

Commander's Message



State Commander Geoffrey D Lyster
US Navy, Post 9835

Greetings. The Department of Virginia has had a very busy and prominent quarter. To begin with we managed to achieve 100 percent membership earlier this month. That marks the ninth consecutive year that the Department of Virginia has earned All-American status. I would like to thank our Membership Team, our outstanding recruiters, and all of our members – old and new. We are proud to be a growth organization supporting our veterans. The following is a recap of our Department activities this past quarter.

On February 1st, we celebrated the 100th Anniversary of the Department of Virginia in Mechanicsville, VA. We had a stirring ceremony and celebration, as Past CIC Hal Roesch presented the Department with a *Centennial Certificate* and read a letter from Commander-In-Chief (CIC) Tim Borland. Also, on display was our re-framed, historic, antique charter that reads *February 1, 1923*. This was the first of seven Centennial Celebrations to be held across the Department this year. Every member who attends one of our Centennials will receive a beautiful limited-edition VFW Virginia Centennial Coin and all posts in attendance will receive their Post Centennial Medallion.

We participated in several Yellow Ribbon events in February, in

which we greet veterans who are returning from deployment. The last one was in Williamsburg where we recruited 13 new members to the VFW.

The whole month of February we were very active on Capitol Hill-Richmond working hard on gaming issues and to safeguard the rights of our veterans. While we were there lobbying, we were honored on February 15th in the Hall of Delegates as our legislators read a resolution “to honor the members, past and present, on the occasion of our 100th Anniversary.”

As part of our continuing effort to provide superior service to veterans we instituted two brand-new VFW Posts. Welcome Post 12217, Holland (instituted on February 25 by yours truly) and Post 12218, Haymarket instituted on March 11th by Instituting Officer Ken Wiseman and special guest speaker Hal Roesch. Adding new posts in strategic areas helps the VFW to accomplish our core mission.

On March 3rd a Dept. of Virginia Life Member received the Congressional Medal of Honor (CMOH). COL Paris Davis, a Vietnam veteran and Life Member of VFW Post 7916 in Woodbridge, VA, received the CMOH at the White House after nearly 60 years. He was honored at a White House ceremony as the President hung the blue ribbon around his neck.

On March 4th we held a Centennial Celebration for our northern comrades at VFW Post 1503, Dale City – the World’s Largest VFW Post. We had distinguished visitors including CIC Tim Borland, National SVC Duane Sarmiento, National JVC Al “The Real Deal” Lipphardt, Adjutant General Dan West and Quartermaster General Marc Garduno. We heard inspiring speeches in a packed ballroom and afterwards had a great dinner thanks to our Centennial sponsors.

On March 6th the 76th National “Parade of Winners” was held in Crystal City, VA. The VFW proudly presented more than \$171,000 in scholarships and awards as it named the national winners of its 2023 Voice of Democracy and Patriot’s Pen youth scholarship competitions. We were very proud to host this event in our Commonwealth.

On March 8th the National Legislative Conference was in town staying in Crystal City as they prepped for our CIC’s testimony. The Department of Virginia delegation was there, in a standing-room only packed chamber in the Cannon House Office Building. CIC Tim Borland delivered his message of “Every Veteran Counts” before the 118th Congress in a special joint hearing of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans’ Affairs

This past quarter your VFW marched in several parades performing Color Guard duties including: the George Washington Parade (Alexandria); the *Ballyshanners* St. Patrick’s Parade (Alexandria) and the Ocean View St. Patrick’s Day Parade

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From the Editor's desk

I am excited to continue as your Newspaper editor for another great year. Please keep the Department of Virginia VFW informed of all your accomplishments by submitting your articles and pictures to me, for the Virginia Veterans Newspaper.



Randy Coker

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www.vfwva.org.

Articles may be submitted by email to:
news@vfwva.org or rwcocker1@gmail.com

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

Note: Deadline for the next newspaper is:

July 24, 2023

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(Norfolk). We are all looking forward to Memorial Day and Independence Day.

On March 31st we held an official dinner with the Department of Pennsylvania State Commander Henry Manella and over 40 comrades from the Keystone State who were in town visiting the Nation's Capital and staying in Arlington. The Arlington Post threw them a great dinner party and we all showed them uncommon hospitality.

