

CHECKPOINT



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Smart/Maher National Citizenship Education Teacher of the Year

VFW Recognizes Teachers of the Year at Convention

VFW's annual Smart/Maher National Citizenship Education Teacher of the Year program awards the nation's top elementary, middle- and high-school teachers for their work in the classroom. Each teacher was awarded \$1,000 for his or her personal development. Each of the teachers' schools also received \$1,000.



EMILY EZELL
Grade level K-5

Cowan Elementary School, Cowan, Tenn.

For the past 15 years, Emily Ezell, a third-grade teacher at Cowan Elementary School in Cowan, Tenn., has produced a self-written patriotic play called "This Is Our Land."

At the beginning of the school year, students practice and research the people they portray in the play.

The performance incorporates the third-grade students' curriculum and gives veterans from the community a chance to share their experiences with students.

Kimberly King, commander of VFW Post 10904 in Manchester, Tenn., was invited to the school for last year's Veterans Day performance.

"When the play began, I was amazed at the quality of it all," King said. "Throughout the play, many old and new patriotic songs were used and played between scenes. The mix was exceptionally well done."

King said many patriotic subjects were covered, including the U.S. flag colors, the Constitution and the purpose of the Secret Service.

Ezell said she, at first, "struggled" with how she could serve America after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. She later realized she had the perfect opportunity in front of her — the classroom.

"I knew that I could make a difference if I could teach them to love our country and honor and respect those who serve," she said.

Ezell said all VFW-awarded funds will go toward future productions of the play.

"I am blessed beyond measure to have the VFW's support," Ezell said. "I cannot begin to express my appreciation for what they have done for me. I am learning what a tremendous organization the VFW is, and I am impressed at how they care for each other and support the communities."



SARA GIBSON COAN
Grade level 6-8

Caroline Middle School, Milford, Va.

Sara Gibson Coan, a seventh-grade history teacher at Caroline Middle School in Milford, Va., helped lead the school's history club in creating the Caroline County (Va.) Korean War Memorial.

After learning that the 38th parallel crossed the school's front lawn, Coan's students presented the idea of creating a memorial for Korean War veterans to school officials. The 38th parallel is the marked border between North and South Korea and location of the two countries' demilitarized zone.

Coan, who was sponsored by Post 8529 in Sandston, Va., said students designed all of the 38-foot-by-38-foot garden after it was approved by the school administration.

"They researched plants from North and South Korea that we could put in the garden," Coan said, "and they even suggested we have concrete instead of mulch for our older veterans to get around the garden easier."

Coan also has led field trips to local military museums, including the Vietnam War Foundation in Ruckersville, Va.

As a part of her students' curriculum, Coan has invited local veterans to ceremonies at the middle school, which gave history club students the opportunity to interview the veterans.

"Often times, my vets ask about my kids, even when they have made it to high school," Coan said. "My kids constantly ask me to bring [the veterans] back for a visit."

Coan said that the school's award is going toward the History Club fund, which will help maintain the Korean War Memorial Garden, and that she is "blown away" by the VFW's \$1,000 contribution to the school.

Coan said her \$1,000 portion of the award is going toward a Vietnam trip. She said she has already visited several battlefields in Europe and South Korea.



MICHAEL RAUENHORST
Grade level 9-12

North Pole High School, North Pole, Alaska

Michael Rauenhorst, an Air Force veteran and aerospace science teacher at North Pole High School in North Pole, Alaska, encourages community volunteerism and leads about 100 students in the school's Air Force Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) program.

In 2017, Rauenhorst's students logged in more than 3,100 hours of community service, including conducting 27 color guard events, participating in North Pole community health fairs, helping maintain a local Boy Scout camp and promoting awareness of youth homelessness.

"Community service projects are a part of the JROTC program," said Rauenhorst, a life member of VFW Post 10029 in North Pole, Alaska. "It really opens the eyes of a lot of the cadets."

In the Air Force, Rauenhorst served in Saudi Arabia with the 1701st Provisional Air Refueling Wing and in Egypt with the 1704th Provisional Air Refueling Wing during the Persian Gulf War. As a JROTC instructor, Rauenhorst organizes Curriculum in Action tours, which teach science and encourage citizenship and patriotism, as well as strengthen student perspectives of aviation and U.S. military history.

"Through that, we use military culture to help facilitate our curriculum," Rauenhorst said. "It's pretty cool to expose kids to things they haven't done before."

Rauenhorst said all these facets of curriculum are a part of his "job description" as a JROTC instructor.

"The best way to build a good citizen is to have them prepared for life after high school," Rauenhorst said.

For the Curriculum in Action tours, Rauenhorst has escorted cadets onto military bases, including Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam in Hawaii, as a part of his aviation history curriculum.

