



# Proud to Serve

## 2017 Department of New York Convention Induction Ceremony

The new Commander addressed the membership: “The day I first walked up the parking lot the night of my first post meeting I could never have imagined being before you today as your State Commander. As I moved up through the chairs from my Post, Council and District I have been blessed to have learned so much from many in this room and from some who are no longer with us. We are about to embark on another VFW year with many challenges before us and I have given much thought to where we have been and where we are going to go in the future. “

“To truly serve our veterans we need to work as our forefathers worked - as one. To that end, my theme this year will be, “Back to Basics – the Foundation for Success”. We are going back to basics in many of the things we do this year.”

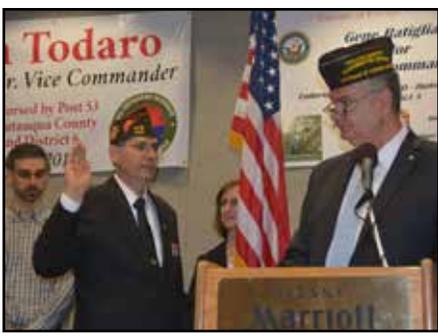
“Our survival as a viable Department rests with membership. We need to continue to recruit new members but must make an even better effort in bringing back members who have failed to renew their dues for one reason or another.”

“I pledge to you that I will do all I can to

support you. It will take all of us as a team and I am sure we can get the job done. So, Let's do it together.”



Eugene Ratigliano takes the oath of office along with his Senior Vice Thomas Todero, Junior Vice Thomas Howard, Quartermaster Daniel McMahon, Surgeon Daniel Kell, Judge Advocate Peter Pennelle along with all nine District Commanders and Administrative Appointees.



Robert Wallace, PCIC, Director of the Washington Office, conducts the swearing in of Commander Ratigliano. Commander Ratigliano takes the gavel and swears to serve the Department of New York and its members for the coming 2018-19 year.



Navy Veteran Ratigliano being piped aboard as the Department Commander by Retired Chief Petty Officer Marcello Rotunda and Army Veteran Harris Bartz both from District 6.



Commander Ratigliano's wife, Jean and family, are escorted in.



Outgoing State Commander Burke pins Commander Ratigliano.



A lighter moment with Sr. Vice Tom Todero and Jr. Vice Tom Howard.

Photographer: John Brunato

Editor: Don Mackey

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## New York State Overseas Veteran

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### \*\* PUBLICATIONS:

*Overseas Veteran* is published four times annually by the Department of New York in July/August/Sept., Oct./Nov./Dec., Jan./Feb./Mar. and April/May/June. All publications are digital format online and available on the VFWNY web site [WWW.VFWNY.COM](http://WWW.VFWNY.COM). Publications are 8.5" x 11" for individual printing capability. One dollar of each member's annual dues, paid to a VFW Post in New York State, is used for a year's subscription to the *Overseas Veteran*. Cost to non-members and widows of VFW members: \$10.00; payable in advance to Department of New York, 69 Sand Creek Road, Albany, NY 12205.

### \*\* ARTICLES:

Articles: Any and all articles involving and/or including the Veterans of Foreign Wars, its members, member communities, awards and activities are welcome.

### \*\* SUBMISSION & FORMAT:

Please prepare all articles in Microsoft Word (version 2003 or newer) or plain text. JPG/JPEG is the only picture format accepted and captions are appropriate. E-mail all articles and pictures as attachments with the sender's name, address and phone number in the base of the e-mail. Submissions from other sources must have complete credits such as publication name, address and dates published.

### \*\* EDITORIAL POLICY:

Inappropriate, demeaning, unduly critical articles and/or statements will not be published. Article length, inaccuracies, composition and other miscellaneous errors and/or mistakes may be edited.

Although every effort is made to maintain an honorable and accurate publication, the Department of New York and/or its staff, editor and other publication participants are not responsible for the content, views and/or positions of any article(s)/submissions.

**\*\* ALL ARTICLES AND PICTURES MUST BE E-MAILED TO: [CITadmin@VFWNY.com](mailto:CITadmin@VFWNY.com). They become the sole property of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of New York.**

### \*\* DEADLINE:

Deadline: Articles must be submitted by the 15th of each month....July, October, January and April.

### \*\* GRAPHIC DESIGN

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## Eugene Ratigliano

State Commander

Greetings Comrades:

July 2018 begins a new VFW year and I am humbled by your support in electing me as your Department

Commander for the upcoming year and send my sincere congratulations to all our District, Council and Post Commanders who were elected to represent you, our members, in 2018-19. As your 100th State Commander I want to assure you that we will continue our mission of supporting our veterans.

As I espoused in my acceptance speech at the State Convention, My theme this year will be, "Back to Basics - The Foundation for Success." If we are to succeed we must all be working together and we will all be working as one this year. All our conferences will be together with the Auxiliary and the goal is to get back to the basics of our organization. This past weekend we concluded a successful Officer Training Seminar in Binghamton, NY with over 150 participants with many of them being first timers and young post 9/11

veterans. A great number of critique sheets were completed by the attendees and will be closely reviewed to consider consolidating some topics, expanding others and removal of overlap to improve the program for next year.

Our strongest efforts in the coming months will be and **MUST BE** membership this year. The Department of New York has fallen below the 50,000 member threshold which puts into jeopardy our ability to remain a strong voice in both the Eastern Conference and in the National Organization. Our membership numbers impact the number of appointments the Department will be authorized as well as the strength of our voting power in many of the important resolution and amendment decisions that may be proposed this year. We have already begun giving your Districts the tools to make you successful in membership at the Post level. Each district has been given a VFW recruiting tent and VFW District table cover for your use in projecting that professional appearance when you go to local fairs, car shows, gun shows, etc. Take advantage of

— *STATE COMMANDER, continued on page 3*



## Harold Burke Jr.

State Adjutant

Comrades,

Spring is on the way. Has your Post submitted all the required reports? Has your Post purchased Buddy Poppies? Has

your Post donated to the Commander's Special Project? If not, please complete your reports and mail them to Headquarters at 69 Sand Creek Road, Albany, New York 12205. The reports may be faxed to 518-426-8904 or email them to [Adjutantdny@vfwny.com](mailto:Adjutantdny@vfwny.com).

As we prepare for the many upcoming events to include Nominations of Post Officers which open in March and remain open until the Election of Post officers in April, please remember to submit your Post Election Reports using the National On-Line Membership System (OMS) immediately following your Post Elections of Officers. If your Post Quartermaster has not accessed this system, we are suggesting that they go to the National Website and sign-in today as a new user and get their Quartermaster password.

National would like all Election Reports submitted by using this system as this will ensure that the Election Report is accurately reported and distributed to the Department.

VFW Posts may change their Quartermasters this year. The IRS requires that the all new Quartermasters file IRS Form 8822-B within 60 days of taking office. This form provides the Quartermaster's current contact information and current address in the event that the IRS send notifications and/or contact the Quartermaster. There is a link on the Department WEB Site to download the IRS Form 8822-B.

The Department Website is up and appears to be operating well. If you see areas which could be improved please contact Don Mackey or Monica on your concern.

If we can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at 518-463-7427.

