

VETERANS & FAMILY SUPPORT AMBASSADOR



TESSA BUTCHER

906 E. 4th Street
Newton, KS 67114-3538
(316) 871-9637
butchert@hotmail.com

"We are all musicians in a great human orchestra. You are not required to play a solo, but you are required to know what instrument you hold and play it as well as you can. You are required to find your place in the score. What we love we must protect. That's what love means. From the right to know and the duty to inquire flows the obligation to act." – Sandra Steingraber.

As members of this organization, we all have our parts to play. Some of us do this by taking on leadership roles within the organization. Others might do it by lending their time organizing or providing baked goods for events. The one thing we all have in common though is love for our veterans; we all strive to serve them and honor their service to our country in any way that we can.

This year we'll be **Banding Together for Our Veterans** by offering guidance to our veterans about acquiring VA benefits, working toward higher education with scholarship opportunities and providing helpful resources for when life gets rough.

Veterans & Family Support is the heart of our organization and a Program that every member can and should participate in. When thinking about this Program, one word often comes to mind: unity. We are united in our passion for this organization and at our core we are all here for the same purpose, to support our veterans, service members, their families and our communities!

Our veterans have sacrificed so much for us and it's time that we do all that we can for them. This year, the primary points of focus will be:

- Veterans and Military Support Programs
- National Veterans Service Suicide Prevention
- Mental Health Awareness

Veterans and Military Support Programs and National Veterans Service

We can step up to ensure that our veterans and their family members are aware of the aid available to them in times of need such as financial assistance with mortgage or rent payments, vehicle expenses, utilities, food or clothing. Now more than ever, we need to guide our veterans and their family members in their efforts to obtain their VA benefits by pairing them with VFW Accredited Service Officers. Financial aid is also available to those service members and veterans who are looking to further their education and find a new career path in life.

As Auxiliary members, we are able to help provide the comforts of home when we adopt units and send care packages to our deployed troops. While it's important to remember them when they're away, it's equally as important to remember them and their family prior to and after deployment. The VFW has financial grants that are available to help with events held by our Auxiliaries and Posts to support and recognize our troops.

For more information, visit the VFW website at: vfw.org/assistance/va-claims-separation-benefits or vfw.org/assistance/financial-grants.

Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Awareness

Our veterans are our heroes and it's time we show them how much they mean to us. Many veterans returning home do so with heavy hearts and minds. By banding together with other organizations such as the Elizabeth Dole Foundation and Give an Hour, we'll be able to raise awareness and foster community engagement to change the stigma surrounding mental health. We need to be proactive in looking after our heroes. Be mindful of the characteristics associated with thoughts of suicide and be watchful of our veterans' mental health. One veteran lost to suicide is one veteran too many!

We can't pass up the time to honor our veterans' service to this great nation. One of the easiest ways to do this is by giving our time to serve in any way that we can to give back to those who've given so much for us. So, I ask, what will you do for our veterans, service members and their families this year?



VETERANS & FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM

VFW National Veterans Service • VFW Veterans & Military Support Programs Assist Veterans, Service Members and their Families Promote Veteran & Military Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Awareness

Spread the Word about National Veterans Service (NVS)

The VFW's National Veterans Service (NVS) helps veterans, service members and their families obtain the benefits they deserve – at no cost.

NVS provides a nationwide network of nearly 300 VFW Service Officers who help veterans navigate the Veterans Affairs system. Those VFW Service Officers recover more than \$1 billion annually in VA benefits for veterans and their dependents.

These highly skilled professionals assist all veterans, whether they are VFW members or not, in filing claims for:

- Disability compensation.
- Rehabilitation and educational programs.
- Pension and death benefits.
- Employment and training programs.

NVS also works to ensure veterans receive quality, timely and accessible VA health care, including:

- Hospital care.
- Outpatient care.
- Specialized health care for female veterans.
- Alcohol and drug dependency treatment.
- Medical evaluation for disorders associated with military service, exposure to Agent Orange, radiation or other environmental hazards.

Donations to NVS can be made online or by mail. Donate online at vfw.org/ways-to-help, select National Veterans Service, click "Contribute."

Donate by mail by sending funds to the VFW earmarked for NVS. Mail check to:

VFW National Headquarters
Attn: NVS
406 W. 34th Street, 11th Floor
Kansas City, MO 64111

VFW Veterans & Military Support Program

Veterans & Military Support contains programs initiated by the VFW: Military Assistance Program (MAP), Unmet Needs and the VFW "Sport Clips® Help A Hero Scholarship." These programs serve active-duty and recently discharged military.

Donations to Veterans & Military Support can be made online or by mail.

Donate online at vfw.org/ways-to-help, select Veterans & Military Support, click "Contribute."

Donate by mail by sending funds to the VFW earmarked for Veterans & Military Support.

Mail check to:

VFW National Headquarters
Attn: Veterans & Military Support
406 W. 34th Street, 9th Floor
Kansas City, MO 64111

Military Assistance Program (MAP) Funds Ways to Connect with Troops

MAP helps VFW and Auxiliary members give more of their local military units. It helps forge and nurture bonds with those units by providing financial assistance for Posts, Districts and Departments to sponsor morale-boosting send-offs, homecomings and casual get-togethers.

Post and Auxiliaries participating in Adopt-a-Unit and Family Readiness Group events can also receive assistance. MAP keeps care packages circulating by covering postage costs.

For guidelines to apply for MAP funds, contact the VFW Veterans & Military Support office at 816-756-3390.

