

UNWAVERING SUPPORT



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Arizona VFW Auxiliary Newsletter

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President Bambi Johnson's Message

Wow! How quickly March has come upon us!

This is the last month for our Program reporting year and I know a lot of you will be working hard on getting in all your Special Project reports. Based on all the events I have seen on Facebook, many of the Auxiliaries that turn in their reports will be eligible for the Outstanding Auxiliary designation! With the assistance and coaching of our incredible

District Presidents, the PAR tracking shows that Arizona Auxiliaries have done a fantastic job of keeping their reports coming in on a very

timely basis...Great Job Everyone!! Lets finish the reporting year strong by getting those final Special Project Reports to your Program Chairmen.

This year's Mid Year Conference and Council of Administration was held aboard the cruise ship Mariner of the Seas which traveled to the Bahamas. Arizona had more than a dozen members in attendance and the Council of Administration was followed with SWAP information by the National Ambassadors. It was both informative and fun! I am sure our National 15 Councilperson, Chrissy Harlan will give us an update from her notes of the meeting.

While we all enjoyed the Conference and being able to swap ideas with others from around the country, I want to share something most of us will never witness. Midway through the cruise, a passenger had a medical emergency and the ship turned for Key West with all haste. As we approached Key West, Chief of Staff, Johnny DeBoard and I were at the rail when we spotted a small Coast Guard boat racing towards the cruise ship. In just seventeen minutes, the Coast Guard crew, working with the cruise ship crew, were able to maneuver alongside, hoist and lower the guest to the small boat, transfer all the guests luggage, move forward and transfer his wife and small son to the Coast Guard boat and race away to get him medical attention. We have Coast Guard members in the VFW as that branch of service has been in eminent danger areas near ports around the world, but the Coast Guard rarely gets a lot of recognition. Our Coast Guard is the unsung hero branch when it comes to civilian assistance and rescue. The next time you are making a toast...to the military...how about a special toast to the men and women of the Coast Guard right here at home.

The first weekend of March, I am honored to travel to Washington D.C. and along with our State Commander, will be escorting our Arizona Voice of Democracy during the Parade of winners during the Legislative Conference. We are all holding our breath for both our Voice of Democracy and Patriot Pen winners to place well on the National level.

Commander Bill and I are hoping a lot of you will be attending our joint Homecoming on Saturday, April 6th in Apache Junction. We are honored that the two Apache Junction Posts and Auxiliaries are hosting it together. The Homecoming is at Post 9399, with music by Reign Country and will feature games, prizes, raffles and the meal is full on barbecue with all the fixins! If you have not ordered your tickets yet, the price is \$25.00 per person if purchased or ordered by March 20th or \$30 at the door. Please order if possible before March 20th so we have a good count for food preparation. To purchase or reserve tickets, please contact Ruth Malick via phone: 480-695-6791 or via email: ruthmalick@yahoo.com or mail a check to her at 738 N. 97th St, Mesa AZ 85207. Any amount raised over the cost of the event will be split between Commander Bill and my Special Projects. We hope to see lots of you there!

Remember that although the 2023-2024 Program year ends on March 30th... our Programs are year round and the 2024-2025 Program year starts on April first...Let's keep the good work on track!



The District Corner and flyers are located on the webpage www.vfwauxaz.org under news/events. Be sure to check out all that is happening around the Department.

**The Information Below was sent out
by the National VFW Office**

Texas VFW Foundation Responds to Panhandle Wildfires

Texas VFW Foundation offers financial assistance to affected veterans and asks for public's help. AUSTIN, TX, February 29, 2024 –

The Texas Panhandle is currently experiencing the largest wildfire in Texas history with over one million acres consumed by fire and is less than 3% contained. The Texas VFW Foundation stands in solidarity with those impacted by these wildfires and offers support during this difficult time. We are extending more than just our thoughts and prayers. The Texas VFW Foundation offers disaster relief and other programs to help Texas veterans in need. Disasters create such loss and suffering. We are committed to making sure Texas veterans have every resource available to them.

The programs offered by the Texas VFW Foundation were developed by combat veterans and others to be able to respond with speed and empathy to address the most urgent needs: food, shelter, and security. However, we cannot do this alone. The Disaster Assistance Program is a financial assistance grant for qualifying Texas veterans affected by a natural or manmade disaster. Awardees can expect up to \$500 per veteran household. This grant is a one-time grant and can be used for needs of the veteran during the disaster, such as replenishing food stores, hotel stays, vehicle fuel, and/or other expenses incurred during and immediately after the disaster. In addition to the Disaster Assistance Program, qualifying applicants can apply for the Veterans' Assistance Program. This grant, funded in part by the Fund for Veterans' Assistance, can assist up to \$2,500 per veteran household for basic living needs such as rent/mortgage, utilities, vehicle payment, and/or auto insurance.

"The Texas VFW and the Texas VFW Foundation have been there for

Texas veterans through the Bastrop fires, Hurricanes Harvey and Katrina, and the West fertilizer plant explosion,” stated Beth West, Executive Director. “Each disaster brings different needs, yet they are similar. Displacement and loss occur each time. The Disaster Assistance grant is designed to assist with those immediate needs first and the Veterans’ Assistance grant is to help pay the bills during and following the disaster. We can only assist when we have sufficient funds to do so. If you are not affected by these wildfires, please ‘pass the ammo’ and help those veterans who are.”