**Harold "Hal" Burke Jr.**  
**PJAG/PSC/PSQM**  
**State Adjutant**

## VFW Elects Vincent ‘B.J.’ Lawrence as New National Commander

*‘There’s an energy in this organization that’s just chomping at the bit to be released’*



**KANSAS CITY, Mo. (July 25, 2018)** — Vincent “B.J.” Lawrence, of Alamogordo, N.M., was elected today as the new national commander of the 1.2 million-member Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, a congressionally-chartered veterans service organization comprised of eligible veterans and military service members from all five branches of the armed forces.

VFW membership eligibility requires honorable service in a war or expedition on foreign soil or in hostile waters. Lawrence served in the U.S. Army from 1983 to 1986 and earned his eligibility by serving in South Korea, where an armistice, or cease-fire agreement, has existed since July 27, 1953, and where war could erupt at a moment’s notice. He joined VFW Post 7686 in Alamogordo, N.M., in 2000, and immediately began moving the organization forward into the new millennium. He has proven to be a highly effective and dynamic leader, serving in a myriad of critical leadership positions, to include being elected commander at every level of the organization. His theme for the year and challenge to the \$102 million nonprofit organization is to “Make It Happen.”

He said “everything the VFW wants costs money, but everything the VFW wants is for someone else.” Through donations and corporate partnerships, the organization has provided more than \$10 million in financial grants to help almost 9,000 veteran and military families through tough times since 2004. It has awarded almost \$5 million in educational grants since 2014 to help more than 1,100

veterans and military service members to complete their degrees, and its youth patriotic scholarship competition, which drew some 133,000 middle and high school entries this year, awarded \$3 million to local, state and national winners. The VFW national organization also testified before Congress more than three dozen times this year to improve quality of life programs and healthcare for veterans, service members and their families, and VFW’s nationwide cadre of trained and accredited service officers helped more than 500,000 veterans to recoup \$7.7 billion in disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs in 2017.

Aiding VFW’s corporate relationships is its VFW Foundation, an IRS 501(c)(3) charity that earlier this month was awarded a coveted four-star rating by Charity Navigator, which sets the Foundation apart from its peers and demonstrates to the public its trustworthiness.

For all the organization already does for others every day, Lawrence now wants the 1.2 million-member VFW to “Make It Happen” even more in every community across the nation and world. “There’s an energy in this organization that’s just chomping at the bit to be released,” he said in his acceptance speech today at the Kansas City Convention Center. “It comes from a younger generation who wants to get their hands dirty out in their communities, and it comes from an older generation who knows that the way we did things in the past no longer works, but whose experience and knowledge remains valuable.”

The new VFW national commander is also putting a new focus on supporting the 6,400 existing VFW Posts, on creating new Posts, and on recruiting and retention of new members, as well as remaining focused nationally on ending sequestration, fixing the VA, and recovering missing and unaccounted-for service members from all wars.

— *STATE COMMANDER, continued from page 3*

this and contact your District Commander when you need them. We are also working on new posters with membership referral cards so that leads can be generated for you to follow up and increase your membership within your posts. The at-large members listing will be provided to you for further follow-up and a Department mailing program initiated to generate even more leads for you to follow. Now is the time to work on getting your unpaid members back into your posts, not in December when many of you think their dues will expire. Right now, we have the weather with us and provides you the opportunity to get to those local events to recruit new members. Take the opportunity now to look at the All-State Program requirements and my membership program book. I am providing a number of incentives for the individual member, the Post, the Council and the District as a reward for the hard work I know you will put forth to make the numbers. The National Membership Program Book is also available to you on the Department and National websites and offers even more incentives for your hard work. We as a collective group need to not only make the Department of New York 100% in membership but put the Department back where it should be within the National organization - a leader of the pack

as an All-American Department. I have faith in every one of you that we can do it this year.

You will see more articles in this year’s Overseas Veteran Newspaper from your District Commanders enabling you to keep abreast of news and happenings within your District as well as articles from our Department Chairman to keep you abreast of updates to VFW Programs and due dates for program submission requirements.

Take advantage of the Department website to keep up-to-date on program due dates and Post MemStats statistics. Communications with your Post officers, members, Council, District and the Department are essential. Feel free to call for assistance at any time. If your Council or District Commander does not have the answer ask them to reach out to the Department and we will get the answer for you. And lastly, don’t forget mentorship. For newly elected officers, ensure your officers down the line are informed and keep them in the loop. For new members coming into the post, make sure they have a ‘buddy’ to pair up with to show them the ropes. Don’t have them hanging out on a limb all by themselves or they will go into that black hole and never see them at the post or a meeting again.



## New Yorker Becomes New VFW National Senior Vice Commander



**KANSAS CITY, Mo. (July 25, 2018)**— William J. “Doc” Schmitz, of Corning, N.Y., was elected Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States on July 25, 2018, at the 119th VFW National Convention in Kansas City, Mo.

Doc earned his nickname by serving as a corpsman in the U.S. Navy from 1966 to 1970. He earned his VFW eligibility by serving in Vietnam, where he was attached to U.S. Marine Corps infantry and artillery units. In recognition of his service, he received the National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal.

He joined the VFW in 1971 at Post 524 in Corning, N.Y., where he

maintains his Gold Legacy Life membership. He has served as Post commander, District 5 commander and VFW Department of New York commander. He has also been the Southern Tier County Council commander, and editor of the New York State Overseas Veteran publication for nine years. In 2007, he was elected Department surgeon, where he served for five consecutive years, and he served as VFW National’s surgeon general from 2010 to 2011, and as VFW National’s inspector general from 2015 to 2016.

Doc worked for the Department of Corrections as a registered nurse and acting nurse administrator for 30 years before retiring. He is currently employed as the director of Veterans Issues for Rep. Tom Reed of New York’s 23rd Congressional District.

Doc and his wife, Deborah, reside in Corning, N.Y.



### Tom Todaro

*State Sr. Vice Commander* —————

First of all I would like to thank Post 53, Chautauqua County Council, District 6 and all the comrades for their support on my election as State Senior Vice Commander. I would also like to congratulate William “Doc” Schmitz on being elected as the National

Senior Vice Commander and Gene Ratigliano on being elected State Commander.

As we start a new year let’s keep the momentum going to recruit new members and retain our existing members. Let’s see if we can put New York over the top this year and attain 100%; I know we can do it!! As I’ve said before, retention is the goal, not just to sign up new members, but to mentor them and keep them active. Use the installment life plan; this works and we don’t have to worry about them not paying dues annually.

Our Commander has asked that we go out fairs, trade shows, car shows, etc. and set up the tents that we gave to each District and RECRUIT new members; every member is on the Membership Team!!! Continue to work with the Student Veterans of America groups at the colleges and continue to bring them into the fold. If you have a college nearby find out if they have an SVA group there and try to meet with them and foster relations. Go in and make a presentation on what the VFW has to offer and find out if they need help or if they need to file claims. A service officer should be involved in every outing, whether it be a County Service Officer or an Accredited Service Officer, to will enhance the recruiting effort. The Senate has passed the Forever GI Bill, which means that the 15 year limit on using it has been lifted, now a veteran can use it anytime during his lifetime. The VFW was instrumental in getting this passed. You can present information like this during your presentations to the SVA.

So let’s get out there and have a banner year!!