Unmet Needs Can Help in a Crisis

A soldier is serving on foreign soil, but the rent is due back home. A soldier is driving a tank on alert for IEDs, and the family car needs a new radiator the family cannot afford. These are the situations Unmet Needs can address. Grants of up to \$1,500 payable to a creditor can bridge the gap to make a mortgage or rent payment or to fund home and auto repairs, insurance, utility costs, food and clothing. To learn more, visit vfw.org/assistance/financial-grants.

VFW “Sport Clips® Help A Hero Scholarship” Program

The VFW and Sport Clips are giving the gift of scholarships to our nation’s heroes as a way of thanking them for their dedicated service to our nation. The VFW “Sport Clips® Help A Hero Scholarship” awards scholarships of up to \$5,000 to qualifying veterans and service members to help them complete their educational goals without incurring excessive student loan debt. To learn more, visit vfw.org/student-veterans-support.

Veteran & Military Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Awareness

Make a difference in the life of a veteran or service member in crisis by educating yourself and others about the warning signs of suicide.

The Veterans Crisis Line connects veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text. Veterans and their loved ones can:

- Call 1-800-MyVA411 to access all VA departments,
- Call 988 and Press 1,
- Chat online at veteranscrisisline.net, or
- Send a text message to 838255.

Confidential support is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Support for deaf and hearing impaired individuals is available. Tip: Add the Veterans Crisis Line number as a contact in your cell phone for easy referral.

Purchase the Auxiliary Suicide Awareness Prevention Pin from the VFW Store. When someone asks you about your pin, tell them that the VFW Auxiliary is concerned about the rates of suicides among veterans and military service members; we want everyone to be aware of the unique stress they face.

Mental Wellness Support and Resources

More than 16 veterans commit suicide each day, and the VFW and VFW Auxiliary are committed to helping change the conversation and stigma surrounding mental health in the United States.

Change the stigma, improve research, support your community and explore treatment options at the resources below:

- **VFW Mental Wellness Campaign**
vfw.org/assistance/mental-wellness
- **The Campaign to Change Direction**
changedirection.org
- **Give An Hour**
giveanhour.org
- **Patients Like Me**
patientslikeme.com/join/vfw
- **One Mind**
onemind.org
- **The Elizabeth Dole Foundation**
elizabethdolefoundation.org
- **Help Heal Veterans (Therapeutic Craft Kits)**
healvets.org
- **Veterans Voices Writing Project**
veteransvoices.org

Other Resource

The VFW and VFW Auxiliary helped pass the Deborah Sampson Act that will enhance and improve VA programs and health services for women veterans and ensure they receive the care and support they need and have earned. It includes an expansion of the Women Veterans Call Center to include text messaging capability.

Women Veterans Call Center

Call or text: 855-829-6636 or 1-855-VA-WOMEN

Women Veterans Health Care

www.womenshealth.va.gov/WOMENSHEALTH/index.asp

VETERANS & FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM AWARDS

Awards for Auxiliaries

1. Most outstanding activity and/or event to increase awareness of military suicide and mental health.

- Citation to every Auxiliary that hosts an activity and/or event to increase awareness of military suicide and mental health. Entry form required and available in MALTA Member Resources. Auxiliaries must send the entry form to their Department Veterans & Family Support Chairman by March 31, 2024 for judging.

The Department Veterans & Family Support Chairman must email National Headquarters by April 30, 2024 at info@vfwauxiliary.org a total combined list of every Auxiliary in their Department that completed and submitted an entry form.

Citations will be mailed directly to participating Auxiliaries from National Headquarters.

- Citation and \$25 to one Auxiliary in each of the four Conferences that hosts the most outstanding activity and/or event to increase awareness of military suicide and mental health.

The Department Veterans & Family Support Chairman must sign and send a copy of the completed Department-winning entry form to the National Veterans & Family Support Ambassador by April 30, 2024 for judging.

Citations will be mailed directly to winning Auxiliaries from National Headquarters and money will be deposited into Auxiliary account after National Convention.

2. Most outstanding activity and/or event to increase the support of veterans, service members and their families.

- Citation to every Auxiliary that hosts an activity and/or event to increase support of veterans, service members and their families. Entry form required and available in MALTA Member Resources. Auxiliaries must send the entry form to their Department Veterans & Family Support Chairman by March 31, 2024 for judging.

The Department Veterans & Family Support Chairman must email National Headquarters by April 30, 2024 at info@vfwauxiliary.org a total combined list of every Auxiliary in their Department that completed and submitted an entry form.

Citations will be mailed directly to participating Auxiliaries from National Headquarters.

- Citation and \$25 to one Auxiliary in each of the four Conferences that hosts the most outstanding activity and/or event to increase support of veterans, service members and their families.

The Department Veterans & Family Support Chairman must sign and send a copy of the completed Department-winning entry form to the National Veterans & Family Support Ambassador by April 30, 2024 for judging.

Citations will be mailed directly to winning Auxiliaries from National Headquarters and money will be deposited into Auxiliary account after National Convention.

Awards for Departments and Department Chairmen

1. \$25 VFW Store gift certificate to one Department Veterans & Family Support Chairman in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the best promotion of awareness of military suicide and mental health. Winners will be announced and awards presented at the 2024 National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky.
2. \$25 VFW Store gift certificate to one Department Veterans & Family Support Chairman in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the best promotion of supporting veterans, service members and their families. Winners will be announced and awards presented at the 2024 National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky.
3. Outstanding Performance Award in each of the 10 Program Divisions based on the criteria listed on Page 5 and for the promotion of the Program Goals listed at the top of Page 58. Winners will be announced and awards presented at the 2024 National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky.