

MICHIGAN OVERSEAS VETERAN

VFW

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

SPRING 26

2026 VFW & AUXILIARY STATE CONVENTION



PSC Reinold Yahnka & PSP Debbie Scheetz at their joint testimonial



Blue Star Service Dogs donation check presentation from the VFW Auxiliary



PSC Reinold Yahnka, National CofA Rep. Bobby Lovergne Jr., Past National President Sissy Borel, and PSP Debbie Scheetz after the joint memorial



2026-2027 Auxiliary Installation

Editor: Alyssa McElfresh
mov@vfwmi.org

VFW Dept. of Michigan
(517) 485-9456
vfwmi.org

924 N Washington Ave
Lansing, MI 48906
Facebook.com/vfwmi



Dispatcher of the Year Award being presented to Mary Reed



Cadet of the Year Award being presented to John H. Moran



Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award being presented to Detective Megan Jordan



DEPARTMENT COMMANDER, LARRY THAYER

Comrades, as I begin my year serving as your Department Commander, I want to thank each of you for the confidence you have placed in me. It is truly an honor to represent the Veterans of Foreign Wars Department of Michigan and the outstanding members who continue to make a difference in communities across our great state.

Since our Mid-Winter Conference, we have completed another successful department convention and have begun a new year focused on service, leadership, and growth. I have already had the opportunity to visit with many Posts and Districts, and I continue to be impressed by the dedication of our members. Whether supporting veterans in need, honoring our fallen, mentoring our youth, or serving our communities, Michigan VFW members continue to lead by example.

Our strength has never been measured simply by membership numbers. It is measured by members who are active, engaged, and willing to step forward when veterans need us. Every Buddy Poppy distributed, every community service project completed, every veteran assisted with a VA claim, and every young person encouraged through our youth programs demonstrates the impact of the VFW.

I wish to congratulate the 62 Posts that have achieved All-American thus far as well as the 11 out of 12 Districts that have made this awesome achievement. And of course, to Commander Yahnka for making our Department All-American. That makes the Commander a triple crown winner, a member of a very elite club. I look forward to seeing the Commander cross the stage in Reno at the National Convention.

As we move through the summer and prepare for the National Convention, I encourage every Post to remain focused on the fundamentals: recruiting and retaining members, strengthening our

Posts, supporting our Auxiliary partners, and maintaining visibility within our community. Invite younger veterans to participate. Tell your VFW story. The future of our organization depends on each of us taking the time to welcome the next generation.

I also want to thank all of our Department Officers, District Officers, committee chairmen, Post Officers, and the many volunteers who work behind the scenes. Your countless hours of service often go unnoticed, but they are deeply appreciated. Together, we accomplish far more than any one person ever could.

I look forward to visiting as many Posts and Districts as possible during the coming year. Please continue sharing your successes with the Department so we can highlight the outstanding work being done across Michigan.

Thank you for your service, your dedication, and your continued commitment to the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Together, we will continue moving Michigan forward.

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DEPARTMENT JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER, SCOTT TAYLOR



Well, we have wrapped up another successful State Convention. Thank you to those who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure our success for the Department of Michigan.

I want to say that I am honored to be serving as your State Junior Vice Commander for the 2026-2027 year. I truly appreciate the faith and trust the members have placed in me by allowing

me to serve you in this capacity.

Congratulations to all of the incoming Department of Michigan Officers, District Officers, and those Officers who are serving at our Post levels in both the VFW and VFW-Auxiliary Memberships. Without you, the members of this organization, the mission of the VFW could not be accomplished. So thank you for what you do.

I am looking forward to a productive year, as we continue to serve our veterans, their families, and our communities. Best wishes to Larry and Jason as you have now taken command.

**YOU FOUGHT FOR OUR COUNTRY.
 NOW JOIN US IN THE FIGHT
 FOR VETERANS.**

We understand the unique bond you share with other veterans of overseas conflicts because we, too, have been there. No matter which conflict called you to service, we invite you to join us as we continue to fight for all that's good FOR VETERANS.



NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.



vfw.org/join

DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT/QUARTERMASTER, BARRY WALTER



Comrades: The Department of Michigan VFW celebrated a very successful year with the 107th State Convention in June in Kalamazoo.

Congratulations to Past State Commander Yahnka for closing out his year as an All-American State Commander and earning the Triple Crown. It has been an honor to serve your AIM HIGH team. Congratulations to every District and Post that achieved the goal of All-American. It takes a team at every level to be that successful.

We would like to congratulate State

Commander Larry Thayer on your election to that position. We look forward to serving you and your fellow officers to the best of our ability.

We have hit the ground running as fast as our sea legs can carry us with well-attended VTS sessions presenting information on the 2026-27 programs. Several programs have some changes, and some will be very familiar. Each of our Department programs is important to a well-rounded Department, providing structure and purpose to our organization and serving our members. All of the Department programs are on the Department website. We encourage every member to review the website and your Department programs. If you

have program-related questions, please contact the Department Director or the Department staff. We will be pleased to assist you in any way possible.

We have a busy summer schedule ahead of us. Please consult the Department calendar and list of upcoming events often, as new information is added regularly.

Officers are encouraged to review the VFW Manual of Procedure and make themselves familiar with their duties and responsibilities. None of us work in a vacuum, and the successful performance of our duties relies on each of us doing our part. I and your Department staff, Amanda and Jan, look forward to working with you in the coming year to make your Post and District as successful as possible.

**VISIT DEPARTMENT'S
 WEBSITE TODAY
 VFWMI.ORG**

vfwmi.org/contact
vfwmi.org/vethelp
vfwmi.org/join

vfwmi.org/directory
vfwmi.org/officers
vfwmi.org/forms



DEPARTMENT INSPECTOR, WILLIAM (BUTCH) OGDEN

Congratulations to all the newly elected and appointed officers! We just completed the Department convention with Larry Thayer being installed as Department Commander along with his Line Officers.

Comrades, when submitting your quarterly audit, make sure that it is clean and legible. If there is a missing signature

of a trustee, a letter from the Post Commander must accompany the audit. We don't need your monthly report or bank statements; we only need the audit. Comrades, per section 219 and section 704 of the National Bylaws, a relief fund shall be established and maintained by the Post. Also, the bond must be of a higher value than the liquid assets of the Post this includes CDs and bonds, as they are liquid assets. Post Bylaws should be reviewed for changes that have occurred at the National Conventions.

