



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.



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## If someone were to ask what does the VFW do for its veterans - AND - WHY SHOULD I JOIN THE VFW - the answer is this:

- ***STRENGTH IN NUMBERS*** –

When the VFW Legislative Committee goes on the Hill in Washington, D.C. and the National Commander testifies before the Armed Services Committee to advocate for YOU as a veteran to protect those benefits for YOU earned we have strength in numbers and our elected representative listen!

- Since 1899, millions of veterans have joined the VFW for the camaraderie, as well as to support and serve their fellow veterans and communities. Currently, there are nearly 2 million members of the VFW and its Auxiliaries and over 7,200 Posts in every US state and 14 foreign countries.
- VFW members are a force to be reckoned with. To date, the VFW and its members have championed every major piece of Veterans legislation since 1899. Every year our members give back to their communities donating more than \$52.1 million dollars and 8.8 million volunteer hours. In 2017, the VFW also helped secure \$7.7 billion in VA benefits for over 125,000 veterans.
- ***Camaraderie*** - the VFW is made up of veterans like you who know where you've been and know the support you need.
- ***Advocacy*** - the VFW, with a strong presence on Capitol Hill, is constantly fighting for veterans' rights and benefits.

***Community*** - VFW members can significantly impact their local communities through youth activities, assisting veteran families in need and supporting their local military units before, during and after their deployments.

## And This!

### Operation UPLINK

Calling program for deployed service members that provides free phone time to active-duty military personnel and hospitalized veterans.

Sometimes a simple phone call home is the best morale boost for a deployed soldier. Each month, VFW's *Operation Uplink* program hosts "Free Call Days" during which soldiers can call home free of

charge. To date, Operation Uplink has provided more than 6.1 million free calls home for soldiers and hospitalized veterans.

### **UNMET Needs**

*Unmet Needs* helps to meet the critical needs of service members and their families who experience a sudden financial hardship, oftentimes during a deployment.

Assists with basic life needs such as: mortgage and rent, home and auto repairs, insurance, utilities, food and clothing. **Unmet Needs** helps meet unanticipated financial demands on our service members' families that can't be remedied through existing means and provides our service members with the security of knowing that their families have additional support here at home.

To date *Unmet Needs* has provided more than \$4.3 million in emergency financial grants to military families across the nation.

### **Military Assistance Program (MAP)**

A huge part of MAP includes the Adopt-a-Unit Program. Through Adopt-a-Unit, VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary adopt hundreds of military units around the world and provide them personal necessity items, care packages, books and more.

### **Patriot's Pen and Voice of Democracy (VOD) Student Scholarship Programs**

#### **Patriot's Pen Essay Contest**

VFW believes strongly in good citizenship and fostering patriotism. That's why we encourage youthful minds to examine our nation's history and their own experiences in modern American society through our Patriot's Pen youth essay-writing contest.

Annually, more than 100,000 students from grades 6-8 (nationwide) enter. One first-place winner from each state competes to win one of 46 national awards totaling \$46,000. The national first-place winner wins \$5,000 and an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., in March.

Students draft a 300-400 word essay, expressing their views based on an — always patriotic — annual theme chosen by the VFW Commander-in-Chief.

#### **Voice of Democracy Contest**

Each year, nearly 40,000 high school students from across the country enter to win a share of the \$3 million in educational scholarships and incentives awarded through the VFW's Voice of Democracy audio-essay competition.

Knowing that a democratic society needs nurturing, the VFW established the Voice of Democracy program (VOD) in 1947 to provide students grades 9-12 the opportunity to express themselves in regards to democratic ideas and principles.

The national first-place winner receives a \$30,000 scholarship paid directly to the recipient's American university, college or vocational/technical school. Other national scholarships range

from \$1,000-\$16,000, and the first-place winner from each (State) VFW Department wins an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C.

### **Scout of the Year**

Some of the VFW's earliest ties to the community involve youth groups. Few are stronger — and none more lasting — than the close relationship between the VFW and Boy Scouts of America, dating back to 1915.

