

# VFW 2024

## VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS®

### THE MARYLAND VFW COMBAT VETERAN

The Official Publication of the Department of Maryland Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States

## VETERAN'S DAY

— HONORING ALL WHO SERVED —



### IN THIS ISSUE

- ◆ STATE COMMANDER'S MESSAGE
- ◆ DEPARTMENT PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
- ◆ HISTORY OF VETERANS DAY
- ◆ MANAGING STRESS
- ◆ HOW THE GRINCH CAN STEAL YOUR DATA



## Dear Members...

November 11th is Veterans Day. As we gather together this Veterans Day, we pause to honor and express our deepest gratitude to the brave men and women who have selflessly served our nation. Their unwavering commitment, sacrifice, and courage are the foundation of our freedom and the strength of our democracy.

In times of peace and in times of conflict, our veterans have stood as pillars of resilience and dedication. They have faced immense challenges and shown unparalleled valor, often in the face of great personal sacrifice. It is our duty and privilege to recognize their contributions and ensure their legacies are never forgotten.

This Veterans Day, let us not only remember the fallen but also extend our heartfelt thanks to those who continue to serve and protect. Their stories inspire us, and their actions remind us of the true meaning of service and sacrifice.

To all veterans, we extend our deepest respect and gratitude. Your service has made an indelible mark on our lives and our nation. We honor you today and every day.

A blessed Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas to all!

Until next time...  
Jackie Kimball  
Editor

The Maryland VFW Combat Veteran

### STATE COMMANDER

Joseph Cicchillo

### ADJUTANT

Orlando "Big O" Roberson, Sr.

### EDITOR

Jacquelyn Kimball, PDP

The Maryland VFW Combat Veteran is published six times per year — July—August, September—October, November—December, January—February, March—April and May—June by the Department of Maryland, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, 101 North Gay Street, Room J, Baltimore, MD 21202, 410-752-6474

Send all communications for publication to [jackie.kimball@comcast.net](mailto:jackie.kimball@comcast.net). Deadline for submissions is on the 20th, during the months of June, August, September, December, February and April.

### WEBSITE

[www.vfwmd.org](http://www.vfwmd.org)

**Veterans  
Crisis Line**



**DIAL 988 then  
PRESS 1**

**Call**

Dial 988 then Press 1

**Chat**

[VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](http://VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat)

**Text**

838255



**NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.**

# STATE COMMANDER JOSEPH CICCHILLO

"I am particularly proud to highlight the achievements of four outstanding Posts: 5246, 8806, 2632, and 8674. These Posts have surpassed expectations, achieving an impressive 102% membership."



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

**A**s I travel across Maryland, I am continually inspired by the dedication and hard work of our VFW Posts. I have had the privilege of visiting 30 Posts for various events, including Post meetings, ceremonies, and award presentations. Each visit has reinforced my pride in our organization and the incredible efforts of our members.

I am particularly proud to highlight the achievements of four outstanding Posts: 5246, 8806, 2632, and 8674. These Posts have surpassed expectations, achieving an impressive 102% membership. Their commitment and enthusiasm are exemplary and set a high standard for all of us. Currently, our State stands at 87.98% membership, a testament to the hard work and dedication of all our members.

We are also excited about the upcoming Army-Navy Game, one of the most anticipated events of the year. This historic rivalry between the United States Military Academy (Army) and the United States Naval Academy (Navy) is more than just a football game; it's a celebration of tradition, honor, and camaraderie. We will have a booth at the game, where we will be engaging with attendees, sharing information about the VFW, and celebrating the spirit of competition and unity. It's a fantastic opportunity to connect with fellow veterans, enjoy the game, and show support for our military academies. The atmosphere at the Army-Navy Game is electric, filled with pageantry and pride. From the march-on of the cadets and midshipmen to the singing of the alma maters, every moment is steeped in tradition. Whether you're cheering for the Army or Navy, the game is a reminder of the dedication and service of our military personnel. **We encourage all veterans and their families to stop by our booth, learn more about the VFW, and join us in this incredible celebration.**

I was honored to be the only Veterans Service Organization (VSO) representative at the Governor's signing of the Hidden Heroes initiative. This initiative is crucial in recognizing and supporting the caregivers of our veterans, and it was a privilege to witness this important step forward. Additionally, I attended the naming ceremony of the new US Navy ship, the USS Baltimore, further solidifying our strong ties with the Navy and our shared commitment to service.

Looking ahead, I am preparing for a one-on-one meeting with Secretary Woods. This meeting will be a vital opportunity to advocate for better care for our veterans and their families. I am committed to ensuring that their needs are met and that they receive the support and resources they deserve.

Thank you to all our members for your continued dedication and hard work. Together, we are making a significant impact and upholding the proud tradition of the VFW.

**Yours in Comradeship**  
**Joseph Cicchillo**  
**State Commander**

## **VA SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING PASSES HOUSE AND SENATE**

The House and Senate passed a bill, to provide the necessary supplemental funding to address the VA Benefits Administration's \$2.88 Billion budget shortfall this year. This will ensure upwards of 7 Million Veterans receive their earned benefits on 1 October. The effort to ensure Congress did the right thing and passed this funding was spearheaded by the VFW, with support of many other Veteran-related Organizations.

Members of the VFW National Legislative Team and your State Legislative Representatives brought this issue directly to the attention of every lawmaker on Capitol Hill, during our Fall Legislative Conference. It is important for Veterans, Families and concerned citizens to make their voices heard on Veteran-related matters. If we do not keep pressure on Congress, they will find it easy to ignore Veterans and take away earned benefits.

