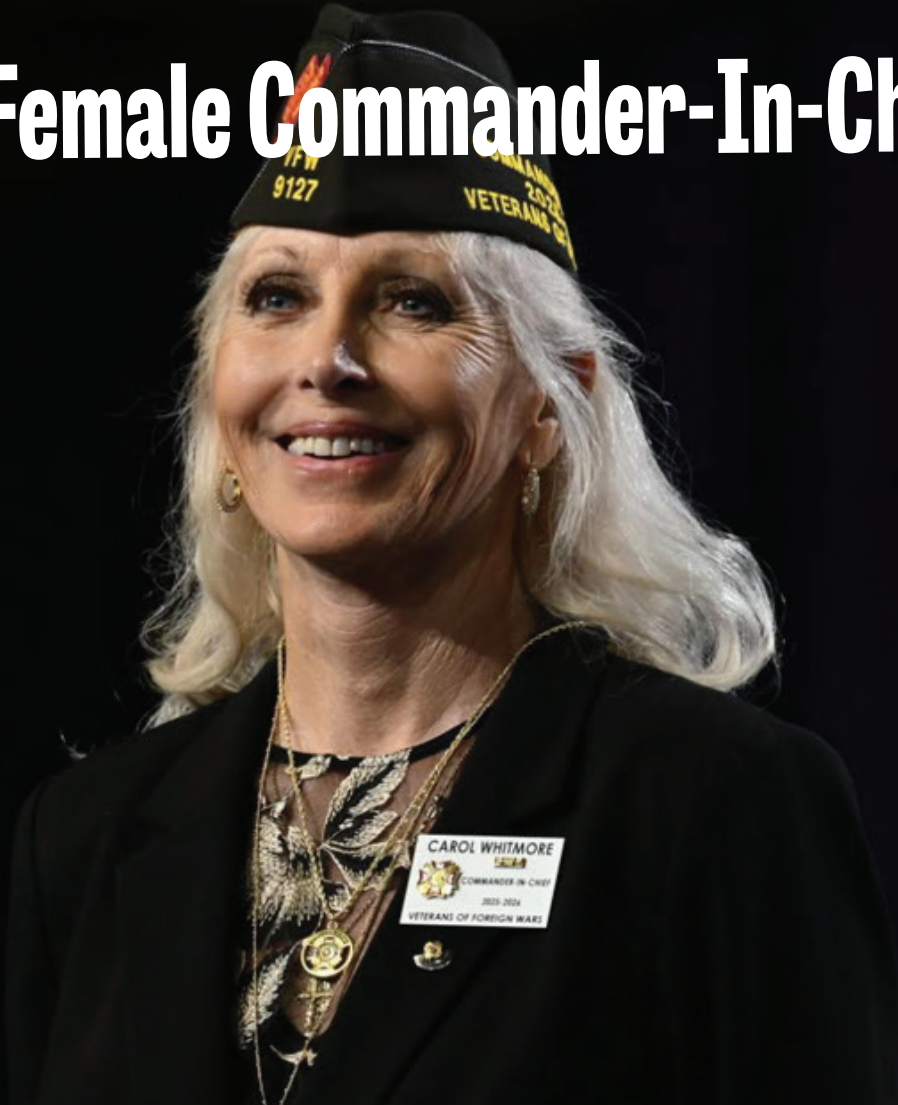


LEADER MAGAZINE

First Female Commander-In-Chief Elected



Also in This Issue

Army Sgt. Michael Verado Laid To Rest

Pictures From National Convention

September Is Suicide Awareness Month

24th Anniversary of 9/11 held in Columbus County



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Dates To Remember:

Oct. 31-Nov. 2

Tomb Trek

Arlington, VA

Nov. 7 - 10, 2025

Southern Conference,

Conrow, TX



Dept of
NC Auxiliary



The Leader Magazine

COMMANDER'S CORNER



Edward Beard 2025-2026 Dept. Cdr

Comrades and Auxiliary,

Thank you for the honor of serving as your Commander. We concluded last year on a high note, with numerous Posts and Districts achieving All-American and All-State status. I'm proud to say we are well-positioned to repeat that success this year.

Raffle Tickets Update Raffle tickets have been distributed, and several Posts have already sold out. These ticket sales are vital—they directly support our Department, which in turn support Districts, Posts, members, and their families. Let's continue pushing toward selling all tickets.

126th VFW National Convention Highlights:

We had a strong showing at the 126th VFW National Convention in Columbus, Ohio, where history was made: Carol Whitmore was elected as the first female Commander-in-Chief of the VFW. The convention was a powerful reminder that every member's voice matters. Roll call votes on key issues and a floor election for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief underscored the democratic spirit of our organization. Thanks to engaged members, you'll soon see a new optional cover—a ballcap—available for comrades this winter.

North Carolina was well represented, with over 60 attendees participating in the dinner and patriotic parade. We were honored to witness four of our own receive national recognition:

Samantha Cahill, Post 5202, received the Service Award. Though deployed, she joined via Zoom to accept her award.

Richard Jones, Post 2771, was honored with the Fraternal Award.

Victor Letourneaut and Greg Stafford were awarded the VFW Gold Medal of Merit for their outstanding service under Past Commander-in-Chief Al Liphart.

Please join me in congratulating these exceptional comrades. If you've never attended a National Convention, I strongly encourage you to consider joining us in Reno, NV, in the summer of 2026. It's an unforgettable experience.

Upcoming Conferences & Legislative Engagement Upon returning from the convention, we immediately began preparations for our Fall Conference, Legislative Conference, and Southern Conference. This Fall, we will celebrate our award winners—and yes, we will be partying like it's the 1980s! Training will focus on our programs. Come ready to learn and enjoy yourself.

A dedicated team from North Carolina will travel to Washington, D.C., to advocate for veterans and their families. I urge everyone to visit the new legislative page on our website and get involved. Change is only possible when we stand united. Watch for Action Alerts and be ready to respond—your voice truly makes a difference.

Let us never forget why we serve: to honor those who gave the last full measure of devotion to our country. We honor the fallen by supporting the living. I am deeply humbled to lead you through this year.

Finally, I want to express sincere appreciation for the Auxiliary. Their unwavering support is not only essential to our organization but also to each individual comrade. On behalf of all VFW members in North Carolina—thank you.

Let us continue to move forward with less talk and more action.



IN COMRADESHIP
Edward Beard
Department Commander
LESS TALK - MORE ACTION

*Pictures from the 126th
Nat'l Convention in
Columbus Ohio
by Barbara Beard, NC
Dept Historian*

VFW Elects Carol Whitmore as New National Commander

The Iowa native is the first woman elected to lead the 125-year-old organization

COLUMBUS, Ohio (Aug. 13, 2025) — Carol Whitmore of Des Moines, Iowa, was elected today as the new national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), a congressionally chartered veterans service organization comprised of approximately 1 million eligible combat veterans and military service members from all six branches of the armed forces.

“Standing here today, surrounded by such incredible people — fellow veterans, families and friends — I am filled with a deep sense of pride and humility,” said Whitmore during her acceptance speech. “This is not just a recognition of me, but of all the men and women who have served in our armed forces.”

Whitmore’s election as the VFW’s 117th commander-in-chief occurred at the conclusion of the organization’s 126th National Convention in Columbus, Ohio. More than 10,000 members of the VFW and its Auxiliary converged on the city to conduct the business of the organization, recognize individuals and organizations for excellence and to elect new leadership for the 2025 – 2026 year.

Whitmore is the first woman elected to lead the more than 125-year-old organization. She delivered remarks to those attending in person at the Greater Columbus Convention Center and watching via livestreaming video.

“When I think back on my journey, I am sure it was just like many others — my reality is not necessarily the VFW reality,” said Whitmore. “But I was driven by a sense of duty, a desire to serve something greater than myself. And little did I know that decision would shape me in ways I could never have imagined.”

