

Commander's Message



**State Commander
Mark Maggio**

descendants of those who defended Fort McHenry and kept the stars and stripes flying during the British bombardment. Although our name denotes foreign wars, we represent the few that

Greetings Comrades,
This is my first chance to speak to you since being elected as your Commander for 2026-27. I am honored that you have put your trust in me to lead this organization for the coming year. We have put together a strong line and great committees, and I believe we will do great things this coming year.

One of the things my kids say about me is that I am a history buff. You will often hear me reference historical events from the past to make a point. Like I said at the convention we are the

defend the many. I need you to remember that as the year goes on. When we fight the battles in Richmond and Washington, we are once again the few defending the many. When I hear my grandson tell me that he wants to join the Army some day just like me, it inspires me more to make sure that when his time comes that he will have the same opportunities and benefits that we have if not more. That is our mission and I am honored to lead that mission for this year.

In the upcoming year I will give you my vision for how I see our organization going forward. We will pay special attention to community reporting and recruiting. They are the lifeblood that keeps our organization relevant. But I am only one person. We are an organization of 33,000 members and we need all of us to do this work. You, at the post level, are where we are the strongest. You are the face of the VFW in your local communities, and you can make a difference in how people view the VFW. You joined because you wanted to make a difference and now you could convince other veterans with the same enthusiasm you showed when you first joined the organization.

My theme for this year is one team one fight. That includes our Auxiliary which is a key component to our continued success. Work with your auxiliary and do great things in your community. Remember, if you travel alone, you travel fast, but if we travel together we travel far. Have a great month and let's hit the ground running.



**2026-27 Line Officers (L-R) Chaplain Mark Ruffulo, Surgeon Paul Smith, Commander Mark Maggio, SVC Charles Bush, JVC Randy Coker, Judge Advocate Todd Taylor, Inspector Patrick Lane and Chief of Staff Tom Gimble.
Not shown: PSC Doug Hoffman**



VFW DEPARTMENT of VIRGINIA
 403 LEE JACKSON HIGHWAY
 STAUNTON, VA 24401
 PHONE: 1-540-886-8112
 FAX: 1-866-416-0586

The official publication of the Virginia VFW published by the *Department of Virginia, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States*
 Please visit our website at www.vfwva.org

DEPARTMENT OFFICERS

Commander Mark Maggio	Surgeon Paul Smith
Senior Vice Commander Charles Bush	Past Commander Doug Hoffman
Junior Vice Commander Randy Coker	Chaplain Robert Ruffalo
Adjutant/ Quartermaster Ed Mann	Chief of Staff Tom Gimble
Judge Advocate Todd Taylor	Inspector Patrick Lane

EDITORIAL STAFF

Editor Rick Raskin	Managing Editor Ed Mann
	Copy Editor Janet Raskin

Virginia VETERAN is published tri-annually by the Department of Virginia, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the US and is available in electronic format on the Department website: www.vfwva.org.

Articles may be submitted by email to:
 rraskin@vfwva.org

We reserve the right to edit all submitted articles for timeliness, clarity and syntax.

Note: Deadline for the next newspaper is:

September 15, 2026

Please submit articles in MS Word or text (.txt) format.

Pictures: Please include captions and photo credit including who is in the picture.



Dept. Of VA Joint Presentation Awards 2026-05

PHOTOS BY JAMES REID



Master of Ceremonies Randy Coker — A record 1 hour for the ceremony



Ben Guinan (Post 1503) receives an award from National JVC Glenn R. Umberger Jr. and State Commander Doug Hoffman



State Commander Doug Hoffman, Past State Commander Tommy Hines and State Quartermaster Ed Mann prepare the All-State caps and awards



Sheri Moore (Post 9835) receives an award from National JVC Glenn R. Umberger Jr. and State Commander Doug Hoffman



State Commander Doug Hoffman presents District 1 Commander Beth Ford with her All-State cap



A super proud Auxiliary award winner



2025-2026 All-State Post Commanders and Quartermasters (Part 1)



2025-2026 All-Sate Post Commanders and Quartermasters (Part 2)



Joint Opening Session 2026-05

PHOTOS BY JAMES REID



State Color Guard posts the colors



Virginia Secretary of Veterans Affairs retired Major General Timothy P. Williams



A moment of levity never hurts as Ed Mann and Doug Hoffman demonstrate



Mechanicsville Post 9808 presented a donation to Melissa Patrick for the Valley Veterans Ride for Heroes which will have it's final run in September

Council of Administration Meeting



Commanders Club Meeting

Virginia Veterans Foundation Meeting



VFW Riders Meeting





Dept. Of VA. Installation 2026-05

PHOTOS BY JAMES REID



Incoming officers prepare for installation ceremony



JVC-IC JVC Glenn R. Umberger Jr. conducted the installation



Past State Commanders welcome Doug Hoffman to the ranks of PSCs



Incoming Commander Mark Maggio is escorted to be installed



JVC Glenn R. Umberger Jr. conducts the installation

RICK RASKIN



Rosanne Maggio caps newly installed commander Mark Maggio



Commander Mark Maggio delivers his acceptance speech





PHOTO FROM FACEBOOK

Joanne Smith, Tarah Jeffery, and Doris Wollet for proudly represented the VFW at the Virginia Women Veterans Ceremony on March 18.