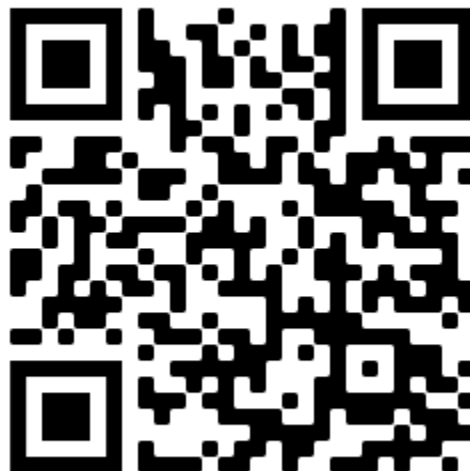
Make your voice heard, in support of our Veteran-related Legislation efforts and encourage others in your family and community to lend their support, by joining the VFW Action Corps.

Joining the Action Corps is easy - just click the link below, to go to the Action Corps page on the VFW.org site, or scan the QR code with your phone.

**Take Action - Join the Action Corps and make your voice heard!**

**Visit [vfw.org/JoinActionCorps](https://vfw.org/JoinActionCorps) - <https://votervoice.net/VFW/register>**

OR SCAN THIS QR CODE



# **DEPARTMENT PRESIDENT**

## **DEBBIE STURGIS**



Welcome to Fall! The leaves are turning and the weather is cooling off. School is back in and the VOD and Patriots Pen should have been delivered to the schools and you should be getting them back and having them judged as the winners are due to your District by October 31.

We have been making our rounds to the Districts and I must say they are doing a great job promoting the VFW and Auxiliary programs. We still have Districts to visit and we look forward to seeing all the members.

We will be going to the Eastern Conference on Nov 1 thru Nov 3 in Burlington, VT. Our Department has a bus and we have members of the Department of New Jersey and Delaware riding along with us. It is going to be a great weekend of learning and fun. I hope to see everyone there.

Our VFWA Annual Christmas Conference will be held December 15th at Cecil County Memorial VFW 6027, 813 Turkey Point Road, North East, MD 21901.

I would like to wish everyone a safe and Happy Thanksgiving and a wonderful Christmas no matter how you celebrate it. May you all enjoy your families during this Holiday Season.

Thank you for all you do.  
Debbie Sturgis  
Department President

My Special Project is "Patriot Point." It is the Military Bowl Foundation's 294-acre retreat that provides a relaxing and safe environment for our nation's wounded, ill and injured service members, their families and caregivers.

**STATE SENIOR  
VICE COMMANDER  
BRUCE R. EDWARDS, JR.**



**Comrades and Members of the Auxiliary,**

The fall is upon us and everyone is working hard on membership and VOD, Patriots Pen, Teacher of year, Civil Servant and Scouts deadlines. **What really is happening is that we are losing veterans every day. The holidays are coming soon, which are hard on some with no family. Please do what you can and offer them a place to stay and a warm meal this holiday season.** Some will not ask, because of their pride and some just don't know how to ask. So let's help these veterans in need if we can. We are all family now and at the end. I have been out in the state visiting Posts and attending functions. If you have an upcoming event or meeting please notify me, so I can attend. I would love to attend your event. I'm still learning a great deal and trying to get ready for next year, if you would like me to be the State Commander. The Department is here to help you if you need help. How can I help you, to help me? [srvce@vfwmd.org](mailto:srvce@vfwmd.org) 443-206-1588.

The Department is here to help you if you need help. How can I help you, to help me?  
[srvce@vfwmd.org](mailto:srvce@vfwmd.org) 443-206-1588.

# STATE JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER TODD A. WALTER



I'm excited and looking forward in supporting Team Maryland's membership, Post, Districts and leadership for the 2024/2025 year. As we know it is an exciting year as we celebrate VFW 125 years of service to our Veterans and Community along with the 100<sup>th</sup> year celebration of our VFW National Home. One of my duties serving as Jr. Vice role is to inform and be liaison for the VFW National Home and our Maryland House. See Maryland's house 4th Quarter report, pictures, and multiple planned events throughout the 2025 year. Also see Maryland's Community Service reporting, Team Maryland is doing outstanding with new online program and activity reporting this year, we are looking for feedback so we can improve our activity reporting system.



1. Fundraising Gala on February 8, 2025 (by invitation only)
2. Community Celebration on June 28, 2025 (all welcome)
3. Bus trips to the National Home at the VFW National Convention in Columbus, OH, August 13, 2025

## Maryland House Sponsored By Department of Maryland VFW and Auxiliary



Maryland House 1938 sq. Ft. Built in 1938  
3 Bedrooms, Full Basement, 2 Bathrooms & Air  
**Currently Funds 1st QTR \$21,496.30**  
Ideal House Funds \$25,000  
Currently Housing Family of 3  
Typical YR Sponsor Cost—\$8,000  
Estimated Transition—04/2028

## MARYLAND COMMUNITY REPORTING TOTAL APPROVED REPORTS 1,222

National Ranking	Volunteer Hours	Value of Hours	Dollars Donated	Total C/S
18th	5817.2	\$194,818	\$377,658	\$572,476

# Veterans Day

## Honoring All Who Served



## *History of Veterans Day*

**V**eterans Day, originally known as **Armistice Day**, commemorates the end of World War I. The armistice between the Allied nations and Germany went into effect on the **11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month** in 1918, marking a significant moment in history when hostilities ceased, bringing relief after years of brutal warfare.

### **ARMISTICE DAY ORIGINS**

On November 11, 1919, President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed the first Armistice Day with the following words: "To us in America, the reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for the victory." The day was dedicated to the cause of world peace and originally included parades, public meetings, and a brief suspension of business activities at 11 a.m.

### **EXPANSION AND EVOLUTION**

After World War II and the Korean War, the United States experienced a surge in veteran populations and thus the need to honor all veterans became more apparent. In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed a bill into law that officially changed Armistice Day to Veterans Day, expanding the significance to honor all American veterans of all wars. Eisenhower called upon Americans to rededicate themselves to the cause of peace and to acknowledge the bravery and sacrifice of veterans.