**Yours in Comradeship,  
Thomas Todaro  
State Senior Vice Commander**



### Dan McMahon

*State Quartermaster* —————

As I had made mention at the June C of A, the status of the properties around the State need immediate attention. I am attempting to clear up these before the Fall Conference. Recently the Liberty Post has been purchased. There are 3 other properties which need attention. Post 54’s building and property in Niagara Falls has had 2 interested parties looking into it. Post 355 in Sloan, Erie County, is going to look at revitalizing it with several Posts which have lost and or turned their charters. Post 199 in North Collins, also Erie County is almost gone.

I recently spoke with the Department Attorney concerning the status of the post homes and their local tax exemption status. Each Post with a property exemption status in their local community, must reapply each year. The local Tax Assessors Office usually mails out these forms. This requires the Post to complete, sign and return it within a certain time. The form number is RP-420-a/b-Rnw-I (9/08) and this is where a downloadable form can found <https://www.tax.ny.gov/forms/orpts/exemption.htm>. Just as the Quartermaster must file an IRS form 8822-B, Change of Responsible Party-Business form, so must each post with a real property exemption file a RP-420-a/b-Rnw-I (9/08) with the local tax assessor’s office. If there are any questions, contact your local assessor’s office.

The By-Laws of the VFW at all levels are very clear about money and funds. I must caution each and every Post, County, District and Department fund raising event, all monies collected must be turned over to the respective Quartermaster for accounting and depositing. **Do Not Hold** the money until the end of the event. If any money needs to be paid out, a check or checks can be made out by the quartermaster.

One final note: this past year there were too many annual dues paying officers removed due to non-payment of their dues by their anniversary date. Every annual member receives 3 renewal notices by the US Post Office. If the member’s e-mail address is on file, that member receives an additional 3 notices. Quartermasters need to be aware of those members who’s dues are about to expire and make contact with them. If that officer is or has done an exceptional job, why not pay that individual’s life time membership!

**Yours in Comradeship,  
Dan McMahon**



## Daniel L. Kell

**State Surgeon**

I would like to take this time to thank my post, County, District and Department of New York Comrades for supporting me and giving me the opportunity to serve as your Department of New York Surgeon. I am looking forward to the challenges that will come before me with this position in the coming year.

As this year begins, my vision is to communicate with the District Commanders/VAVS Chairman and visit the VA Medical Facilities and Veteran Nursing Homes in New York State, talk with the VA Hospital Staff as well as the veterans.

**Yours in Comradeship,  
Daniel L. Kell  
Department of New York Surgeon**



## Roland Abare

**Membership Report**

The State Convention just ended and we had the National Membership Director host a Membership Training Program that provided free information for all in attendance. The Membership Application has changed so make sure you get the new applications and review it

before you use it. Please pay attention to the Member's Declaration on the back of the application and have the member sign it when transferring to a new post. Our Membership Meeting was a success, and all had a laugh or two. Wow imagine that!! We had fun and got work done... so you can do it too!

Each District has membership materials for all to use. The State Commander has provided a table cover with emblem and District name as well as tent for each District. We want posts to give your District Commanders venues to set up a table for recruiting and let's get the VFW out in front of the public. Your Membership Team is ready and willing to assist you in any way. We will come to your post to train you on membership recruiting techniques and we will assist you at venues to help you recruit, but we need you to let us know when and where and how we can assist you.

NOW is the time to get started. You can call headquarters to let them know you need us, or contact our Membership Vice-chair Marlene Roll at 716-949-7840. We want to have FUN and work hard so your Post, County and District will be the best ever!!

The Membership Team will be monitoring this year's efforts and encourage you as we go. There are several awards for your efforts so let's clean the vault of all prizes!!

My Congratulations to all newly Elected Officers at the Post, County and Districts. We took an oath now let's live up to it the best we can. I know family and work come first but will you allow us to be second?

I thank you in advance for the work you are about to undertake. Let's have FUN and the work will be easy!!  
God Bless You, the VFW and the USA

## Bob Mitchell

**State Inspector**

Comrades,

A new Inspection year is upon us and it is imperative that we get an early start to ensure that each Post in the Department of New York is Inspected in accordance with Department and National guidelines and as directed by our State Commander. As a reminder, the purpose of our Inspection process is to ensure that each Post in our Department is operating in a manner that supports the purposes set forth in our Congressional Charter, complies with National By-Laws, preserves the financial integrity of our Posts and most importantly, protects the interests of our membership.

I am confident that our Inspection Teams will provide you with a very informative, educational and constructive inspection this year. I encourage you to work with them, learn from them and if necessary, complete any follow-up items as may be required. Lastly, take pride in having your Inspection "accepted" by the Department and knowing that you are one of our "squared away" Posts!

**Yours in Comradeship,  
Bob Mitchell  
State Inspector**



## Mike Webster

**Veterans & Military Support  
Programs**

Please make your donation today. To help the Department show participation and receive the credit due your Post, or yourself, make the check out to the "Department of NY VFW" and annotate in the memo block "Veterans & Military Support Programs" and then mail it to the Department.

Funded by the VFW, Sports Clips, as well as other donators and supporters, the "Help A Hero Scholarship Program" has granted scholarships to more than 1100 service members and veterans for just under 5 million dollars. Just this past year the bill came to \$700,000. Applications are currently being accepted for the 2019 Spring Semester.

For "UnMet Needs" Burger King has generously donated over \$5 million, but the VFW has paid out over \$10 million. These payments go out to service members, their families and veterans. See the need.

I thank you in advance. I have the pins and I will see you at the Fall Conference.

**Mike Webster  
Chairman**

***Bring Our Troops  
Home Safely!***





## DSO Sees a ‘Red Light’ with ‘Green Alert’; New VA Secretary and Veteran’s Choice Seeks to Continue Funding

*John Bartow, DNY DSO Eastern Region*

### Green Alert Resolutions Being Discussed Throughout VFW Organization

Most of us are familiar with Federally operated Alert Systems that help law enforcement, and the general public, find lost citizens. Amber Alerts hopefully assist us in quickly finding lost or abducted children. Silver Alerts have proven effective at helping us find our senior citizens when they wander or are lost. Naturally, these systems are appealing as they can maximize the amount of resources that search for a missing person in a very timely fashion, and in turn, save lives. That appeal has now entered the veteran demographic, and causes me great concern. On the surface, the “Green Alert” system is emotionally compelling. There are examples of the system working in Wisconsin, where it was initiated through State Law. The idea is obviously well intentioned and certainly has the ability to help our at risk veteran population. So, why would the VFW be against a legislated system that could save the lives of missing veterans? I hope to illustrate why I believe VFW should not endorse the “Green Alert” system and why our organization should stand careful watch over the reputation and national image of our veterans.