Also, your incorporation date is in October, so make sure your resident agent is current with LARA. Incoming District Commanders, make sure that your inspectors turn the inspection forms in to you for your review and correction before submitting them to Department. Inspectors, you are to use the newly revised inspection form, not the old one from National.

As always, if you have any questions, feel free to contact me at 517-304-4069 or via email.



MENTAL HEALTH/VMS DIRECTOR, DOUG BRINKER

Comrades, Brothers, and Sisters, another State Convention is in the books. For all of you who missed it, I highly encourage you to consider the 2026 Fall Conference in Mt. Pleasant on Halloween weekend. Guaranteed to be a howling great time. We managed to empty the table on mental health resources, thanks to all who stopped by, and particularly to give a special shout-out to Tom Sancrant of Erie Post who took all remaining product home for events and other resource opportunities in the Monroe County area. I also will give kudos to those who have held events at their Posts and have sent me pictures and a short informational bio

on the event for All-State points credit. As we finish PTS awareness month and prepare for Suicide Prevention Month in September, please—I urge all Posts to have the program at your Post or District meeting by going onto the Department website vfwmi.org > Resources > Forms & Guides > Request a Department Officer. We welcomed Laura from the Six Feet Over organization from Detroit, whom some of you met and were able to get resources from, exchange contact information with, and even purchase from their Suck It Suicide merchandise collection. Visit sixftover.org to learn more about their mission and purpose for suicide prevention. Hoping to see them in Mt. Pleasant in October. And we are working with the kevinsong.org organization as well. I want to thank all Posts for your

financial sacrifices and donations to the Unmet Needs Program of the VFW. Many veterans struggle, and your \$125.00 minimum contribution really does help. There are more programs, though, such as Adopt-A-Unit. Did you know your Post if adopting a unit can receive up to \$1500.00 from the National Programs Office? There are specific policies for those funds. Sport Clips Help-A-Hero Scholarship Foundation can assist veterans who were Honorably Discharged with an opportunity to apply for up to \$5,000 each semester for higher education. Deadlines are as follows: Quarter 3: 1 Jul-30 Sept. Q4: 1 Oct-31 Dec 2026. We also have the Military Working War Dog Citation, Legacy Citation of Merit, and MAP Grant Funds. In May of 2026, 2,456 veterans, military, and family members received support.



 **Veterans Crisis Line**
1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1



DEPARTMENT JUDGE ADVOCATE, DANN TODD

Greetings, Comrades. It was good to see so many of you at the convention in Kalamazoo. Thank you for your support. Why is there such an emphasis on "the Bylaws"? We have all attended a meeting or training session where the Bylaws were the center of discussion.

Those Bylaws exist to protect and preserve the efforts of every VFW member. Our Comrades from past decades spent endless hours working bingo, working the kitchen, doing

building maintenance, and spending money at Post events to create and sustain the Post organizations that we enjoy today. Living according to the Bylaws preserves the time and money that they spent supporting the VFW, creating the Posts that they handed to us. We live the same experience today. Working parties to improve our Post homes and supporting dinners and other events to raise money used to fund programs that support our fellow veterans in need. The Bylaws also support future Comrades by preserving the fruits of our current efforts to give healthy

and productive VFW Posts to the next generation of veterans. That gift to the future will disappear if we do not act responsibly and follow our Bylaws along with other government rules. Attend VTS. Learn the Bylaws. Learn to use them to preserve our organization's ability to serve veterans both now and in the future. As your newly elected Department Judge Advocate, I look forward to the opportunity to work with as many of you as possible. Together we can work to strengthen our organization and build a stronger, viable VFW for the veterans and their families of the future.



DEPARTMENT SURGEON, MICHAEL ECKMYRE

I first want to express my gratitude for being elected as the 2026-2027 State Surgeon. I look forward

to serving as the State Surgeon to the best of my ability. My past year as District 9 Commander has taught me the importance of accurate reporting and the VFW process. I also look forward to serving the new State

Commander Larry Thayer as we kick off another successful year. Let me close by thanking District 9 in helping our District to become an All-American and All-State District. Let's go, the Mighty 9th!



PAST STATE COMMANDER, REINOLD YAHNKA

To my fellow Comrades, Sisters, and Brothers, thank you, thank you. What can I say? This was the best year of my life in

the Veterans of Foreign Wars as your State Commander. I am so excited about what you have accomplished this past year. You came together and, in the end, you put the Department of Michigan over the top in membership at 101.19% and made the Department of Michigan an All-American Department again. I will proudly wear the Department All-American cover on your behalf. Because you have bestowed the honor of All-American Department Commander on me, that makes me a Triple Crown recipient. The Triple Crown is one of the most prestigious membership awards that an individual can achieve. It requires being named as an All-American Commander at Post, District, and Department levels. You did it on the day that I was going to meet with Commander-in-Chief Carol Whitmore at the VFW National Home on 25 June 2026 to present a check for donations made by you for the Commander's Special Project, which was the new VFW National Home Store for residents at the National Home. On your behalf, I presented a check to the CIC Whitmore for \$4545.62 at the dedication and grand opening of the store. The National Home Store was a joint venture by VFW CIC Carol Whitmore and National Auxiliary President Lois Callahan.

Let me breakdown what you have done as far as All-American goes. There are 234 Posts in the Department, and 139 Posts

were 101% plus in membership. 172 Posts met the requirement for Community Service reporting. 146 Posts purchased Buddy Poppy's. 95 Posts participated in the National Day of Service. We were fourth in the nation, beaten only by California, Florida, and Texas. 83 Posts participated in the Voice of Democracy program. 81 Posts participated in the Patriots Pen Program. 80 Posts made donations to VMS. In the end, we ended the year with 62 Posts making All-American, one more Post than last year. When it came to Districts, we ended up with 11 Districts out of 12 making All-American. Breakdown of Districts:

4: 102.16%, 5: 102.37%, 6: 102.30%, 7: 103.02%, 8: 101.92%, 9: 101.05%, 10: 99.76%, 11: 101.16%, 12: 103.05%, 13: 101.30%, 14: 101.77%, 15: 102.41%.