### **OBSERVANCES AND TRADITIONS**

Veterans Day ceremonies typically include parades and the laying of wreaths at war memorials, especially the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery. These events provide opportunities for Americans to publicly show their appreciation for veterans and their families. Schools and communities often hold educational activities about the contributions of veterans and the importance of Veterans Day.

In addition, Veterans Day serves as a reminder of the ongoing needs of veterans, including healthcare, education, and employment services. Many organizations and communities use this day to advocate for and support the well-being of veterans.





## STATE ADJUTANT ORLANDO "BIG O" ROBERSON SR.

*"By sharing stories of resilience and the assistance provided, the adjutant can inspire others to get involved and contribute."*

### DEPARTMENT OF MARYLAND STATE ADJUTANT THANKS VFW MEMBERS

I extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Maryland VFW and Auxiliary for our dedicated hurricane relief efforts. Your commitment to supporting those in need during these challenging times exemplifies the spirit of camaraderie and service. The state adjutant plays a crucial role in amplifying these initiatives by communicating their impact through emails, social media, and community outreach. By sharing stories of resilience and the assistance provided, the adjutant can inspire others to get involved and contribute. Together, we can foster a stronger network of support, ensuring that help reaches those who need it most. Thank you for your unwavering dedication and partnerships.

**Semper Fidelis,  
Orlando "Big O" Roberson Sr.  
State Adjutant**

Department of Maryland  
Veterans Of Foreign Wars  
101 North Gay Street Suite J  
Baltimore, MD 21202

**New Phone Number—VFW Service Office  
410-230-4500—Ext 11022**

# STATE JUDGE ADVOCATE

## MIKE “TRIKE” LECZA

Greetings from your Department Judge Advocate,

Comrades,

It is rather alarming to me that the number of scam calls and emails I receive has been on the rise. Please be careful when answering the phone/emails and do not give out any personal information over the phone or through emails.

Examples of Emails and Calls that I have received recently are:

- ◆ Call about Income taxes
- ◆ Calls about my Property taxes
- ◆ Emails about my Ez-pass.

There have been numerous instances where Posts have been scammed into giving someone their banking information, causing the Post to have their accounts compromised.

The individuals who send these emails and or make these calls are highly organized and sound convincing. However I have seen quite a few news reports that upon investigation of these individuals, a lot of them are based in another country, so it is hard to prosecute them.



**— BEWARE —**

“There have been numerous instances where Posts have been scammed into giving someone their banking information, causing the Post to have their accounts compromised.”

Please if you get one of these emails and or calls, be extremely careful as to what information you reveal to them.

As always if there are any Questions or concerns about anything! Please feel free to contact me.

**Keep your Powder Dry,**

Mike "Trike" Lecza

Judge Advocate

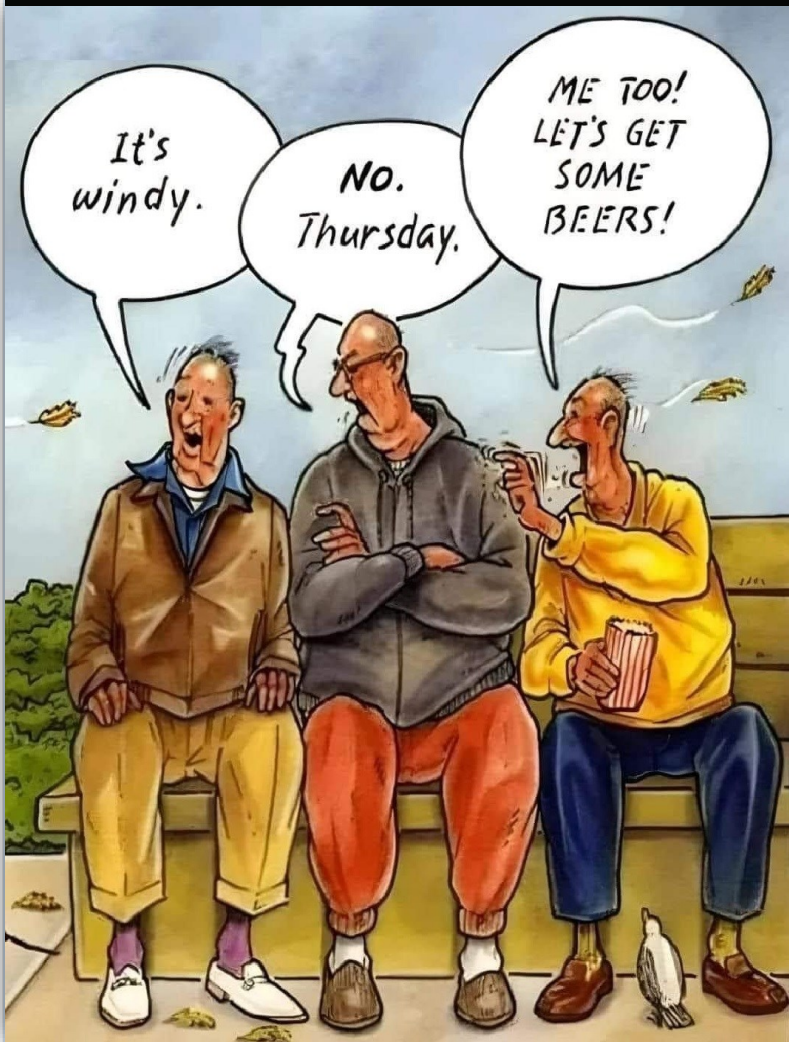
VFW Department of Maryland

Cell: 443-890-1841

Email: [mike.lecza@vfwmd.org](mailto:mike.lecza@vfwmd.org)



**WE ARE  
CELEBRATING  
THE  
LEGACY**



**MARK YOUR  
CALENDAR**

**January 26, 2025 at 1300**

Our Department's Patriot's Pen, Voice Of Democracy, Loyalty Day, Buddy Poppy, Teacher of the Year and Civil Servant Awards will be held at VFW Post 2678, 6521 North Point Road, Edgemere, MD 21219.

