

## **Our Holiday Mission of Support and Connection**

The holiday season is envisioned as the most joyful time of the year, a season pictured with celebration, warmth, and gratitude. However, for many veterans, service members, and their families, holidays can also be a period of stress, loneliness, financial strain, or emotional difficulty. A vital role we hold is to ensure these individuals are supported, remembered and connected.

As VFW Auxiliary members, part of our mission is to make sure these individuals are supported, remembered, and connected with through meaningful action by us.

Veterans & Family Support is part of the foundation of this great organization. I challenge all of you rise to the important task of supporting this part of our mission. During these holiday months, its importance becomes especially clear.

While some of us gather in celebration, others face seasonal challenges that aren't always visible. Many of Arizona's veterans live far from family, struggle with mobility issues, or face PTSD, depression, or anxiety that can be intensified. Their only family close by might be you or other post members. Think of the Gold Star families, often navigating this season with a mixture of cherished memories and renewed sorrow. For them, the empty chair at the table is a powerful reminder of sacrifice.

Let's not forget financial challenges can also rise sharply this time of year. Veterans living on fixed incomes, single-parent military households, or families coping with recent hardship can feel overwhelmed by holiday pressures. Even the most resilient among us can feel the strain.

What can we do? One of the simplest yet most meaningful gifts we can offer is connection. A phone call, a handwritten card, a visit, a shared holiday meal: each can remind a veteran or family that you and their community have not forgotten them. Let's not forget check-ins with homebound veterans and veteran families or coordinate small teams to visit those living alone or in care facilities. These visits don't need to be elaborate; often, a sincere conversation or a few minutes of fellowship can brighten a day more than any gift basket ever could. Even a phone or video call can lift spirits. No matter what the method, the message is the same, you are valued, and you are part of our family.

When we reach out and connect, we are strengthening our entire veteran community. Our acts support our mission in its purest form.....service. I challenge you all to do something, however small to support our mission.

Bless our veterans, service members, their families, and our communities. May we close 2025 favorably and open 2026 with renewed vigor to do the great work of this organization.

Regards

Ray Williams