Donations may be made online or mailed in. To donate online, please visit <https://txvfw.org/texas-vfw-foundation/>. Click on the “Donate” button. You will be able to designate the Disaster Program there. To donate by mail, please make the check payable to “Texas VFW Foundation” and mail to PO Box 14468, Austin, TX 78761-4468. To apply online, please visit <https://texasvfwfoundation.smapply.org/>. The applicant will need to create a login using the “Register” button. For more information or assistance, please email foundation@texasvfw.org or call 512-291-6850.

News

***Uniting to Combat Hunger Grant** is open from Oct 1 thru June 1, 2024. The form is available on the Department webpage - www.vfwauxaz.org under programs/veterans and family support or resources/forms.



***Department MIT** will be held on 3/2 at Post 9399 in Apache Junction. This is the last training for this year and will be from 9-3 pm. The flyer is on the Department webpage - www.vfwauxaz.org under news/events.

***Phoenix Raceway** is offering discounted tickets for Military-active/retired for the race on March 10th starting at 12:30. The flyer is on the Department webpage - www.vfwauxaz.org under news/events.

***Department President and Commander's Homecoming** will be a joint event on April 6th at Post 9399 in Apache Junction. Event begins at 5 pm and cost is \$25. Click [here](#) to see the flyer.

***Department Convention** is May 29th - June 2nd at Loews Ventana Canyon in Tucson.

*Irene Nowacki is running for **Department Guard** at the 2024 Department convention. Click [here](#) to read her brochure.

*Department of Arkansas Kim Davis is a candidate for **National Guard** at the 2024 National Convention in Ky. Click [here](#) to read her letter and brochure.

*National President Carla, Department President Bambi, Department Commander Bill and Kim Harney's **shirts** are available to order. Click [here](#) for the order forms.

* **Department Sr. Vice** Lynn Pierre's order form for her shirt and pin is now available. They need to be ordered by April to receive at Department Convention. The Department is trying something new this year - pins must be ordered ahead of time. This way we know exactly how many to order and hopefully this will save money. Click [here](#) for the form and remember to get your order placed so you don't miss out!

Issue Number: Tax Tip 2024-10

Military members and their families can get free tax help

Military personnel who want to file free federal tax returns have several options, including the Department of Defense's [MilTax](#) and the IRS Free File program. These programs offer online tax preparation, electronic filing and direct deposit of refunds at no cost.

MilTax

The Department of Defense provides [MilTax](#) as a free tax resource for the military community. MilTax is a suite of tax services available for members of the military, as well as qualifying veterans and family members. There are no income limits.

MilTax is designed exclusively for the military community. The software was developed specifically to address the unique circumstances of military life that can affect taxes such as combat pay and dealing with multiple moves within the same tax year. Eligible taxpayers can use MilTax to complete and electronically file a federal tax return and up to three state returns for free.



National Council District #15 Member Chrissy Harlan

I attended the Mid-Year Conference and National Council of Administration meeting in February. The Council Members were asked to present their questions prior to the meeting with the assurance that the questions would be answered at the meeting.

The following questions were submitted to me by the members in Arizona and New Mexico and I emailed them to National Headquarters. What follows are the questions in black and the answers we were given are in red. Some of the questions were answered up front by National Secretary / Treasurer An Panteleakos and others I had to stand up and ask.

12 Month Budget:

Consulting Services - Do we have a contract and if so, why were we over budget? **The new contract was more expensive than was expected.** Does this include Condata's Software for accounting? **Yes, it does.** Are we sure that the \$250,000 Budgeted this year is adequate? **Yes.**

Credit Card Processing - How much do we pay for each credit card transaction? **The costs vary depending on the Credit Card Company as they charge different rates. We also pay on rejected charges.** Does this apply to debit cards? **I am sorry but I did not write down the response to this question but I will get the answer if it is important to any of you.** Last year we spent \$22,000 and budgeted \$23,000 this year. Is this amount budgeted adequately? **They believe the budgeted amount is adequate.**

National Convention - Banquets and Receptions - Is the Auxiliary involved in the planning of this event? What is being done to reduce the cost? Has eliminating this event been discussed? Last year we spent \$58,000 yet we only budgeted \$50,000 this year. Please explain why? **The Auxiliary pays for 1/3 of the reception. We are contracted out for the next few years so we budget based on the contract price. The VFW is discussing eliminating this event in the future.**

Sept - November Budget

Documentarian - How can the Documentarian be over Budget or why were they allowed to book travel that exceeded their budget? Is all the travel for the Documentarian for the year now paid for or will this overage continue to rise? **The Documentarian is not always the same person at each event so different people are booking the travel and the prices on travel increased more than expected. The airline tickets have already been purchased so the overage will increase a small amount for items such as luggage fees.**

CAFE - This CAFE cost almost twice as much as was budgeted! We believe low turn out to this event due to its location should have been expected and better negotiations should have happened if this overage is due to our not filling the block of rooms contracted for. **They based the block of rooms at the hotel on previous CAFÉ's and because we did not fill the block, we had to pay attrition. They will be lowering the number of rooms blocked in the future.**

Pension Plan

If the plan is frozen and terminated what impact will this have on the employees that are on the pension plan and the cash balance plan? Will they lose money/gain money? And how much of a loss? If approved what will the maximum amount of matching contribution be? Will this number remain the same? **We are piggy backed on the VFW plan and the VFW has already frozen their side. A \$260,000 Annuity would be purchased to pay out to current and past employees on the plan. The cash plan can roll over to a 401K with no loss or can be taken as cash and pay a penalty. The questions on matching contributions were not answered.**

Other Items brought forward:

Budgeting at this level is difficult due to very early planning. Work on the current (2023-2024) Budget began well over a year ago and inflation has occurred in all areas.

In an attempt to reduce costs Boot Camp will now be held right after the Fall Legislative Conference.

The Standing Rules allow the National President to travel First Class across the country and they are looking at making that only on flights of 3 hours or more.

The 5 Candidates for National Guard, Kim, Janie, Kay, Donna and Susan all spoke at the Conference.

I did my best to get answers to your questions and presented your concerns to the National Council. If you have further questions or concerns, please contact me at vfwkidsrus@gmail.com.

Thank you to all the members from New Mexico and Arizona that were at the Mid-Year Conference for having lunch together with me on CoCoCay.

Chrissy Harlan
National District 15 Council Member



**Secretary/Treasurer
Kim Sloan**

I had a wonderful time at the Mid Year Conference meeting. It's wonderful to see old friends and it's a great opportunity to talk with other Department Secretaries and Treasurers. We exchange lots of ideas and information. Arizona and New Mexico should be thankful that we have a council member that is not afraid to

ask questions of the national leadership. After reviewing the budget reports, audits, financials there were a lot of questions.

Now on to some ongoing issues –

- Annual Paying Transfers

When you have an annual member that transfers into your Auxiliary and is accepted, the Treasurer only needs to send me the application so that I can process the transfer. As soon as the member is transferred, the Treasurer can go into MALTA and pay that member's dues.

- The same applies to Transfer who want to convert to Life Member. The Treasurer only needs to send me the application which will transfer the member to that Auxiliary. Then the Treasurer can go into MALTA and convert that member to Life Member.

By doing it this way, it will save us both time.

- I'm seeing a lot of acronyms and initials on applications, mostly in the medals section but also in addresses. While you and I may know they stand for, someone in the future may not.....so let's make sure that we use the full words i.e. ICM should be shown as Iraq Campaign Medal.
- Treasurers are forgetting to show the meeting date that the applicant was accepted by the Auxiliary. If that is the only item missing on an application, I will process the application and email the Treasurer for the date.
- If it's a new LM paying by credit card, the application will not be processed by the National Headquarters staff that process the cc payments. So let's all work on making sure that applications are complete.
- Secretary Minute Book – Please review Bylaws Section 812 and Secretary Minutes in the Booklet of Instruction (Podium Yellow Section).

Members names should be shown in full; Motions must show who made the motion and who seconded the motion.

Treasurer Report must be incorporated in the minutes or attached to the minutes.

Audit Reports that are approved at that meeting need to be attached to the minutes.

ELECTIONS

Auxiliaries are to elect their 2023-2024 officers at their April meeting. Don't panic if you don't get all the offices filled at the April Meeting. You may continue elections for the unfilled offices at the May meeting. The critical offices are President, Secretary, Treasurer and Trustees. Since two of the Trustees automatically move up to 2yr and 1 yr. you only need to elect a new 3 year Trustee. If you have any questions about offices, officer responsibilities, installation of officers, etc. please reach out to me or to Asst. Department Secretary Chrissy Harlan.

Please make sure to review the Attendance Sheet that is on the website. In order to achieve Outstanding Auxiliary, the Auxiliary must have been represented at every District Meeting (to which that Auxiliary belongs) and at least one MIT. If the attendance sheet is not correct, please email me asap so that we can correct the error.

Looking forward to seeing many of you at the upcoming District Conventions!

YOUTH VOLUNTEERS

If you have a young family member
(must be related to a VFW or Auxiliary member)
between the ages of 10 – 15

And

They would like to volunteer at the 2024 Department Convention

Please contact the Department Secretary – Treasurer Kim Sloan
at 520.307.7940

They must be accompanied by an adult who will be at convention and responsible for the young person when not “on duty”.

Unfortunately, we do not cover any of the costs for these volunteers.

We just want to expose them to the joys of volunteering and getting to know more about the VFW Auxiliary which they may want to join.



Americanism Lori Schaeffler

[National Ambassador's Feb Blog -
What Defines US?](#)

I am so proud of what each one of you do to assist our Veterans and our communities, I spent many hours reading all your reports. It made me smile and yes many of you brought smiles to my face with what you all are doing to make a difference. From the flag retirements, Wreaths Across America, providing Christmas Cheer to those who would not have without you and gosh what you are doing to help our younger generation understand what patriotism means.

Patriotism What does it mean to you?

Is it hearing the Star-Spangled banner playing over the radio? Is it hearing our National Anthem playing loudly before a sports event? Is it hearing a line trumpeter playing taps for one of our fallen? These are a few examples, but it is so much more. The dictionary defines it as one's life, devotion, and support for one's country. Does this mean you agree with everything our country does? **NO**. Patriotism means having love for your country at the same time questioning and standing firm in your beliefs. If you disagree with something, it's time to act to help improve our country.

Voting is one way to exercise that right. Midterm elections are approaching Have you considered helping your members get to the polls?? Why not make an afternoon meal on that Tuesday at your post so folks that are out voting can get together with each other, and of course decorate tables Patriotic. Patriotism we all have; we need to pass it forward. As JFK stated many years ago "Ask not what your country can do for you but what can you do for your country". It's our time to get Patriotism back to the front line of every home not just in times of tragedy. Patriotism is not part of our DNA – it must be learned. We must teach our younger generation. A healthy patriotism is rooted in a willingness to serve a cause larger than ourselves.

