



Veterans & Family Support

Department of Maryland VFW Auxiliary

Setting Sail for Our Veterans

February 2025

Operation Bottom Cover

National Veterans & Family Support Ambassador

Evan Smiley, our National VFW Auxiliary V&FS Ambassador, continues to promote Operation Bottom Cover in his third national promotion. This is our National President Brenda Bryant's special project.

He states, "it is not just about providing supplies: it's about creating a network of care. each diaper delivered, each pack of wipes shared, represents a tangible reminder that these families' sacrifices are valued and appreciated." He continues by saying, "by supporting this initiative, you're doing more than providing diapers-you're delivering dignity, stability and hope. Together, we can reinforce the message that no veteran, service member or their family should ever feel overlooked."

How You Can Help?

- MALTA - Make donations directly under the gifts tab.
- Coordinate & made a gift of diapers and wipes directly to a military base.
- Use your Post to host a diaper drive for veterans or military families in your area.
- Operation Showers of Appreciation (OSOA) seeks to honor and support military and veterans in everyday life. Their Diaper Assistance Program is just one of the ways they support our military personnel.
- Spread the Word - use social media, create flyers, hold a fundraiser to support this mission.

Contact Info

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Congratulations

Karen Malott of Fort Smallwood Auxiliary #2462.

She won both gift cards for using the 22 a Day statistic and promoting suicide awareness Winter contests. Their auxiliary created a wreath with the 22 A-Day and suicide awareness contact information. They have continuously handed out thank you coins in small sheer bags which included buddy poppies and suicide prevention hotline 9-8-8 wallet card along with miniature American Flags.



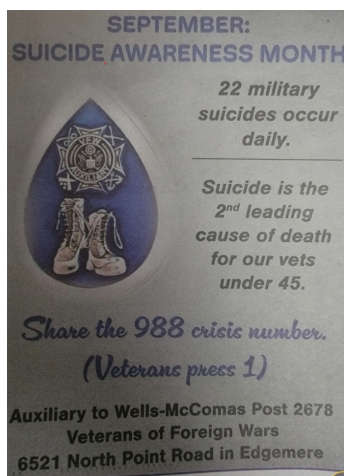
HONORABLE MENTIONS:

Cathy Gistedt of Wells-McComas Auxiliary #2678 her auxiliary sponsored an ad on 19 September 2024 in their local newspaper The DUNDALK Eagle. The ad had a picture of our teardrop lapel pin along with the statistic of 22 A-Day and the 9-8-8 crisis hotline number.

Elisa Decker of Star-Spangled Banner Memorial Auxiliary #10078, they drafted a letter informing their community of the 22 A-Day statistic and include the suicide awareness number and teardrop stickers.



Three winners will be announced at the Department Convention along with the awards in each membership group.



Stamps & Coupons

Now that the holidays are over, are meeting a friend or members for coffee and catching up on all of the latest news from the holidays? How about clippings coupons or stamps from those holiday greeting cards in support our veteran and active-duty military families?

*****REMEMBER*****

• Clipping coupons

- Manufacturer coupons only
- Expired can be up to 6 months past the expiration date
- Unexpired should have at least 2 months left on them
- Sort into sandwich bags:
 - (1) food,
 - (2) non-food,
 - (3) baby, and
 - (4) pet
- Mail to: Support Our Troops
P.O. Box 70
Daytona Beach, FL 32115-0070

• Postage Stamps

- leave at least 1/4 of an inch around the stamp
- Separate stamps into 3 categories:
 - (1) cancelled US,
 - (2) uncanceled US and
 - (3) foreign.
- Mail Stamps to:
Stamps for the Wounded
P.O. Box 297
Dunn Loring, VA 22027

Don't forget to check on our veterans!

VA S.A.V.E. TRAINING: SUPPORTING OUR VETERANS

Signs of Suicidal Thinking

There are behaviors that may be signs a Veteran needs support. Learn to recognize these warning signs:

- Hopelessness, feeling like there is no way out
- Anxiety, agitation, sleeplessness, or mood swings
- Feeling like there is no reason to live
- Rage or anger
- Engaging in risky activities without thinking
- Increasing alcohol or drug use
- Withdrawing from family and friends

The presence of the following signs in a Veteran requires immediate attention:

- When asked, they express a desire to hurt or kill themselves
- When prompted, they reveal they are looking for ways to kill themselves
- They talk about death, dying, or suicide
- They begin to exhibit self-destructive behavior, such as increased drug or alcohol use, talking about acquiring/using weapons for self-harm, and stockpiling medication

Ask the Question

There are behaviors that may be signs a Veteran needs support. Know how to ask the most important question of all:

"Are you thinking of killing yourself?"

Other ways to ask the question include:

"Are you thinking of suicide?"

"Have you had thoughts about taking your own life?"

When asking the question, remember:

- **DO** ask the question if you've identified warning signs or symptoms
- **DO** ask the question in such a way that is natural and flows with the conversation
- **DO NOT** ask the question as though you are looking for a "no" answer ("You're not thinking of killing yourself, are you?")
- **DO NOT** wait to ask the question until he or she is halfway out the door

Validate the Veteran's Experience

As you listen to the Veteran, ask him or her to do the talking and use supportive, encouraging comments. Use the following steps to let the Veteran know that you are listening and acknowledge his or her experience:

- Talk openly about suicide
 - Be willing to listen and allow the Veteran to express his or her feelings
- Recognize the situation is serious
- Do not pass judgement
- Reassure them that help is available

Encourage Treatment and Expedite Getting Help

If a Veteran is having suicidal thoughts, remain calm and reassure them that help is available:

- **DO NOT** keep the Veteran's suicidal behavior a secret
- **DO NOT** leave him or her alone
- Try to get the person to seek immediate help from his or her doctor or the nearest hospital or emergency room, OR
- Call 911

You can also call the confidential Veterans Crisis Line at **1-800-273-8255 and Press 1.**

Safety is Important

Never negotiate with someone who has a gun. Get to safety and call 911. If the Veteran has taken pills, cut himself or herself, or has done harm to himself or herself in some way, call 911.



The Power of One

By: Ashish Ram

One song can spark a moment,
One whisper can wake the dream.
One tree can start a forest,
One bird can herald spring.

One smile begins a friendship,
One handclasp can lift a soul,
One star can guide a ship at sea,
One word can frame the goal

One vote can change a nation,
One sunbeam lights a room
One candle wipes out darkness,
One laugh will conquer gloom.

One step must start each journey.
One word must start each prayer.
One hope will raise our spirits,
One touch can show you care.

One voice can speak with wisdom,
One heart can know what's true,
One life can make a difference,
You see, it's up to you!

YOU HAVE THE POWER TO MAKE A
DIFFERANCE IN A VETERAN'S LIFE!!



Appreciation Coins

Any day is a good day to present a service member with a token of appreciation.

VFW Store
www.vfwstore.org
1 (833) 839-8387

Thank You Coins

Item #01925. They are \$3.25 each



Welcome Home Coins

Item #01900. They are \$4.50 each



Suicide Awareness Lapel Pins
Item #01724 \$3.25 each



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