This year's theme, "She Leads the Legacy: Trailblazers in Motion," was a powerful celebration honoring women veterans of the past, present, and future. The ceremony highlighted the leadership, service, and lasting impact of women who have worn the uniform.

The event featured inspiring remarks from Governor Spanberger, Major General Linda Singh, and Delegate Jackie Glass, who were received by an enthusiastic and appreciative audience. Their words reinforced the importance of recognizing and uplifting women veterans across generations.

To commemorate the occasion all attendees received the 2026 Women Veterans Ceremony Pin at the conclusion of the ceremony—a meaningful symbol of honor and legacy.

Thanks to Tarah, Joanne, and Doris for representing the VFW with pride and for helping ensure that the service and sacrifices of women veterans are recognized and celebrated.

Alexandria Gazette Packet v January 22 - February 4, 2026

A Century of Courage WWII veteran Bernard Long celebrates 108th birthday.

By Jeanne Theismann Gazette Packet

New Year's Eve is universally a time for celebration, with fireworks, popping corks and noisemakers. But for Bernard Long, each Dec. 31 marks a different milestone as the local World War II veteran turned 108 years old, one of a dwindling number of survivors of a time in history that shaped the nation.

"My guesstimate is Bernie is one of the very oldest living military Veterans in the Commonwealth of Virginia," said Alexandria VFW Post 609 Commander Jerry Krueger, who spearheaded a birthday card campaign to honor Long, whose life has spanned two world wars and a century of progress.

Krueger set a goal to get 108 birthday cards sent to Long, a member of VFW Post 609 and lifelong resident of Virginia. Long received more than 150 cards celebrating his milestone, including well-wishes from U.S. Sen. Mark Warner.

Born Dec. 31, 1917, Long grew up during the Great Depression, a time that shaped a generation's character. At the outbreak of

"Bernie is one of the very oldest living military veterans in the Commonwealth of Virginia."

Alexandria VFW Post 609 Commander Jerry Krueger

World War II, he answered the call to serve, joining the U.S. Army in February 1943 at age 25. He trained at Fort Lee in Virginia and became a truck mechanic with the Headquarters Company of the 660th Engineers Topographical Battalion.

Long's unit deployed just south of London in preparation for the Normandy invasion. He and his fellow soldiers endured frequent Nazi buzz-bomb attacks, until one bomb demolished their compound, forcing them to live in pup tents for weeks.

Long, whose Army buddies called him Bunny, still tells the tale of how after living in the 2-man pup tents, the Sargent-in-charge gleefully announced, "Good news gentlemen, tomorrow we are going to a foreign country. We are going to France."

On June 8, 1944, two days after D-Day, Long landed on Omaha Beach, where his mechanical skills were crucial in repairing countless trucks for the advance into Normandy and beyond. He spent about 18 months overseas, supporting the war effort in the European Theater.

After returning home in 1946, Long settled in Arlington, where he still lives independently, supported by his son Thomas, who lives across the street, and home health care staff. His military medals are proudly displayed in his home, a testament to his service and legacy.

Thanks to Krueger's efforts and the members of VFW Post 609, Long's birthday was marked by an outpouring of recognition with cards pouring in from across the country. Although Long is

too frail for visitors, his son shared Long's appreciation and gratitude for those who honored his service.

Though he was unable to attend, Long's story was also celebrated at last year's Alexandria Sister Cities D-Day commemoration event, where his photo was shown to a large audience who honored him with a rousing ovation.

"We do honor our heroes of the Greatest Generation," Krueger said. "His story is a living testament to resilience and patriotism, inspiring future generations to cherish liberty and honor those who secured it."



Photo by Thomas Long



Photo courtesy Long family

Alexandria VFW Post 609 member and WWII veteran Bernard Long celebrates his 108th birthday at his home in Arlington. Long was born Dec. 31, 1917.

Army veteran Bernard Long served in WWII and was part of the Normandy invasion in 1944.



Photo by Thomas Long

WWII veteran Bernard Long received more than 150 cards to celebrate his 108th birthday Dec. 31, 2025.

Virginia War Memorial Salutes Desert Storm

Article and photos by James Reid
Department Historian

March 20th the Virginia War Memorial in Richmond held the inaugural Salute to Service: 35 Years Beyond Operation Desert Storm, Celebrating the Veterans Who Served Together. What a day! All branches of the Military came together for the event. The day included several activities ending with a Wreath Ceremony conducted for the seven Virginia soldiers who were lost in the War to offer comfort, remembrance, and reflection for those who knew these heroes.

Virginia VFW members came together including Ron Riffle, James Reid, Gloria Kennedy, Robert Schwartz, Lynnette Archer, Jerrey Haynes, Mark Dunning, John Ford, Gerald Krueger, Jessica Krueger, Greg Eanes, Carl Grunow.

Sam Russell from Pennsylvania, was also in attendance to place a wreath for his fallen comrade.