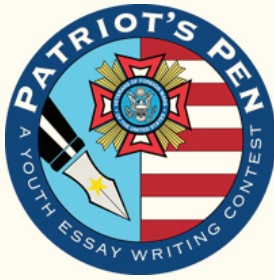
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EXTRA! EXTRA!

YOUTH ESSAY THEMES ANNOUNCED

The 2018-19 Voice of Democracy theme is: "Why My Vote Matters."

The Patriot's Pen theme is: "Why I Honor the American Flag." To download and print the student entry forms for both scholarship competitions, visit www.vfw.org/community/youth-and-education/youth-scholarships.



NEW PRODUCTS AT VFW STORE

Check out the VFW Store's selection of new products online – go to www.vfwstore.org and click on "Look What's New" to find the latest logoed caps, polos, jewelry, accessories and more. You also can order online or call 1-833-VFW-VETS to place your order. Purchases from the VFW Store support veterans, military service members and their families.

HONOR THE VFW WITH A GIFT IN YOUR WILL

Your loved ones should always come first when it comes to your will and estate plans. After taking care of your family, we ask you to evaluate the VFW's place in your overall plans. If you're interested in supporting the VFW and your fellow veterans with a gift in your will, contact the VFW Planned Giving Office for more information by calling (816) 968-1119, emailing plannedgiving@vfw.org or visiting www.vfw.org/plannedgiving.

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM IDENTITY THEFT

The threat of identity theft is real, and the consequences could be serious. Without adequate protection, you and your family might be vulnerable. With Identity Guard, you can help protect yourself with today's most powerful, comprehensive identity protection. By leveraging IBM Watson® technology, Identity Guard

monitors billions of pieces of information to alert you to certain

activity that might indicate fraud on your or a loved ones' identity. You'll also be alerted if your information is detected on numerous nonpublic websites that are at the epicenter of criminal activity. For information about purchasing Identity Guard at a special discounted rate, visit www.identityguard.com/vfw.

VFW ACCEPTING FELLOWSHIP APPLICATIONS

VFW and Student Veterans of America (SVA) now are accepting applications from student veterans interested in participating in the 2019 VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship program. It offers 10 student veterans the opportunity to meet members of Congress during the annual VFW National Legislative Conference March 3-7, 2019. The fellowship also provides additional opportunities for awardees to address veterans' issues in their communities. VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship opportunities are open to student veterans currently enrolled at colleges and universities with active SVA chapters. Candidates also must be VFW members. All applications must be submitted by close of business Oct. 20. Selected fellows will be notified before Thanksgiving, with a formal announcement of the fellowship class in January 2019 at the SVA National Conference in Orlando, Fla. For more details about the fellowship and to apply, visit www.vfw.org/StudentFellowship.

Humana Sponsors Event for Second Year

Health Fair Features More Than 30 Vendors

VFW's annual health fair, held during the 119th National Convention in Kansas City, Mo., offered the chance for attendees to be screened for aneurysms, learn about how Alzheimer's affects veterans and more.

For the second year in a row, Humana sponsored the health fair, which featured 32 vendors. Ed Sandrick, director of veterans-strategic alliance with Humana, said the traffic at both of Humana's booths was "great."

About 15 people each attended a Silver Sneakers (fitness for people 65 years old or older) class and a nutrition class on the first day. Classes held during the health fair, including one on how playing the harmonica can help with COPD, are similar to those offered at Humana's "brick and mortar" guidance centers.

Sandrick said Humana opted to sponsor the health fair for a second time for two reasons – to support VFW and because of its mission as a "health and service" company.

"We believe in helping veterans and their families," Sandrick said. "The VFW is an awesome partner that way."

He also noted the VFW-Humana partnership to fight "food insecurity." A food insecurity drive began



A VFW member visits the Truffoire Skin Care booth during the Humana-sponsored health fair at VFW's 119th National Convention in July in Kansas City, Mo. The booth featured eyelifts and face creams. Other vendors at the fair included Walgreens, Veterans Against Alzheimer's and the Veterans Crisis Line.

PHOTO BY KARI WILLIAMS/VFW

June 6 in Kansas City, and, during convention, raised more than 50,000 meals for the Kansas City area.

Paul Spera, past commander-in-chief and a member of VFW Post 144 in Boston, Mass., visited the VBX Wellness booth – twice – because of the exercise equipment. It provides "value without a lot of work," he said. The machine, equipped with vibration technology, provides a 10-minute workout equivalent to that of one hour in the gym.

Joanne Spera, Paul's wife and a member of VFW Auxiliary 1822, said the machine provides the opportunity to exercise "in the privacy of your own home."

Joanne also said that at last year's health fair, she visited a dermatology booth and a "precancerous" area was discovered. She now has yearly checkups.

