

# Veterans & Family Support

Marilyn Peck, Chairman

*Service to Veterans Is Love In Action.* What better way to show that love than through our Veterans & Family Support program which is the cornerstone of the work of the Ladies Auxiliary. It focuses on four key areas, National Military Services, Buddy Poppy, VFW National Home for Children, and Ladies Auxiliary Continuing Education Scholarship. In addition to actively participating in each of these focus areas, we must continue our other “traditional” work supporting active military and veterans and the families of both. Our support of our Service Officers must continue. The work we do every day to assist veterans – meals, transportation, visits, cards to name just a few - is also an important component of Veterans & Family Support. *It's Time for America's Military Heroes* to be recognized and supported and our work in these programs will do just that.

## NATIONAL MILITARY SERVICES

This includes Military Assistance Program, *Operation Uplink<sup>TM</sup>*, and Unmet Needs. Each area provides a unique focus of support for military service members and their families. Our aim is two-fold; to raise funds to ensure these programs continue to provide much needed assistance; and to actively participate in events in each area.

The Military Assistance Program (MAP) supports the Post, District, and Department interaction with and support of the local military community. It links the VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary to our active-duty, Guard, and Reserve military units. MAP events include farewell & welcome home activities, Adopt-A-Unit, mailing of care packages to troops, and Family Readiness Group events. It also provides for a Memorial Commendation for a service member killed in action. MAP offers grants to VFW Posts and Auxiliaries to support involvement in troop support functions. These grants are to be used to assist in conducting the event. The grant application can be found on the VFW National website.

*Operation Uplink<sup>TM</sup>* provides active-duty troops and hospitalized veterans with connection to their families and friends. These connections include international and domestic phone cards and Free Call days, one per month, where troops can call home – at no charge – from Internet cafes in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kuwait. These much-needed phone calls provide an important personal contact with loved ones. Requests, including unit designation, head count, and point of contact, are submitted through the Department Chairman.

Through Unmet Needs, the VFW provides grants of up to \$2,500 to eligible service members and their families facing a hardship due to deployment or military service. Since its inception in June 2004, this program has provided over \$1.5 million of support to qualified recipients. With funding from corporate sponsors and individual donations, the VFW Foundation administers and promotes the Unmet Needs program. These grants are available to all five branches of service as well as members of the reserves and National Guard. Eligibility criteria, expenses eligible for consideration of payment and the application itself can all be found on the VFW website.

**In order to ensure the VFW can designate these funds where they are needed most, donations to help support all three of these organizations should be on one check earmarked for National Military Services (not to the individual program). These checks should be sent directly to National Auxiliary Headquarters.**

Information, applications and other documents for all three National Military Services programs can be found at [www.vfwdepartmentresources.org](http://www.vfwdepartmentresources.org) .

### **LADIES AUXILIARY CONTINUING EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP**

Support to members and their family is a key objective of the Ladies Auxiliary. The Continuing Education Scholarship – which is not the Marie Klugow Scholarship (see Youth Activities) – provides educational support to us as members. It is available to members, their spouse or children 18 years and older to pursue a college degree or technical trade.

One \$1000 scholarship is awarded to a candidate in each of the four Ladies Auxiliary VFW Conferences. The qualifying member must have been a member for at least one year prior to the application being submitted. There is a revised one-page application form available on both the Department and National websites. The completed application must be received at National Headquarters by **February 15, 2010**.

### **VFW NATIONAL HOME FOR CHILDREN**

The VFW National Home for Children, located on 629 acres in Eaton Rapids, Michigan, is a complete community of homes, office and service buildings, and recreational areas. It provides a supportive, nurturing environment for VFW and Ladies Auxiliary family members and has also been extended to families of active-duty military who are unable to provide adequate care through the approved military family plan. It encompasses a number of different programs to assist families in the best way possible. Information on programs, eligibility requirements, and the referral process can be found on the website ([www.vfwnationalhome.com](http://www.vfwnationalhome.com) ).

The VFW National Home stands as a tribute to the VFW and Ladies Auxiliary members who have supported and continue to support the Home today through contributions. The Home receives no government funding so our continued contributions are critical. The Ladies Auxiliary promotes funding through the *Health & Happiness / Christmas Cheer Fund* with a minimum donation of 10 cents per member based on the Auxiliary June 30 membership quota. Other methods of giving include *Campbell's Labels for Education Program*, the new *Online Giving Option*, *Tribute Giving*, and *Life Membership*. Information on these and other funding options can be found on the website.

Our commitment to the mission of the National Home continues to be to provide opportunities for growth and development for children, youth, and families of members of the VFW and Ladies Auxiliary, while serving as a living memorial to all veterans.

## **BUDDY POPPY**

The Buddy Poppy has been an integral part of the VFW community since 1922. It is the official memorial flower, representing the blood, shed by American Service members and reiterating that their sacrifices will not be forgotten. Poppies are assembled by disabled Veterans in VA Hospitals, dormiciliaries, and State Veterans Home. The proceeds from a Buddy Poppy distribution are placed in a Relief Fund to be used solely for Veterans' benefits or the well-being of their needy dependents and the orphans of Veterans. The Ladies Auxiliary Booklet of Instructions lists all accepted expenditures from the Relief Fund.