The term ‘Alert’ implies that there is an emergency taking place and that someone, or many, are in immediate danger. Our children and elderly are often without their full range of judgment and awareness when they wander or are abducted. Naturally, a full force response is appropriate for the effort to quickly locate them and return them to safety. It can be argued that a veteran with a mental health issue can be equally helpless and require an ‘All Hands’ response when unaccounted for or wandering, especially when the issue is suicide prevention. On the surface, it is very difficult to argue against. When discussed in committees, any hesitancy on the part of skeptics was met with the assurance that all cases would be thoroughly and completely reviewed by law enforcement, medical providers, and state alert agencies to ensure that the ‘alert’ was appropriate and legal. This did not decrease my concern at all, in fact, instead, it increased my opposition to the resolution. Our veterans that are service connected for mental health issues like PTSD can easily appear gravely troubled when viewed only through the lens of their mental health records. It can be confidently presumed that once an alert has been asked for, that responding agencies would seek to move quickly. In most cases, they would see a file that presents a picture of a veteran who is potentially dangerous to his/herself and possibly to others. Simply put, the public would see a “Rambo on the loose,” while in reality, this is very rarely the case. How rare? In our experience here in Albany, we have yet to meet a veteran, even one who is 100 percent service connected for severe and chronic PTSD, with high indexes for suicidal and homicidal ideations, who would meet the “image” that could potentially be portrayed of them by the court of public opinion. Instead, we see more veterans who struggle

internally with mental health challenges, but who are respectful of others, authority, and their own potential for crisis. Most of these veterans lead quiet and “normal” lives just like their civilian counterparts. They have arguments with their spouses and spend a night or two away, just like any civilian would. They enjoy “getting lost” for a while, just like all of us like to do now and then. And just like the rest of society, they choose to turn off their cell phones, emails, and Twitter accounts and just be at peace with themselves for a time.

With all of this in mind, those of us that are skeptical of the “Green Alert” system share concerns that the stigma surrounding our veterans would only worsen if authorities, lawmakers, and angry loved ones or family members misused the system, or worse, used it for retribution or out of needless panic. It is my strong opinion that our veterans would be cast in a negative light and that the implementation of the “Green Alert” would see an immediate and drastic level of reporting. Many veterans with PTSD or other service related mental health conditions are challenged with the urge to “get away from it all,” from time to time. Most of these veterans are not suicidal in any way. Does a veteran who argues with a family member and storms off need to be portrayed as a loose criminal? Is this presumption and criticism an overreaction on the part of skeptics? You be the judge.

The Wisconsin Legislature passed 2017 Wisconsin Act 175 without opposition last year. I encourage all readers who use a computer to see this Act as it is implemented. The website is : <http://wisconsincrimealert.gov/GreenAlert.html>. Please notice that the title of the website includes the words “crime alert” and that the first thing users see is a large banner that reads: “Wisconsin Crime Alert Network.” Is that really something that we want to associate with veterans who served our nation so honorably? Just because a veteran is missing does not infer that he or she has committed any crime whatsoever. I can provide many dozens of examples of veterans, who on paper and in medical files, appear potentially lethal and threatening, while in reality, are harmless and pose no threat to the public. What will public opinion decide on this matter? Will it be a veteran who is presumed to be “armed and dangerous?” Will some civilians be afraid that there is truly a “Rambo on the loose?” Additionally, there is certainly the potential for very negative outcomes if a veteran who is “missing” is approached by responding officials who are certain to be armed, most especially if that veteran already suffers from PTSD. If that veteran was in no danger, imagine the consequences to their mental health if they were suddenly confronted with several or more armed law enforcement officials. This situation could very well do more harm than good. In consideration of today’s society of polarization and overreaction, I contend that this is not only possible, but very likely. Supporters

say that the system will be thorough and properly transmit all relevant information. I firmly disagree that a rapid alert system could exercise due process and still be effective. *How can something run by the government be both fast, and effective?* We are willing to assume all risks for our children and elderly with dementia, but are we willing to risk severely damaging our citizen's respect for and opinion of our Nation's best sons and daughters?

The greatest function our VFW performs is promoting veterans to the stature that they've earned and deserve by virtue of their selfless combat service. As members and officers of the VFW, we must be vigilant and protective when it comes to ideas that may harm our reputation, and consequently, the support and treatment that all veterans receive from our legislators, law enforcement, and the general public. The "Green Alert" proposals are clearly well intentioned, sincere, and have the capacity to help veterans. However, it is clear that the benefits do not outweigh the potential for harm, risk to our National image, and real possibility that this system could spiral out of control and put our very rights in peril.

### New VA Secretary

On July 30th 2018, Robert Wilkie assumed office as the 10th United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Wilkie, a career lawyer and bureaucrat, previously served as the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness as well as several other positions on the National Security Council and Presidential Advisory committees. Secretary Wilkie also serves as a Lt. Col in the USAF Reserves and has previously served as a Naval Reserve Officer. On his way to the VFW National Convention, aboard Air Force One with President Donald Trump, he outlined his proposals

to change VA leadership and restructure the organization away from political influence and more toward nonpartisan focus on the best treatment for veterans. Wilkie inherits an enormous agency that underwent corruption and scandal at the highest levels with a notable gap in unfilled leadership positions. While his goals appear laudable for his first week in office, rest assured that the VFW leadership and the staff of the National Veterans Service will be standing by to hold him, and the entirety of VA's leadership accountable to their mission and vision.

### Veterans Choice Healthcare Options

Last year's passage of Veterans Choice provided over 2.1 billion dollars in emergency funding to give veterans access to healthcare outside of the VA. This allowed veterans living in remote and rural areas to have competent medical treatment outside of the VA healthcare system and greatly improved timely access to services. Because this bill utilized emergency funding, it was set for Fiscal Year 2018 and requires approval for subsequent FY funding. President Trump was clear in his address at the National Convention that his administration was actively working to extend funding for the Choice program. Although it passed through the House with a 414-0 vote, we as veterans can expect opposition to continued funding at this point due to the obvious and enormous cost to the government. However, it is unlikely that the opposition will overcome a strong Congressional bipartisan majority and we can reasonably expect the Choice program to be funded for FY 2019. As always, VFW Legislative members are watching any developments closely and are ready to advocate for the best options for our members and all veterans.



## District I Briefing

### Pat Iulucci, District 1 Commander

Comrades,

Beginning my term of duty as District 1 Commander has been extremely overwhelming for me as it has for most of you. First the District Convention in May, then the Department Convention in June, and then the National Convention in July, followed by the Department OTI in August, and before you know it September will be here, summer will be over and we will start holding our District meetings again.

This year as District 1 Commander, for me, seems to be going well with all Election Reports in for the most part with a couple of snags, which myself and my Junior Officers have been addressing. Now we are facing the next VFW requirement according to the By-Laws set down by the National Headquarters, that is the officers bonds, Quartermasters must be bonded, and other officers may be bonded if the Post, District, Department, and National so desire. Post, County Councils, and District, Inspections have started which is another requirement. IRS requires that each level of the Veterans of Foreign Wars file a 990, 990EZ, or the 990E-Post Card and all necessary State and Federal Tax, and Charitable Gaming, and Fund Raising Solicitations be submitted. Community Service Reports should be completed and forwarded to Department Headquarters twice a year, first one being from May 2018 - October 2018.

Finally we come to Membership, looking to recruit membership and retain our existing membership is an ongoing process, the Districts have been supplied with a Canopy and Table Covering from the Department of New York in order to be used throughout the district for the sole purpose of recruiting. All posts should take advantage of this opportunity to recruit new membership. What I have also been doing in District 1, and particularly at my own post, is reaching out to our Vietnam Comrades and reminding them that had it not been for what happened to us upon our return home, we hope will never happen again, the Vietnam Veterans have made history. The comrades of our current wars and our future engagements will always be thanked for their service and never left out to dry. We are there supporting all of them no matter what color, race, religion, creed, or gender providing them with services such as housing, job fairs, education opportunities, and so much more. Before you know it my term of office will be over as District Commander, however, I will always continue to reach out to help another veteran. I want to believe that "No One Does More For Veterans Than The Veterans Of Foreign Wars". Thank You All For Your Service and GOD BLESS.