Attending their first convention – VFW or otherwise – were employees of Veterans Against Alzheimer's, a 501(c)3 network that educates and raises awareness about the connection between service and Alzheimer's.

Veterans Against Alzheimer's founder Shawn Taylor said the group's purpose is to "shine a light on the military risk factors that place veterans at a high risk for Alzheimer's and dementias."

"Trauma rewires the brain, and what does that look like?" Taylor said. "And it places veterans – we have causation. We have a relationship and now we just need the longitudinal data. But we know that there is a relationship, so we're here to talk about that. Not only to talk about those risk factors, but also to get veterans engaged and mobilizing them to be a part of this."

Taylor said "everyone has somebody" in their family who has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's. As part of their booth, visitors took photos with a sign indicating who they know who has been affected by Alzheimer's to share as part of a social media campaign.

Most people who stopped by the booth were looking for support, according to Taylor.

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Health Fair includes more than 30 vendors

- AAAneurysm Outreach: 653 screened, 12 potential abdominal aneurysms
- VETS Prostate Cancer Awareness: Exhausted 200 kits of screening supplies
- VA Office of Research and Development/Million Veteran Program: 180 registrations
- Mobile Vet Centers: 526 veterans received counseling
- Songs for Sound: 137 hearing tests conducted

Health fair by the numbers

- KC Mobile Vet Center: 1226 visits/526 screenings
- IAAIS: 700 visits
- Live Life Alarms Medical Alert: 687 visits

CHECKPOINT

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VFW
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VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

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Unmet Needs a 'Godsend' for Army Veteran

While unemployed and in the middle of finding new living arrangements, Army veteran Wanda Griffin turned to VFW's *Unmet Needs* program.

She came across the program while researching options for assistance and applied for the grant in March. Since receiving the \$1,303.65 grant, Griffin has become more financially secure. She also now has the means to secure housing for herself and her son.

"[The *Unmet Needs* grant] meant the world to me," Griffin said. "It came at a time in which I was having to move from one place to another while I was unemployed and in need of assistance."

Unmet Needs, according to Griffin, is significant to the veteran community because it's "designed to help all who have served in their time of need."

"A lot of times, we don't know what's available to us," Griffin said, "and to have an organization that's real and available saying, 'Thank you for your service,' 'What can we do to help you because you served?' is a wonderful and outstanding compliment that goes a long way in our community and we need that."

Since its inception in 2004, *Unmet Needs* has granted more than \$10 million to 8,800 military and veteran families, regardless of their VFW eligibility.

Griffin, who deployed in December 1990 during the Persian Gulf War with the 128th Combat Support Hospital as a cook, said she would tell others in a similar situation not to hesitate if they are considering applying.

"I had no idea if the program worked or not," Griffin said. "All I know is I needed help or we were going to be homeless. I took a chance and applied and I received help immediately."

In addition to being grateful for the assistance itself, Griffin said the timeliness of it also helped.

"It was a true godsend for me," Griffin said. "I am truly grateful for this organization, and I hope that all veterans that are in need at some point in their lives, are led to this program. It's a legitimate program with the veterans' needs at heart."

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Unmet Needs has Disbursed \$10 Million

VFW's *Unmet Needs* program helps America's military families who have experienced unexpected financial difficulties.

The program, supported by Burger King franchisees, provides financial aid to assist those with basic life needs in the form of a grant — not a loan.

Since 2004, *Unmet Needs* has given \$10 million to more than 8,800 military and veteran families. In the current fiscal year alone, the program has assisted nearly 4,000 service members and veterans.

Learn more about the *Unmet Needs* program at: <https://www.vfw.org/assistance/financial-grants>.

"It's a legitimate program with the veterans' needs at heart."

— Wanda Griffin, Army veteran

DO I QUALIFY FOR UNMET NEEDS?

To be eligible to receive financial assistance through VFW's *Unmet Needs* program, a recipient must:

- ✓ Be on active duty, whose financial hardship is a result of deployment, military pay error or medical discharge.
- ✓ Have been discharged on or after Sept. 11, 2001, whose financial hardship is a direct result of military-service connected injuries and/or illnesses that are causing an employment hardship.
- ✓ Have been discharged prior to Sept. 11, 2001, who is on a fixed income (VA compensation, SSI, SSDI) and/or whose financial hardship is an emergency situation.

The financial hardship can't be caused by:

- Civil, legal or domestic issues; misconduct; or any issues that result from spousal separation or divorce.
- Financial mismanagement by self or others, or due to bankruptcy.

Eligible expenses

- Household (mortgage, rent, repairs, insurance).
- Vehicle (payments, insurance, repairs).
- Utilities.
- Food and clothing.
- Children's clothing, diapers, formula, school or childcare expenses.
- Medical bills, prescriptions eyeglasses.

