburb of Cincinnati. Harvest Home Fair admission is always free to veterans, making it a great recruiting event, according to the Post leaders. In addition to their recruiting efforts, Post volunteers handed out nearly 850 small U.S. flags. INSET: Scan here for the Membership Training Video Playlist

“Any member can be a recruiter any time, anywhere,” Nute said. “Take a look around your community and be aware of events where the VFW may be able to set up an information and recruiting booth.”

Nute said county fairs, festivals and trade shows are all events where veterans are likely to be present. Also, he said, being on the lookout for military service bumper stickers in parking lots or apparel people may be wearing are good indicators when it comes to recruiting.

“You may be surprised at the people around you who are veterans,” Nute

said. “Once you make the ask of, ‘Did you serve?’ the door has been opened. Be sure to let all potential members know about the advocacy of the VFW — that we work on behalf of all veterans, regardless of membership.”

Nute said that while recruiting is the “lifeblood” of the organization, membership retention should be considered equally important.

“We cannot forget about our current members,” Nute said. “If you have not seen a member of your Post in a while, it is a good idea to check in with that person.”



EMAIL jdyhouse@vfw.org

MEMBERSHIP MONDAY VIDEOS

Check out Membership Monday videos at the Facebook link below. Look for the “video” button and click on it to view a variety of videos to help in recruiting new members into the VFW. <https://facebook.com/VFW-Membership>

PURPLE HEART VETS WANTED FOR PHEASANT HUNT

VFW Post 8530 in Gettysburg, S.D., is hosting its annual pheasant hunt from Nov. 6-12. Selected veterans will arrive on Nov. 6 and leave on Nov. 12.

Travel, lodging, meals, ammunition, shotguns (you also can bring your own shotgun), retrieving dogs and bird-cleaning services are included.

Participants must provide a copy of their DD-214 stating Purple Heart and honorable discharge designations. Hunters need to be able to lift and use a shotgun. Those with mobility issues can be accommodated.

Please submit your DD-214 copy and contact information by July 15, 2025.



Send to:
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c/o Curtis Hamburger
400 E. Commercial Ave.
Gettysburg, SD 57442
(605) 769-0176
Or email curtishamburger@yahoo.com

See the May issue of the Checkpoint e-newsletter for a recap of the 2024 Pheasant Hunt.



RECRUITING MADE EASY

You have likely noticed QR codes on VFW brochures, advertisements and other materials. QR codes are all about convenience and up-to-date information with a scan of the code from a smartphone.

The QR code shown here is linked to a VFW membership application.

Simply open the camera app on your smartphone, hold it over the QR code and wait for the yellow line reading "oms.vfw.org" to appear. Tap the link in the yellow line, and you will be taken to the VFW membership application.

With the use of QR codes, recruiting has never been easier.



Be Prepared for Accidents

Accidents can happen anywhere, anytime — while driving, working, working on home projects or even on vacation.

Unfortunately, these sudden events often claim lives in unexpected ways, leaving families not only grieving but also having to face harsh financial challenges.

Imagine if you were in a fatal car accident. Would your family be able to manage without your income? Could they keep up with bills, stay in their home or afford the essentials as they try to rebuild their lives? These are difficult questions, but they highlight the importance of being prepared for the unpredictable.

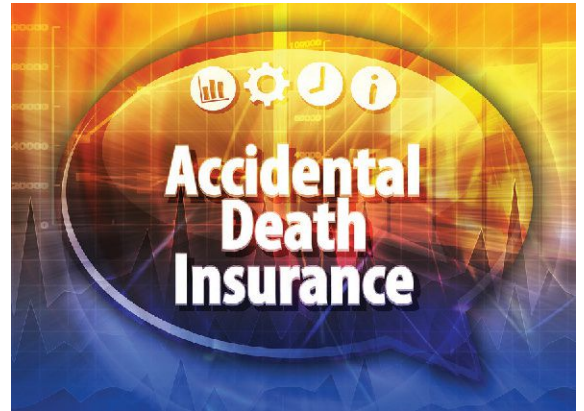
An accidental death insurance plan can provide a critical financial safety net

for loved ones. This type of coverage is designed to supplement existing insurance you may have through work or other sources. It offers an extra layer of protection, ensuring your family has the financial resources they need during a difficult time. With this support, they can focus on healing instead of worrying about bills and other expenses.