Enlisting in the Women’s Army Corps in 1977, Carol’s 36-year military career was marked by significant milestones, from integrating with men into the regular Army to becoming an Army nurse, first sergeant and deploying as an Army Reserve nurse in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. It was there that she earned her VFW eligibility.

“As we look to the future, I believe that the strength of our veteran community is our greatest asset. We have so much to offer,” said Whitmore. “We have lived through adversity, we have faced challenges that many can’t even imagine and we’ve come out on the other side stronger. It’s because of that strength that we are still serving our communities and our nation.”

During the speech, Whitmore emphasized legislative advocacy as a priority for her year, with a focus on fighting to get Congress to grant concurrent receipt for select combat-injured veterans through the Major Richard Star Act.

“Through advocacy, our legislative efforts need to be resolute,” said Whitmore. “The [Major] Richard Star Act must pass this year. This effort was started in 2004, and the bill has repeatedly and shamelessly been voted down. Let’s get this done already. Honor the Contract!”

Whitmore also spoke passionately about the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) mission and the key diplomatic role the VFW played in Southeast Asia during the early 1990s.

“More than 30 years ago, it was VFW Vietnam War veterans who led the mission back to the country that cost them so much to extend a hand of peace to their former adversaries,” said Whitmore. “This tremendously brave effort opened U.S. relations with Vietnam and access to the country so DPAA could find and bring home our comrades who were missing in action.”

“I may be the first veteran to have been elected VFW commander-in-chief while wearing a dress ... the first female veteran, but I will not be the last,” said Whitmore. “And as I have said while campaigning, I am your sister by mud, by blood, by dust, by dirt, by sand, by land, by sea, by air ... I am a veteran first.”

Carol, a retired nurse, attended the University of Northern Iowa and Hawkeye Community College. She and her husband, Brad, reside in Des Moines, Iowa.



Lillington Post Commander Appointed as National Aide de Camp

Stephen Gardner, Commander of Ernest Simmons VFW Post 6722 in Lillington, received a letter from Adjutant General, Dan West, last week informing him of his appointment.

Gardner said “I’m honored and humbled to have been appointed as a National Aide de Camp to the Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Carol Whitmore. This appointment does not come lightly as this is the first National Aide de Camp appointment in our post’s 80 year history and I pledge to serve with honor and commitment deserving of our eight-decades of warfighters who made 6722 what it is today.

We have come such a long way in such a short period of time with the help guidance of Veterans of Foreign Wars - VFW NC. Commander, Edward Beard, and his command staff; Past Dept. of NC Commander ,Annie Cummings, and her command staff; and VFW NC District 7 Commander, Robert R. Kennedy, and his command staff.

Another first in our 80th anniversary year is the selection as a VFW NC Honor Post AND ALL-AMERICAN post. Thank you most of all VFW 6722 comrades, Auxiliary, and families for sticking by my side through thick and thin with positivity and purpose in seeing my Commanders Vision become reality. We could have never achieved this honor without teamwork and dedication displayed by everyone who loves our veteran community and families. I would like to say a special thank you to CommanderEdward Beard for placing his trust in 6722 and recommending me for this amazing position. “LESS TALK, MORE ACTION” it is, sir!”

Gardner is a hands on Commander, doing what is needed for the post from grounds work, to saving the life of a comrade with CPR at the post, both mere days before his appointment.



Submitted by Heather Dean-Woods, with permission from Cdr Gardner.

DEPARTMENT OFFICERS



Commander
Edward Beard



Sr. Vice Commander
Mickey Biggs



Jr. Vice Commander
Chris Brown



Inspector Gen.
Greg Stafford



Quartermaster
Jenn Hutt



Adjutant
Alecia Judd



Chaplain
Dolphus Troy



Judge Advocate
Josh Holt



Surgeon
Graham Leaver



Chief of Staff
Thomas Person



Aide De Camp
Perry Saunders Jr



Asst. Quartermaster
Charlie Cable



Asst. Adjutant
Angela Ross



Asst. Judge Adv.
Winston McMillan



Service Officer
Tab Brown
252-933-2040

Thank You for Your Support

I want to sincerely thank you all for your support throughout my campaign for Department Junior Vice Commander. It's been a long but rewarding road, traveling across the state and visiting nearly every district. Along the way, I've had the privilege of meeting many incredible comrades and visiting numerous outstanding posts.

My focus remains clear: **Bridging the Gap**—especially by making **State Legislation our department's top priority once again**. After all, this is one of the fundamental reasons the VFW was founded.

With strong advocacy, I truly believe we can begin to engage more of our younger veterans—especially when they see the VFW actively fighting for improved benefits and stronger protections for all veterans living in our state. As many of us know, **North Carolina has a long way to go in becoming a truly veteran-friendly state**.

With your continued support, I'm confident we can make that change. Thank you again for standing with me—and let's keep **Bridging the Gap** together.

Yours in comradeship,
Christopher Brown



State Commander for the Veterans Council, Tammy Williamson

It is my honor to serve as Commander of the North Carolina Veterans Council, where we are dedicated to promoting legislation at the state level and advancing the interests of veterans across North Carolina.

I want to take a moment to highlight the wonderful work that our Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) provide every day. These organizations — including the Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, AMVETS, Marine Corps League, Montford Point Marine Association, Military Officers Association of America, Military Order of the Purple Heart, NC Elks Association, Reserve Organization of America, Fleet Reserve Association, Vietnam Veterans of America, Triangle Women Veterans Unit 144, and others — not only promote legislation at the state and national levels but also assist veterans with filing and managing VA claims at absolutely no cost. This service is invaluable, ensuring that veterans receive the benefits they have earned without unnecessary financial burden.

In recent months, the NC Veteran Council has focused on building stronger partnerships across the veteran organizations, state leadership, and local communities. These partnerships are essential in addressing the issues affecting our veteran community. Through collaboration, we empower veterans and continue building a stronger, connected community.

I encourage all veterans to reach out to our VSOs, stay engaged and continue lifting one another up — because together, we are stronger.

We want to hear from you: <https://ncveteranscouncil.org/contact-us/>

In the words of John Holmes, “There is no exercise better for the heart than reaching down and lifting people up.”



Tammy Williamson
GySgt, USMC(Ret)

DISTRICT COMMANDERS



1. Scott Seddon 6060
Currituck, Pasquotank,
Chowan, Gates, Hertford,
Bertie, Martin,
Washington, Tyrel, Dare,
Perquimans, Camden



2. Robert Brock 7032
Hyde, Beaufort,
Pitt, Greene,
Lenoir, Wayne



3. Jimmy Baugham 3702
Northampton,
Halifax, Warren,
Franklin, Nash,
Edgecombe, Wilson



4. Mike Durbin 8986
Pamlico, Craven,
Carteret, Jones,
Onslow, Pender,
Duplin, Sampson



5. Jeremy Schwanz 9983
Bladen, Columbus,
Brunswick,
New Hanover,
Topsail Island



6. Doug Fricker 1920
Caswel, Person,
Granville, Vance,
Durham, Alamance,
Orange



7. Robert Kennedy 9103
Chatham,
Wake,
Johnston,
Harnett



8. Jerry Moser 670
Cumberland,
Robeson,
Hoke



9. Craig Armstrong 7318
Montgomery,
Moore, Lee,
Anson, Richmond
Scotland



10. John Marion 2972
Rockingham,
Guilford,
Davidson,
Randolph



11. Eric Brown 5352
Surry, Yadkin,
Stokes, Forsyth
Davie



12. Bobbi Sheets 6365
Rowan,
Cabarrus,
Stanly



13. Jake Drisker 1160
Gaston,
Mecklenburg, Union,
Kings Mountain 9811



14. Art Gordon 4066
Burke, Lincoln,
Catawba, Alexander,
Iredel, Cleveland
Rutherford



15. Bill Carter 7946
Avery, Watauga,
Ashe, Alleghany,
Wilkes, Caldwell
Mitchell



16. David Collins 9116
Buncombe, Henderson,
Madison, Polk,
Yancey, McDowell.



17. Robert Morrow 7339
Haywood, Transylvania,
Cherokee, Graham,
Clay, Macon,
Jackson, Swain



Congratulations North Carolina

All American Department

Top Recruiters

North Carolina	Anna Cummings	102.91
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All American District