Events on the horizon:

We are currently working hard on preparations for our 100th State Convention to be held June 1-4, 2023 in Portsmouth, VA. Of particular note, we will be holding our Joint Awards Ceremony on Thursday evening, a Commander's Club Luncheon on Friday, and a Commander's/President's Reception & Centennial Celebration on Saturday night, June 3rd. The latter is expected to be one of the biggest events of the year! This free event will include a buffet dinner, entertainment, free Centennial Coins, door prizes and many special guests. The theme for this event is an "All-American Celebration" and the dress is "Western Wear." We hope to see you there.

Geoffrey Lyster
State Commander

VFW Post 2216 awarded Proclamation by City Mayor



At their December 2022 meeting, VFW Post 2216 was awarded a Proclamation by then Mayor Andrea Oakes for their contributions both locally and nationally, totaling almost \$450,000 from 2014 to 2021. In 2022 alone, a total of \$58,875 in monetary contributions were made locally and nationally. A partial list of charities or non-profits they contribute to are: VFW Unmet Needs Program, VFW Widows and Children's Home, Habitat for Humanity, Wounded Warrior Project, Project Healing Waters, Salvation

Army, local Food Banks, American Red Cross and many more. Since its charter in 1931, VFW Post 2216 has made a priority of staying in touch with its community and Veterans and families, while also providing an Honor Guard for graveside burial services. VFW Post 2216 holds various community events throughout the year, such as their Veterans Day open house, which provides food and refreshments as well as a 50/50 drawing, raffles and door prizes, all free to veterans and their families, as well as the public.

Post 2216 in Staunton, Va. replaces Veteran's scooter



In October 2022, VFW Post 2216 was made aware of a veteran in our community who was in need of help. The veteran's electric scooter had stopped working in August, and he hadn't been able to leave his house or visit family. At our November meeting, the members voted to repair the electric scooter. Commander Scott Martin made arrangements to meet a repairman who provided us with an estimate to completely repair the veteran's scooter. The chair needed a new wiring harness,

two batteries and a new key. The scooter was repaired within a week and Rick was finally able to get out of his house and spend Christmas with his family. Rick said to me as I was getting ready to leave, that this was going to be the best Christmas he's had in a long time.

VFW Post 2216 remains diligent in support of our veterans and their families.

Honoring Gene Chavis for 35 years of VFW service

Gene has served as state convention chair since 2004



On Sunday April 16th we held a celebration at Post 2216 honoring a true American. Eugene Chavis, of Verona, served in the Air Force for 20 years, with two tours in Vietnam, and then the VFW for 35 years. VFW dignitaries attended, including, District, State and National levels to honor him, as well as an Augusta County teacher. Eugene is at 1st row center with his great granddaughter.

Raymond Carrier
Senior Vice Commander
Verona Post 10826

District 4 VFW Academic Awards

Article and photos by

Greg Eanes, Senior Vice Commander

Virginia's 'Fighting Fourth' District held its academic programs awards ceremony on February 11, 2023, just before the district meeting at Amelia VFW Post 8759. District Academic Awards Chair Fred Hill served as master of ceremonies and presenter during the 11 a.m. event. The pictures tell the stories.



VOICE OF DEMOCRACY WINNERS – Jasmine E. Palmer (left), a 10th grader at Randolph Henry High School, sponsored by Charlotte County Post 8902 in Drake's Branch, was the first place recipient for Voice of Democracy. Sadie Henshaw (right) an 11th grader from the Kenston Forest School in Blackstone, sponsored by Gold Star Memorial VFW Post 7819 in Crewe, was the third place winner for the same contest. Second place recipient Sydney McDowell of Farmville was absent.



PATRIOT'S PEN WINNERS - Elora Courtney Walker, eighth grade, sponsored by Buckingham Post 8446, was the first place winner for Patriot's Pen. Nicholas Wright, eighth grade, sponsored by South Hill Post 7166, was the third place winner.

District 4 VFW Academic Awards continued Teachers of the Year



Elementary category, First Place, Leanne Mull, sponsored by Clarksville Post 8163



Elementary category, Second Place Mark Roncinske, sponsored by Lunenburg Post 9954



Middle School First Place, Camela (Cam) Williams of Kenston Forest School, sponsored by Gold Star Memorial Post 7918 in Crewe.