The War Memorial put together a great presentation of the events that occurred during the war. Next year, the War Memorial will honor the Vietnam War Veterans and then Global War on Terrorism. It is well worth the drive to Richmond to be a part of the War Memorial's day of honor for our Veterans.





A Celebration of life for Past Department President and VFW Auxiliary #392 member Ellen Stogsdill was held at VFW Post 4809. Members from all Auxiliaries in District 2 came to remember her. Her family was also in attendance. She was a remarkable woman who was an inspiration to all she met. She loved the VFW, the Auxiliary and her family. State Commander Doug Hoffman, Department Officers and friends throughout the state came to pay their respects. She will be dearly missed by all.



District 8 Awards — April 25th



Scout of the Year Maddie Fisher and District 8 Commander Ashley Gurley



Scout of the Year Vivian Rinko and District 8 Commander Ashley Gurley



Department 100 Club winners Patrick Crowley (Post 12218), Jason Stewart (Post 12202) and Sheri Moore (Post 3103)

How a Former Dancer Marched His Way Back to the Stage

by Devon Malin (Manassas Ballet Theatre)

The arts and the military don't seem like the most kindred careers, but to the trained eye, their similarities are woven together into a beautiful tapestry of discipline, honor, and self-fulfillment. Perhaps no one understands this better than local Virginia resident Robert Westover. A former "LA Beach Boy," Westover has built a life in the DMV following an unlikely journey from ballet dancer to U.S. Marine.

Westover began studying ballet at age eight under a former dancer from the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. Through consistent training, mentorship, and exposure to a rich array of performing arts in Los Angeles—including Stars of the Bolshoi—his passion for ballet deepened. His focus and dedication as a young dancer led to a full scholarship to train at the Los Angeles Ballet at age 18, where he worked alongside legends such as Darci Kistler and Damien Woetzel. But Westover's experience there was not what he had imagined. He "had no idea what [he] was walking into," likening the experience to the critically acclaimed film *Black Swan*. His rose-colored glasses shattered quickly upon viewing the ballet world through a professional lens in such an elite, cut-throat environment. While the ballet world has since made strides in supporting dancers' mental and physical well-being, companies and schools operated very differently in decades past.

At 20, Westover traded one dream for another: a spot in the U.S. Marine Corps. With two generations of Marines in his family, continuing that legacy felt only logical—a way to make both his father and grandfather proud. Westover "didn't ever want to do anything that was not the best." When it came to choosing the Marines over other branches, he felt the same drive he'd had in ballet, saying he "wanted to do it because it was the hardest and the best," and because it came with a deeper sense of pride and accomplishment.

He found Marine life strikingly similar to ballet—shaped by comparable structure, physical demands, relentless drills, and even parallel leadership styles. Westover also asserts that "nothing compares" to the athleticism of ballet. Compared to his fellow recruits, the experiences he carried from the ballet world most certainly gave him a leg up in adjusting to life as a Marine.

Years later, Westover learned of a new ballet premiering locally by Manassas Ballet Theatre: *Colin*. The production tells the story of Artistic Director Amy Wolfe's son, who enlisted in the Marines and was killed in action in Iraq. It chronicles his life and the two worlds he inhabited—ballet and the Marine Corps. Westover was captivated. "I thought I was the only one," he says, astonished that such an unusual set of life choices could connect two men who had never met. He called this fateful discovery "divine intervention," and he was "blown away by the expertise" of the dancers in *Colin*. Ballet and the Marines are such integral parts of his identity that choosing between them would be "like trying to

choose between your two kids," so seeing a ballet embody so many deeply personal facets of his life brought a profound sense of euphoria.

After maintaining a relationship with Manassas Ballet as a devoted patron, Wolfe eventually approached Westover with an unexpected opportunity: to return to the stage after 40 years and join MBT's production of *Don Quixote*. Though initially hesitant, Westover agreed, recognizing this as his chance to bring the spirit of a fallen comrade back to life. He chose to channel Colin's essence through the titular character, while also reconnecting with his childhood dream. Now, he is absolutely thrilled to be back on stage dancing and performing again. "I have to do it for my Marine brother. It's the perfect moment," Westover says. "Colin, this is for you."



VADIM SLATVITSKIY / MBT

Robert Westover in rehearsal for *Don Quixote*

Submitted by VFW Post 7589. We support Manassas Ballet Theatre in memory of LCL Colin Wolfe who was killed in Iraq.

Cleaning Veteran's Grave Stones at Rose Hill Cemetery

VFW Post 7589 in cooperation with American Legion Post 114, our Scouts and the Buffalo Soldiers Riders and in conjunction with the City of Manassas are continuing efforts to rehabilitate the long neglected African American cemetery in Manassas.



WAYNE MOORE

Members from VFW Post 7589, Scout Troop1372, American Legion Post 114 and the Buffalo Soldiers Riders participated in cleaning veterans gravestones at Rose Hill Cemetery on May 2.



RICK RASKIN



RICK RASKIN



RICK RASKIN



WAYNE MOORE



RICK RASKIN



RICK RASKIN

VFW Post 9808 celebrated their Day of Service hosting Mission 10 Old Dominion Honor Flight.