District	%	Commander	Quartermaster
6	111.72	Chris Brown	David Potter
1	108.24	Graham Leaver	Todd Leins
7	105.44	Robert Kennedy	Larry Watkins
9	105.17	Craig Armstrong	Vernon Labore
12	105.08	Bobbi Sheets	Dave Sheets
8	104.91	Jerry Moser	Amelia Smith
5	103.29	Nicholas Conrad	Richard Goodman
17	103.24	Robert Morrow	Richard Wittekind
2	102.56	Robery Brock	Rose Quasebarth
15	102.31	Kevin Ross	Charles Hornung
13	102.22	Nathaniel Drisker	Howard McDonald

Honor Posts

Dist	Post	%
1	10950	106.02
5	12196	112.5
6	2417	105.76
6	2740	104.34
7	6722	104.8
11	2019	107.6
13	5464	105.76
15	7034	106.18
17	6812	111.32
7	10225	104.05
9	4203	105.07
12	6480	104
7	7383	104.49
8	670	104.18
8	6018	103.81

All American Posts

Post	%	Commander	Quartermaster
6018 Sag James B. Dennis Post	107.96	Edward Beard	Alphonsia Cogdell
7318 The John Boyd Post	105.58	Kevin Johnson	Ronald Keller
6812 Allison-Bristol Post	126.42	John Clogheher	Edward Dobberstein
1920 Mehane Post	118.75	Michael Barr	David Potter
5464 Garland B. Denny Memorial Post	117.31	Robert Pate	Ryan Stafford
7316 Caswell County Post	116.33	Fred Smith	Heath Wyatt
12796 Leland Post	116.25	Gerald Decker	James Koslosky
2417 Hill Cooper Post	115.38	Theodore Grisson	Jeremy Hetrick
1706 William E. Shipp-Dwight E. Lockman Post	112.09	Logan Green	Scottie Thomas
10950 Outer Banks Post	112.05	Kevin Ryan	James Norrell
670 Corporal Rodolfo P. Hernandez Post	110.45	Mike Baker	Amelia Smith
7034 Bruce Wayne Osborne Post	110.31	Mark Parker	Charles Hornung
3006 Hudson-Miller-Tatum Post	109.83	James Fox	Mike Nussbaum
2740 Henry Seaman Post	109.78	Leo Schuck	Brad Colburn
7313 Joe Wagner Post	109.09	Corey Forrest	Gregory Flood
6722 Ernest Simmons Post	109	Steve Gardner	Jeffrey Sherman
7775 Sgt. William E. Robinson Post	109	Bridget Lightner	Hillary Gaston
10225 South Wake County Post	108.78	Jesus Mendoza	Terry Charfield
6060 William Clarence Jackson Post	108.33	Allen Coatney	Charles Stevens
6183 James P. Lowder Jr. Post	108.33	William Craddock	Erik Van Brero
6480 Cabarus Post	108	Edward Harwood	Dennis Barnhardt
10607 Robert Lee Pate III Post	107.8	Allan Hesters	Douglas Fricker
8989 Foster-Perkins Post	107.19	Tony Gullede	Andrew Brown
5362 Table Rock Post	106.78	Keith Balm	Michael Pritchard
7383 Franklin-Sloan Post	106.74	Matthew Kallio	Kevin Siskman
4203 Henry C. Rancke, Jr. Post	106.6	Eddie Dean	Vernon Labore
7288 Calabash Post	106.51	Michael Dichiana	Jackie Ness
10630 Bryce H. Swindle Post	105.82	James Morris	Michael Noble
9103 Robert R. Miller Post	105.51	Jesse Godoy	Kevin Shuffall
6983 Angier Post	105.45	James Trevisan	Kenneth Castille
6724 Paw Creek Post	105.08	Donald Thompson	Steve Young
9493 Mike Martin Post	105	Paul Millsaps	Richard Wittekind
10777 Butler-Creedmoor Post	105	John Rice	James Hunsuckle
9959 Mt. Olive Post	104.88	James Benson	Ronald Hatch
1160 Mecklenburg Post	104.55	Darryl Hamilton	Wallace Hall
8466 Wake Forest Memorial Post	104.28	William Wade	Charles Cable
2771 Lenoir Post	103.96	Richard Jones	Robert Stephens
5886 Stevens-Barbour Post	103.85	Bradlet Palmer	Jorge Mejias-Diaz
10346 Yalcam Post	103.64	Steve Mosteller	William Webb
5305 Donald Lanford Drum Post	102.94	Johnny Kilian	Scott Dues
5202 Waynesville Post	102.92	Samantha Cahill	John Seider
7032 Charles Gray Morgan Post	102.63	Joseph Vaccaro	Scott Johnson
2423 James B. Crump Post	102.62	Joseph Carranti	Man Martin
7339 Macon County Memorial Post	102.24	William Wallace	Robery Morrow
9116 Womack Bradley Polk County Memorial Post	102.13	David Collins	George Leimann
6365 Barbee-Turner Post	102.11	Bobbi Sheets	Dave Sheets

All State

District	Commander	Quartermaster
6	Chris Brown	David Potter
8	Jerry Moser	Amelia Smith
12	Bobbi Sheets	Dave Sheets
13	Jake Drisker	Howard McDonald
Post	Commander	Quartermaster
670	Mike Baker	Amelia Smith
1160	Darryl Hamilton	Wallace Hall
1920	Michael Barr	David Potter
2423	Joseph Carranti	Matt Martin
3006	James Fox	Mike Nussbaum
6018	Edward Beard	Alphonsia Cogdell
6060	Allen Coatney	Charles Stevens
6183	William Craddock	Erik Van Brero
6365	Bobbi Sheets	Dave Sheets
7775	Bridgette Lightner	Hillary Gaston
8989	Tony Gullede	Andrew Brown
9116	Terry Trelford	Jerry Melton
10607	Allan Hesters	Douglas Fricker
10950	Kevin Ryan	James Norrell
12196	Gerald Decker	James Koslosky

Special Awards

Life Saving Award	Victor Letourneaut	9960
Fraternal Award	Richard Jones	2771
Service Award	Samantha Cahill	5202
Gold Medal of Merit	Greg Stafford	6060
Gold Medal of Merit	Victor Letourneaut	9960

Recruiter	Count	Post #	Dist.
Edward E. Beard	54	6018	8
Neal O. Lyman	51	670	8
Ronald Keller	50	7318	9
Mike A. Baker	35	670	8
Gualberto Martinez	28	9983	5
Robert R. Kennedy	26	9103	7
Timothy R. Grooms	16	4203	9
Timothy P. Woods	15	5352	11
Scottie R. Thomas	14	1706	14
Ragene S. Warner	13	8969	8
Calvin T. Singleton	13	9133	4
Gerald J. Decker	10	12196	5
Robert P. Bond	10	6812	17
Christopher A. Brown	9	1920	6
Robert W. Morrow	9	7339	17
Samantha A. Cahill	9	5202	17
Dennis R. Barnhardt	8	6480	12
Roberta A. Sheets	8	6365	12
Craig R. Armstrong	8	7318	9
Perry W. Saunders, Jr.	8	6018	8
Charles E. Stevens, Jr.	8	6060	1
Victor R. Letourneaut	7	9960	4
James R. Fox	7	3006	12
Jackie M. Ness	7	7288	5
Darren E. Lowry	7	5352	11
Godfrey Godfrey	7	7318	9
Mary Beth Germann	7	9133	4
Dolores F. Witt	6	9960	4
Jesse A. Godoy	6	9103	7
James A. Morris	6	10630	8
Jennifer L. Hutt	6	4542	8
Matt P. Martin	6	2423	13
Allison P. Price	6	10226	5
Allen W. Coatney	6	6060	1
William J. Sigwalt	5	8986	4
Michael L. Pumphrey	5	9133	4
Tony Gullede	5	8989	12
Charles J. Hornung	5	7034	15
Lawrence J. Pervier, Jr.	5	670	8
Scott P. Seddon	5	6060	1
Tab Brown	5	2771	2
Anna M. Cummings	5	7288	5
Nicole L. Przybys	5	7288	5
Bridget Lightner	5	7775	13
Jeremy L. Schwanz	5	9983	5
Lawrence E. Fuller	5	10226	5
Alan R. Boudreau	5	9133	4
Bruce J. King	5	753	3



September: Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

Veterans are 58% more likely to die by suicide than those who have not served.