*Celebrating outstanding achievements  
and honoring exceptional individuals.*



# STATE SURGEON CLAUDIA WALTER

IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS IN EMOTIONAL CRISIS, YOU CAN CALL THE VETERANS CRISIS LINE. DIAL 988 THEN PRESS 1. YOU CAN ALSO TEXT 838255 OR CHAT ONLINE AT: [HTTPS://WWW.VETERANSCRISISLINE.NET/](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/)

## BE TOBACCO FREE! & MANAGE STRESS

Don't use commercial tobacco in any form. Tobacco in this document refers to commercial tobacco products such as cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco, and others, and does not include the sacred and traditional use of tobacco by some American Indian and Alaska Native communities. If you are using tobacco, the VA can help you stop. Avoid secondhand smoke. If you are pregnant, both you and your baby will have better health.

### WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO KNOW?

Stopping tobacco use is the single most important thing you can do to improve your health and protect your family's health. If you stop smoking or using other forms of tobacco, you and your family will experience short and long-term health benefits. **It's never too late to stop—your health will improve at any age after stopping tobacco!**

All forms of commercial tobacco use—including cigarettes, cigars, pipes, snuff, snus, chewing tobacco and more—are harmful. Tobacco use harms nearly every organ of the body and causes:

- Cancers
- Heart disease and stroke
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and other lung/breathing problems
- Complications in those who are pregnant

Cigarette smoking is the largest cause of preventable illness and death in the United States. One in five deaths are caused by cigarette smoking and secondhand smoke.

Secondhand smoke is the smoke released from a burning cigarette, cigar or pipe, as well as the smoke exhaled by the smoker. There is no safe level of secondhand smoke. It can cause harmful effects on non-smokers' health and can increase their risk of heart disease, lung cancer, and other health problems by 20-30%.

**GOOD THINGS HAPPEN AS SOON AS YOU STOP.** You'll breathe easier, save money, smell better, sleep better, and have more energy for activities that ease stress and bring you joy. If you're pregnant, your baby will be healthier. You'll also be protecting your health and protecting your family and friends from secondhand smoke.

## WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Some Veterans wonder if smoking alternatives, such as vaping or using e-cigarettes, are safer than using tobacco. These products and devices still have risks to your health and can cause harm to your body. We are still learning about the short and long-term health effects of e-cigarettes on people of all ages.

Your VA health care team can provide proven, safe, and effective treatments for stopping tobacco. Behavioral counseling and the use of FDA-approved tobacco cessation medications work together to help you stop for good. Whether it's your first time trying to stop or if you've struggled before with stopping, your VA health care team is ready to provide helpful tips, tools, and encouragement.

## VHA TOBACCO CESSATION RESOURCES

- <https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/quit-tobacco/>
- <https://veterans.smokefree.gov/>
- VHA National Tobacco Cessation Quitline for Veterans: 1-855-QUIT VET (1-855-784-8838). Counseling is available Monday through Friday from 9 am to 9 pm ET.
- SmokefreeVET: Text the word 'VET' to 47848 from your mobile phone or visit <https://veterans.smokefree.gov/> to sign up for the SmokeFreeVET text messaging system.
- SmokefreeVET en español — Envíe un mensaje de texto con la palabra "VETESP" al 47848 desde su teléfono móvil o visite <https://veterans.smokefree.gov/tools-tips-vet/smokefreevetesp> para acceder al sistema de mensajes de texto SmokeFreeVET.
- Stay Quit Coach—a free mobile app to support quitting smoking and staying quit. Available at: <https://mobilehealth.va.gov/app/stay-quit-coach>
- Stress Management Support Resources
- Veterans Health Library: <https://www.veteranshealthlibrary.va.gov/>
- [https://www.prevention.va.gov/Healthy\\_Living/Be\\_Tobacco\\_Free.asp](https://www.prevention.va.gov/Healthy_Living/Be_Tobacco_Free.asp)

## DECEMBER HEALTH PROMOTION MANAGE STRESS

What's Important to Know?...Want to Know More?

Pay attention to stress. Tools are available to help you manage and reduce your stress.

### WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO KNOW?

If you are having difficulty coping with the demands of your life, you are experiencing stress. Everyone has stress. While some challenge in life is healthy, too much stress can create problems.

If you are overly stressed for too long, that stress can put your health at risk. If you have too much stress, your body will let you know in different ways, and you may:

- Have difficulty concentrating
- Feel worried and fearful
- Feel “wound up”—with sweaty palms, pounding heart, and tense muscles
- Feel irritable toward others
- Feel tired



**If you or someone you know is in emotional crisis, you can call the Veterans Crisis Line. Dial 988 then Press 1. You can also text 838255 or chat online at: <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>**

## WANT TO KNOW MORE?

There are many things you can do to better manage your stress, and many resources to help you. You will find a variety of stress management strategies to help you better problem solve, relax and be more mindful, express yourself, manage your time, think positively, be more physically active, and plan activities you might enjoy using the resources below.

Your VA health care team can also help you manage stress. They can provide information, refer you to classes, and suggest stress-management tools, such as the Manage Stress Workbook, and the PTSD Coach, COVID Coach, and Mindfulness Coach mobile apps.

The VA also offers Veteran trainings for stress-related topics such as problem-solving, anger management, parenting, and sleep.