We had Post members, Auxiliary members, Fire Department members and NJROTC Cadets plus Honor Flight Veterans and Guardians. It truly was a Day of Service and a Celebration of Service.



PHOTOS BY JOANNE SMITH



Post 2582 received notice that we have been awarded the Business Rate Best of 2026 Award for the best Veterans Organization in Suffolk. As our focus is to support veterans, this was an unexpected award.— feeling pumped at VFW Post 2582 — Joe Bagley.

Post 9835, Warrenton



Post 9835 Commander, Brian Cohen and Adjutant/Quartermaster Jeff Dombroff presented the Post's annual Warrenton and Fauquier County First responder awards during the January meeting. Awards were presented to: David Achter, Warrenton Volunteer Fire Company, Emergency Medical Technician of the Year; Sgt Nick Hoffmaster, Warrenton Volunteer Fire Company, Firefighter of the Year; Deputy 1st Class Gary Jenkins, Fauquier County Sheriff's Office, Law Enforcement Officer of the Year; Corporal Jeffrey Shaver, Warrenton Police Department, Law Enforcement Officer of the Year; and Shift Supervisor Tracy Werner, Fauquier County Sheriff's Office, Dispatcher of the Year.



Post 9835 JVC Bilger, SVC Benson, Adjutant/QM Dombroff, Surgeon Lenky and Trustee Xavier (not pictured) visited the Fauquier Free Clinic for a tour and presented a \$500.00 donation. The clinic supports the local community with medical, dental and mental health services for underserved populations, including local veterans in need.



Post 9835 members (Brian Cohen, Jeff Dombroff, Bruce Campbell, Francis Xavier, Jim Salyards, James Antone, James Kerr, Mark Whisenant, Walt Lenky) and two spouses (Mercedes Whisenant and Barbara Lenky) visited the Puller Veterans Care Center (PVCC). The new care center, operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs, was built on the former Vint Hill Farms Station in Fauquier County, and delivers top-notch quality and state-of-the-art care in a home-like setting to veterans who are residents of the commonwealth. The 128-bed center features private rooms, organized by households and "neighborhoods" surrounding a central community center. At the time of the visit, 20 Veterans resided in the center, and as PVCC awaits further inspection and certification by the Virginia Department of Affairs, it will be opened to more Veterans.

Poppies for Patriots: Prince William veterans speak on true meaning of Memorial Day

Sébastien Kraft | InsideNoVa



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Romeo, Elizabeth Marlowe, Check and Ben Guinan at the PWC Memorial Monument listing the names of PWC citizens that gave their lives in service

The threat of rain and some howling winds could not dampen a solemn Tuesday at the Prince William County government complex, as local officials, veterans and their families gathered outside for the annual “Poppies for Patriots” Memorial Day ceremony to honor fallen service members.

Assembling beneath a giant American flag provided by Prince William fire and rescue, community members paid their respects at Sean T. Connaughton Plaza during the county’s yearly tribute event.



Sébastien Kraft | InsideNoVa

Two members of VFW Post 1503 in Dale City, including Robert “Check” Adamczyk (left at front, in blue shirt) – the post’s incoming commander – salute during the singing of the National Anthem on May 19, 2026, at the Prince William County government center.

Attendees were invited to pin red paper poppy flowers on the county’s “poppy wall” display and inscribe them with names of fallen service members or simply messages of support.

County Executive Christopher Shorter led the ceremony, which also featured the singing of the National Anthem by Miles Merwin, a county police officer, remarks from Board of County Supervisors Chair Deshundra Jefferson and a guest speaker, retired Air Force Col. Jesse Citizen, chair of the county’s Veterans Commission.

Veterans sported side caps embroidered with their Veterans of Foreign Wars insignia, as a jovial mood at the outset of the event gave way to a period of quiet reflection and remembrance. Military salutes were aplenty, both during the National Anthem and the playing of “Taps” by bugler Donna Flory.

Ben Guinan, commander of Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1503 in Dale City, addressed the VFW’s crucial role in remembering those the nation has lost.

“Given that we are all veterans of foreign wars, it is incumbent on us as the VFW to perpetuate the memory of our fallen,” Guinan told InsideNoVa following the ceremony. “Memorial Day is where we reflect on that the most during the year, so that’s what it truly means for the VFW.”

Guinan said he specifically remembers family members who died after sustaining injuries overseas as well as some of his college fraternity brothers who were lost in the 9/11 attacks.

Robert “Check” Adamczyk, the incoming commander for VFW Post 1503, is set to take over from Guinan on May 30 after the latter’s two years in the role.

Having served in the U.S. Army from 1987-1991, including two years in Korea, Adamczyk spoke to the true meaning of Memorial Day and some misconceptions therein.

“A lot of times you get people thanking veterans for Memorial Day,” Adamczyk told InsideNoVa. “And we have to explain to them – I appreciate the sentiment, but this isn’t for us, this is for those who didn’t make it to today.”

Adamczyk added the VFW is active across several area tribute events around Memorial Day in addition to the county’s ceremony, notably a community cookout on the holiday itself and a regional ceremony at Quantico National Cemetery.