Life is full of uncertainties, but an accidental death insurance plan gives you peace of mind knowing your fam-

ily will be taken care of no matter what.

For more information, please call the VFW Member Benefits Department at 1-800-821-2606.



Travel Tips Lead to Savings

Planning your next vacation? Thinking ahead about potential hiccups can save you stress. Here is a helpful checklist to get you prepared, including some important travel document updates for 2025:

Key Dates & Document Changes:

- 1. Real ID Deadline:** Starting May 7, you will need a Real ID-compliant driver's license or other acceptable identification to fly domestically. Obtaining a Real ID can take time, so plan out as far as possible.
- 2. Online Passport Renewal:** The U.S. Department of State is launching a new online passport renewal system for eligible applicants. Check its website to see if you qualify. Remember, many countries require your passport to be valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure date.

Travel Essentials:

- 1. Medications & Health Records:** Pack all necessary medications in your carry-on baggage, along with documentation of any pre-existing health conditions.



- 2. International Cell Phone Connectivity:** Ensure your cell phone will work internationally so you can easily contact assistance if needed. This is crucial for staying informed about weather updates and staying connected with loved ones.

Unexpected situations can happen, whether you are traveling domestical-

ly or abroad. Having a backup plan for medical emergencies is essential to protect yourself, your family and your finances. Navigating the various medical assistance plans to assist you while traveling may be a good option for you.

For personal guidance on choosing the right plan for your trip, contact the VFW Member Benefits Department at 1-800-821-2606.



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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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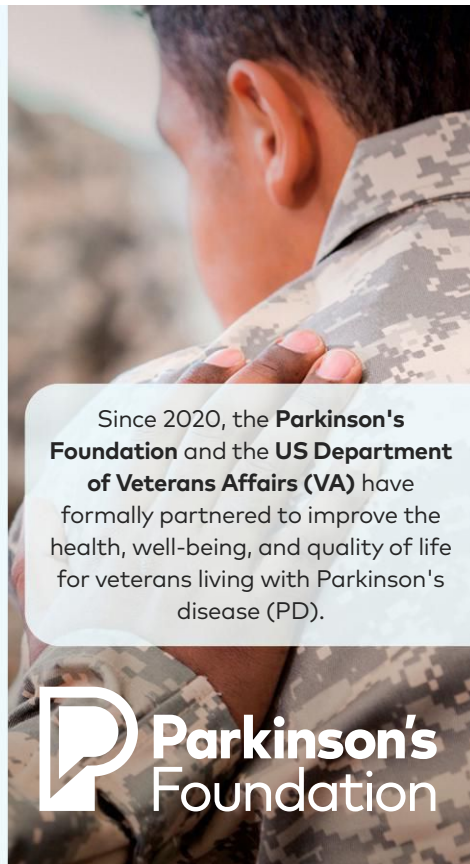
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Better than cannabis, better than CBD

New Joint-Supporting “Miracle Oil” Capsule Delivers Hip, Knee, and Shoulder Comfort in Just Days

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.

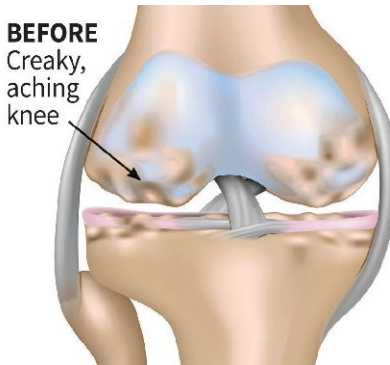
As they aged, the deficient mice had a whopping 60% more joint degeneration than the mice with a healthy ECS.

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.