Middle School Second Place, Jaime Beatty, sponsored by South Hill Post 7166

District 4 VFW Academic Awards (continued) Teachers of the Year



Middle School Third Place, Nathan Shortridge, sponsored by Lunenburg Post 9954



High School First Place, Chris Anderson, of Randolph-Henry High School, sponsored by Drake's Branch Post 8902



High School Second Place, Casey Davis, sponsored by Buckingham Post 8446.



High School Third Place, Derek Burke, sponsored by Lunenburg Post 9954

'Fighting Fourth' Posts on Way to All-American

Article and photos by
Greg Eanes, Senior Vice Commander

The 'Fighting Fourth' District Va. VFW held its annual academic award recognitions during its most recent meeting February, 11 at the Amelia VFW. District Coordinator Fred Hill said teachers "are there all the time serving our children. Our teachers are our unsung heroes."

All honorees in attendance were effusive.

Camela (Cam) Williams, first place Middle School Teacher of the Year remarked that she felt "humbled and honored to be recognized by a group of people I think so highly of." Williams has for several years actively promoted the Patriot's Pen and Voice of Democracy programs at Kenston Forest School in Blackstone and has forwarded over 450 to 500 entries over the years.

Joe Baldwin

Also recognized was Joe Baldwin of Farmville, the only remaining World War II veteran on the District Committee, who received a standing ovation from his VFW comrades. Baldwin is retired Navy and was in Tokyo Bay when the Japanese signed the "instruments of surrender" before Douglas MacArthur and other senior allied military personnel.

Membership

Recruiting Chair Tommy Hines reported the district had 35 new members, four reinstated and 13 new Life members. It was reported the district was only 31 members short of 100% and could very well make District All-American if the numbers come in and donation requirement is met. The district approved a \$100 donation to the National Veterans and Military Support (VMS) fund to meet that need.

State and National Contests

It was reported that, except for meeting membership, Farmville Post 7059 and South Hill Post 7166 had already met requirements for All-State. Additionally, two Posts, Amelia 8759 and Charlotte County/Drakes Branch Post 8902 have met all the requirements for All-American. Four other Posts, Farmville 7059, South Hill 7166, Crewe 7819 and Clarksville 8163 are in striking distance of meeting membership requirements for All-American and should achieve those goals before the State Convention in June. If all six posts make All-American, that would be 50% of the district.



State Inspector Charles Bush addresses a joint session of the 4th District VFW and Auxiliary in Amelia on February 11. Bush said the 4th District's report "was the best report I've ever seen from a District". On the left is 4th District Commander Gus Villalobos, a retired Navy veteran, and on the right is 4th District Auxiliary President Pat Baldwin, a Navy veteran.

Continued on next page

Inspector Present

VFW State Inspector Charles Bush was present and said the 4th District report “was the cleanest I’ve ever seen” in commitments met. He said, “it was the best report I’ve ever seen from a district.” He told District Officers and attendees to “take care of veterans, take care of your community, and take care of our law enforcement. Let’s keep doing what we do and thank you for what you do.”

He also commended and recognized the following District 4 Posts for being ‘inspection ready’: Post 7059, 7166, 8166, 8466, 8902, 9954 and 12200. He noted all Posts met reporting requirements for the first and second half of the year and four Posts (7897 Blackstone, 8759 Amelia, 9855 Appomattox and 12200 Emporia) had already exceeded 100%. He also awarded pins for the ‘one member’ recruiting push.



RECRUITING RECOGNITION - State Inspector Charles Bush (center) recognized 4th District Commander Gus Villalobos (left) and Past Department Commander Tom Hines, a top recruiter, for their recruiting and retention efforts. (Photo by Greg Eanes)



STANDING OVATION FOR JOE BALDWIN – Joe Baldwin, the only remaining World War II veteran on the VFW 4th District staff received a standing ovation from his VFW comrades. Baldwin is retired Navy and was in Tokyo Bay when the Japanese signed the “instruments of surrender” before Douglas MacArthur and other senior allied military personnel. (Photo by Greg Eanes)

The following pictures were from lobbying the State Legislature about charitable gaming and also recognizing us for our Centennial and 100 years of service to Virginia's veterans during a session of the House of Delegates



Meeting with Senator Bryce Reeves (center)



Geoffrey Lyster
Mitch Rubenstein
Charles Bush



With Speaker of the House of Delegates Todd Gilbert



The VFW team was recognized at the House of Delegates session

General Louis B (Chesty) Puller Post 1503 in Dale City, hosts a ceremony commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War.