We're proud of our Veterans and Auxiliary Members and we are proud of YOU. Let's show the Community how you're #StillServing #auxtribe. Start planning for the May VFW Day of Service. Did you know that the VFW Day of Service shirts through the VFW National store website are only \$10. Wearing the shirt lets the community know that we are out in the Community making a difference.

So, who has done their Community Event educating the Community on #Morethanletters ??

To get a Citation from National I need the report by April.

PSST.... Would you or your Auxiliary like to assist with a donation or a Gift Basket, or Gift Card for President Bambi and Commander Bill's Homecoming on April 6th. From now Until March 20th tickets are \$25 after that date tickets go up to \$30 Lets ALL show them our love as we all know how their year started, They have both overcame a big obstacle this year and are doing AMAZING Lets show them that we care.

PLEASE CONTINUE TO DO THOSE BUDDY CHECKS, MAKE A DIFFERENCE AND SAVE A LIFE

**Auxiliary Outreach
Melissa Martin**

[National Ambassador's Feb Blog -](#)

Plenty of Time to Reach Out

Hello everyone, Keep those reports coming in. You have a few more weeks to get them in. March 31st is the deadline, and I would love to see all the Auxiliaries get outstanding awards.



Remember all you have to do is pair up with some other organization in your community and volunteer to help them with an event. Remember though you can only volunteer to help not plan it or donate any monies to the event, and it can not fit into any other programs that we have. I know for some small communities it has been a challenge but I have faith you all can do it.

Food banks usually need help packing boxes and libraries have used book sales that you can go in and help them organize books.



V F W
N A T I O N A L H O M E

Buddy Poppy & VFW National Home
Connie Hargraves

[National Ambassador's Feb Blog - Sharing Questions and Answers](#)

While loading groceries into my car at the grocery store, I noticed the vehicle next to me looked like someone was moving. It turned out that they had no place to stay and the mother and kids were living in their vehicle between apartments. She still needed her next paycheck to pay for the first, last and deposit on their new apartment. As I was giving her information on help in the area, I discovered her husband had been a Iraq combat veteran and recently passed reducing their income.

What an opportunity to tell this family about National Home and the opportunity it provided for her and her kids. She listened, found out it was a start to a great new life not only for her children but for her in learning how to manage without her Veteran who she had cared for. She was excited to contact the VFW National Home and find out how they could help.

I gave her my card and I hope she keeps in contact with me as to whether she would apply there or receive help from their crisis line resources. It is really a challenge when a person loses an income, and she was relieved to find out she could possibly get some much-needed help.

It is March, we have just about completed our program year. Have you sent in your Project Report? There are three National Certificates your

Auxiliary can receive. One is for using Buddy Poppy in another National Program, one is for educating the community about National home and one is for sending in your Health and Happiness fund. Please get your Project report forms in so you can get your citations from National, and it noted on the monthly progress report. We no longer do the end of year report, your committee chairs just need to fill out the project report under Programs on vfwauxaz.org, attach up to **three** pictures of their event and send it to the Department Program Chair after the event.

The VFW Chair and I are looking forward to getting your Buddy Poppy displays at the Department Convention. Please, if you do not have them ready for judging at your District convention, still bring your displays to the Department Convention. Both poppy types can be used on your display. Remember one poppy must be an original unaltered poppy with the white label. The entry form and rules can be found on vfwauxaz.org under Buddy Poppy National Home on the programs tab. No there has not been an update sent regarding metal poppies on the contest guide.

I want to thank all of the Auxiliaries for the support you have shown the “Buddy” Poppy and the National Home and for your support of the Special Project of our National Commander and President by raising funds for the Welcome Center/Store at the National Home remodel.

ATTENTION: NATIONAL HOME BOARD OF TRUSTEES OPENING!

If you have been a **life member of National Home for more than a year**, please consider applying for trustee at National Home. More Information can be found at <https://vfwnationalhome.org/about-us/leadership-board/>

Vacancies for 2024 include District 11 which consists of a representative from Arizona, Colorado, Nevada & Utah

Chief of Staff
Johnnie DeBoard

COMMUNICATING



How are you communicating with our members? Is it verbal, non-verbal, visual or written? No matter how you are communicating, start by thinking about what the reader or listener should think, feel and do once they've heard or read your message.

- Prepare to present your idea clearly whether you are using

verbal or written.

- Be clear about the topic and cohesive by staying on the topic. Complete your idea with supporting content.
- Be concise by eliminating unnecessary words.
- Be concrete by using precise words. Be correct and most importantly be courteous.
- Your body language and tone of voice are very important.

Are you crossing your arms or talking loud? Are you rolling your eyes? If you are doing those things the conversation will not go as planned.

- After the message has been heard ask questions, don't interrupt the person giving the message.
- Be respectful of others time and opinions.
- Make request not demands.
- Be a active listener and try to understand the perspectives of others. Respect others differences and be patient.

When sending out a email or text - after writing it, take time to read it. Is it a clear topic? Is it cohesive? Is there supporting content? Is it correct and courteous? Don't use all capital letters, your meaning can and usually is misunderstood.

Remember the way you communicate and present your ideas will leave a lasting impression on others.



Historian/Media Nancy Schatz

Happy almost beginning of Spring everyone— can you believe it's here...and in a few weeks, our President Bambi will be celebrating her homecoming. Wow has this year absolutely flown by!!!