Ineligible expenses

- Credit cards, military charge cards or retail store cards.
- Cable, internet or secondary phones.
- Cosmetic or investigational medical procedures/expenses.
- Taxes.
- Furniture, electronic equipment or vehicle rentals.
- Any other expenses not determined to be a basic life need.



Wanda Griffin is an Army veteran who recently received a \$1,303 VFW *Unmet Needs* grant to help while she was unemployed and searching for housing. More than \$10 million has been granted to military and veteran families since the program's inception in 2004.

Army veteran Wanda Griffin deployed in December 1990 to serve during the Persian Gulf War with the 128th Combat Support Hospital as a cook. PHOTOS COURTESY OF WANDA GRIFFIN



Convention Attendees Voice Opinions about VFW's Future

VFW's Publications staff quizzed VFW members attending the organization's 119th National Convention in July in Kansas City, Mo. Members offered their thoughts on specific topics, such as when VFW might see its first female national commander or what they would like to see changed about the annual convention. Here's a look at what some of them had to say.



Carlo Davis, 44
Post 9191, Killeen, Texas

Davis served in Iraq (2003 and 2007), Afghanistan (2011) and later in Kuwait (2018), earning his VFW eligibility.

Comradeship is what Davis likes most about being a VFW member. "Being able to mingle, the common bond. [There's a] generational gap, but VFW closes the distance," he said.

VFW's most important function, Davis said, is advocating on behalf of veterans – especially for benefits.

In 10 years, Davis said VFW will still be the "No. 1 organization championing for veterans rights and benefits." He added that in three to five years, VFW should see its first female national commander.



Ken Ramirez, 36
Post 1123, Vallejo, Calif.

Ramirez, an Iraq and Afghanistan War vet, served in the Navy from 2000-2010. "It's important for my generation to be represented here," said Ramirez, noting it was his first time to convention. The camaraderie is one of the things he most likes about VFW.

Ramirez said ensuring proper representation for all veterans is the most important function of the organization. In 10 years, he sees VFW with a "more powerful voice."

When asked when VFW might elect its first female national commander, Ramirez answered: "Hopefully ASAP."



Angela Hudson Davis, 53
Post 10321, Hamden, Conn.

Davis earned her eligibility through Army service in the 1991 Persian Gulf War. She said the convention is a great time to be with "like-minded" veterans.

"The best thing about being a VFW member is having a voice and being able to make change," Davis said. "It is important that we point out the areas that need improvement in our communities, [as well as] create better cohesion among members and the organization."

Davis said the most important thing VFW does is provide help to veterans recently discharged from the military.

She believes VFW will be more active in 10 years' time, but that the organization overall needs to do better with recruiting and being active in the community.

Davis said the first female national commander-in-chief should be elected "right now." But, she feels the first woman will be elected in the next five years. Women need to be involved in VFW, Davis said, because female veterans are "not well represented."



Floyd Stewart, 72
Post 4709, Conroe, Texas

Stewart served in Vietnam in 1965, where he earned his VFW eligibility.

He most enjoys the camaraderie the organization offers and believes VFW's most important function is helping other veterans.

Stewart thinks a woman will become national commander in three years.



Timothy Brown, 58
Post 1503, Dale City, Va.

The Desert Storm vet said it's important to attend the national convention to show the legislative strength of the organization. Brown said he wouldn't change anything about convention. "I really don't think this could be any better," said Brown, who brought with him his granddaughter, Vada. As his Post's quartermaster, Brown said VFW's most important function is educational assistance and helping vets find jobs. He is optimistic about the future of VFW: "I see us growing and with a louder voice," he said. "Within 10 years, we will have a female national commander. I see it coming."



Tiffany Green-Porter, 37
Post 7842, Linesville, Pa.

Green-Porter served with the Army in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The single mother found herself struggling to make ends meet during the holidays. VFW stepped in and helped her financially.

"When I came home, I couldn't get a job," she said. "It was the VFW that gave me a \$250 check so we were able to have a Christmas."

Once she got back on her feet, she joined the VFW. She said being around other veterans helps her feel she's not alone.

She said her Post is very family-friendly. "Six times a year, we have family events," she said. "The kids love it. I love my Post."



Christine Bassett, 55
Post 3236, Ludlow, Mass.

Bassett earned her eligibility in *Operation Iraqi Freedom* in 2003. She feels it's important to attend convention for the camaraderie. "You're able to get together and meet people from other states [and find out] things you might not learn at the lower level," she said.

Bassett said adding younger, more family-oriented activities to convention would be a welcome change.

She said helping her fellow comrades and families is what she most likes about being a VFW member. Helping provide all benefits between VA medical, GI bill and transitioning from service is what VFW's most important role is.