## RESOURCES

- ◆ **Manage Stress Workbook** - guides you through steps to identify and track stress and practice strategies that have been shown to counteract stress.
- ◆ **Veterans Health Library** - offers information and resources on maintaining wellness, as well as a variety of physical and mental health topics.
- ◆ **VA Mental Health Services** - has a variety of resources about specific mental health topics, conditions, and other challenges.
- ◆ **VA's Living with Purpose** - a self-help workbook can help you get more active and involved in rewarding activities.
- ◆ **VA's National Center for PTSD** - has Self Help and Coping resources for those who have experienced traumatic stress.
- ◆ **VA's Whole Health Wellbeing Program** - can help equip you with tools for skill building and self-care to support your health and wellness.
- ◆ **Veteran's crisis line** - offers 24/7 support for Veterans and their loved ones.
- ◆ [https://www.prevention.va.gov/Healthy\\_Living/Manage\\_Stress.asp#resources](https://www.prevention.va.gov/Healthy_Living/Manage_Stress.asp#resources)



# THOMAS C. WILLIAMS, PSC

## CHIEF OF STAFF

### Comrades,

Summer is over and I hope everyone is doing well. The kids are back in school and well rested from their summer vacations. Now our work begins as we work the programs, especially VOD and Patriot's Pen.

We have posts that are not complete with their forms. There are still reports due, audits due, and election reports due and National is reviewing all our reports and sending back the deficient ones. Posts are being put in Suspension Special Order No, 2025-01. Nothing has changed with the paperwork - it still needs to be submitted at the beginning of each term.

We all need to work together and make Maryland strong. The last C of A meeting was well attended. Although it was a long ride for a Sunday afternoon, it was well worth it.

We need help to find the Department VFW canopy. It has been missing for 4 years now and it is important to have and use at recruiting events. If you know it's whereabouts please let Department know. If it's not located we will need donations from posts and districts to replace it. It costs \$1000 at the VFW store.

The VFW and the Auxiliary are working together to collect items and monetary donations for the victims of the hurricanes in

North Carolina and Florida. A lot of comrades lost everything in these storms. A wish list has been distributed. On the good side, The VFW Riders took a \$500 donation out to the National Home from Department and other donations. Maryland donated the most money that day.

The National Auxiliary President visited Maryland last month and I was able to have dinner with her one night. She visited several of our posts and seemed to have a good time.

Just remember that Department and our staff are here to help you anytime. Got a question? Need

**"We need help to find the Department VFW canopy. It has been missing for 4 years now and it is important to have and use at recruiting events. If you know it's whereabouts please let Department know. If it's not located we will need donations from posts and districts to replace it. It costs \$1000 at the VFW store."**





## STATE MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN PATRICK PIERSON

### Combat Vets and our family,

As the Membership Chairman of the Department of Maryland, I am thrilled to continue driving an exciting year for our members and potential recruits, building on our successes so far.

This Veterans Day, we invite all veterans to join us at their local VFW posts. It's a day to honor your service, connect with fellow veterans, and learn about the resources and support available to you. Whether you are a current member or considering joining the VFW, we welcome you to come and see what we have to offer. With a sense of camaraderie and community, we look forward to celebrating and

supporting each other.

We are also excited about the upcoming Army-Navy Game, a historic rivalry that celebrates tradition, honor, and camaraderie. We will have a booth at the game to engage with attendees, share information about the VFW, and celebrate the spirit of competition and unity. We encourage all veterans and their families to stop by our booth and join us in this incredible celebration.

Additionally, the State Commander is actively visiting posts, awarding Louisville Slugger Bats to 10 posts that reach 102% membership and giving Commander's Challenge Coins to every member who recruits 10 new members.

I am here to help and provide information to any post that needs it for recruiting. If you have any recruiting events coming up, please reach out to me via email ([patrick.pierson@vfwmd.org](mailto:patrick.pierson@vfwmd.org)). I am more than willing to assist with planning or even attend events to support your efforts. Your success in recruiting new members is vital to our mission, and I am committed to providing the resources and support you need to achieve your goals. Let's work together to grow our community and strengthen our organization.

Lastly, I encourage all posts to create and share social media content about their activities, events, and successes. By actively posting on social media, you can reach a wider audience, engage with your community and highlight the

**"I am here to help and provide information to any post that needs it for recruiting."  
If you have any recruiting events coming up, please reach out to me via email,  
([patrick.pierson@vfwmd.org](mailto:patrick.pierson@vfwmd.org))."  
"Let's work together to grow our community and strengthen our organization."**

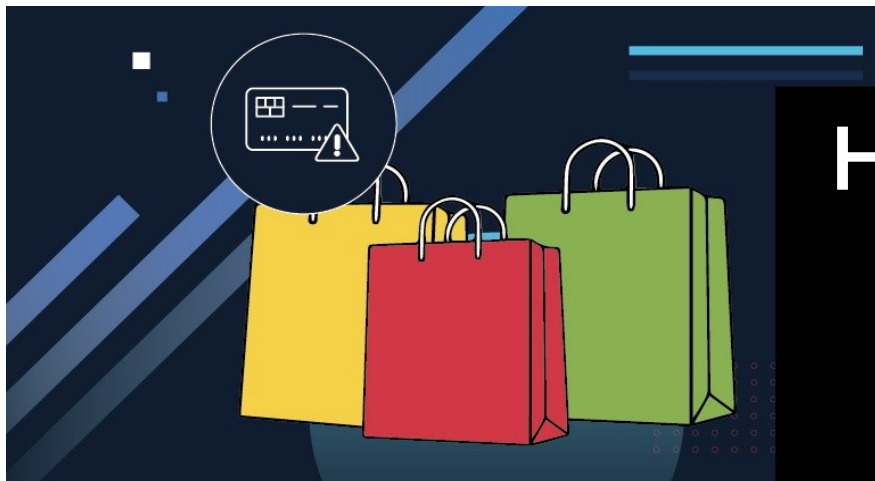


valuable work we do. Share your stories, photos, and updates to help spread the word and build a stronger, more connected VFW community.

Let's use these platforms to honor, celebrate, and support each other every day.