I do want to thank all the great auxiliaries that have submitted their Historian/Media reports to me. So far, I've received 22 awesome reports and four videos. I'm so pleased that so many of you have submitted these projects to me. Thank you, thank you, thank you!!!

Please remember—the deadline for your programs is March 31, 2024, with submissions due by April 15, 2024. Do not miss out on being recognized at our Convention!! Who will receive “Best Interview” or “Most Engaging Member Interviewed”???

Hmmm...????

As I've said before, retaining our history is absolutely a must and something that we are auxiliary members look back on and always remember and use as a guide! It's a great way to show new and potentially new members what we have been doing...as the saying

goes, a picture is worth a thousand words and not only do they represent words, they prompt memories and thoughts of times gone by.

See you all at President Bambi's homecoming!!! I'll be there with my camera clicking...smile!!

Hospital Denise Williams

How is everyone doing? You are doing a fantastic job. I still have Auxiliaries that I have not received anything from; any project reports or request for Hospital Grants. Time is running out. I know you doing something; report it and get credit. Do not forget the year is ending fast. We want everyone to get credit for all their hard work.



I had one Auxiliary make an appointment with the VA Hospital to get a wish list so they can apply for a grant; to buy what they needed for the women veterans. Amazingly simple things like this go a long way. Now they are in the process of buying the items that are needed. Simple items we take for granted, our veterans really need. Some places let the homeless veterans come in once or twice a week to take showers, do laundry, and give them a hot meal. They also try to help them find a place to live or find employment. Stuff we take for granted some veterans do not have the options we do.

Next time you go to your local VA Facility, drop off a hygiene bag or two. If you can, drop one off for a man or woman. Everything trivial helps. If we all do this what a difference, we can make. If we can make one person smile and let them know they are loved, we will make a positive statement for someone.

On my Hospital page is a cute apron project I found. I would love for each of the auxiliaries to try this. Send me pictures of your completed aprons. Click [here](#) to find the instructions for the apron.

Thank you for all your hard work. Remember to turn in all your reports and apply for the grants.



VAVS Region 3

Quarterly CDCE meeting for Southern Arizona VA Health Care System was held January 24, 2024. Here are the highlights from that meeting!

I CARE – What motivates you to treat all those you serve and with whom you work with dignity, respect, and kindness? What’s your why?

INTRODUCTIONS AND ATTENDANCE: – Kimmy Kamerer, Chief, CDCE; Official FY24 Executive Board Members
Kathy Szakonyi, Chairperson, Representative

COMMENTS BY MANAGEMENT – Jenny Wasielewski, Assistant Director reported SAVAHCS received accreditation after Healthcare Inspections and shared about Gardens planted by Bldg 95 and blind rehab unit

Jennifer Gutowski—extended gratitude for Volunteers serving Veterans. SAVAHCS received a Patient satisfaction- trust score of 90%

Upcoming Events and new Programs:

SAVAHCS is gearing up for its 95th Birthday Celebration!! Many VIP Visitors will be invited.

New programs: Virtual Health resource center (Bldg 80 2nd floor), Long term COVID, 1st Dietetic internship program graduation, Hiring events include onboarding mental health providers.

Virtual Health Resource Center (VHRC) – Karissa Ervin:



- Virtual Health Resource Centers expand availability of virtual care resources to VA staff and Veterans, their families, and caregivers
- **SAVAHCS VHRC Grand Opening: Dec. 1**
- One-stop shop for VA Connected Care tools and programs:
 - Create, access, and use a My HealthVet Premium account
 - Use VA-issued tablets and other smart devices
 - Get started with VA Mobile apps
 - Connect Veterans to VA care teams using VA Video Connect (VVC)
 - Troubleshoot technical issues
- Staffed with experts for a “genius bar” experience
- VHRC goal is to improve:
 - Access to care
 - Effective care delivery
 - Quality and efficiency of care
 - Health outcomes
 - Veteran and staff experience

**Virtual Health
Resource Center**

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION



Christina Blake- Volunteer Support Specialist

Need to capture the occasional Volunteer hours- registered and non-registered volunteers. Please track your hours!
Christina also shared some photos of the AWARD Winning SAVAHCS Veterans' Day Float

2024 Volunteer & SERVE Program – Kristina Blake, Volunteer Support Specialist:

Reported on the Youth Volunteer Program:

students volunteering for veterans

Important Dates to Remember

- ❖ **Friday, April 5, 2024** - Deadline to Submit SERVE volunteer application.
- ❖ **Saturday, May 25, 2024** – Group Information Session 9:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.
- ❖ **Monday, June 3, 2024** - First day of 2023 Session
- ❖ **Tuesday, June 11, 2024** – 1st Brunch & Learn – Veteran Culture
- ❖ **Tuesday, June 25, 2024** – 2nd Brunch & Learn – Mock Code Blue response.
- ❖ **Monday, July 9, 2024** – 3rd Brunch & Learn – Recreation Therapy – music.
- ❖ **Thursday, July 25, 2024** - Youth Volunteer Recognition Party/ Scholarship presentation
- ❖ **Friday, July 26, 2024** – Last official day of summer SERVE Program

SAVAHCS Patient Needs / Programs/Updates –

Fisher House – Mike Ramsey, Fisher House Manager:

michael.ramsey2@va.gov 520-838-3680

FH Is celebrating **Eight** years of serving family members of hospitalized veterans. Even though FH house volunteers who cook, there are still needs such as Dish and laundry soap. Partial Needs list below.