Bassett said a female national commander likely will be elected within 10 years.



Cody Mangold, 34
FFW Post 791, Yankton, S.D.

Mangold served in Iraq in 2007-08 with the Army National Guard.

"My hometown bought my membership for the first year," he said. "One of the guys I deployed with, his dad said, 'Why don't you come to VFW?' My friend said, 'Come with me.'"

Mangold said they made him feel welcome. When he got out of the Guard, he said it was a really hard adjustment. "With VFW, there's a camaraderie," he said. "That's what you have in the military. I encourage fellow younger veterans to join VFW."



Brian Wiener, 47
Post 8098, Egg Harbor Township, N.J.

Wiener earned his VFW eligibility for his service in Bosnia in 1995. He said this was his second national convention and that there is a lot to learn by attending VFW events.

“There are so many resources to use in this organization that people aren’t familiar with or don’t use,” Wiener said.

He added that the convention would be improved by having small group sessions with other members from around the world. Having groups of veterans from different eras, as well as sessions with members who hold certain positions at all levels within the organization, would help members achieve “common goals” in their local communities and within the organization.

The most important functions of VFW, according to Wiener, are “supporting medical endeavors” and legislation for veterans. Because of this, Wiener said VFW will be “stronger, more powerful” in the next 10 years, even if it is a smaller combat veterans organization. Wiener also anticipates VFW’s first woman commander-in-chief will be elected in the next decade.

“But, it should be next year,” he added.



Jeffrey Byrd, 41
Post 2330, Searcy, Ark.

Byrd served 20 years in the Air Force, including time in Iraq and Afghanistan. His uncle bought him a VFW life membership. His grandfather also was a member.

“I was welcomed more so than the average new member,” Byrd said. “We’re the largest veterans’ advocacy organization and a lot of the new members just want to belong to something bigger than themselves.”

Byrd said he credits VFW with nearly every benefit veterans receive.



Trisha Leslie, 27
Post 4556, Pocahontas, Ark.

Leslie served in Afghanistan before becoming a VFW member. Prior to that, she had been a member of the American Legion. She said that while her Post is made up of mostly older members, she still was made to feel welcome.

“It gives me something to look forward to, knowing that there’s other people who understand the difficult situation we go through that civilians don’t quite understand,” she said. “We’re here for veterans. If we don’t step in to do it, it’s not going to get carried on from generation to generation.”



Juan DeSantiago, 60
Post 8925, Austin, Texas

DeSantiago earned his eligibility while serving in the Navy as a machinist’s mate off the coast of Vietnam in 1975. He said that the best thing about being a VFW member is the “camaraderie” he has with all the members.

“I get to meet so many different people and veterans with different backgrounds,” DeSantiago said.

To DeSantiago, VFW’s most important function is the scholarship opportunities provided to children and veterans.

He hopes VFW will have a “bigger” membership base and “more participation” in the next decade. He wants people and veterans not to perceive VFW as “just a place to go drink at a bar.”

When asked when the first female commander-in-chief will be elected, DeSantiago said, “Hopefully soon. Three years, maybe.”



Willie Keller Jr., 43
Post 9191, Killeen, Texas

Keller earned his eligibility first in Haiti (1995). He later served in Iraq (2003) and Afghanistan (2005 and 2008).

He said it’s important for VFW members to attend national convention so that they don’t get lost “in the complacency” of local surroundings.

He thought the convention could be improved by offering a variety of concerts. He noted that in 2017 in New Orleans, there were more music selections beyond country.

Keller said he most likes the sense of brotherhood VFW offers. He said he’s had the opportunity to reconnect with people he hadn’t seen since basic training.

He added that if VFW doesn’t evolve and pull in more youth, the organization will be viewed as “an old man’s organization.”

Keller hopes to see a woman elected national commander in six years.



Mary Smith, 35
Post 6830, Walhalla, S.C.

Smith earned her eligibility in Bosnia while serving in the Air Force and later served in Iraq.

Smith’s grandfather is a WWII veteran, and she grew up going to VFW Posts. When she came home from overseas, she missed the camaraderie.

“I thought, ‘I could go to the VFW,’” she said. “At first glance, the assumption was I must be Auxiliary. After a conversation, they discovered I was an eligible veteran and they signed me up on the spot.”

Smith said everyone should join VFW, “even if you’re not ready to be elected to office.”



Justin Blodgett, 37
VFW Post 3442 Custer, S.D.

Blodgett did four tours in Afghanistan with the Army’s 10th Mountain Division. He joined VFW two years ago.

“My family was involved with the Auxiliary because of my service,” he said. “I joined right off the bat. It’s helping me get into a normal life.”

Blodgett got divorced and his house burned down, so he wasn’t too involved at the Post at first.