In Comradeship,  
Patrick Pierson  
Membership Chairman  
VFW Department of Maryland  
membership@vfwmd.org  
301-466-7559





# HOW THE GRINCH CAN STEAL YOUR DATA

The online shopping season is about to start. It's a prime time for fraudsters and scammers to tap into your increased online activity, when you're busy with seasonal distractions. Don't let your guard down! These scammers are hoping to steal your personal and financial information.

It's a great time to think about ways scammers might try to deceive you and how to be on guard against them. Can you tell which of these statements is true or false? **If a website looks legit, it is. If an email comes to my inbox and not my junk folder, it must be valid. They're both false.**

On the first statement, you should know that imposter websites are being built that closely mimic the real thing, making it difficult to tell the difference. Make sure the URL has "https," and the picture/icon of a padlock on it, and usually ends in .gov or .com in the United States. When you select the padlock, confirm it says the connection is secure. If a site is hard to navigate or missing sections, that's a major warning sign that it's fraudulent. A missing "About Us" page or contact information is another sign. Scammers typically include fake or no contact information. If you can't find or verify in other ways the accuracy of the information about the company on its website, it could be a scam.

For the second statement, the junk mail feature of email providers is not foolproof. If it's an option, be sure it's turned on. Don't depend on the junk mail filter. Evaluate each email you receive before opening any attachments or links.

**Next, consider these situations:**

**If I pick up the phone and the caller asks for me by name, and inquires how I'm doing, they sound friendly enough and I should engage. I'm looking for a special gift and see an ad for such a gift as I scroll through social media, so the ad must be safe. If I get a text saying, "thanks for your order" and can't remember ordering something, I should click on the link within the text for more information. These three are also all false.**

On the first, know that scammers and salespeople can sound downright friendly and perhaps confide that they're Veterans and share common interests and concerns with you. It doesn't mean it's true. It might be their cover story or schtick. If you don't know someone, don't answer or engage. Screen your calls; if the caller is legit, they'll leave a message with details about how to contact them. Check all the information first through other resources to see if it's authentic. Even then, you have no obligation to return calls from cold callers. **One general rule: If anybody contacts you and wants personal, financial, health or background information about you, your family or friends, don't give it to them, and immediately hang up. Some scammers will try to record your voice and use it for nefarious purposes. The less you say, the better.**

For the second statement above, understand that scammers are using social media to place fake ads that point to fake websites. If you see an ad on social media, don't select the link. Write down separately the business information and do some internet sleuthing and reconnaissance to see if they're a real and sound business. Red

flags also include no recent reviews, few discussions or recent engagements.

Lastly, in the third statement above, consider that text messages and emails like this are sent to millions of people every day looking for anyone who—perhaps in a hurry or despair—will take the bait. Instead of opening, reading or selecting attachments and links, take a pause to logically evaluate the situation. If you didn't order anything from that company, it doesn't pass the sniff test. Delete the text or email immediately, and report it as junk if your mobile device or email service gives that option.

- Report issues to your banks and financial institutions if you believe there is fraud or identity theft.
- Veterans who suspect they have been the victim of VA disability benefits fraud should call VA at 1-855-578-5492, right away.



## DEPARTMENT SCHOLARSHIP CHAIRMAN JOANNE BIERLY

The VFW Auxiliary Scholarship Program is currently 43% with 24 out of 56 auxiliaries reported as of October 13, 2024. In addition, donations of \$295.00 have been received toward the Department of Maryland Scholarship Program from 7 auxiliaries. Consider “Increasing the Fund” by sending your donations to Department Treasurer Jackie Kimball.

Judging of the Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen essays is currently underway throughout the state. Now is the time for the posts and districts to be planning your awards banquets to recognize your students; and all District Commanders and District Auxiliary Presidents should plan to attend the **Department of Maryland Scholarship Awards Ceremony at 1 p.m. on Sunday, January 26, 2025 at Wells-McComas VFW Post 2678 in Edgemere.**

**The next deadlines are February 15, 2025 for the VFW Auxiliary National Continuing Education Scholarship and March 15, 2025 for the Young American Creative Patriotic Art Contest and the 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contest.**

Check out the details at [www.vfwmd.org](http://www.vfwmd.org)

**ATTENTION AUXILIARY TREASURERS**

**THIS AWARD IS FOR YOU!**

**WE  
NEED  
YOU!**



**EACH AUXILIARY TREASURER WHO  
REACHES 95% IN MEMBERSHIP  
BY NOVEMBER 20TH**

**\*MALTA VERIFIED ON NOVEMBER 21ST\***

**WILL BE PUT IN A DRAWING  
TO WIN \$100**

**ONE TREASURER WILL BE DRAWN  
PER MEMBERSHIP DIVISION**

**DRAWINGS WILL BE HELD AT THE CHRISTMAS CONFERENCE**

# DEPARTMENT PRESIDENT'S SPECIAL PROJECT CHAIRMAN SHELIA JUSTICE

**O**ur Department President Deborah Sturgis' special project this year is Patriot Point. Patriot Point is a 294 acre retreat that provides a relaxing and safe environment for our nation's wounded, ill and injured service members, their families and caregivers.

Patriot Point works directly with veterans and military service organizations to help guests heal through organized recreational activities and peer-to-peer communications. Some of the activities that Patriot Point has on their premises are kayaking, fishing, golfing, crabbing, canoeing, paddleboarding, fitness training and art classes and many more.

Patriot Point is for veterans and focuses on giving back to our nation's heroes who have given so much to us. At Patriot Point the veterans have the opportunity to focus on healing, sharing, motivating and simply enjoying the relaxing serene environment.

Department President Sturgis has a goal of \$40,000 this year. You can help her to achieve this goal by giving monetary donations which should be sent to Department Treasurer Jackie Kimball. Patriot Point is also accepting donations of various art supplies for art therapy activities.