Post Commander Bernie Carter addresses the membership during the 50th Anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War.

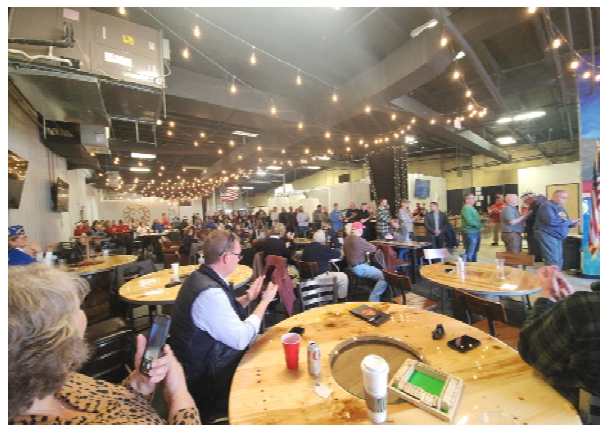


A large number of Comrades and Auxiliary attended the ceremony.



A few Vietnam Veterans pictured with the Post Commander.

District 8 gets a new Post — Western Prince William County Post 12218



BEN GUINAN



RICK RASKIN

State Commander Geoff Lyster



BEN GUINAN

Past Commander in Chief Hal Roesch, National Council member and Past State Commander Ken Wiseman and State Commander Geoff Lyster welcome the Post members



RICK RASKIN

The large contingent of Post members take the oath of obligation. The Post was instituted with a record 62 members



ROSANNE SKINNER WORRELL

L-R: Mitch Rubenstein, Doug Hoffman, Mark Maggio, Gary Adams and Rick Raskin

Home and Abroad Writing Project

Farmville VFW member Dr. Michael Lund hosted an exhibit of books published by the Home and Abroad project recently at the Longwood University Greenwood Library. A Vietnam veteran, Dr. Lund encourages other veterans to write their stories. He provides assistance with the writing process, editing and eventual publication of their work. A series of such presentations will be offered in area libraries and announced on the VFW Post 7059 Facebook Page. Farmville post members Greg Winston, Dean Lord and Fred Hill have authored books for the program and a book of remembrances for deceased VFW comrade Tom Hicks. During a recent meeting Hill briefly described his memoir. The program is open to all area veterans. Those needing help telling their story can visit Dr. Lund's webpage at <https://homeandabroadva.com>. Pictured, from left to right, are Dr. Lund, Commander Lord, author of 'I Always Wanted to Be an Artist;', Deanna Schwartz, author of 'I Couldn't Save My Boy' and Fred Hill, author of 'The Man Behind the Mask: Grenada and other Ports of Call'. (VFW Photo)



Farmville VFW Recognizes Leader



Farmville VFW Post 7059 took time at a recent meeting to recognize a 'Post Patriarch' Joe Baldwin of Farmville. A retired Naval veteran Joe served in WWII and was present in Tokyo Bay when Japan surrendered. He was still an active-duty member during Korea and Vietnam. He has been a member of the Thomas Hardy Graham Post 7059 in Farmville Virginia for 50 years. During his tenure in Post 7059 Joe has served as Quartermaster, Post Commander and is currently Judge Advocate. Presenting Joe with the plaque is current Commander Dean Lord. Past Commanders standing for the presentation pictured from left to right are current Quartermaster Fred Hill, Earl Swink, and Mike Perutelli. (Contributed Photo)



PHOTO FROM FACEBOOK

Post 7589, District 8 and State Voice of Democracy winner awarded \$1000 scholarship in VFW national competition

Congratulations! Virginia's 1st place winner won an additional \$1,000 at the national level for his scholarship! L-R: State Commander Geoff Lyster, VOD Winner John McGraw and State Auxiliary President Fred Jennings.

Vietnam Veterans Still Serving the Community

The 4th District Veterans of Foreign Wars at its February, 11 meeting took an opportunity to recognize the Vietnam Veterans present in a preliminary 'thank you' prior to March 29 which is the National Vietnam War Veterans Day. These officers are still serving their community nearly 50 years after the war ended.