Congratulations to Troy Post 4037, which is in the top 15 in the nation in their division, and Commander Todd Wodzinski will walk across the stage and receive his All-American cover and award at the National Convention in Reno on behalf of his Post.

Comrades, I thank you for what you have done. But we can do better. These are the core programs of the VFW mission, and our numbers should be higher in all categories. So, every Post needs to be reporting activity reports every month. Every Post needs to purchase Buddy Poppy's every year. Every Post needs to do a National Day of Service in their community. Every Post needs to submit a Voice of Democracy and Patriots Pen essay. Every Post should be donating to VMS. If you are a Post Commander, lead your Post to becoming an All-American Post; set your sights on achieving that goal and get your membership to help

you. All-American is for your Post and your community.

To the District Commanders, you need to lead your Post and help them and guide them down the path to making All-American. Keep them advised as to where they are and what deficiencies they are lacking. Make sure they are meeting the guidelines and dates set forth in the National Membership Program to become All-American.

Where would I have been without my Department Quartermaster/Adjutant Barry Walter? He has such a wealth of knowledge and history that is irreplaceable. He was always on top of situations and gave great guidance on what to do, not just to me but to anyone that contacted him at Department Headquarters. If he didn't have the answer, he knew someone and could get us the answer. He kept the entire Department informed by his communication skills and relentless emails at all times of the day and night. The man is always about VFW business 24/7. Thank you, Barry, for everything that you have done to help the Department make All-American. I know that without you we would not have achieved that goal.

To my Auxiliary President Debbie Scheetz, Brothers, and Sisters. Thank you for being there and working with the Post and bringing some unity back to our organization. I know it was not easy at times, but we stayed the course and overcame our differences. Let's keep improving our relationships and working together as one. Contrary to some beliefs, we need each other to achieve our goals.

Comrades, it was my honor to be your State Commander, and once again, thank you!



SERVICE DOESN'T STOP WHEN WE'RE DONE SERVING.

VFW
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

Today's VFW.org

ALL GAVE SOME  **SOME GAVE ALL**

★ ★ ★ POST REPORTS ★ ★ ★

POST 1138 - MONROE

Post 1138 VFW and Auxiliary won 1st place in category 2 Buddy Poppy Contest at Department Convention.



POST 2406 - CHARLOTTE

The Mayor of Charlotte recently issued a proclamation declaring May 15th and 16th as Buddy Poppy Days. This recognizes the efforts of Post 2406 to distribute Poppies and raise funds to support local veterans programs. Post 2406 will use these days to focus on community outreach and highlight how we serve our area - connecting residents with veterans needs and continuing the VFW's important Buddy Poppy tradition.



POST 3900 - CALUMET

CLK Post 3900 cleaned up the winter stamp sand used on the highway for winter from the USS Kearsarge Stone Ship Memorial in Kearsarge, MI. The Post raked and put out the flags for the summer tourist season. The Post also took note of items that have to be repaired this summer and notified the township.



POST 6248 - DECATUR

On Sunday, May 17, 2026, VFW Post 6248 participated in a 2.2 mile walk for suicide awareness and to raise funds for both the Gold Star Family Memorial Monument and the non-profit organization Working Dogs for Vets.



VFW STORE AD



Back



Front

MEN'S 250TH ANNIVERSARY T-SHIRT Navy blue 100% preshrunk cotton. Screened design on back. VFW logo screened left chest. U.S. flag screened left sleeve. Imported; decorated in the USA. 7499 S-3XL \$24.00 *While quantities last.*



LADIES' 250TH ANNIVERSARY V-NECK T-SHIRT Navy blue 100% preshrunk cotton. Screened design on front. VFW logo screened right sleeve. Imported; decorated in the USA. 7450 S-3XL \$24.00 *While quantities last.*



NEW! 250TH ANNIVERSARY ORNAMENT This 'America Semiquincentennial' ornament showcases iconic symbols – the American flag, the Statue of Liberty, and the Constitution. 2 1/2 x 2 5/8 x 1/4". Made in the USA. 1063 \$29.95 *While quantities last.*



AUXILIARY DEPARTMENT PRESIDENT, JASON MANKE

Congratulations to Past Department President Debbie Scheetz for an outstanding 2025-2026 year. I am looking forward to an awesome year for our Department in 2026-2027. I may be your Department President, Leading with

a Patriot's Heart, but with each Auxiliary member in this state, we will make a very strong team. You will hear me talk a lot this year about teamwork, and there is not an I in TEAM. Always remember that. We are here for our veterans and our VFW Posts; let's never forget that, so if they need a helping hand on a project, each Auxiliary member should be jumping at the chance to help. I have some very energetic Department

Chairmen that are more than willing to answer any of your questions on our programs. Each Department Officer and District President are more than willing to assist and help an Auxiliary out rather than see an Auxiliary fail. I am planning on continuing the roadshow trainings; I'd like to conduct some sort of training in each District. Lastly, I look forward to traveling and visiting with our members.



AUXILIARY DEPARTMENT SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, JAN GELDER

Welcome to a new administrative VFW Auxiliary year. I am so excited to serve this year as your Department Sr Vice President and continue to follow

Sr Vice President, I welcome you to being a part of the 2027-2028 year. I'm available by phone at 989-292-0917 or email at janione@frontier.com. We will be meeting at Fall and Mid-Winter Conferences and the 2027 Department Convention. I hope to see you all at the Fall Conference.

Trotter Family Day on Saturday, August 22nd.

Please congratulate, along with me, our first male Department President for the Michigan Department VFW Auxiliary, Jason Manke. We wish for you a fantastic 2026-2027 year, and I'm confident that all our members will support your Department Programs that you and your team have put in place. We want your year to be as wonderful as it can be!

the path to the high office of Department President.

If you are now the District Auxiliary

If you're able, we invite everyone to attend Michigan Day at the VFW National Home on Sunday, August 9th, and Camp



AUXILIARY DEPARTMENT AMERICANISM CHAIRMAN, VICKIE BUSHONG

Greetings, Auxiliary Brothers, Sisters, and Comrades! Americanism is the very heartbeat of the VFW Auxiliary. It is defined as an

on three foundational pillars:

1. Promoting Robust Flag Education We must be the premier resource for flag etiquette in our local communities. This means going beyond simply flying the stars and stripes; we need to actively teach the public, civic groups, and businesses the proper way to display, salute, and retire our nation's symbol. I challenge every Auxiliary to seek out opportunities to present flags and Patriotic Appreciation Citations to local citizens and businesses that proudly display American pride.

community calendars.