SAVAHCS Fisher House Wish List

Quantity	Items Needed
	Dish soap
	Dish washer detergent
	Laundry softener (liquid)
	Dryer sheets
	Paper towels
	Tissue boxes

Quantity	
	Slipper socks
	Mini cans hair spray
	Make up remover towelettes
	Toothpaste (travel size)
	Tooth brushes & floss
	Cotton swabs
	Individual hand sanitizers
	Gift Cards (Used for food shopping or other needs)
	Fry's
	Walmart
	Visa
	MasterCard

b. **Patriot Pantry** – Kristen Ellis, Clinical Dietician: **792-1450 x-12878**

Patriot Pantry has been doing very well; however, since the Holidays the Pantry can use items such as Pasta Sauce, Individual Cereal boxes, Canned Chicken/Tuna, Applesauce, Peanut Butter, can openers etc. The Patriot Pantry also accepts gift cards and cash which allows the Pantry to purchase items when demands are high.

Community Living Center – Jessica Valez, Recreation Therapist-CLC extends its deep gratitude for items donated for Birthday Celebrations and the Christmas Stuffed stockings
The Greenhouse (supported by VAVS) outside of BLDG 60 is currently off limits to Patients and volunteers due to the uneven patio, which poses a safety hazard

Prepared by Brenda Price
VAVS Deputy
01 Feb 2024

**Legislative
JaNice Robertson**

Be an Advocate – Be Informed – Be Engaged



March is here and your VFW National Commander, his legislative staff, upcoming Department Junior Vice Commanders and yes, our Auxiliary President will be in Washington D.C. March 2-6 for meetings with the National committees and each State Representatives and/or Senators promoting our Priority Goals and talking points for our

Veterans.

These talking points will include bills and benefits for our military and Veterans in finances, health care, education, jobs, and of course mental health. The VFW and Auxiliary advocate for Veterans benefits and needs each year in mass on an executive level as well as throughout the year. They also let them know what the VFW has accomplished throughout the year and provide extensive input on the bills going through the process and committees to get our Veterans the best tools for their needs.

Please, if you are interested or want to learn more about what is said on Capital Hill, go to the apps store and download the VFW Washington Conference 2024. What is said and done here is great to bring back to your Auxiliaries and Posts to let them know what the VFW is doing for Veterans and also how your representatives in Washington vote through the year by knowing which legislation to follow.

Some talking points on a National level are HB736, Claim Sharks who are charging Veterans to fill out a claim telling them that they can get a claim prepared and a decision issued "faster" than accredited staff like the VFW employs. There is no way to prepare a claim faster or get it processed faster. Every veteran uses the same forms, follows the same rules, and goes through the same adjudication as every other veteran. They say they can get them processed faster due to backlog, VA "processes" claims, not anyone else. Our bill (HB736) focuses on "preparing" claims as that is where the Sharks are focusing their efforts to make money.

Arizona is the latest to try and stop lawyers from overcharging our Veterans for work our VSO officers can do. Recently our representatives at the State Capitol heard and voted on state bill HB2792 introduced by Travers, Payne, Gillette, and Seaman. The amendments added by Payne, due to comments from North Carolina and Florida lawyers, changed the bill to where even the originating Representatives had to vote down their own bill as it no longer protected veterans.

Other bills being introduced in February, with some not having a bill number as of this writing are:

- 2304 Change Buffalo Soldiers monument
- 2096 Tiny homes Exemptions on building codes
- 2143 Drivers license exemption fee for homeless
- 2603 Native American Veteran license plate
- 2392 Veteran Property tax exemptions
- 2552 Transitional Housing grants
- 2577 PTS Injury bill

The following insert is from VFW AZ State Legislative Chairman, Tom Judd - Due to the language in the Amendment to SB1308 makes it unconstitutional and it opens up Arizona for the Claim Sharks to come and do business. I ask you to email your opposition to SenateDems@azleg.gov also lpena@azleg.gov. Please get this to all your Members.

Thanks

Tom Judd

VFW AZ State Legislative Chairman

Also Note - I have updated all of the program reports to Kim, if you do not see your auxiliary noted as turned in a report, **PLEASE** contact **me**, so we can get it corrected not Kim. March 31st is coming quickly so we need all the program reports turned in. On a side note: if any of you have gone to the Civics 101 classes, please let me know. I feel this is a great program and encourage everyone to at least take a look at the information on the site. Special prize at convention for those who took the challenge.



Membership Becky Baldwin

Spring Has Sprung! March is here which means there is 31 days to complete a membership project.

I have been getting many in. Please when emailing, it is best to send in as a word document or a pdf, otherwise I am unable to open and read them. My Mail system is super slow, so email is preferred to ensure that it is received no later than April 15th.

Has your Auxiliary decided to raise dues? Now is the time to talk to those annual members about turning to life! Start planning your next program year, get those members in and active send a questioner on what sparks joy for them. Gaining members is important but keeping and re-energizing seasoned members is a big part of membership as well.

Membership is not a project you start and stop it is an ongoing continues process.

Check the department Facebook Page for 100% Auxiliaries but also 100% district! We have many districts who reached 100% and have been recognized there. Go Congratulate them!

Mentoring for Leadership

Doug Kinghorn



Its March already!!! Our end of the year is upon us. March 31st is the ending date to do your reports and send them to me, before April 15th.