As for the VFW’s continued commitment to area veterans, Guinan said his role as post commander is to formally induct and welcome new officers to “the greater war of American citizenship.”

“It isn’t always the easiest transition for military members to come back to civilian life with their various injuries – both externally and internally, both physical and mental,” Guinan said. “It takes dedication to become a valuable citizen once again and not forget your discipline, your drive, but to focus it on your community, as opposed to the country at large.”

(Continued on page 17)

(Continued from page 16)

The use of the poppy flower originates from the poem “In Flanders Fields,” written by John McCrae, a Canadian soldier and physician during World War I. McCrae described the blood-red flowers growing among the soldiers’ graves along the Western Front.

In 1918, Moina Michael, an American professor, wrote “We Shall Keep the Faith,” a subsequent poem inspired by McCrae’s original work, which led to the poppy’s adoption as a symbol of remembrance by the American Legion Auxiliary.

Jefferson read excerpts from both poems during her remarks and Citizen later emphasized the ongoing role of the Veterans Commission.

“The Prince William County Veterans Commission remains unyieldingly committed to serving our living veterans and honoring our fallen heroes,” Citizen said in his speech, “but today on this ground our sacred duty belongs to all of us. May we leave today with the resilient, bright spirit of the poppy in our hearts, forever rooted in the soil of a free nation. To our fallen women and men, we remember you. To our veterans, we thank you. To our families, we stand with you.”

Post 2894’s National Day of Service

By Jim Ireland, Service Officer, Post 2894 and of District 2

Volunteers from Post 2894 held their National Day of Service with the help of Boy Scout Troop 413 and their parents, totaling 21 volunteers helped a disabled veteran who lost his wife 2 years ago, [by doing a yard cleanup on his property].

The group mowed his lawn, [trimmed] bushes and trees, edged his yard, pulled weeds and dragged all the clippings and weeds to the far back of his property with tarps and dumped them over deep drop-off and spread 5 yards of mulch around his house and flower garden.

The value of our work shown brightly in his eyes and smile.



Hillsville Post 1115's Day of Service

VFW Post 1115 Grover King is proud to recognize Boy Scout Troop and Cub Scout Pack 810, Woodlawn VA of Coulson Church, for their efforts as an extension to our VFW Day of Service month!

The two groups cleaned up the Veteran's Memorial area and in partnership presented two United States of America flags and one Prisoner of War flag.

Their efforts provided a commendable service that goes above and beyond in honoring our brothers and sisters that have served our great country!

VFW Post 1115 wants to also thank Aden Moore for his support in mowing the lot east of our Veteran's Memorial!

Thank you all for your support in our mission in honoring the dead by helping the living!



SGT Nicholas C. Mason Memorial Post 12202 Celebrates its Five Anniversary

On Saturday, May 2nd, our local community gathered for a dual milestone: celebrating the fifth anniversary of VFW Post 12202 during the fourth annual King George Family Day / VFW Celebration. Co-hosted alongside our steadfast partners at King George Parks and Recreation, this annual tradition continues to strengthen the bond between our service members, veterans, and the local community we call home. Over 50 local businesses and artisans showcased their goods, boosting our local economy. 15 diverse food trucks kept the crowd energized with a fantastic variety of culinary options. More than 10 dedicated activities kept our youngest community members laughing and playing and King George Fire and Rescue provided an interactive, hands-on experience for children and families with their Touch-a-Truck.

At its heart, this event is a celebration of service. VFW Post 12202 members took the stage to highlight the history and mission of the various branches of the United States Armed Forces, fostering a deeper understanding of military service. In keeping with our commitment to public service, the Post was proud to present awards to our dedicated local first responders. We extend our deepest gratitude to these brave individuals who work tirelessly to keep King George safe every single day.

Below are the awardees:

- Tianna Ashton King George County Sheriff's Office
- Breanna Brewster King George County Sheriff's Office Dispatcher
- Tina Fenwick King George County Sheriff's Office Dispatcher
- Kristin Olten King George County Fire & Rescue Paramedic



Post 12202 CDR Jason Stewart (center) with Past CDR's Ashley Gurley (left) and Alex McKenna (right) cutting the Post 12202 Birthday cake

Post 12202 Judge Advocate Chris Werle and Post 12202 JVC Bob Dolensky assist in preparing an American Flag for retirement



Post 12202 CDR Jason Stewart and 12202 Past CDR Ashley Gurley present King George County Sheriff's Office Deputy Tianna Ashton with her Public Servant Award



Post 12202 CDR Jason Stewart and 12202 Past CDR Ashley Gurley present King George County Sheriff's Office Dispatcher Breanna Brewster with her Public Servant Award



Post 12202 CDR Jason Stewart and 12202 Past CDR Ashley Gurley present King George County Sheriff's Office Dispatcher Tina Fenwick with her Public Servant Award



Post 12202 CDR Jason Stewart presents King George County Fire & Rescue Paramedic Kristin Olten with her Public Servant Award

Hot Springs Post 4204 Flag Retirement

Article and Photos from Facebook / VFWVA



One of the Posts in VFW Virginia District 11 did a dignified retirement ceremony for national flags that have become worn out. Post 4204 in Hot Springs retired 40 flags.