3. Honoring the Pledge of Allegiance The Pledge of Allegiance is more than a tradition recited at the start of our meetings; it is a solemn oath of unity. We need to encourage a deeper understanding of the words we speak. Let's lead by example, showing unwavering respect and teaching others, especially young children, the history and profound meaning behind those thirty-one sacred words.

unfailing love of country, loyalty to its institutions, and a strict allegiance to its flag. This year, our mission is to take that definition and put it into active motion.

As we step into a brand-new programmatic year, I am deeply honored and incredibly excited to introduce myself to you as your Department of Michigan Americanism Chairman for 2026-2027. First and foremost, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to our Department President, Jason Manke, for trusting me with this vital appointment. I look forward to working side-by-side with President Jason, our leadership team, and every single Auxiliary member across our great state to ignite a renewed passion for patriotism in our communities.

2. Cultivating Patriotism in Our Schools and Communities

True patriotism is taught, nurtured, and passed down. We must engage our youth by visiting classrooms, participating in community festivals, and supporting the Smart/Maher Teacher of the Year program. By planting the seeds of gratitude early, we ensure that future generations respect the staggering price paid for the freedoms we enjoy daily. Celebrate the birthdays of our military branches and keep our patriotic holidays at the forefront of your

Let's Get to Work! Every flag distributed, every classroom visited, and every veteran honored helps to strengthen the fabric of our country. I will be providing detailed guide sheets and resources throughout the year to help your auxiliaries shine, and I cannot wait to see the creative ways you bring this program to life in your hometowns.

Thank you again to President Jason Manke for this incredible opportunity to serve. Let us move forward into the 2026-2027 year with teamwork, commitment, and an unyielding pride in the United States of America!

To achieve this, our focus will center



AUXILIARY DEPARTMENT BUDDY POPPY CHAIRMAN, JANE DADY

The VFW Buddy Poppy is the official flower of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. They represent the fallen during all wars. Donations

go out and distribute your poppies. When you set up your membership tables, add a VFW Buddy Poppy board and/or a display. Tell all potential members the reason for the poppy and how it helps our veterans. Always get permission to distribute your poppies. Find high traffic areas like stores and coffee shops.

from the Department, 1¢ goes to the National Home, 1¢ goes to the National Headquarters Veterans Service Fund, and 1.5¢ goes to the Department's Veterans Service Fund.

When you see the dedicated volunteers with the poppies, purchase one or ten. All proceeds help your local veterans in need. Remember the dead by helping the living.

for the poppies fund local relief efforts.

This summer is the perfect time to

When you purchase your poppies





AUXILIARY DEPARTMENT CHAPLAIN, DENISE ARNOLD

To my Michigan Auxiliary family, as we lace up our boots and prepare for the 2026–2027 year, I am filled with an overwhelming sense of gratitude and pride. Stepping into the role of your Department Auxiliary Chaplain is not just a title to me—it is a sacred trust, a commitment to be there for each of you, and an opportunity to serve the veterans who have given us so much.

For those I haven't had the pleasure of meeting yet, I wanted to share a bit of my heart and why this organization means the world to me. This year marks my 30th year as a Life Member of the VFW

Auxiliary. Three decades ago, I joined under the eligibility of my hero—my dad, George, a proud World War II veteran. Every time I look at our flag, every time I stand for the opening prayer, and every time I work to support a veteran, I think of him. Carrying his memory into this role is the greatest honor of my life. My 30 years of membership haven't just been about time spent; they've been about building a family with all of you, rooted in the shared mission of honoring the sacrifices of heroes like my father.

I am absolutely thrilled to officially be a part of Jason Manke's team for the upcoming year. Jason brings a dynamic energy and vision to the Michigan VFW Auxiliary, and I cannot wait to see the incredible things his leadership will

inspire across our department. We have a phenomenal crew assembled, and the energy behind this team is genuinely infectious. The engines are roaring, the crew is ready, and we are officially dropping the green flag on the 2026–2027 year!

My prayer for us this year is for a fast, smooth, and powerful ride. Under Jason's leadership, we are aiming for a clean track with very few yellow flags to slow our momentum. Let's keep our eyes on the finish line, look out for one another during the tight turns, and drive full throttle into a victorious year of service for our veterans.

Thank you for your trust, your friendship, and your dedication. Let's make this year unforgettable!



AUXILIARY DEPARTMENT CHIEF-OF-STAFF, DELLA STEEGE

As your incoming Chief of Staff-Extension/Revitalization Chairman I'm looking forward to assisting members and Auxiliaries across this state. I understand that there are concerns across this state and much of it is personality issues. Keep in mind it is not Departments job to resolve these issues, but things often escalate to a level that it requires our involvement. Personality conflicts happen when differences in communication styles, values, or behavior create tension. Although we cannot easily change someone's personality, we

can adjust how we respond to them. By focusing on specific actions instead of personal traits, members and individuals can reduce frustration and work together more effectively. To resolve conflict between members, address it early in a private, neutral setting. Listen to each side without bias, focus on behaviors rather than personalities, and guide them toward a clear solution. The process involves understanding each person's viewpoint, encouraging respectful discussion, identifying shared interests, and ending with a concrete action plan.



Last year our National Auxiliary Chief of Staff implemented the PIP Plan and the Green, Yellow and Red flag system for Auxiliaries. We will be continuing it this year with hopes of strengthening our current Auxiliaries. Lately, we have found plenty of Auxiliaries that are struggling with lack of active membership, no regular recruitment of new members and aging active members who hold the Auxiliary together and they are getting tired. As an organization must figure out how to encourage new younger members to take leadership roles in the Auxiliary. We have lots of work to do this year and I hope it will be a positive experience for all of us.



