

**VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE U.S.
DEPARTMENT OF ILLINOIS
PROGRAM BULLETIN**

FEBRUARY 2019

MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM 2018-2019

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A big "THANK YOU" goes out to all the Posts that have achieved 100% in Membership! Please remember that for a Post to be named as an "All State" Post this year, the membership requirement is **100% plus 10 members**. If your Post is already at 100%, then this shouldn't really be a problem. As of this writing, our Department is at 92%, with the 4th District leading at 97.79%. Congratulations to **District Commander Joe Scanlon** for setting the pace in our Department! In addition, we have several District Commanders who are over 95%.

NOTE TO ALL DISTRICT COMMANDERS: If your District is lower than the Department average of 92%, then you and your Membership Team have some work to do. It's not too late to catch up, and if I can be of help, please contact me and let me know what you need.

National Membership stands at 94.44%. Therefore, as a Department, compared to the National average, we are lagging behind by a little over 2%. The GOOD news is that we are in a much better position now than we have been in the past few years, and I believe we can bring our Department to over 100% this year. There are already three Departments that have attained over 100%. Of all Departments in the nation, we are in 37th place. In the Big 10 Conference, we stand at 8th place. **I hope you all believe we can do better!**

To date, we have recruited 535 new members and reinstated 131 members. We are currently 965 members less than we were at this time last year. *So, how do we make this up?* I believe we need to do a much better job the second half of this year in recruiting and reinstating prior unpaid members. We literally have the names and addresses of thousands of unpaid and relocated members. ***Are you concentrating your efforts on reaching out to these people?*** Looking at these numbers, we should have more reinstated members than we have new members—but we don't! Since we have only 131 reinstated members right now, that leads me to believe that our Posts and Districts are not contacting these individuals. If you're looking for a way to accomplish your "All State" goals, this may be the answer.

We can provide names and addresses to a Post or District looking for prior unpaids, based on the zip code you wish to work! Many Posts and Districts have already requested this information, but we haven't yet seen the actual numbers coming in from these lists.

We have a Council of Administration meeting next week, and I look forward to seeing many of you. If you see me, please let me know how we can help you with your Post or District. STAY POSITIVE and BELIEVE IN YOURSELF! Thank you for all your dedication and service to the VFW. Daily activity will ultimately produce results, so keep talking to people and keep recruiting!

VETERANS SERVICE

Derek Giffin, Director

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Comrades:

I am beginning my ninth year as a Service Officer for the Department of Illinois, VFW. There are appeals that I have been working on since 2011 that have yet to be fully adjudicated. Our own National Veterans Service office in Washington DC has been working with Congress for years to help develop a system to break into the appeals backlog which, at current count, is over a half a million.

One of the problems with the appellate system is that it is replete with redundancy. For example, if a veteran gets a decision for which they disagree, they invariably contact the VFW Service Office to help submit a Notice of Disagreement. In the remarks section, we argue why this decision was improper. Two to three years later, the VA responds with a Statement of the Case. If we do not agree with it, we respond timely with a VA Form 9, where we, again, make the same argument as to why the decision was improper. Two or three years later (sometimes longer), the VA certifies the appeal to the Board of Veterans Appeals, the next higher appellate jurisdiction, and asks our office to complete VA Form 646, where we, again, make more or less the same argument that was made on the Notice of Disagreement and Form 9. Two or three years later, the veteran and I appear before the Veteran Law Judge at the BVA and, again, reiterate the same argument that had been made in three prior phases of the appeal's development.

On 14 Feb 19, the VA will be fully implementing the largest overhaul of the appellate system I've seen in my eight years as a Service Officer. This system is designed to excise the aforementioned redundancy by making an appeal a three-part system. This should ease the bottleneck and streamline the process. Now, a veteran who disagrees with a decision can either submit new and relevant evidence, request a new review by a more experienced adjudicator, or request a hearing with the Board of Veterans Appeals. This new system will be familiar to any veteran who has had their appeal expedited under the new RAMP (Rapid Appeals Modernization Program). Though an ambitious goal, BVA is hoping this new system will keep most appeals at the Regional Office level which, in turn, will give BVA time to work down their remaining backlog within the coming two years. With all changes at VA, expect new forms. If you need assistance in deciding which of the three options is most advantageous, please reach out to the VFW Service Office.