**District 1 Commander,  
Pat Iulucci**



## District 3 Briefing

### James MacArthur, District 3 Commander

Hello comrades:

It is an honor and privilege to have been elected as Commander of District 3 of the Department of New York. Now that the Department and National Conventions are over it is time to get to work on our programs and most importantly membership. I deeply believe that with the team we have we can become number one in the state this year.

On July 14, 2018, our district held my Commanders' picnic at Stuyvesant Falls Post 9593. We had a very good turnout thanks to all those who attended. On July 28, 2018, we held our first Ways and Means fundraiser with Sr. Vice Bob Mitchell. Last year I started a golf tournament and Bob continued this golf tournament this year, which I hope becomes an annual event, it's a great way to get comrades together and have fun and raise funds for our Ways and Means. Thank you to all who attended.

Next up is our District OTI Class on September 8, 2018, at Post 8692 in Albany. I hope to have a great turn out for this class, especially with the newly elected officers. Oh yeah, there are always great donuts at Post 8692, I hope to see you there.

Our first District meeting will be held on October 14, 2018 at Post

1545 in Windham at 1:00pm. Please remember comrades, this is a mandatory meeting. My Sr. Vice, Bob Mitchell, is working on our convention which is scheduled to be held next May and Jr. Vice, Mark Farmillette, is working on our Gold Chevron to be held in March. Both of them are working with the Auxiliary to make these events successful. More information on these events will be in our next newsletter.

One last thing before I close, I was informed by my membership chair, Mike Hoag, that as of this past Saturday we are number one in membership. At this point, it is only by a small percentage point which is better than being a small percentage point from the bottom. At this point and time we have recruited more members than any of the other districts so let's keep up the good work comrades.

I hope to have much more to report about for the next newsletter and remember comrades let's not forget what we are here for and that is to help Veterans. NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS THAN THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

**Yours in comradeship,  
James MacArthur  
District 3 Commander**



## Nice Way to Start the New Year

### Ron Bambury, District 4 Commander

The 50th Anniversary of the South Jefferson Memorial Post 5344 (Adams) was held on Saturday July 14, 2018 with BBQ chicken,

burgers, weiners, sides & dessert along with live entertainment, raffles, etc. I presented to Post Commander Mike Chamberlain Post Members (Past & Present) & Auxiliary, the National Recognition Letter, Certificate & Photo of "Chief" Harman. "Icing on The Cake" was Commander Chamberlain's presentation of Placques, Letters & Pins to the attending ORIGINAL Charter Members (8 Left). A job well done, as always by Post 5344. Past District Commander Crossett was Presented with an award, thanking them for supporting him in the past. May they stay strong & viable for another 50 years!!

July 28th - "Honor America Days Parade" was held in Rome, a 3-Hour Event with 14 Divisions. Our very own Willie Fletcher was the 2nd Division Marshall. With the reviewing stand directly across from Rome Post 2246 (Home of the most popular food & beverage tent), no better deal for Post & Auxiliary Members to donate their time and watch the Parade. SO, with a shiny, new recruiting tent, District 4 & Auxiliary set up on Post Grounds. Inquiries were many, some Veterans were not VFW Eligible. Some eligible VFW Veterans were indecisive (They gave us their name & phone number for follow-up). We did get a Vietnam AF Veteran to complete an Application for Life Membership (He brought his DD 214 into the Post last week).

On Sunday July 29th - Rome Post Commander Barry, requested the recruiting tent be present for "Rome Parade of Homes". It was set up in front of our Post. It was definitely a busy day with 125 - 150 people

taking a tour of our Post (a mansion, built in the 1890's). Recruiting was slow, yet we got names and numbers of potential VFW & Auxiliary Members. For the weekend it was overall successful: "Seeds of Membership Planted".

Recruiting - Yes, Will Be Heard Over & Over. No magic formula. High visibility of VFW & our programs help. Department & District willing to assist Posts!!

#### District 4 Upcoming Meetings & Events:

- "First" District & Auxiliary Meeting Noon, Sunday September 9th, at Yorkville Post 6001
- State Commander's Testimonial Dinner & Dance, Saturday October 27, Rome Post 2246 - Details TBA
- Military Ball is Saturday November 3rd, at Clinton Post 9591 Details TBA.
- "Second District & Auxiliary Meeting, at Noon, Sunday November 4th, also at Clinton Post 9591.

OTI in Binghamton, went well with a nice format of "ALL In One" Training. There was lots of new information. Hats off to Department/Staff/Presenters

Let's all do our best in 2018 -19!!

Until next time, may you all have "Fair Winds & Following Seas"

**Very Respectfully,  
Ron Bambury  
VFW District 4 Commander  
315-335-2209  
vfwdist4cmdrron@yahoo.com**

## Wally Zincio New Chairman of Youth Development Recognition & Scholarship Program



Dear Comrades, Sisters & Friends

I am honored to report to you that I have been asked by our Department of New York Commander Gene Ratigliano to chair our Department's Youth Development Recognition & Scholarship (VOD) Program. I graciously accepted the position.

I have two goals for our Department's VOD program: First is to have every High School Student aware of our Department VOD Program and encourage them to submit an entry at their local VFW Post. Second goal is to have one of those students win the National Competition and return home from Washington, D.C. with a \$30,000 Scholarship.

I know these are goals can be achieved with the cooperation of local Posts and their Auxiliaries and our District VOD Chairman. So let's start by getting the word out to our high school students. This year's 2018-19 Voice of Democracy Contest Theme is: "Why My Vote Matters". Sounds like this could be an interesting theme and I can't wait to read and hear their thoughts.

I recently spoke with our 2017-18 Department's first place VOD winner Kristen Bednarczyk, and I asked her for her thoughts regarding the Voice of Democracy Essay Contest and her experiences since being chosen as Post 8495 1st place VOD winner. Her comments are published here in the Overseas Veteran for all to read.

High School Students will be returning to class soon so let's make them aware of the Voice of Democracy Essay Contest. Sometime in the near future I will put together a press announcing our 2018-19 program.

**Yours in Comradeship,  
Wally Zincio  
Dept. Youth Development Recognition  
& Scholarship (VOD) Chairman**

## Fort Worth Memorial Service

For Italy Campaign WWII Veterans  
Whiteface Mountain, NY



*Department Chief of Staff Mike Hoag pictured with 10th Mtn. Division Deputy Commanding General Patrick J. Donahue and the 10th Mtn. Division Staff Sergeant Major.*

## Department of New York Voice of Democracy Winner Kristen Bednarczyk



Never could I have imagined writing a four minute speech for English class would turn into one of the most incredible experiences of my life. I had probably driven by the local VFW in my town hundreds of times, but never had known much about it.

My teacher suggested I enter my speech into the Voice of Democracy so I thought I would give it a shot, but little did I know the incredible impact this essay and program would have on me.