Buddy Poppy Distributions are scheduled around Memorial Day and Veterans Day. As of 2009, March 3<sup>rd</sup> was deemed the "All American Star Spangled Bonus Day" in recognition of the anniversary of VFW's success in sealing "The Star Spangled Banner" as the national anthem. It is now the third official day for a Buddy Poppy Campaign. Campaigns need careful planning and a lot of enthusiasm. Finding & scheduling the right volunteers, obtaining permissions if needed, and publicizing the event are all pieces of a successful campaign. The *It's About Service – How to Have a Successful Program Year 2009 – 2010 Programs Guide* has tips for a successful campaign as well as contest details. It is available on CD or on [www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org),

In addition to distributions, Buddy Poppies can be used in a number of different ways, including corsages, centerpieces, and the Buddy Poppy Display Contest. Remember to use at least one poppy in its original form for any decorations or contests. Be creative and generous in your use of Buddy Poppies.

### **CALIFORNIA VFW SERVICE DEPARTMENT DEPARTMENT PRESIDENT'S SPECIAL PROJECT**

In addition to our four National focus areas, Veterans Service is our Department President's Special Project. We need to actively support our Service Officers through both our donations and our efforts. Our Veterans and their dependents are entitled to enroll in the VA Healthcare System. The VFW Service Officer's job is to provide assistance with eligibility and to help with navigation through the VA system. A Service Officer can make the difference in what benefits and services are available to the Veteran and their spouse in the VA Healthcare System. Their services are available free of charge to any honorably discharged Veteran and they are a Veteran's best advocate.

We can assist the Service Officers in a number of ways. Our contributions to the Department Service Officers' Fund provide much needed monetary assistance. The Service Officers offer training for volunteers who then work a few hours a week assisting Veterans in completing the initial enrollment applications. Any of us can volunteer for this. We can also organize meetings involving the entire community to allow the Service Officers to share their wealth of information with this broader audience.

## AWARDS

### NATIONAL AWARDS

- Citation to Auxiliary, District, Department, or Junior Girls Unit that donates \$100 or more to National Military Services (one time donation)
- Citation to Auxiliary that contributes 25 cents or more per member to the Health & Happiness / Christmas Cheer Fund

### DEPARTMENT AWARDS

#### Plaques

- District Chairman with the best overall promotion and participation in all areas of Veterans & Family Support Program
- Auxiliary Chairman with the best overall promotion and participation in all areas of Veterans & Family Support Program

#### Legacy Awards

This is the inaugural year for our new Legacy Awards which celebrate the successes of our Past Department Presidents. These awards recognize the Auxiliary Chairman with the best overall promotion and participation in the specific program. In Veterans & Family Support, a citation will be awarded to the Outstanding Auxiliary Chairman in each of the following categories:

- Past Department President Reta Butler - Veterans and Family Support Legacy Award
- Past Department President Stephanie Martin - Military Assistance Program Legacy Award
- Past Department President Sherl Ann Daverio - Operation Uplink Legacy Award
- Past Department President Phyllis Whitley - Unmet Needs Legacy Award
- Past Department President Emma T. Lopez - Adopt A Unit Legacy Award
- Past Department President Gwendolyn Rankin - Veterans Service Legacy Award
- Past Department President Mary Bellon - Buddy Poppy Legacy Award
- Past Department President Verna Caywood - VFW National Home Legacy Award
- Past Department President Darlene Kidd - Youth Continuing Education Scholarship Legacy Award
- Past Department President Jean Anderson, California VFW Service Dept. Legacy Award

#### Citations

- 1st, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> by division, in overall Veterans & Family Support program efforts
- Auxiliary with Best Fundraising effort for National Military Services
- Auxiliaries donating at least \$50, in addition to their Health & Happiness / Christmas Cheer quota, to National Home
- Auxiliary with the Best Use of Buddy Poppies

- Auxiliaries with one or more Continuing Education Scholarship entries submitted by members
- Auxiliaries donating at least \$50 to the Department Service Officer fund
- Auxiliaries actively supporting Service Officer through programs and / or volunteer hours
- District Chairman with the best overall promotion and participation in Veterans Service / Department President's Special Project
- Auxiliary donations of \$50.00, or more, sent to the Ladies Auxiliary VFW, Department of California, and earmarked for the California VFW Service Department will receive a special certificate of appreciation for their generosity.

In all reporting, please describe the project itself and include how much money was spent on the project, as well as the time and mileage of persons who helped. Please also provide the total number of Buddy Poppies used in each project and the total number of Campbell's Labels that were sent to the VFW National Home. **Please** ensure that projects are reported separately for each of the five categories.

Don't hesitate to contact me with questions about any of these programs.

Marilyn Peck

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