AMERICANISM PROGRAM

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Comrades as of now there are several Posts that have not reported any Americanism Projects for this reporting year. There is really no excuse for this seeing that there have been so many projects that could have been reported. Just a few examples are Memorial Day Programs, 4th of July Programs, Veterans Day Programs, Flying the Flag at your Posts. These are only a few; there are many more that I am sure you have completed. We need to get our programs reported. The end of the reporting year is April 30, 2019. If you need help reporting ask your District Americanism Director, call the Department Office, or call me. We can get this done if we just report what we did.

Loyalty Day is coming up in May. Now is the time to start planning your programs.

The Teacher of The Year has been completed and our winners have been sent to The National Judging. I want to thank all Posts and Districts who took part. A special thanks to Erin in The Department Office for all her help. The Winning Teachers are:

Grade 1-5 Shelly Smith from Marissa Elementary School out of the 14th District

Grade 6-8 Laura Mudd from Red Bud Elementary School out of the 14th District

Grade 9-12 Melinda Perkins from Elk Grove High School out of the 4th District

Please remember if you need help reporting just call the help is out there all you have to do is ask for it.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES PROGRAM

Charles Ingle, Director

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The Home Depot Grant window is scheduled to open February 1. We will need to take a look at The Home Depot grant application to see if any changes were made. Jason Couch of the Foundation Staff will then issue a How-To-Apply Guide. This information will be included in the next Bulletin. Please email me, chuck@roscoevfw.com if you require it sooner.

VFW FOUNDATION COMMUNITY SUPPORT GRANT AVAILABLE

Funding for VFW Post and Auxiliary community service projects is still available through the VFW Foundation Community Support Grant. Qualified Posts and/or Auxiliaries may receive grants of up to \$1,000 to support local nonprofits or important outreach projects in their communities and up to \$500 more if a Post/Auxiliary conducts an activity with a VFW Foundation sponsor such as Humana, Burger King, Sport Clips, etc. **As of Jan. 25, 2019, 245 Posts/Auxiliaries have received approximately \$245,349 to support their community outreach.** To apply please go to: vfw.org/grants or for additional information contact Jason Couch at JCouch@vfw.org or 816.968.1174.

In the report above, 97.8% of participating Illinois Posts received a grant for the exact amount they requested; totaling \$45,500.00. Our Department got an 18.5% slice of the National pie.

On the other hand ->

The Foundation tells me that: “No Illinois Post/Auxiliary received a VFW Foundation Regular Grant during the [2017-18] time period.” The implication is that, not one Post applied.

The REGULAR GRANT is created: To help VFW Departments, Posts and Auxiliaries, as well as qualifying nonprofits provide the vital support America's heroes and their families deserve, the VFW Foundation has established the VFW Foundation Regular Grant.

Grants ranging from \$1,000 - \$15,000, will be awarded for activities that directly benefit veterans, active duty military personnel and their families. Requests displaying innovation in service delivery, unique program design that addresses an under-served need and the likelihood of sustainability after the grant period ends will be given special consideration.

VFW 2018-2019 Community Activities, Dept. of IL

<u>District</u>	<u>Commander</u>	<u>Posts Reported</u>	<u>District</u>	<u>Community Activities Director</u>
3	Samuel Scaife, Jr.	9	56%	Richard E. Bukowski
4	Joseph P. Scanlon	9	60%	Thomas W. Davidson
5	Raymond O. Rigsby	11	55%	Daniel J. Pearson
6	Gary Holmes	17	100%	Rick Frank
7	Robert Sable	8	38%	Donovan L. Eskeson
8	Russell "Pete" Mosher	11	65%	Mark W. Sowers
9	"Scott" Buennemeyer	10	45%	Daryle D. Peters
10	Michelle K. Ramlow	6	38%	Jim Duvendack
11	Joseph S. Swinford	6	40%	Steve Jurgens
12	Christopher R. Retzer	9	47%	John "Jack" Fessler