After submitting my paper, everything seemed as though it moved in fast motion. From my excited English teacher's news that my paper placed first locally, to learning I won the district, to the unexpected call from the state VFW, the next thing I knew, I was on a flight to Washington D.C. for the Voice of Democracy National Competition. At the time I was still nervous and unsure of what was happening. Here I was all by myself, hours from home, at a convention where I did not know anyone, but in the end it was one of the most rewarding trips of my life. I met kids and Veterans from all over the country, made incredible friends that I still keep in touch with, and visited many memorable monuments in our nation's capital. The VFW treated me and the other students like royals the whole trip and adhered to our every need. I learned so much about our country, our veterans, and had a blast while doing it all.

However, my journey with the VFW did not stop there. Afterward, I went on to the New York State VFW Convention where I was able to read my speech and meet many lovely and kind people. Everyone at the convention was welcoming to my family and I had a great time being able to meet so many people. I would like to give a special thanks to Wally Zincio, Commander Burke, and Denise McHugh for being so accommodating and courteous to my family and me.

Lastly, my journey with the VFW continued on a trip to Valley Forge where I was reunited with all the lifelong friends I had made in Washington D.C. Together we learned about our government, the constitution, leadership, and did various team building activities together. The weekend was an absolute blast, although bittersweet since it was the last time we would all be together. Nevertheless, we all continue to keep in touch to this day and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to meet them all.

Although the trips and the conventions are over, I know that my journey with the VFW is not. They have been so considerate to me and I hope to give back in every way possible that I can. The VFW's generous contribution has made college more affordable, introduced me to lifelong friends, and taught me the importance of supporting our veterans. For all of that, I cannot thank them enough.



## Poppy Drive at Belmont Raceway



*Pictured left to right: District 1 Commander Pat Iulucci, Suffolk County Council Commander, Joe and Tom Quinn Post 5350.*



## Blue Star Memorial

This is a dedication of a Blue Star Memorial Plaque on Armed Forces Day May 19, 2018 in Mount Morris, New York. Pictured on the left is 2017-18 Department of New York Patriotic Instructor, Art Scheuneman and U.S. Congressman Chris Collins. Funds were raised through a raffle held by Mount Morris VFW Post 547 and Hally-Allen A.L. Post 1341 from Sonyea, New York. The picture below is Chris Collins giving his dedication speech in Veterans Park. These pictures were taken from U.S. Congressman Chris Collins' paper.

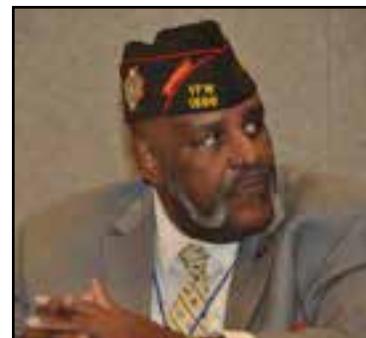


## Service Officers Raffle

Both Past State Commander Ben Thompson and I are honored that Commander Gene Ratigliano asked us to chair the committees that would raise money for the Department Service officers. There are few endeavors in the VFW that are more important and more rewarding than helping raise money for Service Officers. At the very core of the VFW existence is service to our fellow Veterans. We are a Veterans Service Organization. Service Officers are both the first and the last line of defense for our Veterans with the VA. A Veteran seeking help to maneuver through the VA to get compensation needs a Service Officer. A spouse seeking assistance when their Veteran answers the final call and needs help and advice on how to move forward without their Veteran needs a Service Officer. The first and the last line of defense.



Ben, as Chairman of the Service Officers Raffle and I, as Chairman of the Service Officers Journal Ad Book, along with Art Hanley, PDC as Vice Chairman, will be contacting each of you through your Posts, Councils and Districts, to help raise money to help keep our Service Officers in the Department of New York strong and viable. We will be asking you to sponsor prizes for the raffle, to purchase raffle tickets and to take ads out in the journal. Over the next few months you will be getting mailings from our committees



soliciting money. Please do not ignore them or disregard them, bring them to the floor at your meetings to have the comrades decide on what to do with the requests.

Simply put, we are asking each of you to join us, in any way you chose, in being part of the first and last line of defense for our Veterans and their families.

**Karl Rohde**

## Erie County Fair August 12, 2018



*Left to Right: Past District 6 Commander Dale Scurr, District 6 Jr. Vice Harris Bartz, State Commander Gene Ratigliano, District 6 Commander Brenda Serena, Dave Willard and State Quartermaster Dan McMahon.*



*Left to Right: Post 1419 Commander; District 6 Commander Brenda Serena, State Commander Gene Ratigliano, Department Auxiliary Sr. Vice President Debbie Casella, Chris Leavor, Department Quartermaster Dan McMahon, Wally Zincio VFW Post 9593 and Art Scheuneman, and Department Membership Team.*



*Veterans Memorial Park Erie County Fairgrounds*

## Hudson Memorial Day Parade



The Hudson Memorial Day Committee met to plan for the annual Hudson Memorial Day Parade & Service. The Parade & Service was held on Monday, May 28th starting at 10:15am at the Seventh Street Park Veterans Monument with the laying of the wreath. Immediately following, the parade participants lined up on Seventh Street and then paraded down Warren Street and across Fourth Street to the Court House Park where Memorial Day Services were held. The Guest Speaker was Vietnam War Veteran, Sergeant Robert LaPorta.

*Pictured L to R: Committee Members Carmen "Turtle" Torchia, VFW Post 1314, Chelsea Torchia, President VFW Post 1314 Auxiliary, Gary Wallace, American Legion Post 184, Terry Vogel, VFW Post 1314, Randy Staats, VFW Post 1314 and Committee Chairman Mike Madison, American Legion Post 184.*

## “Why I Honor the American Flag”

### Department of NY Patriot's Pen Program 2018 - 2019

I want to thank Department Commander Ratigliano for the re-assignment as Department Chair of Patriot's Pen Youth Essay Contest. I encourage all Post and District chairman to please co-ordinate your efforts with your Auxiliary counterparts.



All information that is needed for chairmen to conduct the 2018-19 Patriot's Pen Program is on line. Visit the VFW website: [www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org) - Under the **Community** heading, click on **Youth and Education**, where you will find the “**Scholarship Program**” that covers **Patriot's Pen, VOD and Youth Activities programs**. Listed below that you will find additional brochures along with other materials and resources. Anyone {including chairman, students, parents and teachers} can download and print the student entry forms for Patriot's Pen Contest.

Post Chairman should provide each student with a Patriot's Pen brochure/entry form directly or through the teacher or your youth leader. To participate in the Patriot's Pen contest, a student needs to submit a completed entry form and their essay of **300 to 400 words, NO More - NO Less. (Essay of too few or too many words will be eliminated)** Chairman at all levels please take note of this: (*Each; a - an - be - it - of = All Count As Words*). Students must have ready a clear, close up, head and shoulder picture to send in only if they become a District Winner. This year's 2018- 2019 Patriot's Pen theme is “**Why I Honor the American Flag**”.

All student entries are due at the Post level by midnight, October 31, 2018. Your VFW Post judging should be done before **November 15, 2018**. You then need to pass your winners on immediately to

your District Chairman for their judging. I am asking all District Chairman to have their judging completed before **December 15, 2018**. Each District winning entry {with the picture of student} will be submitted without delay to the Department Chairman. The Department judging will be held at the Malsan- Jones VFW Post #7393, on Thursday, **December 20, 2018**, at 4:00 pm.