AUXILIARY DEPARTMENT SCHOLARSHIP CHAIRMAN, NICOLE KOUTZ

The Scholarship Program encourages patriotism, assists students in attaining an education, and helps students reach their full potential. This increases VFW and Auxiliary recognition while supporting our communities, students, and members. The following is a list of the scholarships available for the 2026–2027 year:

- 2026–2027 VFW Voice of Democracy Audio-Essay Contest – Theme: “What a Veteran Taught Me about America?”
- 2026–2027 VFW Patriot's Pen Essay Contest – Theme: “What a Veteran Taught Me about America?”
- Continuing Education Scholarship
- Young American Creative Patriotic Art Contest

• 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contest

All forms for each scholarship and contest will be available on the Department website (vfwauxmi.org) under Programs/Scholarships. This includes the judging score sheets, school release forms, award information flyers for each contest, student biographical questionnaires, and promotional materials suitable for social media. Additionally, flyers outlining contest titles and submission deadlines will be provided to support effective communication and outreach.

The first two scholarship contests with upcoming deadlines are the VFW Voice of Democracy Audio-Essay Contest for 9th–12th graders and the VFW Patriot's Pen Essay Contest for 6–8th graders. Both submissions must be received by each Auxiliary no later than October 31, 2026, for judging. These are open to

public, private, or parochial schools in the U.S., its territories, or its possessions; or dependents of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools. Home-schooled students also are eligible. Although U.S. citizenship is not required, students must be lawful U.S. permanent residents or have applied for permanent residence (the application which has not been denied) and intend to become a U.S. citizen at the earliest opportunity allowed by law. (Foreign exchange students are ineligible.)

If you need help finding a participating VFW Post, follow these instructions: First, visit vfw.org/FindaPost to “Find a VFW Post.” If you don't have success in finding a Post, or if you have trouble contacting them, you can contact your VFW Department of Michigan VFW Headquarters office at 517-485-9456 to see if they can offer any information or assistance.

FIND US ON FACEBOOK @VFWMI & @VFWAUXMI



AUXILIARY DEPARTMENT YOUTH/CAMP TROTTER CHAIRMAN, APRIL LOWERY

The Department of Michigan VFW Auxiliary is pleased to welcome Garret Sieloff as the new Director of VFW Camp Trotter. Garret brings enthusiasm, leadership, and a commitment to providing Michigan youth with the memorable camping experiences that have made Camp Trotter a treasured tradition for generations. We are excited for the future of the program under his direction and encourage all members and supporters to join us in welcoming him to the Camp Trotter family.

Preparations are well underway for another outstanding camping season. This year, Camp Trotter will offer five week-long camp sessions, beginning on July 5 and concluding on August 8. These sessions provide young people with opportunities to develop confidence, build friendships, learn new skills, and create lasting memories in a safe and supportive outdoor environment.

The cost of camp is \$475 per camper. Thanks to the generosity of VFW and Auxiliary members, scholarships are available to ensure that financial

circumstances do not prevent deserving youth from attending. Families interested in scholarship assistance are encouraged to inquire during the registration process.

For the first time, all camp enrollment can now be completed online, making registration easier and more convenient than ever. Families may register by visiting the Camp Trotter website at <https://vfwcamptrotter.org/default.asp?pid=34053>.

Please mark your calendars for Camp Trotter Family Day on Saturday, August 22. Family Day is an opportunity for VFW and Auxiliary members and community supporters to visit camp, see the grounds, and participate in various activities available to campers during their stay. It's a fun day and way to build new relationships with other members! Please consider joining if possible.

As many of you know, the auxiliary has traditionally maintained a fundraising table at Department conferences and conventions throughout the years. However, there will not be a Camp Trotter table at conferences or conventions this year. We respectfully ask members to consider donating the money they might otherwise have spent on promotional items or purchases at those events.

Contributions may be made to either the General Fund or the Scholarship Fund.

Donations should be sent by check to:
 Department of Michigan VFW
 924 N. Washington Avenue
 Lansing, MI 48906

Please indicate either General Fund or Scholarship Fund in the memo line of your check so funds can be properly allocated.

In Youth Activities news, please note that the Illustrating America deadlines have moved up this year. The new schedule is:

- December 15 – Entries due to Auxiliary
- January 15 – Entries due to VFW Department
- January 31 – Entries due to National Headquarters

Please share these updated dates with participating students, teachers, and local program chairpersons to ensure submissions are received on time.

Thank you for your continued support of VFW Camp Trotter and our Youth Activities programs. Together, we are making a difference in the lives of young people across Michigan.



AUXILIARY DEPARTMENT VETERANS & FAMILY SUPPORT CHAIRMAN, EVELYN AVERY

Who? What? When? Where? Why? Simple Answer – Veterans and Family Support! My name is Evelyn Avery, and I am honored

VFW Department of Michigan President Jason Manke asked me to be Veterans and Family Support Chairman for the 2026–27 year. I look forward to working with you to assist veterans by achieving the goals of this chairmanship—promoting awareness and prevention of veterans' Post Traumatic Stress, military suicide, and mental health; assisting veterans, service members, and their families; and promoting resources for veterans and military support programs.

Bulletins will go out every month to give ideas for you to reach these goals. The information is your opportunity to work as a team with your members and your community to assist veterans and their families. Reporting to me how you use the suggestions and program resources

is vital in our mission. Remember to use the “5 W’s” above and include how much and how many when you report. Sharing your events and ideas on the Department Facebook page (Veterans and Family Support-Michigan) is also helpful to the entire membership.



Please remember to purchase the 2026-2027 Special Program Pin to support President Manke's special project this year, “Vets Returning Home,” which is a non-profit charity that helps homeless veterans in crisis reclaim independence. Donations made to this project and events held in support of this program are reported under Veterans and Family Support and will also earn an Achievement point on your Guide Sheet. The pin symbolizes the following: the cross for Jason's religious beliefs; Helmet, his father who served in Vietnam in the Army; the draped flag—for the patriotism of all veterans; and the 3 poppies for his uncles who also served in battles in

defense of our country. Pins are \$3.00 this year and make great thank-you gifts—Auxiliaries and Posts are encouraged to order today! (Pin Chairman - Ruth Barnhill, ruthbarnhill@att.net)

Supporting VFW Auxiliary National President Donna K. Mills and VFW National Commander-In-Chief Cory L. Geisler's Joint Special Project—DPAA (The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency) is also reported under Veterans and Family Support and a Guide Sheet Achievement. This is a Department of Defense agency that works to account for and repatriate U.S. service members who are or were POW or MIA from past conflicts. Also reportable is FRS (a Family Resource Sample, which is DNA from surviving family members). Helping this organization means helping families find peace.