Marine Rides to Stop Soldier Suicide

By: Heather Dean-Woods, Leader Publisher

A Stop Soldier Suicide Challenge to ride 300 miles in a month, made Gulf War Veteran, Tom Kopetzki from Cooleemee-Mocksville Post 1119 get up and go. But in true Marine fashion, 300 miles wasn't enough for him. Coming in second in the nation for miles rode, he totalled 1,671 & raised \$2,000.

On March 4, 2024 at 11:00, "Ski" as he's called & fellow 1119 Marine, Scott Burton headed out. Going past Nashville before turning around, they rode for 23 hours straight, 500 out, & 500 back, at times through snow. The other 671 Tom traveled were in part going back and forth to Camp Lejeune to visit with military, friends, & his grandson. His wife, Cheryl, accompanied him on some of these.

He said his favorite vest patch was the one he received for this ride. "When you get patches they mean something- this is near and dear to me- with more reason and rhyme to me for this cause." He got a lot of support across the nation, and followers on social media. People would hand him money to help with fuel or food expense but he would never accept it, instead directing them to the Stop Soldier Suicide Foundation website.

"I've lost people, then we have our own weaknesses and battles we fight....you gotta get it out. This is one way to funnel it, and two, to make a difference. Next thing you know, someone in Arizona had read my story as it was going around, and they were contemplating. They got help. It saves lives in real time, never think it doesn't. You know, I was trying to help those that came back from Iraq & Afghanistan, because they were struggling, then they still.... It makes me feel like maybe I missed something, that I could have done something different. So this, this right here I feel makes a big difference; you see, you gotta believe in what you're going after, and I'm going after STOPPING SOLDIER SUICIDE."

He encourages everyone to check out the Stop Soldier Suicide facilities in Durham. "They do this without medication. These are people who have been there, and gone thru this, versus someone who works for the government. They have programs to help you when other stuff fails."

"We're out there trying to save them from making a mistake. We make mistakes, and they see that, otherwise why would we be out here trying to help? Helping them, helps us, it helps me. The government isn't going to do it, so I will."

Motorcycle therapy is common among veterans, and Ski is no different. Getting on his bike is therapy, but this mission behind the ride, even more so. So what is he thinking about on his Challenge Rides? I'm thinking about the people struggling. Riding for them exhilarates me, keeps me going. They say the life you save just might be your own. Thats true."

As for the people who ask, "But why in this weather, what are you doing?!" "Saving a life!" he answers back.

U.S. Army veterans Brian Kinsella, Nick Black, and Craig Gridelli co-founded Stop Soldier Suicide in 2010. September challenges include a 30 Mile Dog Walk, 90 Mile Move, and 100 Hour Gaming.

Find out more at stopsoldiersuicide.org



Pictures from top: Tom & his Post Commander, Wayne Seamon by Heather Dean-Woods; The patch Kopetzki received for the ride; Kopetzki & Burton stop for a bite during their thousand mile bike ride. The Burton's & the Kopetzki's.



VFW STORE
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Single post with rubber back
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Pence, Stein, Tillis Pay Homage To Sgt. Michael Verado

On August 26, 2025 Sgt. Michael Verado completed his earthly mission. He was 40 years old.

On September 2, the church bells gave way the usual hymns to playing "God Bless America" and other patriotic music, as the doors to the Weddington Methodist Church were held open by 82nd Airborne Governor Josh Stein had ordered all U.S. and North Carolina flags at state facilities to be lowered to half-staff from sunrise to sunset in honor of U.S. Army Veteran Michael Verado. Weddington Fire Department's Ladder 41 waved a giant American flag at the entrance of parking lot. Inside, his wife, Sarah, greeted friends and well wishers. Michaels friend, Sean, took the family dog, Bravo, over for one last goodbye.

Verado served in Fort Bragg's 82nd Airborne Division. In April of 2010, Michael was wounded in an IED attack in Afghanistan's Arghandab Valley while serving with Bravo Company, 2-508th Parachute Infantry Regiment. He could have gone home then, but was unwilling to leave his unit, he asked to return to the fight. On April 24 he experienced a second IED attack that left him one of the most catastrophically wounded soldiers of the Global War on Terror. The blast took his left leg, shattered and shredded his left arm, and left him with burns and a traumatic brain injury. Michael should have died on the battlefield that day. When he was loaded onto the helicopter, not a man in his unit thought they'd ever see him again. He was labeled "death imminent" by medics; the crew on the helicopter took turns giving him blood trying to keep him alive long enough to get help. His wife, Sarah, said that day became his "Alive Day."

Despite amputations, burns,grueling recovery at Walter Reed, and 120 surgeries, Michael lived an incredible 15 years after his "Alive Day". Those years were spent with his highschool sweetheart Sarah by his bedside, whom he married in 2013, a union that gave them three daughters: Grace, Mary Scott, and Elizabeth. In those years Michael and Sarah fought for changes for wounded veterans. They even wrote a book called "Hero At Home" about how to view the wounds of our veterans with understanding and compassion. Years of meetings with Presidents, Senators, Congressmen, and Judges, their work also led to his family's involvement with the Independence Fund, pushing the charity into the national spotlight; Sarah is now the Executive Director. It also led to thousands of Afghan interpreters being brought safely to the United States, including Zia, Johnny, & Blaze, Michaels interpreters. Zia & Blaze were awarded Purple Hearts.

His fighting spirit, his compassion and his determination were repeated by the speakers at his eulogy. Jennifer Griffin, Chief National Security Correspondent at Fox News recalled "The image that will stick with me forever was Michael forcing himself up, standing to salute the flag on the day North Carolinians came out to welcome his beloved Afghan translator, Johnny, and his family after Sarah arranged their harrowing rescue during the chaotic and violent withdrawal from Afghanistan."

Senator Thom Tillis used humor to hide the pain of losing a dear friend. After stating Michael's only downfall was being a Patriots fan, not a Dolphins fan like him, he said "Michael was committed to his mission. Whether it was to get Sarah to agree to be his girlfriend, to join the Army after the 9/11 attacks, to survive after the attack and to recover, helping his brothers and sisters with the invisible wounds of war... Michael was always there. Mission accomplished, Michael." Tillis reiterated that Michael could have gone home after the first blast. He could have given up after being blown up the second time. "He understood that he had not completed his mission. I would visit him in the hospital, & tell him he had to keep marching. He soldiered on, & met the challenge, for so many people for so many years." Through tears he added "Mission accomplished my friend. We should all be thankful, that a man like Michael once lived."

Vice President Mike Pence, "We gather today to celebrate the life of Army Sgt Michael Verado. Karen & I are deeply honored to be with you today, as friends, to express sympathies and prayers to everyone who admired your brave Michael. Thank you for sharing him with our nation and for your inspiring dedication, leadership and compassion for veterans and their families across America." He recalled how meeting with them once, he bent to shake hands with a young Mary Scott, who looked up at him and said "Every time we meet you we have to wait and wait and wait..." He told the crowd that they made sure to be early today,so we made sure to be early today." He told the girls their father was a patriot, who loved this country deeply. "But he loved you more, and I know you will always be proud to say he was your dad. To the families, I cannot comprehend your loss- thank you for raising a hero." He hugged the girls and Sarah, before placing a hand on Michaels flag draped coffin, with a long pause, and tears in his eyes.