**Are you eager to learn more?** Go to their website: <http://patriotpoint.org>

Thank you in advance for any and all physical and monetary donations to help our Department President achieve her goal. **We can do it!**





## **DEPARTMENT PRESIDENT'S VETERANS & FAMILY SUPPORT CHAIRMAN VANETTE JONES, PDP**

Hello Department of Maryland VFW & Auxiliary. I am excited to be your Department Auxiliary Veterans and Family Support Chairman for Department President Debbie Sturgis. This year our National President Brenda Bryant's Special Project is Operation Bottom Cover. There is an increasing need for diapers and wipes for babies of our military and veteran population. She would like us to partner with Operation Showers of Appreciation to get the much needed diapers and wipes into the hands of our active military and veterans. You can also hold a diaper drive for your local communities. For the auxiliaries, donations can be made in Malta under gifts should your auxiliary wish to support this program.



National President Brenda Bryant has also chosen to promote military suicide awareness. Did you know that approximately 22 veterans commit suicide daily. How can your auxiliary help? Promote suicide awareness in your Post and local communities. Use the blue teardrop to bring awareness. Ask your local stores, libraries and communities centers if you can put up flyers advertising the 9-8-8 number in which you call and text to immediately speak with a trained professional. Remember that not all wounds are visible. Our veterans deserve any assistance that we can give them as they gave the ultimate sacrifice for the freedoms that you and I enjoy daily. With that being said, I am wishing you and your family a very safe, happy, healthy and prosperous holiday season and blessings for 2025.



# **VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS®**

**DEPARTMENT OF MARYLAND VFW**

**ANNUAL FUND RAISER**

**GRAND PRIZE DRAWING—\$2,000**

**ONE DRAWING FOR \$1,000**

**SIX DRAWINGS FOR \$500 EACH**

**TICKETS TO BE DRAWN AND PRIZES AWARDED**

**MAY 28, 2025**

**EARLY BIRD DRAWING ON MARCH 16, 2025**

**ONE DRAWING FOR \$1,000**

**FOUR DRAWINGS FOR \$500 EACH**

**Raffle Tickets Have Been Mailed to All Members  
More Tickets are Available and can be requested  
by contacting the Department Adjutant, Orlando Roberson  
at 410-752-6474**

**Please Support Our Department Fund Raiser**

# Congrats Cathy & John Gistedt!



## THE DUNDALK EAGLE NEWS REPORT

Backbones of Edgemere VFW recognized in pavilion dedication ceremony. The Edgemere Wells-McComas Veterans of Foreign Wars post managed to keep it a secret from Cathy and John Gistedt.

**The secret:** On Saturday, the post dedicated its newly built pavilion to the two long-serving members of the post and its auxiliary. Minutes after the ceremony, the only word John Gistedt could find to describe the feeling was “*overwhelming*.”

“*They kept it a secret*,” Cathy said. “You work all those years not for recognition, but we did it to help veterans in the community. But to feel that much appreciated is really overwhelming.”

“It is, um...” Cathy said, trailing off, “I never imagined that. I really didn’t. It’s quite an honor to have something like that named after you.”

The pair have been serving veterans forever — John alone has been the post’s quartermaster, akin to a treasurer, for 30 years. And he’s had great successes: **On Aug. 24, the post burned its 30-year mortgage.** Cathy has been up and down the ranks of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary — she’s currently the auxiliary secretary and district president in addition to being a department chairman and historian for the state.

“Both of us have had a long history with the VFW,” Cathy said. As the two sat at the bar after the ceremony, attendees came up to congratulate them.



# STATE VETERANS & MILITARY SUPPORT

## CHAIRMAN

### TOM KIMBALL, PSC

**It is true, there are Veterans in Maryland who are currently living on the streets or making their home in their cars trying to survive day by day. In order to continue to give assistance the Department relies on donations from VFW Post and Auxiliaries our Department.**

#### Comrades and Members of the Auxiliary,

As the Chairman for the VFW State Veterans and Military Support Committee, almost everyday I receive request from veterans, and members of the military who have fallen down on their luck and need assistance to give them a hand up. **It is true, there are Veterans in Maryland who are currently living on the streets or making their home in their cars trying to survive day by day.** Even though the National VFW Organization has decided to abandon their assistance program, our Department still continues to receive request for assistance and would still like to continue to provide assistance the best we can. Last year our Department was able to give approximately \$15,000 of assistance to members of the veteran community who were facing troubling times in their life. **In order to continue to give assistance the Department relies on donations from VFW Post and Auxiliaries our Department.**

When considering giving assistance, the financial hardship cannot be caused by misconduct, civilian, legal, or domestic issues, any issues that are a result of spousal separation or divorce, and/or financial mismanagement by self or others, or due to bankruptcy.

**All grants are paid directly to the creditor** and not to the applicant. The applicant must provide the most current bills due. We will render payment for eligible current bills only.

Expenses Eligible for consideration of payment (daily necessities):

- Housing expenses - mortgage, rent, repairs, and homeowners' insurance (establishing residence/insurance or paying off expenses for a residence that is no longer being occupied will not be considered).
- Vehicle expenses – payments, repairs, insurance (purchasing/paying off loan, major repairs for vehicles over 10 years old, registering, establishing insurance will not be considered).
- Utilities (establishing/paying off utilities for a residence no longer being occupied will not be considered).
- Childcare.
- Medical bills (the patient's portion for necessary or emergency medical care only).

**Expenses Ineligible for consideration for payment:**

- Military debt/repayment, tuition assistance debt/repayment.
- Cable, internet, secondary phones.
- Taxes owed of any kind.
- Rentals of any kind (vehicle, furniture, and/or electronics).
- Any other expenses not determined to be a "daily necessity."