“In meetings, I just sat back and watched,” he said. “It’s on a Post-by-Post basis, but if it’s a good Post, it does help you get integrated back into civilian life.”

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— Angela Hudson Davis
Persian Gulf War Vet
Post 10321

Illinois Post Teams with Other Posts to Honor Veterans

A VFW Post in Coal City, Ill., worked with other Posts to honor a 101-year-old Navy veteran and a Pearl Harbor survivor for their service in World War II.

Retired Chief Hospital Corpsman Mabel Thomsen, of Fayetteville, Ark., was honored with a personalized throw blanket from Blankets for Vets, a program created by VFW Post 1336 in Coal City, Ill. Thomsen later passed away on Aug. 5. Post Commander Charlie Brown got the idea to honor the Navy veteran after reading an article about Thomsen, who lived at the Arkansas State Veterans Home.

Brown wanted a VFW member to present Thomsen the award, so he contacted Post 2722 in West Fork, Ark., to help with the honor. Post 2722 Adjutant and Quartermaster Eugene Kovach agreed to present the award to Thomsen on June 15.

"It was a great partnership," Brown said. "Eugene followed through on his promise like a good VFW comrade."

Last year, Post 1336 also honored a Pearl Harbor survivor, Hobart Van Deventer. Brown said they partnered with Post 1492 in Streator, Ill., of which Van Deventer is a member, to present a blanket to the Army veteran.

Post 1336's Blankets for Vets program started in 2012 at the suggestion of Brown's wife, Kathy. The woven throw blankets feature an embroidery of the recipient's name and branch of service emblem.

Brown said Blankets for Vets is Post 1336's "premiere program."

"The vets love them," Brown said, of the blankets. "We are approaching about 400 [blankets] given to vets."

Blankets from Post 1336 typically are given to local veterans, as well as veterans in assisted-living and skilled-care facilities in the Coal City area, but Brown said Thomsen and Van Deventer each were a "special case."

"You don't get to honor many Pearl Harbor survivors or that many female vets who served during WWII, Korea and Vietnam," he said.

Brown added that at least three Coal City-area women, who are WWII veterans, also have received blankets though Post 1336's Blankets for Vets program.

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Retired Navy Chief Hospital Corpsman Mabel Thomsen receives her throw blanket provided by VFW Post 1336's Blankets for Vets program at the Arkansas State Veterans Home in Fayetteville, Ark., on June 15. Suzy Fehlig, U.S. Sen. John Boozman (R-Ark.) and Eugene Kovach, the adjutant and quartermaster of Post 2722, in West Fork, Ark., presented her with the gift. Thomsen passed away on Aug. 5.

PHOTO BY DAVID GOTTSCHALK/ NORTHWEST ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

Post Honors Vietnam War Veterans

VFW Post 7288 in Calabash, N.C., recognized National Vietnam War Veterans Day on March 29. Post Commander Rick Arvonio welcomed these Vietnam War veterans (pictured), who were acknowledged during the holiday for their service. Post members remembered the 58,479 men and women who died during the war. Post Sr. Vice Commander Dan Kossler also mentioned the more than 11,000 women who served in the Vietnam War, as well as the eight who died.



Among those honored (in alphabetical order) were:

- Rick Arvonio, *USS Mullinnix* (DD-944)
- Ronnie Cook, 585th Eng. Co. (DT)
- Mike Dichiaro, *USS J.C. Owens* (DD-776)
- Greg Gallus, 25th Inf. Div.
- Jack Goin, 2nd Bn., 9th Marines
- Jack Heslin, 119th Assault Helicopter Co.
- Pat Hinchliffe, Navy
- Clifford Hinkley, 23rd Field Arty
- Ray Ketcham, 5th Special Forces
- Dan Kossler, 159th Aviation Bn., 101st Abn. Div.
- Joe Lenz, *USS Rainier* (AE-5)
- Ron Lieft, 50th Air Wing, 834th Air Div.
- Alfred Lowrie, 1st Marine Air Wing, MACV, MABS16
- Thomas McCormack, 352 Tactical Fighter Sqdn.
- Ken McGuire, Navy
- Nick Micale, 1876th Comm. Sqdn.
- Rich Murphy, 1st Marine Div.
- Tommy Tucker, 544th Maintenance Co.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF PASQUALE CAPPELLETTI

Henry Repeating Arms Donates Guns for Membership Incentive

Henry Repeating Arms has upped its relationship with VFW, and now offers rifles as part of a membership incentive for Post quartermasters that Commander-in-Chief B.J. Lawrence announced earlier this year.

The Department Quartermaster Early Bird Incentive will award either a .30-30 caliber rifle or a Veterans Travel Services credit voucher of equal value to Departments that achieve 92 percent in membership by Jan. 1, 2019.