13	Christopher L. Hatcher	7	58%	Elmer McDuffee
14	Maurice F. Bridges	16	84%	◆John Barrett
15	Clarence E. Caraker	4	29%	Barbara R. Wilson
16	Eugene C. Blackwell, Jr.	5	45%	William A. Browne, Jr.
17	Sean D. Conner	7	50%	◆Dan R. Swaner
18	Robert M. Adame	8	67%	Robert McLeod
19	Robert Zeman	24	96%	George R. Cramer

◆Assistant State Director

Total Posts
286

X-Sheet Data
29-01-19

Department Percentage
58%

Compiled by
Chuck Ingle

VOICE OF DEMOCRACY

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Post and District chairmen ó your year has been completed for this year. Take a breather and then take some time to see what can be done better at the post and district levels program. If you have not heard as of yet, next year theme is öWhat Makes America Greatö, for Patriots Pen as well. This should be interesting to see how it well come out.

So now that you have this information, what are your plans to get it out to the students? Donot wait too long on getting in contact with the schools.

Letos enjoy this yearos winner and hope out State Champion does well at the National level.

BLOOD DONOR PROGRAM

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Comrades, it is cold outside. With that, there is a great need for blood. This is something that we as veterans can do. When we were in uniform, serving, we had each otheros back. If we donot take care of each other then who is? As I have stated before in the bulletins that your post, your district can have a blood drive. If you donot know who to contact please look to the resources on the web page to find the blood donor program to find out whom in your area can help you with a blood drive. Now who out there has donated a pint of blood? Is it you? If not then when? Go out today and donate a pint today.

NATIONAL HOME

Michael J. McGrath, Director

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COMMANDERS AND QUARTERMASTERS PLEASE NOTE

Comrades we thank you for your generosity as your donations have been a great help to the National Home. However, we are seeing in some cases that the "X" sheets have not been completed ... So your posts and Districts are not getting credit on the system.

AND AS A REMINDER

Your participation in the Illinois State V.F.W. National Home program is required for you to become eligible for State and National awards! The minimum requirement is \$50.00 and please remember the V.F.W. National Home for Children receives no Government funding and has been helping veterans and their families for over 90 years.

THANK YOU!

Thank you comrades, and if any questions, please do reach out. We are glad to help you.

SAFETY PROGRAM

Robert Mattson

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Now that we have entered 2019 with our Safety Program in the last few months before the end of the year, we must start to report on all of our six (6) Safety programs. I have been following the X sheets and have noticed that there are a few Districts that are doing a great job of reporting.

Now if the other Districts would follow suit it could be a good year for our program. As I have said in the past, District 4 has had their Safety Program seminar and it was a great success which I reported in December. This is such an easy thing to do, it cost the District a few dollars but was well worth it. I you need any information on how we conduct our seminars please see me at the C of A in February.

District and Post Commanders please start reporting all of what you do. I know that you have done it - just report it please!

Please have a safe trip to Springfield for our C of A and VOD banquet. I will see you all there.

HOMELESS VETERANS PROGRAM

Paul Bezazian, Director

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Comrades, it is brutally Cold Outside Pretty much everywhere in the state. If you have a spare coats, sweater, sweatshirts, hat, gloves, scarf or anything of that nature, please keep it in your car will give to a homeless veteran. They are really bad on in the elements outside right now. Please keep them in your mind during this cold weather

VETERANS AND MILITARY SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Clarke Christiansen, Director

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Hello fellow comrades, I hope this bulletin finds you well and warm. At the moment it's 6 degrees and I'm looking at -14 tomorrow. That said, please remember we are here to help our fellow veterans who may be in need. With this cold weather upon us some folks out there are struggling to stay warm because of broken furnaces. Perhaps they can't get to work or the grocery store because their car won't start. We have programs to assist these folks both at the Department and National level. One veteran suffering because of the cold is one too many, please reach out and verify everyone is safe. If not, contact Mike DeRoss at headquarters, or myself (info in the book) and we will do our best to help.