The eligible and ineligible expense lists are not all inclusive. Each case will be carefully reviewed for its own merits. Upon approval, payments will be made for the veteran directly to the creditor. All applications are individually reviewed, and the VFW reserves the right to make exceptions on a case-by-case basis.

**VFW Post** wishing to make donations can make their checks payable to:

**VFW Dept. of MD**

Earmark your check: **VMS**  
**Mail your donation to the following address:**

VFW MD Department HQ  
101 North Gay ST, RM J  
Baltimore, MD 21202

**VFW Auxiliaries** wishing to make donations can make their checks payable to:

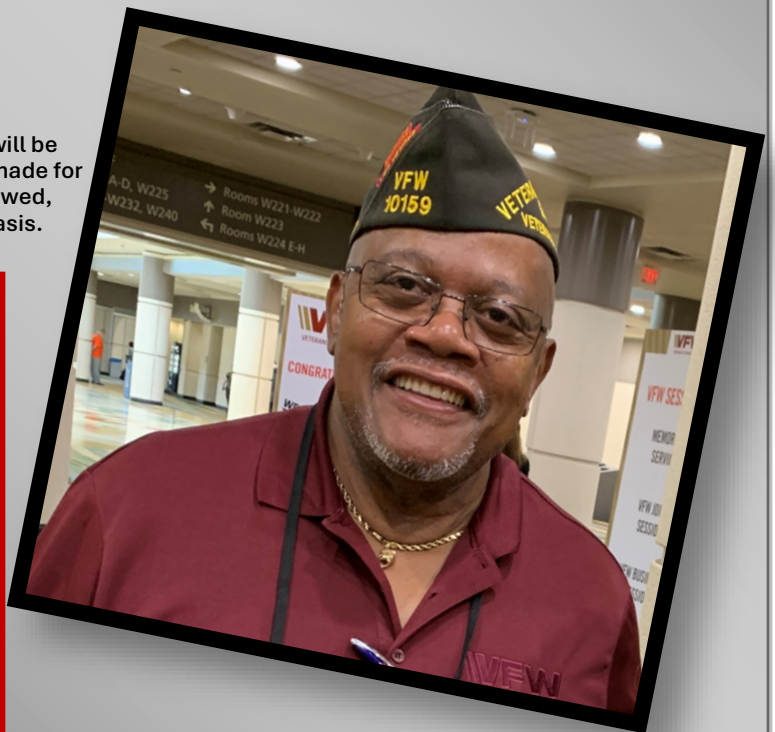
**VFW Auxiliary Dept. of MD**

Earmark your check: **VMS**

**Mail your donation to the following address:**

Jackie Kimball, Dept Treasurer  
1019 Queen Ave  
Salisbury, MD 21801

Sending your check to the Dept Aux Treasurer ensures you receive credit for your donation.



Heavenly Father,

We come before You with heavy hearts, lifting up those affected by Hurricanes Helene and Milton. We pray for the victims who have lost their lives, and for their families who are grieving.

Grant them Your peace and comfort in this time of sorrow.

For the survivors, we ask for strength and resilience as they rebuild their lives. Provide them with the resources they need and surround them with supportive communities.

We also pray for the volunteers and first responders who are tirelessly working to provide aid and relief.

Bless them with safety, courage, and the endurance to continue their vital work.

For those who are missing, we ask for hope and the swift efforts of search and rescue teams. May they be found safe and reunited with their loved ones.

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer. Guide us all to be instruments of Your love and compassion, offering support and aid to those in need.

In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

*Dept of Maryland  
VFW Auxiliary Chaplain  
Melissa Tracey*

# STATE CHAPLAIN TIFFANY DANIEL

"This year I will be continuing with Meet and Greets to focus solely on Mental Health Awareness. Once a month there will also be a Therapeutic Horticulture session. They are currently held in Charles County."



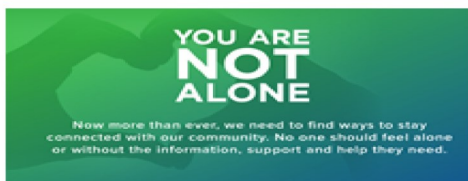
I surrender all. Heavenly Father, we desire to show our loyalty and patriotism for this great Nation. We are a Nation that was founded on religious principles. Our forefathers came to these shores in the hope of finding a land where they were free to worship you in the manner they choose. We cherish all the freedoms we have here in this great land. Help us to never forget our religious heritage. May we be loyal to those who sacrificed so much so we can gather here in the shadow of these government buildings without fear. We pause to remember our men and women serving in harm's way. Give them the courage and faith and the sense of your presence amid their duties and responsibilities. We thank you for all your blessings and we praise you forever and ever. Amen.

I pray this finds you all well. We have started this year with a challenge to meet and overcome all the changes forthcoming as our new CIC and State Commander step into their new positions. May we come out on top as we always do.

Women Veterans Committee – let's plan an adventure with the Mighty Women of WWII Tour. A trip to France, September 19 – 27 2025.

This year I will be continuing with Meet and Greets to focus solely on Mental Health Awareness. Once a month there will also be a Therapeutic Horticulture session. They are currently held in Charles County. Plans are forthcoming to include Prince George's County in the Fall and Kent County, Spring of 2025, stay tuned and if you'd like more information, don't hesitate to contact me.

Legislation - The JVC is returning to Annapolis in February 2025. We hope you will be joining us.



**Mental Health Awareness Project Presented By:  
CTLDomGroup, Inc., and  
Women Veterans United Committee, Inc., (WVUCI)**

**Veteran Service Organizations bring awareness and break barriers.**

**Camp Springs Elks Lodge #2332  
7350 Temple Hill Rd, Temple Hills, MD 20748**

**Dates**

**October 7, 2024  
November 4, 2024  
December 2, 2024**

**Time: 10:00am – 12:00pm**

**Contact: Dr. Tiffany Daniel at 202-498-5678**