Lawrence said the rifle incentive "is an excellent opportunity to recognize these hard-working professionals for their contributions to our great organization."

The idea to include Henry came about in late 2017, according to Anthony Imperato, Henry Repeating Arms CEO.

"I have always viewed the VFW as an important organization in this country, so I decided to donate all of the rifles that will be used for this program," Imperato said. "There's that, and the fact that it was right after the holiday season, so it made me get to feel a bit like Santa Claus."

Imperato said he hopes the Post quartermasters "see this rifle and start drooling."

"It's a unique reward, and I hope that everyone will see it as a huge motivation to drive membership," Imperato said.

Different than the .22 LR VFW Tribute rifles, the .30-30 (model H009B) is "a bit more versatile,"

according to Imperato.

"With our .30-30, you get a rifle that you can actually take out and hunt with," Imperato said. "It's a legendary caliber that has probably taken more deer than anything else, and a lever action .30-30 is about as American as it gets."

The tribute rifles are part of a fundraising program for VFW Posts.

Imperato said it has been "an honor and a pleasure" to work with VFW over the years. Henry's relationship with VFW began in 2015, when Imperato made an impromptu \$50,000 donation to the organization.

"My father served in the United States Army in Korea from 1953-1955, and I know he's looking down on me with a smile of approval whenever I get the chance to contribute to our veterans," Imperato said. "From the bottom of my heart, I want to say thank you to all of the members of the military, past and present, for your service to our great country."

EMAIL: kwilliams@vfw.org



Then-Commander-in-Chief Keith Harman presents country music star Trace Adkins with a Henry Repeating Arms rifle during a performance at VFW's 119th National Convention in July in Kansas City, Mo. VFW Department quartermasters are eligible to receive similar weaponry as part of a membership incentive program. PHOTO BY MICHAEL EDSON/VFW

'Record' Donations

Corporate Sponsors Continue to Support VFW

VFW's corporate sponsors stepped up at VFW's 119th National Convention in July, raising funds not only for VFW itself, but efforts the organization is involved with.

VFW's Uniting to Combat Hunger campaign — an initiative that brought together VFW, Humana, Harvesters — The Community Food Network and After the Harvest — exceeded its goal of raising 50,000 meals for those in need in the Kansas City, Mo., community.

The campaign kicked off June 6 in Kansas City and concluded during convention, where some attendees brought canned goods to donate and others donated their time packaging food.

President and CEO of Twisted X Boots, Prasad Reddy, presented VFW with a \$75,000 check. Reddy, a native of India, said he "gets goosebumps when he attends convention." He attributed his business success and opportunities to the sacrifices of U.S. veterans. Twisted X sells a line of patriotic, VFW-inspired boots.

The Howard E. Vander Clute Jr. Memorial Ride brought in a "record" \$33,248 for the VFW Programs Department, which included \$15,001 from the Department of Virginia riders. Representatives from the VFW National Home for Children in Eaton Rapids, Mich., spoke and introduced 2018 Buddy Poppy Child Chloe Johnson. VFW Post 1503 in Dale City, Va., presented a \$3,000 check to the home, while Post 9972 in Sierra Vista, Ariz., donated \$3,500.

The VFW Programs department sold lapel pins on-site at convention, raising \$16,015 — a record year.

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Top right: VFW Foundation Manager Richard Freiburghouse packs potatoes as part of VFW's Uniting to Combat Hunger campaign during VFW's 119th National Convention in July in Kansas City, Mo. The initiative exceeded its goal of providing 50,000 meals for Kansas City families. PHOTO BY MICHAEL EDSON

Bottom right: A VFW member from Post 56, in Leavenworth, Kan., participates in the annual Howard E. Vander Clute Jr. Memorial Ride. The event raised \$33,248 for VFW's Programs Department. PHOTO BY ANNETTE KEETER



Left: Participants in the Howard E. Vander Clute Jr. Memorial Ride stop at the Liberty Memorial and National World War I Museum in Kansas City, Mo., during their annual ride. This year's ride took place in Kansas City during VFW's 119th National Convention. PHOTO BY MICHAEL EDSON



Former Navy Logistics Specialist 2nd Class Melissa Fahlgren received more than \$1,600 from VFW's *Sport Clips Help a Hero Scholarship* program. She said her ultimate goal after earning her master's degree is to be an entrepreneur and open a business in her hometown of San Antonio. PHOTO COURTESY OF MELISSA FAHLGREN

VFW's Sport Clips Help a Hero Scholarship

Navy Vet Has 'Passion' to Serve

Navy veteran Melissa Fahlgren's ultimate goal in life is to start an arts and crafts consignment shop in her hometown of San Antonio. To get there, she plans to earn a bachelor's degree in business administration then a master's degree in marketing.