To the District Chairman: Your District winner's entry materials that should be forwarded to the Department Chairman are: **District winner's completed official entry form; District winner's typed Essay; and District winner's photograph, {clear, close up, head and shoulder picture}** Please send your District winner's information and the **District Report Form** to: Department of New York Patriot's Pen Chairman, **Michael Spellman, 18 Seventh St. Yorkville, NY 13495**

I would greatly appreciate having them in my mail box by Tuesday, December 18, 2018.

If you have any questions in regards to this contest, please feel free to call me at (315)736-2456, any time. Thank you for your support and your participation in this contest. Good Luck to all our Post and Auxiliaries.

**To all District Commanders:**

Please send me the names, addresses and phone numbers of your **District Patriot's Pen Program Chairman for 2018 - 2019**.

*Michael Spellman, Chairman  
Department NY Patriot's Pen Program*



*2017 Patriot's Pen Winner  
Jacob Halpin*

## VFW Post 1314 Salvation Army Presentation

Columbia County Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1314 Quartermaster Randy Staats and Post Commander Joseph Drabick presented a check for \$1000.00 to Jill Wishon Sterling, Executive Director of the Hudson Army Salvation Service Center, for the many services they provide to the Community. The donation was received from the VFW Foundation Community Service Grant which supports Nonprofit Community Organizations. The services Hudson Salvation Army Center provides includes free lunch to residents of Columbia & Greene Counties Tuesday through Friday, free dinners on Mondays & Wednesdays evenings and a pantry open Tuesday, Fridays and Saturdays, offering food, clothing and other items needed for the home to Columbia & Greene Counties residents, especially paper products and other items for the bathroom & kitchen not covered by food stamps. They provide a free lunch each year to participants and attendees of both the Hudson Veterans Day Parade & Service and the Hudson Memorial Parade & Service. In emergencies and disasters they provide clothing, furniture and boxes of food. For the Children they provide back packs for back to school and send kids to summer camp. If you would like to make a donation to the Hudson Salvation Army Center, call Jill at 518-822-1602.



*Pictured Left to Right: Post Adjutant Terry Vogel, Quartermaster Randy Staats, Director Jill Wishon Sterling, Commander Joe Drabick, Chaplain Vince Grimaldi and Trustee Dominic Fiorillo.*

## Teacher of the Year Program

Comrades, I have been appointed the NYS VFW chairman for the teacher of the year award. The information and forms are on the VFW National Website under Programs (teacher of the year). This is officially known as the Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Teacher Award.

The award recognizes teachers on three levels: Elementary, Middle School, and High School at the State and National level.

The link is: <https://www.vfw.org/community/youth-andeducation/teacher-of-the-year>.

On this site are the dates to forward from posts to the district chairmen to me. Also the directions and forms are on the site. Everything is quite simple, just follow the instructions.

Posts will forward their nominee (one per post) to the District Chairman who will forward the district nominee (one per district) directly to me. The website will explain the judging of candidates will be done and the due dates

Due dates: Post Level November 1st and Complete judging by November 15th. Please send the winner to the District Chairman by December 1st. District chairmen need to send your winner to the State Chairman by December 15th. Department judging will be done January 10th with judging done with by January 15th. I will then send the package to the national organization.

Make sure, along with the application, the advancement form is included. This is signed off at each level or the application is disqualified.

**Carl Fosco**  
**NYS Chairman teacher of the year program**  
**130 John Street**  
**Hudson Falls, NY 12839**

## Post 9593



*Stuyvesant Falls Memorial Post 9593 recently elected Larry Knott Commander for this ensuing year. Commander Knott received his Post Commander Cap and congratulations from Post Member and PDC Wally Zincio.*

## District 7 Commander visits VFW National Home for Children

On August 2nd, I made the 347 mile journey from Lockport, NY (home of VFW Post 2535) to Eaton Rapids, MI to visit the VFW National Home for Children. After exiting highway I-69 North, traveling over several miles of back country roads and passing field after field of six foot tall corn, I came upon an opening in the country scenery and there it was . . . looking just like any other housing community one might expect to pass by. After turning into the entrance, I saw the golf cart waiting for my pre-arranged tour of the facility setting in front of the administration building. Inside I met Tammie Manchester who is the facilities Donor Relations & Major Gift Specialist and who also was my tour guide. I had spoken to her in the weeks before to make arrangements for my visit.

The Department of New York sponsors two houses at the facility. The first, which I was able to actually go inside, is "home" to a single mother with one child. It is a three bedroom complete with everything a family would require. When I say complete, I mean COMPLETE. It has furniture, linens, towels, dishes . . . everything! The home was in excellent condition with regard to carpeting, painting, appliances, etc. All that is required by the family is their personal belongings and food. The second home is a seven bedroom which is currently occupied by a family with six children. It is the policy of the facility that every child will have their own room.

The grounds were beautiful and immaculate and are maintained by an outside contractor who's cost is covered by a portion of the donations from the various sponsors. As we were doing the tour, Tammie used the phrase "we use to have" a number of times and it made me wonder, are we slowly closing the facility down? For example, "we use to have a hospital with doctors", "we use to have a swimming pool", "we use to have a grocery store with a meat market", "we use to have a fire department", "we use to have a school" and so on. I asked her to explain why these services were gone and she said that over the years those services were no longer necessary to maintain as the residents had their own transportation and were able to use the facilities outside of the Home (except for the swimming pool which was an insurance issue).

During my ninety minute tour, in addition to the Home, I was able to go into the administration building, the church, the recreation facility (built over the old swimming pool), the boy scout cabin, the visitors housing and more. I was amazed to learn that the Home has quite a number of vacancies and has no waiting list. Also it's hard to understand why only about half of the Departments even sponsor a home at the facility. The VFW Riders motorcycle club was the most recent sponsor.

After my tour, I submitted my Life Membership application to Tammie (\$35.00 until the end of the year), purchased a Life Membership Pin and a great looking shirt. All in all, it was a wonderful experience and I learned so much about this "special place". I whole heartedly recommend and strongly urge that all Posts within the Department donate to the Home on a regular basis and make it a point to get as many of their members as possible to purchase a life membership. And, anytime you may be traveling in the general area of Eaton Rapids, Michigan, make plans to stop in and visit.

If further information about the VFW National Home for Children is required, you can contact Art Scheuneman, State National Home Chairman at (585) 689-5975 or at his email [wstock44@yahoo.com](mailto:wstock44@yahoo.com).

## Post 6249

For 15 years VFW Post 6249 is proud to host four free Summer Concerts along with our County Legislator. This is a great event and a way to have Rocky Point and surrounding communities get together in St. Anthony's parking lot and enjoy the great music and camaraderie. We, as VFW members, have a super opportunity to bring in new members, distribute poppy's, collect food for the homeless (Harry Chapin Foundation on premise), and honor those Veterans present. Strawberry Fields, (Beatles Tribute Band) started us off this year with super music and an audience of over 2,000. Our last concert August 7th is Big Shot. Last year over 4,000 started to set up their lawn chairs at noon for a 7pm start. Our young adults always lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance and a student from one of our local high school sings the National Anthem! It doesn't get any better!