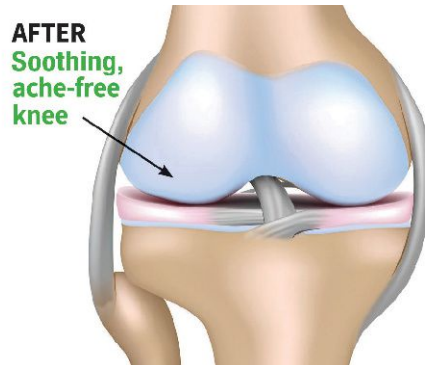
“Calling it the ‘endocannabinoid system’ was a misnomer from the very beginning,” Dr. Sears explained. “Modern research reveals that you don’t need cannabis to activate this incredible system. You don’t need to ‘get high’ to get joint relief.”

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.

BEFORE
Creaky,
aching
knee



AFTER
Soothing,
ache-free
knee



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.

All the Benefits of CBD – Without Cannabis

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.

Get Moving Again with Mobilify

Mobilify has already helped thousands of Americans stay on their feet and breeze through their daily activities with ease.

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

“**Mobilify** really helps with soreness, stiffness, and mild temporary discomfort,” Joni D. said.

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 **1-800-341-7848**. “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 **1-800-341-7848** 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: **VFWMB425** when you call.

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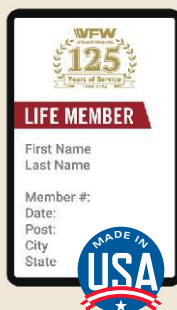


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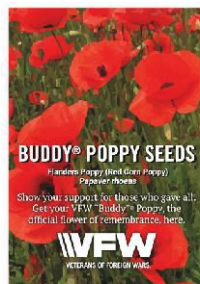
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If You Still Have The Spark,
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REAL Praise!
REAL Results!**



"I have the energy to **perform three times in one day. WOW!** That has not happened in years. Oh, by the way I am 62."
— Jonathan K.

"I am 81 and newly married. I had not had sex for 20 or more years. **Primal Max** gave me the same e*****n I had when I was young." — Stefano A.

"I just wanted to try **Primal Max** out of curiosity, without expecting too much. I was really shocked by a **substantial boost of my libido**. Thank you."
— W.K. Stephens

Super Charge Your Libido IN AS LITTLE AS 5 MINUTES!

Dr. Sears' new, 5th generation NITRIC OXIDE SUPER BOOSTER FORMULA has the incredible power to *reverse* those typical effects of male aging that leave *her* feeling frustrated ... and *you* feeling helpless. JUST 5 MINUTES is all it takes to start giving you back the confidence that "you've still got it," regardless of your age! And even more impressive, you can get this result without seeing a doctor or stepping into a pharmacy.

HERE'S HOW AND WHY IT WORKS!

- **Super Boosts Nitric Oxide Levels and Delivers MORE Nitric Oxide Where It's Needed Most!** For a lot of guys, age-related loss of blood flow causes a drop in performance, but you can support youthful blood flow at any age. **Primal Max Red** not only boosts nitric oxide, it also delivers more nitric oxide than ever before to your manly area. That can dramatically increase vital blood flow *where you need it*, to give you back the lasting power to perform. Researchers confirm that a nitric oxide deficiency is largely responsible for the impaired functionality so commonly found with male aging."



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- **NOT A Pill, Capsule Or Tablet!** Primal Max Red is a powdered dietary supplement with a mild and tasty berry flavor. It's designed as a powder to accommodate the larger doses of key ingredients required to make Primal Max Red one of the most effective nitric oxide boosting supplements available. It even comes with its own scoop to ensure that you get the full 9,000 mg daily dosage for MAXIMUM effectiveness.

- **Proven Effective In Clinical Trials, Plus Most Men Who Try It Keep Using It!** One double-blind, placebo-controlled study involving a group of 60-year-old men in poor to average shape reported an increase of blood flow to the levels of a man feeling much younger and more vibrant. And most men who try it describe a renewed feeling to perform like they used to in the past.

Al Sears, MD is America's top Male Health and Vitality Expert and author of more than a dozen books, has spent decades developing and improving **Primal Max Red**. Dr. Sears not only promises that Primal Max Red really works, but he also promises a 100% Money-Back Guarantee.



