

VETERANS & FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Stacey Miller, Department Chairman
598 N Strickler Rd., Manheim PA 17545
717.808.6444 / staceyauxiliary@gmail.com

The one thing we all have in common is love for our Veterans. With over 18 million Veterans across the US, we have ample opportunity to join **“Together Helping Veterans,”** and honor their service to our country. As an Auxiliary, we have the ability to support them and their families; and honor their service and sacrifice through our Veterans & Family Support programs. This program is the heart of our organization, where every member can and should participate. This year, we are joining **“Together Helping Veterans”** by offering guidance to veterans about acquiring VA benefits, supporting the Veterans and their families, not only while serving, but as they are transitioning to civilian life, and most importantly, providing helpful resources for when life gets rough.

Each day, Veterans who are serving or have served, have needs that we, the Auxiliary, can help them overcome. Our Veterans have sacrificed so much for us, so we are joining together to do all we can for them. This year, the primary focus will be:

- Veterans and Military Support Programs, and National Veterans Service
- Family and Youth Support
- Outreach to Veteran support organizations throughout your local community

So now the journey begins, **“From Our Roots to Our Branches Extending Service to Our Veterans.”** Your Auxiliaries have the power to make a difference in the lives of our Veterans and their families, **Together Everyone Achieves More.** I challenge YOU to make a difference!

VETERANS AND MILITARY SUPPORT PROGRAMS AND NATIONAL VETERANS SERVICE

Veterans and their families struggle daily with financial burdens along with the physical, mental and emotional challenges due to their service to our country. We can step up to ensure that our Veterans, and their family members, are aware of the aid available to them in times of need by linking them with resources that can promote their overall wellbeing, (VFW Accredited Service Officers, National Veterans Service, Suicide Prevention, and Mental Health Resources). While the resources are critical, there are many other needs that still exist which include financial assistance with mortgage or rent payments, vehicle expenses, utilities, food, or clothing. As service members transition from active duty to civilian life, there is financial aid available to help further their education and find a new career path in life.

Military records indicate that there are approximately 2 million members on Active Duty or serving in the National Guard / Reserves. When they are away from home, we need to keep them in our hearts and minds by adopting units and sending care packages, along with supporting them through

their send-off and welcome home events. While it's important to remember them when they're away, it's equally as important to remember them and their family prior to, during, and after deployment. The VFW has financial grants that are available through the Military Assistance Program (MAP) to help with events held by our Auxiliaries and Posts to support and recognize our troops. For more information, visit the *VFW website at vfw.org/assistance*

RESOURCES AND WAYS TO SUPPORT

NATIONAL VETERANS SERVICE (NVS)

This service helps Veterans and their families obtain the benefits they deserve. The NVS involves a network of hundreds of VFW Service Officers (VSO) who help veterans navigate the Veterans Affairs (VA) system. Service Officers will assist all Veterans, whether they are VFW members or not in filing claims for:

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

The NVS also works to ensure that Veterans receive Veterans Administration (VA) healthcare such as:

- Hospital care
- Outpatient care
- Specialized health care for female Veterans
- Alcohol and drug dependency treatment
- Medical attention for disorders associated with Agent Orange, radiation, or other environmental hazards

Donations to NVS can be made online at vfw.org/ways-to-help, select National Veterans Service, click "contribute." Or sent to the VFW National Headquarters Attn: NVS at 406 West 34th Street, 11th Floor Kansas City, MO 64111

VFW VETERANS AND MILITARY SUPPORT PROGRAM

This service has three programs initiated by the VFW. It is for active duty, recently discharged military, and their families.

MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (MAP): This program provides funds for Posts, Districts, and Departments to sponsor end-offs, homecomings, and casual get-togethers. Posts and Auxiliaries participating in Adopt-a-Unit and Family Readiness Group events can also receive funds. MAP will cover the postage fees for all care packages. For instructions regarding how to apply for MAP funds, contact the VFW Veterans and Military Support Office at 816-756-3390

VFW "SPORT CLIPS HELP A HERO SCHOLARSHIP" PROGRAM: This program awards scholarships of up to \$5,000 to qualifying Veterans and service members to help them complete their education

without incurring excessive student-loan debt. To learn more, visit vfw.org/student-veterans-support.