Sarah: Michael would not have believed this turnout. I stand before you with a broken heart, but also believing unequivocally that Michael is whole and healed in heaven. This is hard to say, and it will be hard to hear, but the last few years, Michael suffered. He suffered and he stuggled every single day. He fought for every day, for every breath until the bitter end. He lived in chronic excruciating pain, and I take comfort in knowing he is in the arms of Jesus, and has been welcomed by his brothers that were lost in battle. Our girls, they have warrior blood, they have been called to leave this world better than they found it, and I cant wait to watch them change the world. He used to say "always, always" to me- he would write it in letters, send it in texts; The three last things I said to him were I will love you until my last breath, always, always; Every day will be a living testament to you; You did it, you fought the good fight, and you completed the mission."

Their eldest, Grace said "My dad taught me to never give up, that America is the greatest country in the world, and that the Patriots are the best football team" she paused to give Tillis a long side eye, as the church erupted in laughter. "Thank you for being my dad. I love you. I promise I will never forget you, and you'll be part of everything I do every single day."

Other speakers included Secretary Doug Collins, Dept. Of Veterans Affairs, & Alex Flernister, on behalf of the POTUS. Military honors were presented by 82nd Airborne and Indian Trail VFW Honor Guard.



Clockwise from top: Michaels Unit Patch; Elizabeth Verado carries the flag presented to her by the 82nd Airborne; Sean, US Army, & Bravo; 82nd Airborne at attention for one last salute; Zia, Michael's Afghan Interpreter, handed out flags; 46th Vice President, Mike Pence.

Story & cutlines by Heather Dean-Woods, Publisher

ELECT VICTOR LETOURNEAUT

VOTE JUNE 2026



1 MORE !

**NORTH CAROLINA NATIONAL
COUNCIL MEMBER 2026-2030**

Around Your State



N. Wilkesboro Post 1142 Auxiliary was in the National Spotlight for their exemplary work on Auxiliary Outreach. Pictured are Linda Flora & Hope Raney.



Art Lashomb, Afghan Veteran walked from Syracuse, NY to Brunswick, GA to raise money for his Post. Along the way he stayed with PDC, Annie Cummings in June. "She's done so much to help guid me in the right direction with making my quest successful. She is a true leader! Thank you Annie and your husband "Top" (Bill) for your kindness!!" he said in a FB post.



S.S. Patriot, newest addition to Post 2771 in Kinston.



Crd. Beard got to meet Good Times actress, Bernadette Stanis, "Thelma."



Post 670 blood drive with Johnnie Cox checking in donors.



9103 Schnitzel Dinner fundraiser with Department President, Anna Holme



Auxiliary members showed up in full force for Natl. Aux. President, Brenda Bryant's visit.



South Port North Carolina 4th of July Festival. Pictured with Commander Beard are Dept. Jr. Vice, Chris Brown, Membership Chair, Mike Baker, and Auxiliary Americanism Chair, Jeanie Baker.



Dept. Jr. Vice, Chris Brown, attended a birthday parade for WWII Navy Veteran, Sam Parham in Roxboro, who turned 100.



Auxiliary 7383 Cary, Post 6018 Fayetteville & Post 9103 Spring Lake donated school supplies

126th National Convention

Congratulations Department of NC



Above: The 126th VFW National Convention was held in Columbus, Ohio, back where it all started...



Richard Jones from VFW Post 2771 in Kingston, NC was presented the VFW Fraternal Award for his work on Hurricane Helene disaster relief by Commander-In-Chief, Al Lipphardt, and Auxiliary National President, Brenda Bryant

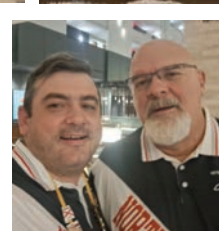
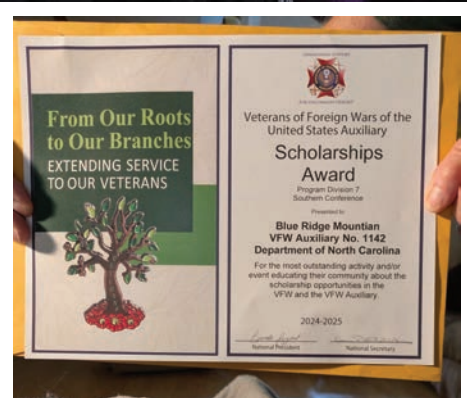
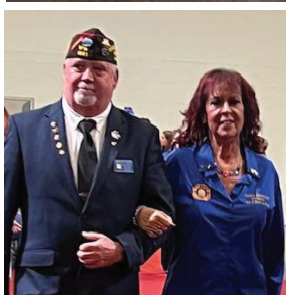


L-R: Commander-In-Chief, Al Lipphardt, presents 2024/2025 Cdr, Anna Cummings the All American Department Commander award, which also earned her the Triple Crown Achievement. Also presented were All American Awards to Dept. Cdr., Ed Beard (6018), Chris Brown (District 6), Jerry Moser (District 8)



In frame: Presented with the Commander-In-Chief Gold Medal of Merit, signifying the deepest level of admiration, respect, and gratitude from the VFW, for demonstrating exceptional service and unwavering dedication to veterans and the VFW's mission were: (top left) Greg Stafford, National Interpreter, and (top right) PDP Victor Letourneaut, 3 Year Budget Chair.

NC In Action at National Convention



Photos by: NC Dept Historian Barbara Beard, Richelle Brown, Dept QM Jenn Hutt, Dist. 7 Cdr, Robert Kennedy, Jaclyn Jones, Dept. Jr. Vice, Chris Brown, PDP Sandra Jeffries,

Jeff Sherman; Michelle Letourneau, PDP Sandra Johnson-Leu, PDC Tim Woods, and Dept of NC Social Medias

9/11: 24th Anniversary Ceremony At Veterans Memorial Park



Columbus Co.-
In the midst of the field, representing Flight 93, U.S. flags wave; Two brick columns represent the Twin Towers, hit by Flight 175 & 11. The memorial garden is shaped like the Pentagon, hit by Flight 77. It is also a reflection space for those lost by suicide.

Pictures & cutlines By Heather Dean-Woods



Presentation of Colors by Columbus County Sheriff Dept. Honor Guard, including officers Sawhill, Ivey, Holden, Reaves, Lancaster, Inman & Howard; National Anthem by Officer Redwine; Guest speakers were Asst. Fire Marshall, Jonathan Juhl, & Past Department Commander, Tim Woods, Navy Veteran. A NY native, he was stationed in California when they got the news of the attack. His brother was a fireman & his father a newly retired NY Police Officer, golfing in PA that day. Almost 3,000 lives were lost that day, & hundreds more in the years after due to suicide, or severe health issues from the attacks.



A large crowd, including civil servants, veterans across the decades, elected officials and community members gathered to remember those lost, including Officer Elliott, with his newest officer, Elizabeth Pierce.



Columbus County Fire Dept. Honor Guard: Elliott, Miller, Stacy, Ward, Ezzell, Etheridge, & McPherson; Elliott played TAPS. Clerk of Court, Jess Hill, & Deuce Niven, of the Tabor-Loris Tribune; EmCee, Randy Norris, Mary Jo Schnepf, & Randy Norris.



Need More Space?



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Wilkesboro NC

28697



VFW NC State Legislation Priorities

Opposing

S0693 - Veteran Access, Liberty, Options for Recovery (Claim Sharks) -

AN ACT TO REGULATE COMPENSATION FOR SERVICES RELATED TO VETERANS' BENEFITS MATTERS.

- o Permits fees up to five times the one-month increase in benefits—placing veterans in unnecessary debt.
- o Excludes licensed attorneys but offers no protection against unaccredited or out-of-state businesses exploiting veterans.
- o This legislation does not require VA accreditation for companies charging fees, allowing substandard, unregulated services to proliferate.