It has become customary at VFW Post 6249 Rocky Point to read the Declaration of Independence on the steps of the VFW for July 4th. This is our 5th year doing so and has gained some momentum in the community. Members of the Post and Community are assigned



sections of the Declarations to read. Before and after the program all are invited in for coffee and refreshments and camaraderie. As customary the Pledge of Allegiance and National Anthem leads us into the reading.

For our 11th Annual Warrior Golf Outing, last year's recipient was Marine Cpl. Matias Ferera, a double amputee, received \$10,000 from Post 6249. Additionally the Long Island State Veterans Home received \$2,000, Joseph Dwyer Peer-to-Peer \$2,000, Johnathan Keller Memorial Fund \$2000. \$20,000 in total was

given out to Veterans and their families. We thank all those on the Committee and those who participated to make this event most successful. This year we are recognizing the Family of Technical Sgt. Dashan Briggs who was among seven military personnel who perished in a helicopter crash in Iraq near the Syrian border.

**Regards,**  
**Joe Cognitore, Commander**  
**631-873-8272**



## VFW Not a Club

As a warzone veteran (Vietnam), I belong to the only federally chartered organization in the United States that recognizes that fact – The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. I have a home Post in Massena, New York. Yes, a Post! I don't belong to a Club or my club or the club, I belong to my Post. When comrades refer to their post as the club or my club, they continue to reinforce that idea of the old veteran sitting at the bar in a smoky room at 9:00 A.M. drinking a brew or something stronger. When veterans hear the term post, it conveys and reminds them of their military service. Why am I writing about this? Well all you have to do is listen to the Club members of other organizations to hear how bad their efforts are in recruiting new or returning members. When you make that transition to the VFW, it makes me realize why we have problems in recruiting new or returning comrades. Think about this and what we can achieve if we all return to our POSTS.

On another subject, we are entering the 2018 inspection period.

Proactive Commanders and Quartermasters are already in the process of obtaining (or already have) a copy of their new bond (does it reflect all the officers and canteen staff who handle Post funds?), insurance binder (is it enough for the Post house, internal property and external property?), most recent Trustee Report (has it been done and is it current?) and the IRS Form 990 – if the Post garners less than \$50,000 per year, remember you can file via on-line report; sometimes called the post card. However, if required have you gotten the CPA to file it (not an extension – you pay for this) and have a copy for the inspection team? Now is the time to work on this, not when the team has arranged to do the inspection! As people say, “git er done”.

I hope to see you all in the near future.

**Pat Rourk**  
**Commander, District 9**

**WE SUPPORT OUR TROOPS**

## Camp4Heroes Building a Sanctuary for our Veterans



A young veteran is sitting at a bar drinking whiskey. Another is in his car with a pistol by his side. Another cries in the woods. Still another looks at a pill bottle. A young woman has a shotgun on her lap. They're all in pain. They all want to die. And they will.

We have an epidemic in this country and it's called veteran suicide. As many as 20 veterans - or more - will take their own lives today... and tomorrow ... and the next day. They all want to exorcise the mental hell caused by trauma from a variety of things -- abuse, combat and/or the stress war has put on them.

While America tries to figure out how to end this tragic syndrome, there are some people out there doing something about it. Camp4Heroes is one such group of people.

Camp4Heroes was a dream of Captain John Woodall, a retired Raleigh, NC, fire captain who has devoted his life since 9/11 to our wounded/recovering veterans of the War on Terror. He dreamt of a place where veterans could be with each other, share their experiences over a campfire and help each other heal.

Camp4Heroes is 184-acres of serenity in Fairmont, NC, a rural area once fruitful with tobacco and now a poor farming community that still retains its pride and patriotism. It lies about 20 minutes south of Robeson County Seat Lumberton, and is less than an hour's drive from Fort Bragg or Camp Lejeune. In essence, it is in the heart of military North Carolina.

Once a hunting lodge, the main lodge on the property is the center

of activity right now at the Camp. It's façade sports a beautiful American Flag painting by patriotic artist Scott LoBaido.

A half mile down a gated asphalt road is 10-acre Lake Elliott, full of bass and surrounded by woods and fields. A picnic shelter was built by the lake, along with a brick campfire pit and a swing. A chapel will be built overlooking the lake and will house a music studio.

There are currently three cabins in various stages of construction. The "Adopt-a-Soldier Platoon" cabin is completed and has already had its first visitors. Next to it is the Bergen County American Legion cabin, nearly completed and awaiting last touches, including its deck. The third cabin, the "Cannata Report and US Bank" cabin is about 2/3 finished.

An outdoor kitchen is erected near the cabins. Vets and their families will eat their breakfasts and lunches there. They'll probably gather their own eggs from the chickens at the Camp. Next to the kitchen an outdoor shower/laundry/bathroom facility was just completed. A bivouac area for tents and RV hookups is nearby. So if vets want to pitch a tent and camp out, they have comfortable facilities to stay clean and do their laundry. The RV facility has four RVs already connected to water and electric.

A large Wellness Center is in the plans. It would house a commercial kitchen, art studio, area for dining/meeting for 50 and an exercise room. A 20'x30' American Flag that comforted wounded Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and Airman in Afghanistan's Warrior's Way at Craig Joint Theater Hospital will find a new home in the great room.



## — *CAMP4HEROES BUILDING A SANCTUARY FOR OUR VETERANS, continued from page 15*

A barn and two-acre paddock face the cabins. There are two therapy horses there, along with two goats. They provide lots of love for our visiting veterans, who can interact, feed or take care of them. The horses can even be ridden.

Camp4Heroes is being run by Captain Woody, his son John and Secretary/Treasurer Kaye Zumbrennan. Two other charities also support the Camp –the Fire Family Transport Foundation of the FDNY and Adopt-a-Soldier Platoon (AaSP). Besides building the first cabin on the property, AaSP helped develop the property by donating over \$100,000 for improvements. AaSP also brought along corporate benefactor Unilever which donated furniture and appliances well over \$50,000; and connected Camp4Heroes with the Cannata Report and US Bank, which built the outdoor kitchen and is building the third cabin. AaSP’s president Alan Krutchkoff, former Service Officer for American Legion Post 171 in Fair Lawn, NJ, also connected the Bergen County (NJ) American Legion with the Camp. Consequently, the second cabin is being built by the Big Bees of Bergen County.

“This is one of the best projects we’ve gotten involved with,” said Bob Salvini, Bergen County Commander. “Our posts are losing members

and new members are not joining so fast. This is a great way to save lives and rejuvenate American Legions throughout the country.”

It is hoped that more Legion posts, including those from North Carolina and neighboring South Carolina, for example, would help build cabins or donated toward the Wellness Center. Maybe Veterans of Foreign Wars will also take up the mantel.

It’s time to provide our wounded/recovering veterans with a sanctuary where they can enjoy some peace, learn to cook, fish, forge a knife, paint, weld, mow fields or just relax and know Americans care about them and understand their pain.

In other words, Camp4Heroes is being built to bring veterans together. Help them heal ... together ... bring their brotherhood and the best of what the military meant for them all back. We urge our Legionaire brothers and sisters and VFW members to help.

The author is Alan Krutchkoff, a USAF Vietnam Era veteran and former Service Officer for American Legion Post 171, Fair Lawn, NJ.

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