UNMET NEEDS (CAN HELP IN A CRISIS): This program helps American's service members who have incurred unexpected financial difficulties. Grants of up to \$1,500 are available to assist with basic life needs (vehicle maintenance, mortgage payment, rent, etc...) Repayment is not required. To learn more, visit vfw.org/assistance/financial-grants.

VETERAN AND MILITARY SUICIDE PREVENTION AND MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

Each day, an estimated 20 Veterans commit suicide. Make a difference in the life of a Veteran by educating your Auxiliary, VFW members, and community about the warning signs of suicide. Below are some resources to include in your educational awareness campaign:

BLUE TEARDROP STICKER: The VFW Auxiliary's symbol to bring awareness to this issue is the "Blue Teardrop" sticker. The teardrops can be worked to pen conversations regarding the issue of Veteran and military suicides.

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

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

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

OTHER MENTAL WELLNESS SUPPORT RESOURCES:

- VFW Mental Wellness Campaign: VFW.org/assistance/mental-wellness
- Campaign to Change Direction: changedirection.org
- Give An Hour: giveanhour.org
- Patients Like Me: patientslikeme.com/join/vfw
- One Mind: onemind.org
- The Elizabeth Dole Foundation: elizabethdolefoundation.org
- Help Heal Veterans (Therapeutic Craft Kits): healvets.org
- Veterans Voices Writing Project: veteransvoices.org
- Women Veterans Call Center: 855-829-6636
- Women Veterans Health Care: www.wsomenshealth.va.gov/Womenshealth/index.asp

FAMILY AND YOUTH SUPPORT

Our service members, especially when deployed, are focused on their mission, and want to know that their family is taken care of and has the support back home to keep things as “normal” as can be. As an Auxiliary, we often overlook the needs of the family, especially the needs of their children. This is a special focus this year within the Veterans & Family Support Program, by giving back to these families. Examples could include:

- Babysitting for a few hours a week
- Providing diapers for the babies or toddlers
- Assistance with lawn care / snow removal
- Taking a meal to relieve the stress of meal preparation
- Or just being emotional support for the spouse / caregiver left behind to take care of the family

These simple things our members can provide will bring much more peace for our service members and their loved ones.

OUTREACH TO VETERAN SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS THROUGHOUT YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY

Across our communities, there are many organizations whose missions are to provide support and resources to Veterans. Some of these organizations can include service dog training, transportation, food pantries, and many more. Support these local organizations to be successful by volunteering, donating, or even coordinating a fundraising campaign. Invite them into your Auxiliary or Post to share their services, you never know who is in need, and will benefit from these resources. Note: Partner with your Community Outreach Committee and make your work even greater!

VETERANS & FAMILY SUPPORT AWARDS AND CITATIONS FOR AUXILIARIES

Criteria must be met and submitted to Department Chair no later than March 31, 2025

NATIONAL AWARD

1. Most outstanding activity and/or event to increase awareness of Suicide and mental health for veterans, military and their families.

Citation and \$25 to one Auxiliary in each of the 10 Program Divisions that hosts an activity and/or event to increase awareness of military suicide and mental health for veterans, military, and their families. Entry form required and available in MALTA Member Resources. VFW Auxiliaries must send the required entry form to their Department Veterans & Family Support Chair by March 31, 2025, for judging. Citations will be mailed directly to the winning VFW Auxiliaries from National Headquarters.

DEPARTMENT AWARDS

1. Citation to the Auxiliary in each membership division with the most outstanding activity and/or event to increase awareness of Suicide and mental health for veterans, military and their families.
2. Citation to the Auxiliary in each membership division with the most outstanding activity and/or event to increase the support of veterans, active-duty service members, and their families.
3. Citation to the Auxiliary in each membership division with the most outstanding activity and/or event in support of the VFW Veterans and Military Support Program.
4. Citation to the Auxiliary in each membership division with the most outstanding activity and/or event in support of a VFW National Veterans Service.
5. Citation to the Auxiliary in each membership division with the most outstanding activity and/or event in support of a veteran's families and their Youth.
6. Citation to the Auxiliary in each membership division with the most outstanding activity and/or event in support of veteran support organizations in your local community
7. STAR AWARD will be given to the top Auxiliary with the most outstanding activity and/or event to increase the support of veterans, active-duty service members, and their families. The candidates for this award will be selected from the citation 2 winners above.

For consideration for each of these awards, description of the event / activity along with photos must be submitted to the Department Veterans and Family Support Chairman.