Veterans and Family Support is the lifeblood of our organization, and you are a vital part of accomplishing just that! Together, we are a team who are “Serving America's Heroes” by “Leading with a Patriot's Heart.”





AUXILIARY DEPARTMENT HISTORIAN/MEDIA RELATIONS, ANGELA WOOD

Thank you, Jason, for appointing me as your Media Relations & Historian Chairman. This is going to be a great year! Want to know more about the VFW Auxiliary and what we do? Go to www.vfwauxiliary.org.

Members can create or sign in to MALTA and download the Bylaws, read blogs, and get program information and training. The Department of MI Auxiliary has a website, vfwauxmi.org, that has information pertaining to events, programs, and important documents. National, Department, Districts, and Auxiliaries also have Facebook groups that provide information on

our organization, promote events or fundraisers, and share about our military, veterans, family members, or the community. If you have not visited any of these sites, please take a few minutes to read more about the Veterans of Foreign Wars and what we are doing to help our military, veterans, and their families. God bless our troops, and thank you for your service.



AUXILIARY DEPARTMENT NATIONAL HOME CHAIRMAN, JANE DADY

The VFW National Home is a jewel in our backyard that has been assisting our veterans and families for more than 100 years. It has been a place of stability and support. The home offers on-campus

residency for those who qualify and provides nationwide support. They help our veterans and their families with guidance, referrals, veteran services, and outreach efforts. If you would like more information, please call the VFW National Home Helpline at (800) 313-4200. You can see for yourself what it

is all about at Michigan Day at the National Home. The event will be held on Sunday, 9 August. The fun starts at 8 AM. You can tour the grounds, join in the activities, and then join us for a short program and lunch. Please go to their website at www.vfwnationalhome.org, click on EVENTS, then click on Michigan Day for all the details.



PAST STATE PRESIDENT, SARA MANKE

Since 1927, 94 women have proudly held the office of Department President for the Department of Michigan VFW Auxiliary, each one helping to shape a legacy of loyalty, service, and dedication to our veterans, their families, and our communities. On June 13, 2026, that legacy reached a truly historic milestone as Jason Manke became the first male to serve in this distinguished role. As the Department of Michigan VFW Auxiliary begins its 100th year, it is especially fitting that this new century of service begins with a leader

whose election reflects both the strength of our history and the promise of our future. Jason's leadership represents commitment, progress, and unity. We know he will guide the Department of Michigan VFW Auxiliary in the right direction, honoring those who came before him while inspiring continued service, fellowship, and support for the generations yet to come. Together, Jason and Sara Manke have also made history as the first husband and wife to each hold the office of Department President. Their shared dedication stands as a meaningful example of service, partnership, and devotion to the mission of the VFW Auxiliary.

Congratulations, Jason Manke, on this historic achievement and best wishes as you lead the Department of Michigan VFW Auxiliary into its next century of service.



DISTRICT COMMANDER REPORTS



DISTRICT 6 COMMANDER, DOUG BRINKER

I am with the highest honor possible to be the Super 6th District Commander. It's been a learning journey since I first joined the VFW back in 2010. I am a proud US Navy veteran from the 1982 Multi-Peacekeeping Mission of Lebanon and MI Army National

Guard veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom (2004). Super 6 Theme: Family, fun, and fellowship, bringing the District back to VFW basics. I want to thank Ret. Navy Chief Murdock for the past two years of piloting the Super 6 to a repeat All-American District. 2026-2027 is about encouraging our members and officers to explore the Super 6 and discover what other Posts are doing for their communities.

Look for big things from Super 6 that include a dinner/comedy fundraiser, a passport booklet, raffles, and much more. We owe it to our communities to step up and serve them like we served and supported those who served. I can't thank those enough who purchased my book at the Convention to look for other opportunities across the District to grab your copy and help save a life from suicide.

VETERAN CRISIS LINE // 800-273-8255 PRESS 1



DISTRICT 7 COMMANDER, SCOTT HOLMES

Congratulations to Department Commander Reinold Yahnka and his Line Officers on a very successful 2025-2026 year. Together we all pushed over the goal and made it to 101.16%. Congratulations to all the District Commanders that made All-American, almost a clean sweep throughout the Department. I will, again, be the Commander for District 7 and want to encourage all the

Posts in the District to strive to retain their members and add, at a minimum, 1 new member in the coming year. All-State programs have been uploaded to the Department website, and you should be reviewing them for the 2026-2027 year. Start now and do what we should all be doing for our Posts, veterans, and our community. Keep informed on issues that matter to all of the veterans and service members. An easy way to stay current is to sign up for Action Corps; text VFW to 50457 on your phone to sign up. Updates come out every Monday. The most important

issues on the Hill will come out as an Action Alert. Take a minute and respond by completing the preformed email to your Congressional Representatives. Just fill in your name and address and send it. Remember to keep track of contact, to or from, your emails that you send each month. Report it to your Program Activity Chairmen for Post credit under Legislative. As summer approaches and the warmer temperatures arrive, be safe and stay hydrated. Enjoy your summer, but always keep in mind our mission. I hope to see many of you at Fall Conference.

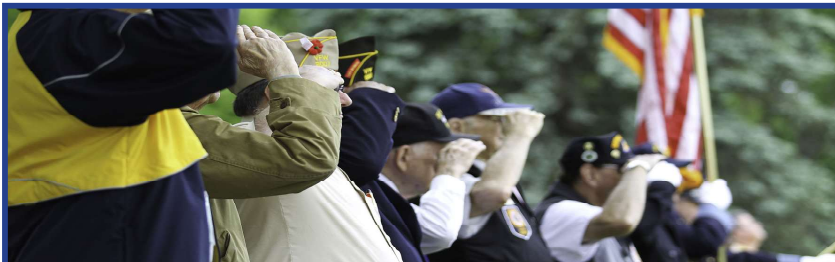


DISTRICT 8 COMMANDER, MARILYN MUNRO

Comrades and fellow Officers, it is a profound honor to step into the role of District Commander for the 2026-2027 year. I am energized and ready to hit the

ground running alongside our new Department Commander, Larry Thayer, our Department Line Officers; and my fellow District Officers. To my Post Commanders: I want us to dig in and get down to the basics. We are starting with a clean slate. My goal is for us to learn as much as possible so we can be the best for

our fellow veterans and truly uphold our motto: No One Does More For Veterans. In addition to serving as your District Commander, I am also honored to serve as the Department Buddy Poppy Director this year. I look forward to working with all of you to make this year our most impactful yet.



ROLL CALL OF DEPARTED COMRADES

LISTED BY POST NUMBER	LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	AGE	SERVICE	WAR
565 Battle Creek	Stiff, John M. Sr.	83	Navy		
2144 Holland	Mc Alpine, Barry	80	Army/Vietnam		
2492 Imlay City	Anderson, James	79	Army/Vietnam		
3672 Albion	Hull, Russell	78	Marines/Vietnam		
3676 Sault Ste Marie	Watson, Dennis	81	Army/Vietnam		
4090 Portland	Reisbig, Gary R.	85	Marines/Cuba		
4659 Shelby Township	Cope, Harold K.	77	Army/Vietnam		
	Isham, Michael L.	80	Army/Vietnam		
5857 Onaway	Curtis, Aaron	87	Army/Vietnam		
6464 Fowlerville	Belcher, John Sr.	78	Army/Vietnam		
	Plotts, Charles	75	Army/Vietnam		
6782 Eastpointe	Whitehead, Donald W.	83	Navy/Vietnam		
6864 Cadillac	Helmboldt, Harold J. Jr.	78	Air Force/Vietnam		
	Thompson, Joseph	83	Marines/Vietnam		
9363 Flat Rock	Doran, Edwin	83	Navy/Vietnam		

UPCOMING NATIONAL & STATE EVENTS

- **2026 VFW National Convention:** July 25-29 in Reno, NV
- **2026 MI/OH National Home Day Events:** August 7 - Golf Outing; August 8 - OH Day; August 9 - MI Day
- **2026 Camp Trotter Family Day:** August 22, 10:00am, at Camp Trotter
- **2026 VA GLNC Golf Outing:** August 22 in Lansing, MI
- **2026 National Auxiliary President visit:** August 27, 6:30pm dinner, at VFW Post 9455, Owosso, MI
- **2026 Nat'l Home Golf Tournament:** September 11 in Marshall, MI
- **2026 National VFW Fall Legislative Conference:** September 14-17 in Washington, DC
- **2026 POW/MIA Recognition Day:** September 18, Every Post
- **2026 Commander-in-Chief's Homecoming:** September 24-27 in Milwaukee, WI
- **2026 Big 10 Conference:** October 15-18 in Kalamazoo, MI
- **2026 MVAA Woman Veterans Conference:** October 15-17 in Bay City, MI
- **2026 MI Fall Conference:** October 28-November 1 in Mt. Pleasant, MI

AUXILIARY DISTRICT REPORTS



DISTRICT 4 PRESIDENT, ANNIE GEIGER

Hello and welcome all to the 2026-2027 year. I would like to thank all the members who stepped up and took offices or chairmanships. Your dedication and service are greatly appreciated. A very special thank you to my mentors, Stephanie

Krueger PDP, Marian Belaire PDP, Sandy Medos PDP, Jenny Hobson PDP, Serena Lemoncelli, Sharon Lewinski, and Shirley Caldwell. Without your guidance I could have never made it here. I joined the Auxiliary under the eligibility of my grandfather, a WWI and WWII USMC veteran, about 20 years ago. I have held many offices at Auxiliary and District level. One of my projects this year is the Special

Americans Program for Special Needs Children. It was launched 3 years ago at Taylor VFW Auxiliary 4422; each year it continues to grow. We have games, clowns, cupcake decorating, cotton candy, popcorn, balloon animals, music, and so much more. It brings so much joy to see these special Americans smile and laugh. March 20, 2027, is the date for the 2027 program at Taylor VFW 4422, from noon to 4.



DISTRICT 6 PRESIDENT, ANGELA WOOD

Greetings from the Super 6! I want to thank the District for voting to have me as your District

President again this year. I look forward to working with District Commander Doug Brinker this year. Debbie, thank you for a great year and Department Convention. We saw Auxiliaries, Districts, and members get awarded for their hard work

and commitment to the organization and to our veterans. Congratulations, Jason, on becoming Department President. I look forward to working with you, the Line Officers, and the District Presidents to make this a successful and fun year.



DISTRICT 7 PRESIDENT, JENNIFER WINNIE

Let me start by introducing myself. My name is Jennifer Winnie. I joined under my grandfather's eligibility in 1992.

Thank you for the great opportunity to serve my District. I want to congratulate Jason Manke, our new Department President, and his Line Officers. I know we are going to have a great year. With teamwork, we will accomplish much more than we can alone. Just a few events that are

coming up: August 2nd-7th District Meeting and School of Instruction at Carrick Jarosz Post 9411, Homer. August 9th - MI Days at the VFW National Home, Eaton Rapids. August 20th-23rd - The Walls That Heals at Harper Creek High School, Battle Creek.



DISTRICT 9 PRESIDENT, ROBERT KLOCKZIEM

My name is Rob Klockziem, and I am honored to serve as the VFW Auxiliary District 9 President. I have been a proud member of the Corunna VFW Auxiliary Post 4005. Family is at the center of everything I do. I am married to my wife Heather, and together we have a blended family of six children as well as three grandchildren who bring us great joy. The values of service, patriotism, and community that we share as a family

are the same values that guide my work within the Auxiliary. The VFW and Auxiliary have been an important part of my family's life for many years. My father proudly served our country during Operation Desert Storm and later served as Commander of Corunna Post 4005. My mother was also deeply involved in the organization and had the honor of serving as a District President. Their dedication to veterans and community service inspired me to become involved and continue our family's commitment to the VFW and Auxiliary. As District 9 President, I look forward to working alongside our

Auxiliary members to strengthen our programs, support our communities, and continue honoring the sacrifices made by our veterans. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve and am committed to helping our District grow while encouraging fellowship, volunteerism, and dedication to the Auxiliary's mission. Together, we can make a positive difference in the lives of veterans and their families while ensuring that their service and sacrifices are never forgotten. Important dates to remember: First District Meeting - Sept 12th; National Home - Aug 9th; Camp Trotter Family Day - Aug 22nd.