Look through your Auxiliary's Facebook postings - has your members done a Mentoring activity? Has someone in your membership done or provided a mentoring moment. Look back through the newsletters this year to see if a report can be generated through the ideas that was given.

Pictures of the mentors and mentees, with names, what they are mentoring on.

Mentoring

M – Moral support – Listen to your member's ideas. We are here to increase our membership and encourage our members to take a more active role.

E – Encouragement – Our auxiliaries work together – Members are the key to be successful.

N – Neighborly – Foster a sense of community and support.

T – Training – Have education materials handy at your meetings. Have open discussions, Q & A with the senior members of your auxiliary. Attend the MITs.

O – Outgoing – Be welcoming, friendly, sociable, and approachable. Your members need to be assured they are needed and wanted to reach the auxiliary goals.

R – Resourceful – Find creative solutions. Provide kindness, consideration, and self-esteem. Build their confidence, so the mentees know they can move to positions in the auxiliary.

I – Inclusive – Embrace diversity and ensure everyone feels valued. Listen to your membership.

N – Nurturing – Encourage growth, development, and well-being. Ask if you can help in any way. Seek answers for the questions that has been presented to you.

G – Guidance – Point members in the right direction. Help their understanding, on values, compassion, and the willingness to work

together support our main goal.

VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES.

“A community that is engaged and working together can be a powerful force.”



Keith Doris Scholarship

If you are reading this as soon as you get the newsletter, I am reminding you that on March 4th starting at 4 P.M. Arizona time the Parade of Winners for VFW's Voice of Democracy will begin. You can log on to www.vfw.org and watch live as our Arizona winner is escorted by our Department President and State Commander! If you heard our winner speak at Winter Conference, you know what a powerful speaker she is and we are all cheering her on!

While this coming weekend will be the big finish for the National Patriot Pen and Voice of Democracy contest of the Program year, we still have two National Scholarships to finish as well as our own Arizona Scholarships...so lets finish those strong!

Young American Creative Patriotic Art Contest is due to your local VFW Auxiliary by March 31, 2024.

3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contest is due to your local VFW Auxiliary by March 31, 2024.

Both the Young American Creative Patriotic Art and 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art winning entries from your Auxiliaries must be received by me no later than April 15th for the Department judging. The first place winner for each of these contests, will then be sent to National for the National judging.

Arizona VFW Auxiliary Merit Scholarship with Completed Application & Binder must be received by me as Department Chairman no later than April 1, 2024

Arizona VFW Auxiliary Educational Grant with Completed Application and Essay must be received by me as Department Chairman no later than April 1, 2024.

Keep in mind that the Scholarship Program does not end with the Contest deadlines. We work to continually educate the public about all our scholarship opportunities year round! Thank you for all your hard

work to help our youth with these Contests!

**Below is information on a scholarship provided through the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. This information is also on the Department webpage - www.vfwauxaz.org under programs/scholarships.

My name is Dara McGuinness, and I am a Program Manager for the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. GLI is excited to work with the [US Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Legacy Project](#) to commemorate Veterans and service members interred in VA national cemeteries and VA grant-funded state, territorial, and tribal Veterans cemeteries through the discovery and sharing of their stories. As a part of this grant, we are launching the [2024 War II: Portraits of Service Awards](#).

According to the National WWII Museum, only 167,284 WWII veterans were still alive at the end of 2022, just one percent of the sixteen million Americans who served during the defining military conflict of the twentieth century. As the WWII generation recedes into history, GLI believes that it is essential to instill in younger generations a deeper understanding of their service and sacrifice. The Portraits of Service contest aims to encourage students to commemorate their stories.

Students will create a biographical portrait of a WWII veteran. Portraits could include written reports, eulogies, videos, podcasts, poems, or songs. A teacher or guardian can submit student work on their behalf. GLI will offer **ten \$500 awards** to top submissions, and winners will be featured on our website. The deadline to submit is **Friday, May 3, at 8:00 am EST**.

We are reaching out to you in an effort to involve the students in your network in this commemoration of Veteran history in the United States. Please help us in our mission by spreading the word and sharing the award info: <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/veterans-legacy-program/student-contest>

Please feel free to email me if you have any questions or wish to learn more about the program.

Thank you!

Best regards,
Dara McGuinness

Veterans and Family Support Jeannie Hampton

[National Ambassador's Feb Blog - Show Your Appreciation](#)



Partnerships in the Community

It's not just "one and done". Build a relationship with community organizations. It may start off by just getting a foot in the door and learning about a really great Veteran Program the Auxiliary can embrace and support for years to come. That partnership will be remembered when the Veteran Organization may have need.

Honor Flight Arizona

<https://honorflightsaz.org/veteran-application/>

Invite a Veteran to apply. Sit with them. Learn their story. Help them through the application process. This could be a trip of a lifetime that otherwise might be a missed opportunity. Currently there are upcoming flight dates listed through May 2024.

March 29- Vietnam Veterans Day- host a Welcome Home Celebration.

[Make the Connection | Videos & Info for Military Veterans](#)

Coming full circle- suicide awareness is still on the forefront. We started the year with full court press information- is it still out, available, fresh? Everyone receives information differently. The "dog tags" DT4Life.org are great to have on hand. Most Veterans will carry a dog tag- will they pick up a card with the 988 Press 1 information. It seems a simple reminder- update where the available Suicide Crisis information is located. If it was your first time through the door- would you see it? It could save a life.