Backing

H0432 - Property Tax Relief Study

o AN ACT TO DIRECT THE REVENUE LAWS STUDY COMMITTEE TO EXAMINE THE CURRENT PROPERTY TAX RELIEF PROGRAMS FOR ELDERLY, DISABLED, AND DISABLED VETERAN HOMEOWNERS; TO EVALUATE WHETHER ANY MODIFICATIONS SHOULD BE MADE TO REDUCE THE PROPERTY TAX BURDEN ON THOSE HOMEOWNERS; TO CONSIDER OTHER PROPERTY TAX REFORMS; AND TO REPORT ITS FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, IF ANY, TO THE 2026 REGULAR SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

- o Must complete first before SB228 – Disable Veterans Tax Relief is passed

H0094 - Dis. Veteran Homestead Excl. Prequalification

o AN ACT TO ALLOW DISABLED VETERANS TO PREQUALIFY FOR THE DISABLED VETERAN PROPERTY TAX HOMESTEAD EXCLUSION.

H0254 - Adopt Tuskegee Airmen Day.

o AN ACT TO DESIGNATE THE FOURTH THURSDAY OF MARCH OF EVERY YEAR AS TUSKEGEE AIRMEN COMMEMORATION DAY IN NORTH CAROLINA.

H0266 - Adopt Women Veterans Day

o AN ACT TO ADOPT THE FIRST DAY OF MAY OF EACH YEAR AS WOMEN VETERANS DAY IN NORTH CAROLINA.

Passed

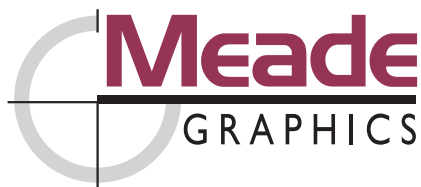
H0231/S0155 -

Social Work Interstate Licensure Compact. (Signed by Governor – 6/13/25)

o AN ACT TO ESTABLISH AND ENTER INTO AN INTERSTATE COMPACT FOR THE PRACTICE OF SOCIAL WORK.

S118 – Military and Veteran Support Act. (Signed by Governor – 7/9/25)

o AN ACT TO MAKE VARIOUS MODIFICATIONS TO LAWS PERTAINING TO MILITARY SERVICE MEMBERS AND VETERANS AND TO AUTHORIZE SHERIFFS TO SEND NOTICE OF THE EXPIRATION OF A CONCEALED HANDGUN PERMIT VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL.



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PO Box 125, North Wilkesboro, NC 28659

★ ★ ★
**PASS THE
RICHARD
STARR ACT**

**WHY CONGRESS SHOULD PASS
THE RICHARD STARR ACT:**

ELIMINATES THE DISABILITY OFFSET

Concurrent receipt of retirement pay and VA disability compensation is allowed

SUPPORTS DISABLED VETERANS

Provides financial stability to those forced to retire from military service due to a combat-related injury

RESTORES EARNED BENEFITS

Ensures these veterans receive the full compensation they are due

Dolphus Troy



Candidate for **Dept of NC Jr. Vice Commander**



Current Dept of NC Chaplain

Current Sky Pilot at MOC
Pup Tent 11

Current Dept of NC National
Legislative Committee
Member



Bronze Legacy Life Member

US Army

Operation Iraqi Freedom
2004-2005 30th Infantry Div.

"VETERANS FIRST"

Former Jr. and Sr. Vice Commander-District 11
Former National Aide de Camp
Former All-American Commander-District 11
Former All State Commander-District 11
Former 2x All State Post Commander
Former All American Post Commander
Former Dept. of NC Chaplain of the Year



Dolphus has been eagerly serving Veterans and their families for 10 years. He enjoys what he does and finds purpose in being an advocate for Veterans needs as well as upholding camaraderie with every new "brother and sister" he meets. If he doesn't know an answer, he'll definitely point you in the direction of the answer because KNOWLEDGE is POWER in every setting.

DEPARTMENT AUXILIARY OFFICERS

“Serving Our Toto-ly Oz-some Veterans”

I hope you are looking forward to hearing about all of the awards the Department Program Chairmen won at the National Convention! I'm very proud of the work that was done last year under Sandra's leadership, and congratulate her and the Department for maintaining the Circle of Excellence status for North Carolina.

Please review the promotions provided each month by this year's Program Chairmen. They are working hard to make them interesting, Toto-ly Oz-Some, and fun! We want to continue to earn awards for all of the work you do for our veterans!!

Once again, I want to remind everyone that the Department Fall Council of Administration will be held October 3-5, 2025, at the Embassy Suites in Greensboro, NC. On Friday night at the Fall meeting, we will have an auction for the VFW/VFWA Joint Special Project, “Veterans Mental Health Issues.” Please ask your Auxiliary and/or District to donate a new item for the auction. At least three of the items brought to be auctioned will be put in a witch's mystery bag, so it will be a nice surprise!



Anna Holm
Department of NC
President
2025-2026



Senior Vice
Lin Moore
Post 5352
Kernersville



Junior Vice
Tracy Armstrong
Post 7318
So. Pines



**Secretary/
Chief Of Staff**
Debra Crowder
Post 10226



Treasurer
Sandra Johnson-Leu
Post 7383 Cary



Conductor
Angi Hardy
Post 5631
Sanford



Chaplain
Teresa Billips
Post 3006

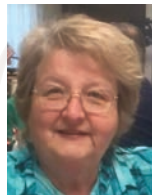


Guard
Sherry Brooks
Post 1142
N. Wilkesboro

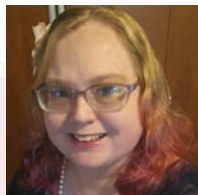
Program Chairs



**Veterans &
Family Services**
Joe Nelson
Post 6018
Fayetteville



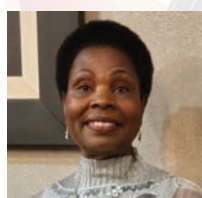
Aux. Outreach
Patti Harris
Post 7034
Sparta



Americanism
Jeanne Platt
Post 670
Fayetteville



**Buddy Poppy/
Nat'l Home**
Donna Wright
Post 6722
Lillington



**Historian/
Media Relations**
Barbara Beard
Post 6018
Fayetteville



Hospital
Farres Upton
Post 9010
Clemmons



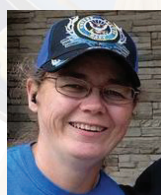
Legislative
Lynn Childs
Post 6060
Elizabeth City



Membership
Angi Hardy
Post 5631
Sanford



Scholarships
Fracnes Perini
Post 5206
Hendersonville



Youth Activities
Marge Gray
US Navy
Post 7034
Sparta NC



Special Project
Becky Rowe
Post 1160
Charlotte

District Presidents

**Denotes First Time As DP*

Mary Coatney
*District 1

Violet Saviak
District 2

Yvonne McLeoud
*District 3

Jaymie Hayes
*District 4

Deborah Crowder
District 5

Emily Ball
District 6

Wanda Macall
*District 7

Mary Zanders
District 8

Angi Hardy
District 9

Carsonia Whitmore
District 10

Farres Upton
District 11

Theresa Billips
District 12

Lyndsey Bowlus
*District 13

Linda Owen
District 14

Sherry Brooks
District 15

Joyce Preston
District 16

Jan Stough
*District 17



Barbara Beard
Candidate for Department Guard
2026-2027

Brothers and sisters, after much soul-searching, contemplating, and prayer,
I enthusiastically announce my candidacy for 2026-2027 Department Guard.

Eligibility:

I joined the Auxiliary in 2015 under the eligibility of my husband, Edward Beard, a Desert Storm Veteran.