DISTRICT 14 PRESIDENT, SCOTT COLLINS

Greetings from the central and eastern half of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, also known as District 14. I am privileged to be elected this 2026-27 fiscal year to serve my District 14 as well as the Department of Michigan's first VFW Auxiliary male President, Jason

Manke. Historical congratulations, Jason! I would also like to congratulate all of this year's Department Line Officers and District Presidents. I live in Negaunee and work as an aide and substitute teacher for Negaunee Middle School. My VFW and Auxiliary volunteer service started at the V.A. Romo VFW Post 3165 in 2002, when I became a charter member and secretary of their Men's Auxiliary. Subsequently, when the Men's Auxiliary disbanded, I

joined the current VFW 3165 Auxiliary in 2017. Some chairs that I have filled include Auxiliary President, Trustee, Secretary, Past District President, and 2024-25 Department Veterans & Family Support Chairman. Thank you, VFW 9023 and Auxiliary of Brimley, for hosting our first District meeting of the year on August 16. Our District 14 Spring Convention is scheduled for April 9-11, at VFW Post 5670, Gwinn.



DISTRICT 15 PRESIDENT, JUDY FELL

Hello, I'm Judy to congratulate all the newly elected officers. May this year be a great year for supporting our veterans and their families. District 15 had a planning meeting on June 27th, where we hosted an in-house school of instruction on media and reels. The District is planning the All-District Family Freedom Fest in the fall. I hope that the year '26-'27 will be a great year.

Peninsula—a Yooper! We are small but mighty as a District. I would like



AGENDA OUTLINE

		ROOM
Thursday, Oct 29		
6:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.	Department Hospitality	Stadium Room
Friday, Oct 30		
Friday Dress Code:	Department Officers & Council Members in CofA uniform Post Members, Navy or Gray slacks & Commander's polo shirt	
8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.	Conference Registration (closed for lunch 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.)	Conference Room Foyer
8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.	Committee and Vendor Tables	Conference Rooms F&G
8:30 a.m.	VFW Service Committee Meeting	Conference Room A
9:00 a.m.	VFW Budget Committee Meeting	Conference Room A
9:30 a.m.	VFW Bylaws meeting – review of amended Department and National Bylaws	
10:30 a.m.	Joint VFW / Auxiliary Opening Meeting	Conference Rooms A, B, C, D
12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Lunch on your own	
12:00 p.m.	VFW Council of Administration Lunch	Stadium Room
1:15 p.m.	VFW Council of Administration Meeting	Conference Room A
6:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.	Auxiliary Bingo, Silent Auction, Raffle	Conference Rooms B, C, D
7:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m.	Department Hospitality	Stadium Room
Saturday, Oct 31		
Saturday Dress Code:	Officers and Members, Navy or Gray slacks & Commander's polo shirt	
8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	Conference Registration	Conference Room Foyer
8:00 a.m.	Committee and Vendor Tables	Conference Rooms F&G
8:30 a.m.	Department Program Director Presentations	Conference Room A
12:00	Lunch on your own	
1:15 p.m.	Department Program Director Presentations	Conference Room A
6:30 p.m.	Fall Conference Dinner & Halloween Costume Party Raffle	Conference Rooms A, B, C, D
Sunday, November 1	Safe Travels Home	

**DESIGNER / EDITOR
ALYSSA MCELFRESH**

Hello! It was a pleasure seeing everyone at State Convention in June. Thank you to everyone who took the time to ask me any questions they had about the MOV. I am always available for questions and welcome the conversation. It was a great opportunity to catch up with you all and I look forward to doing so again at Fall Conference that will take place over Halloween weekend in Mt. Pleasant.

As we continue to move swiftly through summer, I hope everyone is staying cool, hydrated, and safe from the severe storms we have been experiencing across the state.

I would like to extend my congratulations to the first male Department President for the State of Michigan VFW Auxiliary, way to go Jason Manke! Congratulations as well to State Commander Larry Thayer and all other VFW & Auxiliary Line Officers and Chairmen for the 2026-2027 year.

Lastly, please be sure to check the Department Website for upcoming MOV deadlines!

Next deadline = September 15, 2026
Send articles for consideration to:
MOV@VFWMI.VET

The mission of this paper is to provide pertinent and accurate information about the decisions and activities of the VFW at the Post, District and Department level; the relevant affairs of the State and Federal governments, and the decisions and activities of the national organization of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The paper is also the voice of the members. We welcome articles from all members. All articles should contribute positively to the welfare of the VFW and its members. We will accept no attacks on any member or leader of the VFW. We will accept a thoughtful discussion of all related issues and reserve the right to reply to those that seem to reflect a misunderstanding of the VFW and its policies. Articles more than 500 words may be rejected or returned for revision. *We reserve the right to edit all articles as we see fit.*

The news and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of Michigan or the National Organization.



CONTACT INFO UPDATE FORM

Members, please print the form to be filled out.
Return information is listed below.

Name: _____

Member number: _____ Post number: _____

Email address: _____

Address (if changed in last two years): _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip code: _____

Are you currently on active duty? YES _____

Please complete and return to:
VFW Headquarters
924 N Washington
Lansing, MI 48906
Or email to: adjutant@vfwmi.vet

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NOW JOIN US IN THE FIGHT
FOR VETERANS.**

We understand the unique bond you share with other veterans of overseas conflicts because we, too, have been there. No matter which conflict called you to service, we invite you to join us as we continue to fight for all that's good FOR VETERANS.

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- vfwmi.org/directory
- vfwmi.org/officers
- vfwmi.org/allstate
- vfwmi.org/mov
- vfwmi.org/gallery

TAPS FORM
Comrades, please copy this form and use it for your TAPS report.

Send completed form to:
VFW of Michigan
924 N Washington - Lansing, MI 48906
or Amanda@vfwmi.org

Branch of Service :
ARMY AIR FORCE NAVY
MARINE CORP COAST GUARD

Served in :
WWI WWII KOREA VIETNAM
GULF IRAQ/ AFGHANISTAN
OTHER OCCUPATION FORCES

(Last Name)

(First Name)

(Age)

(Date of Death)

(Post)