State Junior Vice Commander Charles Bush presented a check to the Virginia House during his visit to the VFW National Home in Eaton Rapids, Michigan



State Junior Vice Commander Charles Bush and Auxiliary Jr. Vice President Susan Dinon, along with our own Ronnie Steele at the National Home in Eaton Rapids, Michigan



City of Manassas Inaugural Annual

VETERANS RESOURCE FAIR

Scan to Register



Mayor Michelle Davis-Younger and members of the City of Manassas Mayor's Veterans Advisory Board invite active duty and retired veterans and their families, and community members to find out more about benefits and resources for veterans of all ages.

- May 16, 2026
- 10 AM - 2 PM



Mayor Michelle Davis-Younger



Monti Zimmerman, Mayor Michelle Davis-Younger and Wayne Moore



Rick Raskin, Monti Zimmerman, Wayne Moore and Megan Cate



Megan Cate with members of WOVEN



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

SGT Nicholas C. Mason Memorial Post 12202 Memorial Day Weekend

King George Post 12202 honored Memorial Day weekend with a series of community events dedicated to remembering our fallen veterans. The weekend began at Historyland Memorial Park & Arboretum, where members placed nearly 300 American flags on the graves of veterans. Throughout the weekend, the Post distributed Buddy Poppies at several local venues, including El Charro Mexican Restaurant on Friday, and the King George Walmart on Saturday and Sunday. Members also participated in the Memorial Day service at Shiloh Baptist Church before concluding the weekend's events with a final Buddy Poppy distribution at Creekside Farm & Brewery.



Chesapeake Post 2894 Annual Awards Ceremony



Patriots Pen Award winner Abhinav Hari Sarma



Voice of Democracy winner Alithia West



CAP Cadet Officer of the Year Michael S Hogwood



CAP Cadet NCO of the Year Russel A McCracken



Teacher of the Year Anna M Wright



Teacher of the Year Veronica Carpenter



Deputy Sheriff of the Year William Holmes



Firefighter of the Year Ted Locklear



Outstanding Support DW2 Electric



EMS Provider of the Year David Pang



Outstanding Support Hare's Heating Cooling and Electric



Firefighter Award Eric Bissell

Auxiliary 7589's Buddy Poppy Display advances to National Competition



Happy Birthday America

"With a single sheet of parchment and 56 signatures, America began the greatest political journey in human history." On July 4, 2026 our nation will commemorate and celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The journey towards this historic milestone is an opportunity to pause and reflect on our nation's past, honor the contributions of all Americans, and look ahead toward the future we want to create for the next generation and beyond.

Auxiliary 7589's Patriotic Art contest winner won **3rd Place** in National Competition



Patriotic Art (3D) by Rachel Elrod

Auxiliary 7589's Illustrating America contest winner advanced to National Competition



Tristian Simms, Illustrating America first place winner in Grades 3-5

Post 3219 — Farewell to “Charlie”

Please help us say good bye to Military Working Dog (MWD) Charlie. Charlie served in Syria and Iraq. He also worked on several Presidential missions.

Charlie was stationed at Ft. Eustis.

Thanks Mike Martinez for reaching out today and allowing us to support this ceremony. It was truly an honor to be asked.

Thank you to the Virginia State VFW Riders Rob Pedersen, and Mark and Catherine Shockley for being there.

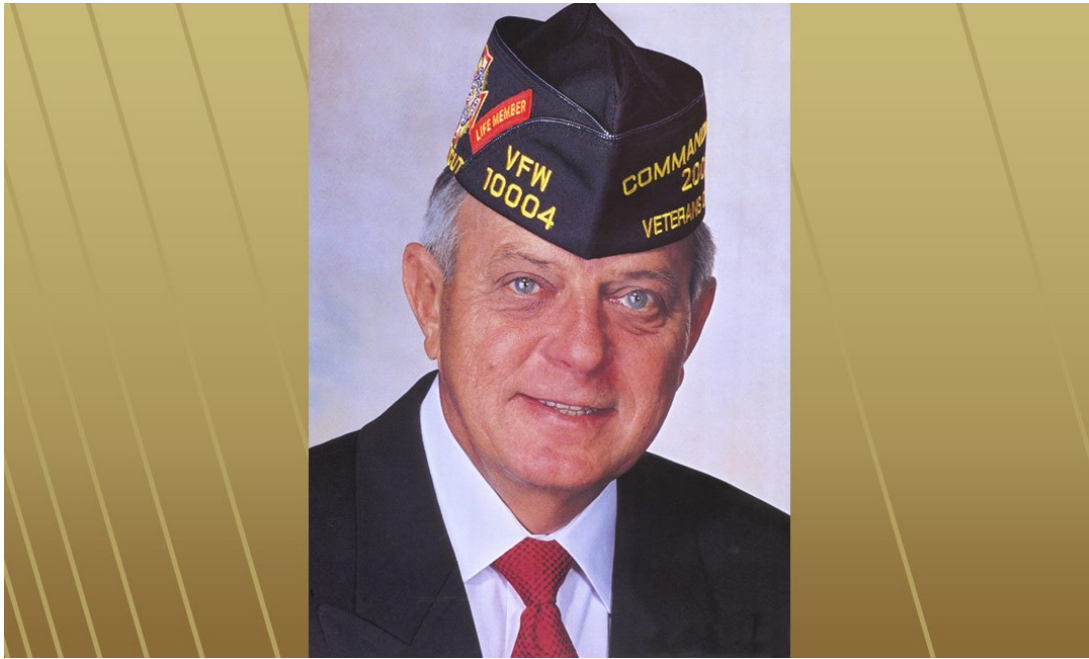
His handler played Taps to give the beautiful military servant a well deserved send off.