Auxiliary Experience:

Post Level:

Guard, Junior Vice President; Senior Vice President; President; Historian Chair; Veterans and Family Support Chair; Membership Chair; Auxiliary Outreach Chair

District:

Historian/ Media Relations Chair

Department:

Historian/ Media Relations Chair (5 years); Budget Committee; Audit Committee; Program Director

Awards

Auxiliary President of the Year (2023-24 & 2024-25) 30 Department Awards; 8 National Historian/Media Relations Awards

Education:

BS-Sociology; Magna Cum Laude; Master of Business Administration with Government Contracting Certificate

Employment:

I retired in 2020 after 35 years of Federal Government Service. The Last 25 years of my career, I was employed at Womack Army Medical Center as Supervisor Logistics Specialist, and Budget Analyst and Health Systems Specialist. Having worked with Veterans by entire career, I have gained a mutual understanding and respect for their sacrifice and service.

My Why:

I joined the Auxiliary to support Veterans and their family members. I truly enjoy visiting Veterans at the VA Medical Centers & Nursing Homes. You can also find me in the community volunteering at Fort Bragg, local schools, and partnering with other civic organizations. Although I've enjoyed being the Department Historian/Media Relations Chair for the past 5 years, it is time to move forward and use my talents to build on an already awesome Department.

Hobbies:

I enjoy gardening, traveling, DIY projects and event planning.

Thank you for your support and consideration. I pledge to bring the same energy and commitment to the Department as I do at the Auxiliary level.

Sincerely,
Barbara Beard

NC's own Sandra Jeffries, is National Buddy Poppy Representative



Hello Department of NC comrades and brothers and sisters of the Auxiliary. What a wonderful time that we had at National Convention In Columbus, Ohio. Our department represented well.

I have a new appointment as the 2025-2026 "Buddy"® Poppy/VFW National Home Ambassador. President Lois has the theme "From Sea To Shining Sea Honoring Veterans Who Keep Us Free". Goal for the "Buddy"® Poppy this year find creative ways to partner with the VFW for joint poppy drives and splitting the proceeds to help our members. When you distribute poppies, you are honoring the dead by helping the living. This is a great experience to show teamwork with our VFW on the local, district and department levels. We really want to keep this program alive and thriving each year as we share ideas. While you are distributing Poppies, you can also hand out VFW National Home brochures and explain that this is one of the Programs supported by donations from poppy drives. The "Buddy"® Poppy and VFW National Home go hand in hand!! Each "Buddy"® Poppy purchased by a Department for distribution contributes to the following:

- o One (1) cent goes to the VFW National Home
- o One (1) cent goes to the VFW National Headquarters Veterans Service Fund
- o One and a half (1.5) cent goes to the Department's Veterans Service Fund

Our goal for the National Home to have each State share creative ideas for educating our veterans about the National Home and how to get those in need to come and experience life at

the National Home. We are aware that there are times that our service men and women fall on hard times and need assistance. We want to create a way to make this a smooth transition which mean we need to familiarize ourselves with the available resources of the National Home and get our Veterans and their families an application.

photo submitted by Sandra Jeffries

Still loyally serving our veterans,
Sandra A. Jeffries

Sandra Johnson-Leu. Department of NC, is our new District 9 Representative



At the June 2025 Convention I was elected as the National District Council Member #9, serving North and South Carolina for 2 years, June 2025-2027. This means I now serve on the National Council of Administration, much like our Department of Administration, only the decisions we make affect all the members across the entire organization.

We are tasked with bringing information from National to the members we serve. Determine the National budget, standing rules, etc. There are extra meetings involved with this position, but it is one I have thought about seeking for many years. I promise to do my best, as I have with everything else. I promise to represent you to the best of my ability and bring your concerns to the National Council. I appreciate the confidence the members of North Carolina have shown in me.

BIO: I joined the VFW Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars in 2000 under the service of my father, Sgt. 1 st Class William H Sloan, a WWII and Korean War veteran. Soon after, I became the secretary to the Auxiliary I joined and have served as an officer at some level since that time. I met my husband, Donald J. Leu, a Korean War and Vietnam War veteran, the very first night I walked into the Garner Post 10225, back in November of 2000. This year we will mark our 20th wedding anniversary.

I have one son, Joshua Daniel, a life member of the Auxiliary, a daughter-in-law, also a life member, and 2 grandchildren. My grandson is also a life member.

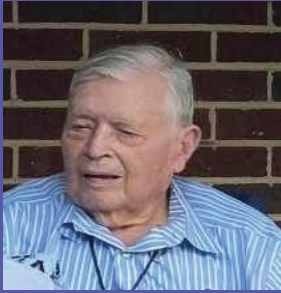
Most of the male members in my family have served in the Army. During my years as an Auxiliary member, I have served as the District 7 President for 4 years, earning the high honor of District President of the year 3 times, thanks to the hard work of my members. I was the Department Secretary for part of one year and have served in many Department positions.

In 2016, I was elected as the Department Guard, leading to my year as Department President in 2021-22, having served each office on the way. As Department President, again, thanks to the hard work of the Department members, I was inducted into the Circle of Excellence at the National Convention.

After my term as Department President, the members felt I would be a good choice to become the Department Treasurer at the June 2022 Convention. One position I had never served within the organization, but I did have a background in accounting. I admit I accepted this challenge and have enjoyed working with the treasurers throughout the Department on their audits, membership applications, and every aspect of being a treasurer. And trust me, there is a lot.

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Happy 100th



WWII Navy Veteran, Sam Parham,
Roxboro, NC.



Wedding Announcement

Rockingham Post 4203
Commander Eddie Wayne Dean
married Lou Ann Rose.

Dean is an All American
Commander of the post. Both are
active in the VFW and the community
of Rockingham. They were married by
the lake and the reception was held at
the post.

From Commander Beard &
the Department & Auxiliary, congrats!

Happy 99th



WWII Navy Veteran
Jack
Post 1119



Scott Burton
Post 1119



Happy Birthday
PDP Patty Harris



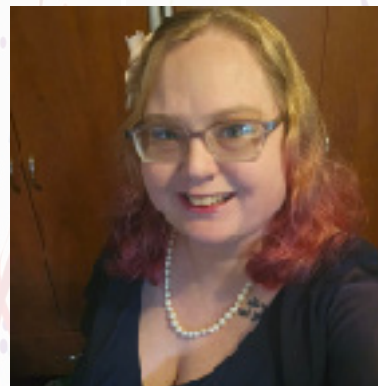
Happy Birthday
Cdr. Edward Beard



Happy Birthday
Stephanie Jagers



Happy Anniversary
Sam Cahill &
Niki Pagineilli



Happy Birthday
Jeanne Platt



Happy Birthday
Prez. Anna Holme

Inspiring the Next Generation:

VFW's Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen Programs

Since 1947, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) has proudly championed two transformative youth programs that inspire patriotism, civic engagement, and leadership among America's students: Voice of Democracy (VOD) and Patriot's Pen. As the 79th annual scholarship contests launch for 2025-2026, more than 85,000 students nationwide will have the opportunity to share their voices and compete for nearly \$2.4 million in scholarships and awards.

Voice of Democracy: A Platform for High School Voices

The Voice of Democracy program offers high school students in grades 9 through 12 a unique platform to express their views through a recorded, democratic and patriotic-themed audio essay. Each year, approximately 26,000 students compete, making it one of the nation's premier youth scholarship contests.

The 2025-2026 contest theme, "How Are You Showing Patriotism and Support for Our Country?", encourages young people to reflect deeply on what patriotism means in today's world.

The stakes are high — the national first-place winner receives a \$35,000 scholarship paid directly to their American university, college, or vocational/technical school. Other scholarships range from \$1,000 to \$16,000, with every state-level first-place winner awarded a minimum of \$1,000.

But the rewards go beyond monetary prizes. Department (state) winners earn an all-expenses-paid trip to the prestigious Founding Forward Spirit of America Youth Leadership program at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. This four-day immersive experience includes mock congressional debates, free enterprise challenges, visits to historic sites, and interactive educational activities — nurturing the next generation of civic-minded leaders.