Pictured, from left to right, are Luther Wooten Commander Post 8759 in Amelia, John Sedgwick Service Officer Post 8446 in Buckingham, Dean Lord Commander Post 7059 in Farmville (also District 4 Chief of Staff), John Hill, Quartermaster/Adjutant Post 7897 in Blackstone. Back row - Michael Whitaker Judge Advocate Post 8759 in Amelia, Victor Moss Commander Post 8446 in Buckingham (also District 4 Surgeon), Frank Booker Senior Vice Commander Post 8759 in Amelia, Robert Walker Chaplain District 4 (also Quartermaster Post 9855 in Appomattox), Tommy Hines Past State Commander and Adjutant Post 12200 in Emporia, Mearl Smith Senior Vice Commander Post 5313 in Nottoway and Ronald Wilson Quartermaster Post 8163 in Clarksville. (Photo By Greg Eanes)



Alexandria Post 609 Conducted a 50th Anniversary commemoration of the end of the Vietnam War



Virginia VFW Legislative Report

After Action Report

March 2023 (Lynch/Levitt)

We were honored to have with us our National Council Member Ken Wiseman, Virginia VFW State Commander Geoff Lyster, Virginia VFW Auxiliary President Fred Jennings and State Chaplain Kelli Levitt, District 10 Commander Ben Guinan, and State Legislative Committee Chair Monti Zimmerman for several meetings with our Congressional Staff. We also had the honor of having a member of the SVA, Ms. Meghan Fitzgerald with us for a meeting.

We met with the following legislators:

Rep. Rob Wittman (VA-01), Mr. Aaron Reep, Legislative Fellow
Rep. Jenn Kiggans (VA-02) – Staff
Rep. Bobby Scott (VA-03) Ms. Natalie Valentine, Legislative Director
Rep. Bob Good, (VA-05) Mr. Pete Holland, Legislative Director
Rep. Ben Cline, (VA-06), Mr. Matt Miller, Chief of Staff
Rep. Abigail Spanberger (VA-07), Ms. Rebecca Eichman, Legislative Director
Rep. Don Beyer (VA-08), Ms. Grace Brigtbill, Legislative Director
Rep. Morgan Griffith (VA-09), Mr. Michael Piquero, Legislative Assistant
Rep. Jennifer Wexton (VA-10), Ms. Jooeun Kim, Legislative Director
Rep. Gerry Connolley (VA-11), Mr. Matthew McLaughlin, Legislative Director
Senator Tim Kaine, Mr. Ausan Aleryani and Ms. Kristin Koch, Legislative Fellow

We were unable to meet with anyone from Senator Warner's office, but we did leave VFW information and Priority Goals with his staff.

Location: Congressional Offices for all House Members, and Virtual with Senator Kaine's staff.

Main Issues discussed: VFW Priority Goals and upcoming legislation.



Jill Lynch, Ben Guinan, Fred Jennings, Monti Zimmerman and Tom Levitt



Pictured from left to right are, District 10 chaplain, Kelli Levitt, District 10 Commander, Ben Guinan, Matt Miller Chief of Staff for Representative Ben Cline, State Legislative Committee Chair Monti Zimmerman, National Council Member Ken Wiseman, and National Legislative committee members Jill Lynch and Tom Levitt



Pictured from left to right are, Department of Virginia Commander Geoff Lyster, Jill Lynch, representative from Jen Kiggans' office and Monti Zimmerman.



Matt Miller in Representative Cline's office joined as a VFW Life Member



Visiting with Mr. Matthew McLaughlin in Representative Connelly's office



At the Commander in Chief's Testimony -Department Commander Geoff Lyster, National Council Member Ken Wiseman and National Legislative Committee Members Jill Lynch and Tom Levitt



With Mr. Aaron Reep in Representative Wittman's office. Mr. Reep is a Legislative Fellow – USMC Active Duty



With Joeun Kim, Legislative Director for Jennifer Wexton



VFW Student Veterans Association fellow Ms. Meghan Fitzgerald with Abigail Spanberger and the VFW delegation



At Representative Scott's Office with Natalie Valentine, Legislative Director



Meeting with Legislative Director Joeun Kim in Jennifer Wexton's office



At Senator Warner's Office – Ben Guinan, Monti Zimmerman, Jill Lynch, Fred Jennings and Tom Levitt