SSgt Charlie - Thank you for your amazing service. Job well done, rest well.



VFW Mourns the Loss of Past Commander-in-Chief Edward S. Banas Sr.

His leadership, integrity and unwavering commitment inspired generations of VFW members



KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States mourns the passing of Past Commander-in-Chief Edward S. Banas Sr., a devoted leader, Vietnam veteran and lifelong advocate for America’s veterans and military families. He was a respected member of the VFW whose decades of service left a lasting impact on the organization and the veteran community nationwide.

Banas was elected the 2003-2004 Commander-in-Chief of the VFW during the organization’s 104th National Convention in San Antonio, Texas, becoming only the second member from Connecticut to hold the organization’s highest office.

A proud Army veteran, Banas served from 1965 to 1968, including service in Vietnam with the 18th Military Police Brigade. His military decorations included the Vietnam Campaign Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, National Defense Service Medal and the Army Good Conduct Medal.

While still serving on active duty in 1967, Banas joined VFW Post 10004 in Jewett City, Connecticut, beginning a lifelong commitment to the organization and its mission. Over the years, he served in numerous leadership positions at every level of the VFW, including Post Commander, All-American District Commander and Department Commander of Connecticut.

Nationally, Banas served on several key VFW committees, including Safety, By-Laws, Budget & Finance, and served as chairman of the Americanism and Legislative committees. He also represented the Departments of Connecticut and Massachusetts on the National Council of Administration and served as chairman of the Eastern States Conference.

Following his military service, Banas continued his commitment to service as a member of the Norwich Police Department, where he served for more than a decade. During his law enforcement career, he was active in several professional associations and pursued advanced studies in constitutional law, police management and criminal investigations.

Banas was a member of the American Legion, the Voluntown, Connecticut Historical Society and remained a Life member of VFW Post 10004.

Chief Banas dedicated his life to serving others — first in uniform, then in law enforcement, and for decades as a tireless advocate for veterans through the VFW. His leadership, integrity and unwavering commitment to veterans and their families strengthened this organization and inspired generations of VFW members.

VFW Remembers Past Commander-in-Chief John Furgess

His long career dedicated to military service and veterans advocacy leaves an indelible mark



KANSAS CITY, Mo. (June 3, 2026) — The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States remembers the legacy of John Furgess, a distinguished Army officer, veteran advocate and past VFW Commander-in-Chief.

John began a lifetime of public service after earning his bachelor's degree in business from Middle Tennessee State University in 1965. He entered the U.S. Army the same year where he served until 1970, to include a tour in Vietnam with a military intelligence unit assigned to the Americal Division headquarters at Chu Lai. For his service, he received numerous military honors, including the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, and the Vietnam Service Medal, among others.

Following active-duty service, John continued his military career in the Tennessee Army National Guard, ultimately retiring in 1993 at the rank of colonel after 28 years of combined service. He also completed the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, in 1979.

In 1970, he joined VFW Post 1970 in Nashville, Tennessee, becoming a Life member in 1974. Over the years, he held numerous leadership roles within the organization, including Post Commander, District Commander, and Tennessee Department Commander (1978–1979), becoming the first Vietnam veteran to serve as the state's commander. He later served on the VFW National Council of Administration and was appointed to multiple national committees.

After his military service, he continued his commitment to veterans as assistant commissioner for the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs, a role he held for two decades until his retirement in October 2002, overseeing 11 field offices across the state.

John was elected to the organization's highest office on August 20, 2004, during the 105th VFW National Convention in Cincinnati, Ohio. The following year, he escorted a group of veterans on the VFW's inaugural Purple Heart Return to Vietnam healing retreat, and traveled to Iraq, making him the first VFW National Commander to visit deployed service members in the region since the start of the Iraq War.

Beyond the VFW, he was active in several veterans service organizations, including Disabled American Veterans, AMVETS, the Military Officers Association of America, the American Legion, the Americal Division Veterans Association and Vietnam Veterans of America.

He will long be remembered for his more than 60 years of dedicated military service and veterans advocacy at the local, state and national levels.