Patriot's Pen: Cultivating Patriotism in Middle Schoolers

The VFW's Patriot's Pen contest, aimed at students in grades 6 through 8, complements the VOD by fostering early patriotism and writing skills. With more than 60,600 middle school students competing annually, the contest inspires young writers to explore themes of citizenship and national pride.

This program awards nearly \$1 million in prizes across local, state, and national levels. The national first-place winner receives a \$5,000 scholarship, offering a significant incentive for middle schoolers to engage meaningfully with their country's values.

How to Participate & Resources for North Carolina

Interested students should submit their essays to their local participating VFW Post by the deadline of October 31, 2025. Each submission requires a completed entry form, available through local posts or the VFW website.

For members and coordinators in North Carolina, the Department is streamlining the process by utilizing the Scholars App program. Once your Youth Program Chairperson gains access to this platform, they can leverage the comprehensive Help Center, which includes numerous PDF guides. These resources walk through every step—from creating flyers and uploading student files to selecting judges and managing the entire judging process. The Help Center also provides tools for promoting winners to the next competition level.

Both the Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen programs continue to inspire young Americans to reflect on patriotism and leadership. With resources like the Scholars App enhancing participation, students and coordinators alike can look forward to another successful year of engagement and achievement.

Scott Seddon, Department of NC VOD Chair

VOICE OF DEMOCRACY



2025-2026 Theme
"How Are You Showing Patriotism and Support for Our Country?"
Student Entry Deadline: Oct. 31, 2025
Patriotic Audio Essay Competition Grand Prize: \$35,000 Award

PATRIOT'S PEN



2025-2026 Theme
"How Are You Showing Patriotism And Support For Our Country?"
Student Entry Deadline: October 31, 2025
Patriotic Written Essay Competition Grand Prize: \$5,000 Award



ANGEL PLATOON



Michael Verado
Sgt. US Army
Purple Heart
GWOT



Joseph McNeil
Maj. Gen. US Air Force
Vietnam



Michael Allen
Army CSM
Iraq; Afghanistan



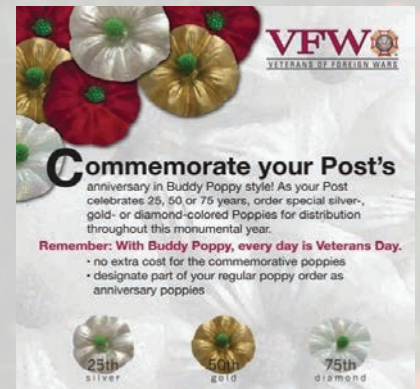
Roscoe Killet
US Army
Purple Heart



George Watson III
Ssg US Army

Creator, by whose mercy the faithful departed find rest, look kindly on your departed veterans who gave their lives in the service of their country.

Grant this through their passion, death, and holy resurrection so they may share in the joy of your heavenly kingdom and rejoice in you with your saints forever. We honor our veterans in your name.



North Carolina Native First Female Commander of the Military Order of the Purple Heart

Tracey Brown-Greene, a proud native of North Carolina, began her distinguished military career, when she enlisted in the United States Army. Over the course of her service, she deployed globally and served in combat during both Operation New Dawn (Iraq) and Operation Freedom Sentinel (Afghanistan). Rising through the ranks, she culminated her career with the rank of Master Sergeant (MSG). Her final assignment was at Fort Hood, Texas, where she served as a Logistics Manager with the 1st Cavalry Sustainment Brigade.

MSG (Ret) Brown-Greene's military awards and decorations reflect her outstanding service and sacrifice, including the Bronze Star, Purple Heart, Meritorious Service Medal, and numerous other commendations. She sustained combat-related injuries in Afghanistan due to an enemy attack.

On Her Journey to Becoming Commander of the Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH)
"My journey began with a simple yet powerful statement from Past State Commander Williams: "I think you would be a good Commander."

Those words planted a seed that grew with every experience that followed. As the year progressed, I observed what true leadership demanded—dedication, resilience, and vision. That's when my personal mission took shape: To lead with purpose. To provide guidance, and to be unapologetic in advocating for Veterans and their families.

As the only woman in many rooms, I carried a sense of duty—not just to serve, but to be a light for other female Veterans to follow. The path has not been easy. Every step forward brought challenges. Breaking barriers require courage, patience, and relentless determination. Each year brought new obstacles—and new insights. With every challenge came growth. With every leadership role, an opportunity to elevate others and pave the way forward.

This journey has never been just about me. It's about what's possible when we lead with integrity, serve with heart, and open doors for those coming behind us."

Tracey is sincerely passionate about the well-being of military veterans and their families. She is a recipient of the Congressional Veterans Commendation (CVC) and holds a certification as a Master Life Coach. She is committed to fostering goodwill, camaraderie, and service among combat-wounded veterans and the broader veteran community.





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Guidelines for Submission

Leader Magazine is a quarterly online magazine published by the Department of North Carolina, Veterans of Foreign Wars. It is distributed to VFW members, State Legislators, Elected Officials, Veterans Hospitals and Nursing Homes. The online version reserves the right to present more content than printed versions.

Online version available to the public at www.vfwnc.com

Leader Magazine provides information from our Department of North Carolina Veterans Of Foreign Wars on current issues of interest both state and national, through the ever evolving rights and benefits, and legislation, supporting veterans and their families. We are always happy to receive news items and pictures from Posts and their auxiliaries.

What to Include in your Submission:

- The who's, what, where and date of event
- Accurate spelling of all names and titles
- Digital, high-quality jpeg photographs submitted via email
- When submitting photos, please include captions and names of all individuals captured
- Submissions must be typed seperately in email body- no handwritten, microsoft word document with embedded pictures, or screenshots from social media will be accepted.
- Deadlines for each edition are 15th of June (Summer), September (Fall), January (Winter), April (Spring)

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Media kit available to the public at www.vfwnc.com



COMBAT TESTED GAMING

By the **VFW**
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

THE VFW'S INAUGURAL GAMING LEAGUE EXCLUSIVELY FOR VETERANS.



Join the
community!



Combat Tested Gaming (CTG) has become the fastest-growing veterans gaming community in America. We are approaching 2,500 veteran gamers on our Discord server and streaming gameplay on our Combat Tested Gaming Twitch channel. Join our Discord community to connect with other veterans and active duty server members who play your game of choice! Subscribe to our Twitch and YouTube channels to watch our gameplay and experience the thrill and camaraderie of our gamers.

GAMES

- Rocket League
- Call of Duty
- Call of Duty: Warzone
- World of Warcraft
- Valorant
- Madden
- MLB: The Show
- Rainbow Six Siege
- NBA 2K
- Helldivers 2
- Apex Legends
- Fortnite
- League of Legends
- The Finals
- EA Sports FC
- And more! We are adding games consistently.

IMPACT OVERVIEW

2,250+
Veteran
gamers.



**DEDICATED VFW
SERVICE
OFFICER**



answering VA benefits
questions daily.

**4 VFW
POSTS**



have leveraged CTG to start
gaming nights – one building
a gaming room to support
student veterans.

**5 VETERANS'
LIVES SAVED**



during crisis by
using connections
made through CTG.

CTG has quickly succeeded in reaching its early objectives. Now, as we look to the future, we set our sights on becoming THE leader in the veteran gaming space by continuing to promote the program and through partnering with a veteran-owned company which specializes in building the gaming infrastructure needed to support our growth and long-term success.

Veterans deserve a Medicare plan that delivers more

You proudly served our country. We're proud to serve you.

As a veteran of the U.S. armed forces, we want to help make sure you're getting all of the health care benefits you deserve. At UnitedHealthcare®, we have Medicare Advantage plans that may offer North Carolina veterans more benefits, which could help you live a healthier life.

Call me today to find out if you qualify.

I can help review your current benefits to see if UnitedHealthcare has a plan that could complement the coverage you already have.



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