Be Connected Arizona [Be Connected: Help & Support for Arizona Veterans, Military, and families \(beconnectedaz.org\)](#)

So many different facets of assistance- emergency situations to long term care. Navigation Training dates webinar sessions to learn about the stress Active Duty Service members face and why it is so difficult to transition to civilian life.

Arizona Caregiver Association

Caregiver Respite [Caregiver Respite - Arizona Caregiver Coalition \(azcaregiver.org\)](#)

Service Dogs

Soldiers Best Friend Arizona [Home : Soldiers Best Friend Overview : What We Do : Soldiers Best Friend](#)

We all know how much our own pets help us to cope with the day to

day- imagine having that one special friend that loves you unconditionally when the world is just too much. Soldiers Best Friend is Peoria based with training locations in Phoenix, Tucson, Prescott, Sierra Vista and Flagstaff. Being the month of the Military Dog- let's give a shout out to our support animals!

Tanner Thomas Village for Veterans in Phoenix- forever homes for Veterans who otherwise face Homelessness- [Tanner Thomas Village for Veterans - Tanner Community Development Corporation \(tcdccorp.org\)](https://www.tcdccorp.org) “Adopt a Casita” Chuck Byers spoke about this housing for Homeless Veterans at Winter Conference and introduced the “Adopt a Casita” stated all the requirements for the City of Phoenix permit had been met and were looking to break ground, now slated for the 1st week in March. To Adopt a Casita - \$800 fully furnishes, \$1000 allows the Veteran to personalize their “forever home”.

VA Solid Start and TAPS Transition Assistance (to civilian life) Program

<https://benefits.va.gov/transition/solid-start.asp>

The Solid Start program requires the VA to call the Military Service Member to follow up with them after they leave their military duty 90 days, 180 days and 365 days post separation to follow up with their adjusting to civilian life.

<https://www.benefits.va.gov/transition/tap.asp>

The TAPS Program is an online course on where to find the benefits and resources available to the post duty service member transitioning to civilian life.

VFW Veteran Resources through VFW.org

As this Auxiliary Program year is ending- did you look to the Resources and explore or learn about everything available to the Veteran/Active Duty Military through the VFW?

*Unmet Needs [Financial Grants - VFW](#)

*MAP Grants [Troop Support - VFW](#)

*Sports Clips Help a Hero Scholarships [Student Veteran Support - VFW](#) Fall 2024 Semester applications open until April 30 to apply “Service Members and Veterans” up to \$5,000

Thank you for all you do to continue to support Veterans in your Community.

Banding together for our Veterans!

Youth
Irene Nowacki

[National Ambassador's Feb Blog - Working with Youth](#)



THIS IS IT!!! We are in the final stretch of our program year. It is time to get your members together and have a meeting to go over what reports you have done and what still needs to be done. I am excited to say that over half of the auxiliaries have turned in a Youth report this year and I have received some truly outstanding ones.

Remember, reports must be completed by **March 31st, 2024** and turned in by **April 15th, 2024** to gain credit towards your Auxiliary getting its Outstanding Auxiliary award. For those Auxiliaries that submitted reports that followed the National criteria, be on the lookout for your National Citation.

It has been amazing to be able to see what you all have done thru out the year with the youth in your area. Getting involved with them will not only help to strengthen our bonds with them but to also help to support our membership. The youth of today is the future of the VFW Auxiliary of tomorrow. Keep getting involved with them and show them that they are important to us. Involve them in everything no matter how big or small.

It is also the last call for getting entries for the Get Excited for the Red, White and Blue singing contest and Illustrating America contest. If your auxiliary was fortunate enough to receive more than one entry, please contact other auxiliaries in your area to see if they need one. We want to showcase as many youth submissions as possible. They all deserve to be recognized.

Keep those reports coming!

Program Activity Reports Lynn Pierre

Hello and thanks again for all your ongoing hard work!

Project Activity Reports (PAR), are coming in and I thank you for the diligence we need to be able to report all these extremely important numbers to National at the end of the year.

If you have given out Flags, American or Prisoner of War (POW), please remember to report them. Something I find many Auxiliaries fail to remember to list is the amount you are donating to Food Banks, Homeless Shelters, etc. These are very important numbers and as we



are always proud to donate, we need to remember to report those donations.

A very important thing to remember in order to help out your Post is to fill out the Community Activity report with everything you have done and forward it to your Post Commander or Quartermaster. They too need to fill out monthly reports regarding activity and need to know this information. The form can be found on our Department Website at VFWAUXAZ.ORG. Its so easy to complete and will help your Post complete their objectives as well.

You all have been doing so much work this year and I am so very proud to include your numbers every month. Many of the questions included on this report are simple yes or no and the form is so easy to complete. Again, if you would rather fill out by hand and send by “snail mail” that is perfectly acceptable. Please call or email if you should need any help and, again the President does NOT need to do all the work. You can always ask someone in your Auxiliary who like to do these things to complete it for you and let you take a final look at it before sending.

I look forward to receiving the remainder of your reports for the year and wish you much success in all your planned events coming up!

Program Activity Reports

The PAR form can be found at www.vfwauxaz.org under Resources/Program Activity Reports as well as behind log in.

Login/Members Only, sign in and then click on Program Activity Report.

A black x means that the PAR was done using this year's form, and a red x means that the auxiliary used an old form from a previous year. For an auxiliary to receive the “Arizona Outstanding Auxiliary Award” they must use the current 2023-2024 PAR FORM.

Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary in Arizona | 326 E. Burrows St., Tucson, AZ 85704

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