PRESS RELEASE

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 21, 2026

No. 26-13
Contact: Mokie Porter
301-996-0901

VVA Mourns Loss of Trail-Blazing Army Nurse and Vietnam Veteran Diane Carlson Evans

(Washington, D.C) – “It is with heavy heart that we share the news of the passing of Vietnam Veterans of America lifetime member and trail-blazing U.S. Army (ret.) Captain Diane Carlson Evans,” said VVA National President Tom Burke. Carlson Evans is known most widely for leading the hard-fought, decade-long effort to build the Vietnam Women's Memorial on the Mall in Washington, D.C., the first—and still the only—memorial on the National Mall dedicated specifically to women's military service.



WWW.VVMF.ORG

“Diane was a true American hero,” said Burke. “Volunteering at age 21 for the Army Nurse Corps, she served a life-changing 1968-69 tour of duty as a combat nurse in the operating and recovery rooms at the U.S. Army's 36th Evacuation Hospital in Vung Tau and the 71st Evac in Pleiku.”

“In 1983, she became a founding member of VVA Chapter 5 in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and spent a lifetime working as a forceful veterans’ advocate. That advocacy—and her personal experiences in the war and after coming home—led to the idea of a memorial at The Wall in Washington to honor the American women who served in the Vietnam War,” he added.

In 1984, Evans incorporated the Vietnam Women’s Memorial Project as a non-profit organization. The fight to get the Women’s Memorial was ten years long, complex, and arduous, but Carlson Evans refused to back down, and her tenacity inspired the many women veterans who joined her in the battle. Evans felt deeply an “incompleteness” in the initially controversial Wall, paradoxically highlighted by the addition of Frederick Hart’s statue of three fighting men. “Where are the women?” Evans asked. “Women are also soldiers. Women also need to heal. Their service is worthy of honor and recognition.”

Beyond this one life-altering accomplishment, Carlson Evans’ dedication to her country and to her fellow veterans continued throughout her life. Her unwavering commitment to public service defined her professional life. In 2022, at VVA’s National Convention, she was honored as a recipient of the VVA Lifetime Achievement Award.



The Vietnam Women's Memorial to honor the women who risked their lives to serve their country. Depicting three women caring for a fallen soldier

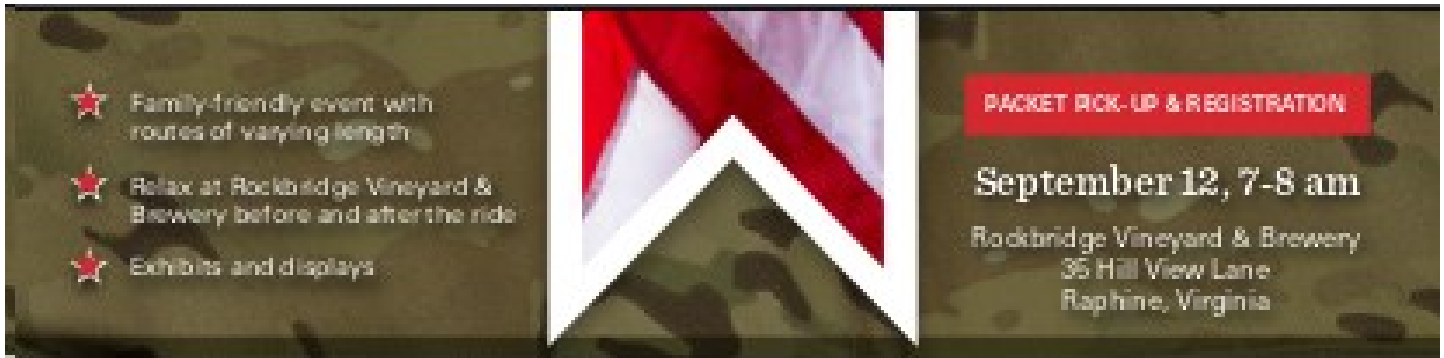


The **Gold Standard** of Service
for Veterans and their Families

Connect to
hundreds of local
services and resources.



For more information about
the Virginia Veterans Network,
visit **dvs.virginia.gov**.



- ★ Family-friendly event with routes of varying length
- ★ Relax at Rockbridge Vineyard & Brewery before and after the ride
- ★ Exhibits and displays

PACKET PICK-UP & REGISTRATION

September 12, 7-8 am

Rockbridge Vineyard & Brewery
35 Hill View Lane
Raphine, Virginia



VALLEY VETERANS



Enjoy either a short, mid, or Metric Century bicycle route through the beauty of the rolling hills and lush fields of the central Shenandoah Valley countryside.

Post-ride food and beverages available. Stay and celebrate with us.

September 12, 2026

Begins at 8:15 am

Last rider off: Metric Century 9 am / Mid 9 am / Short 9:30 am

Meet at Rockbridge Vineyard & Brewery
35 Hill View Lane, Raphine, Virginia

We ride to support our combat veterans and to raise funds for Boulder Crest Foundation, a therapeutic and wellness facility which enables our combat veterans and their families to recover, rest, recharge, and reconnect.



RIDING FOR STRENGTH

REGISTER ONLINE
valleyvetstride4heroes.com



Dynamic Aviation

ManTech

Hollister



BlueStone Partners



★ HONORING OUR HEALING HEROES IN COMMEMORATION OF AMERICA'S 260TH ANNIVERSARY ★