For help along the way, Fahlgren applied for VFW's *Sport Clips Help a Hero Scholarship*.

Fahlgren, who served as a logistics specialist from 2012 to 2016 and aboard the *USS George H.W. Bush*, said she found out about the opportunity from Palo Alto College in San Antonio, where she currently attends. It sent her an email of scholarship opportunities for veterans.

Fahlgren said it was "very easy" to apply – all she had to do was fill out an information form and write a short essay. Those two things provided her with more than \$1,600 for her tuition and fees during this semester. She added that the scholarship will "significantly help with tuition costs."

Fahlgren said she is transferring next semester to Texas A&M University-San Antonio to continue toward her bachelor's degree. Before she transfers, she is scheduled to earn an associate's degree in business administration.

"By earning this degree, I can reach my goals, and this would also guide me into being a knowledgeable and successful entrepreneur," Fahlgren said.

She said being a San Antonio native and Navy veteran are two aspects she "holds close" to her heart.

"I have grown into adulthood with a passion to contribute to society as much as possible," Fahlgren said. "Soon after graduating high school, I struggled with the decision of choosing a field of study. And after a long and hard thought, I decided to enlist into the Navy."

Fahlgren said she is "thankful for" her decision to enlist.

"Without this life stepping stone, I would not come to realize the importance of my next task at hand," Fahlgren said. "My military experience helped me solidify my choice to pursue a higher education, and, from there, I have not looked back. I continue to strive, to be the best and to give my best every day, because I know in the end I will succeed."

Sponsored by hair salon franchise Sport Clips, the *Help a Hero Scholarship* is now in its fifth year. **EMAIL:** dspiva@vfw.org

VFW's Sport Clips Help a Hero Scholarship

Did You Know...

- *Sport Clips Help a Hero Scholarship* has awarded almost \$5 million in scholarships since 2014?
- More than 1,100 veterans and service members have received scholarships?
- In 2018, nearly \$790,000 was awarded?
- Scholarships of up to \$5,000 will be awarded to qualified applicants?
- Scholarships are restricted for tuition and fees only and will be paid directly to accredited schools?

Eligible Applicants Must:

- Be a U.S. citizen.
- Be retired, honorably discharged, active duty or a member of the National Guard or Reserve.
- Have completed Basic Training and follow-on training, such as Advanced Individual Training, "A" school, training battalion or technical school.
- Separated with or currently hold a military rank of E-5 or below.
- Demonstrate a need for financial assistance.
- Participate in, be accepted to or currently enrolled in a VA-approved program or school at an accredited post-secondary institution.

SEPTEMBER | OCTOBER 2018

CHECKPOINT

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

Posts with the Most

VFW POSTS OF 1,000 MEMBERS OR MORE AS OF AUG. 22, 2018

Rank	Post No.	Location	Members	Rank	No.	Location	Members	Rank	No.	Location	Members
1	1503	Dale City, VA	2,974	11	2485	Angeles City, Philippines	1,684	25	56	Leavenworth, KS	1,182
2	27	Wiesbaden, Germany	2,565	12	76	San Antonio, TX	1,599	26	9399	Apache Junction, AZ	1,168
3	9972	Sierra Vista, AZ	2,436	13	10047	North Las Vegas, NV	1,419	27	549	Tucson, AZ	1,143
4	8180	Songtan-Si, Korea	2,033	14	4647	North Highlands, CA	1,358	28	2111	Chula Vista, CA	1,125
5	10692	Grafenwoehr, Germany	1,992	15	63	Boise, ID	1,357	29	3282	Port Orange, FL	1,110
6	1114	Evansville, IN	1,988	16	628	Sioux Falls, SD	1,352	30	10281	Radcliff, KY	1,101
7	8862	Vicenza, Italy	1,973	17	2391	Saint Augustine, FL	1,332	31	1146	St Clair Shores, MI	1,089
8	4709	Conroe, TX	1,923	18	9342	Ansbach, Germany	1,327	32	972	Terre Haute, IN	1,079
9	392	Virginia Beach, VA	1,851	19	7234	Ocean View, DE	1,316	33	7968	Apache Junction, AZ	1,068
10	9785	Eagle River, AK	1,745	20	6873	Abilene, TX	1,282	34	7686	Alamogordo, NM	1,053
				21	4372	Odessa, TX	1,258	35	1512	Lemon Grove, CA	1,038
				22	4809	Norfolk, VA	1,214	36	1273	Rapid City, SD	1,019
				23	10097	Fort Myers Beach, FL	1,206	37	3160	Norfolk, VA	1,011
				24	6506	Rosedale, MD	1,185	38	969	Tacoma, WA	1,003