THESE STATEMENTS HAVE NOT BEEN EVALUATED BY THE FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION. THIS PRODUCT IS NOT INTENDED TO DIAGNOSE, TREAT, CURE OR PREVENT ANY DISEASE. RESULTS MAY VARY IF YOU HAVE A MEDICAL CONDITION OR ARE TAKING ANY DRUGS. CONSULT YOUR DOCTOR BEFORE USE. ALL STUDIES PERFORMED WERE INDEPENDENT AND THIRD PARTY.

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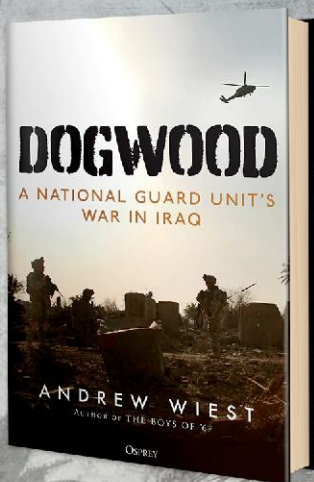
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How a Safe Step Walk-In Tub can change your life

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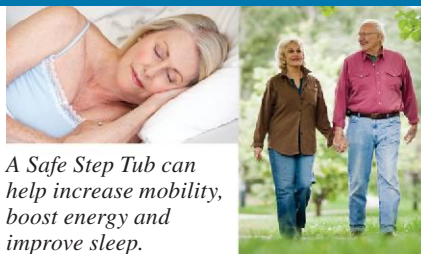
Personal Checklist:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arthritis | <input type="checkbox"/> Dry Skin |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Insomnia | <input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diabetes | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobility Issues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lower Back Pain | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor Circulation |

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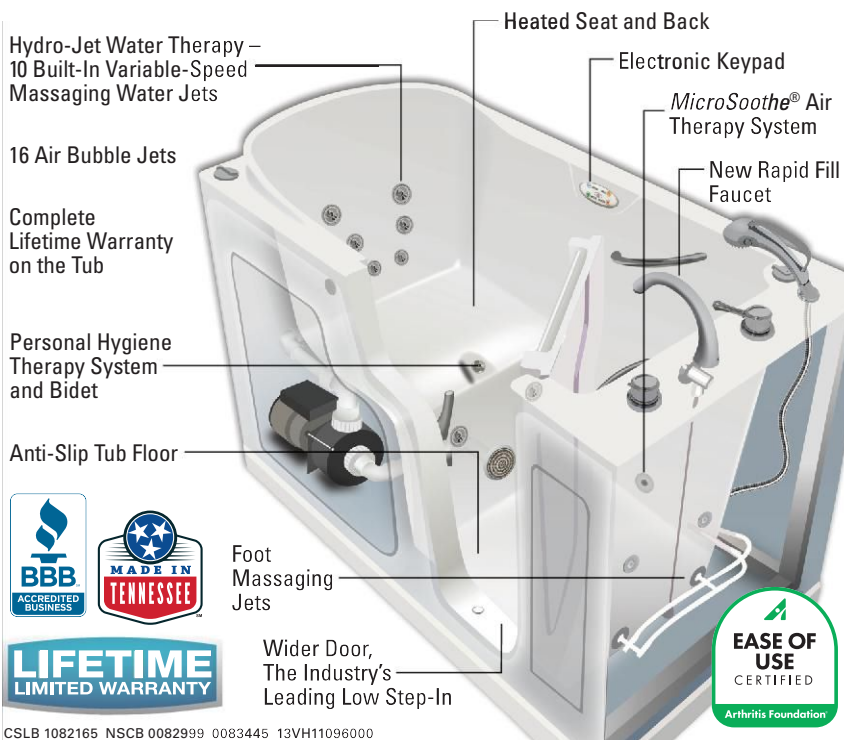
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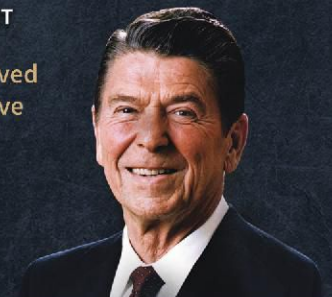
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