Each year, the VFW selects three young people — of the Boy or Girl Scouts, Sea Scouts or Venturing Crew — who have demonstrated practical citizenship in school, scouting and the community. The first-place winner receives a \$5,000 award, the second-place winner receives a \$3,000 award and the third-place winner receives \$1,000.

### **Teacher of the Year Program**

Each year three exceptional teachers are recognized by the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) for their outstanding commitment to teach Americanism and patriotism to their students. The VFW annually recognizes the nation's top classroom elementary, junior high and high school teachers who teach citizenship education topics—at least half of the school day in a classroom environment—and promote America's history, traditions and institutions effectively.

The Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award (Teacher of the Year) national winners will receive:

- A \$1,000 award to the top K-5, 6-8 and 9-12 grade teachers for professional development expenses.
- \$1,000 award for each winning teacher's school.
- Plaques for both the winning teacher and school.
- An all-expenses-paid trip to attend a VFW conference and receive their award.

### **VFW In the Classroom**

Veterans and their experiences play an important role in educating our nation's youth about the founding principles upon which this country was founded. The principles they've fought to protect.

War can sometimes be a delicate subject for teachers and students. Through VFW's Veterans in the Classroom community outreach initiative, a VFW member is able to assist the teacher in conveying a variety of American history lessons.

Our members are "living history" and can provide students with insight into the great sacrifices our service members make to maintain freedom for all of us.

When called upon to participate in a classroom lesson, a member would prepare a brief introduction, a main presentation and a Q&A session. Depending on the lesson, a veteran may bring appropriate memorabilia, uniforms, photographs and other relevant material.

### **National Veterans Service**

Nationwide network of VFW Service Officers assist more than 120,000 veterans nationwide. From assisting veterans in filing for disability compensation to requesting hearings before the VA

Board of Appeals, these skilled professionals garner over a billion dollars in compensation benefits for veterans annually.

In New York State, the Department of NY VFW maintains two Veteran Service Officers. One in Albany, NY and one in Buffalo, NY. In 2012 alone, they were able to garner \$82,561,145.00 in benefits for NY Veterans.

What our VFW Service Officers do is:

- Offer research and advice to veterans who wish to handle their own claims.
- Assist veterans who are filing original claims for compensation and/or pension with the Department of Veterans Affairs and complete the required VA forms on behalf of the claimant.
- Assist veterans in reopening claims for service-connected disabilities and complete the required VA forms.
- Follow up on status of claims filed by veterans with the VA Regional Office
- File Notice of Disagreement with the VA if a veteran believes the decision made by the VA was incorrect.
- Review statements of the case from the VA regarding denials of claim and assist veterans with the preparation of responses.
- Assist veterans or surviving spouses in the preparation of appeals for denial of claims and file the appeals with the local VA Regional Office for forwarding to the Board of Veterans Appeals in Washington, D.C.
- Complete VA Forms other than original claims
- Answer/research telephone inquiries regarding medial, death/burial and other miscellaneous benefits.

These two New York offices are totally funded by the Department of NY VFW and through the Service Officer Raffle and Ad Book Program which is sponsored once a year to obtain funds to support these offices by paying the minimal salaries of the two counselors and office administrative expenses. **They receive NO funding from the VA or the Federal or State Governments.**

## **Emergency Relief**

When an emergency arises or a disaster occurs as happened with "Hurricane Sandy", the VFW stands ready to help and assist its Veterans.

During the Sandy disaster the Department of NY VFW Relief Funds combined with the \$80,000 in relief funds provided by VFW National were distributed to VFW members who lost their homes or were displaced by the storm.

During the recent calamities in Texas, New York, New Jersey and Louisiana VFW New York assisted.

Not a week - a month - or six months - BUT WITHIN DAYS. Checks were written and given to our veterans when they needed it - long before FEMA or any other agency.

**Interested? Don't have an application?**

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