



Department of Georgia Veterans of Foreign Wars Monthly E-Bulletin December 2008



Volume 2, Issue 10

1. **OFFICIAL.** The Monthly E-Bulletin is an OFFICIAL communications device of the Department of Georgia Veterans of Foreign Wars and is distributed "For the Commander/By Direction". The bulletin is intended to provide more timely information to the field than would be provided by the periodic Commanders' mail out or Quarterly Department newspaper. Target date for each issue is between the 25th day of the title month and the 15th day of the following month. The E-Bulletin will be distributed in the Adobe and Microsoft Word formats. Adobe Reader is available free on the Internet.
2. **SUBSCRIPTION.** The bulletin is intended for Department Council of Administration members and Commanders and Quartermasters at all levels but any member of the VFW or LAVFW may request distribution by providing an e-mail address with identity and post number to the Headquarters by email (gahq@gavfw.org) with the subject line: "Subscription to Monthly E-Bulletin".
3. **GEORGIA WAR VETERANS HOME DOMICILIARY SUSPENSION FINAL.** To comply with statewide budget reduction directives, the Georgia Department of Veterans Service reviewed several alternatives for efficacy and viability. The action that would prove the most beneficial yet adversely affect the fewest veterans was to suspend domiciliary care in Milledgeville. Each of the individuals in domiciliary care when this decision was made was satisfactorily placed before the deadline of November 30, 2008. No veteran became homeless as a result of this suspension of operations. The Georgia Department of Veterans Service is to be lauded for their diligence – from the Commissioner, the Deputy Commissioners, the Health Contracting and Facilities Director to all of the area Service Officers and their staffs. They got it done and they got it done right!
4. **MID-WINTER CONFERENCE.** The Department of Georgia Mid-Winter Conference will be February 13-15, 2009. **NOTE: The Friday Council meeting will start at 7:30 PM** rather than the usual start at 7:00 PM, this meeting only. It is at the Mid-Winter Conference that we honor our VOD, Patriot's Pen, and Teacher Citizenship Education at the Awards Banquet in their honor. We will also honor our Public Safety winners (law enforcement, EMT, and firefighter). The banquet tickets are available at \$40 and may be obtained by contacting Judy at the Headquarters (478-474-3737). A special room rate (\$72) is available but you must contact the hotel directly at 478-476-1461 and request "In House Reservations" and ask for the VFW meeting rate. Do not call Ramada's 1-800-number. If you have not done so, call Judy to reserve your banquet tickets.
5. **TRICARE.** The Veterans of Foreign Wars stance is firm and unequivocal – The VFW opposes any and all proposed increases in TRICARE fees regardless of the form taken. All members should note that the opposition to fee increases in TRICARE is a Priority (Legislative) Goal for 2009. As such, you can feel free (and are encouraged) to officially visit the local offices of our Congressmen and Senators and represent the position of the VFW as firmly opposing any increases in TRICARE fees. Use the "five B's" – Be bright, Be polite, Be brief, Be firm, Be gone. A *short* visit from three or four articulate Post members wearing their official VFW caps (clean and devoid of excess pins) is far more effective than a dozen e-mails or letters. As Tip O'Neil said: "All politics is local." A visit to the local office ensures that your Representatives-in-Congress and Senators put local faces on the issues on which they vote.
6. **VOICE OF DEMOCRACY AND PATRIOT'S PEN THEMES 2009-2010 ANNOUNCED.** The Voice of Democracy theme for the 2009-2010 will be "Does America still have heroes?" The theme for the 2009-2010 Patriot's Pen contest will be "When is the right time to honor our heroes?" Please destroy all unused documents and papers listing the themes from previous years so that there is no confusion as we look toward the 2009-2010 contest year. Start planning now to get the program to the teachers. Deadline for all entries to be at National Headquarters in the 2009-2010 Year will be November 1, 2009.
7. **A BETTER WAY TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE VFW PROGRAMS.** Do you love the VFW's Program but dislike the mail? National now has a new idea – you make the contribution automatically on an annual, quarterly, or monthly basis. You tell the Development Department the amount and frequency and authorize

either a debit of your checking account or a charge on your credit card. Saves all the mailings, keeps your mailbox free of all the mail, and still makes your valuable and appreciated contribution on terms that you decide. We have the forms in the Headquarters and for information or a form, contact Judy or Al at the State Headquarters.

8. **PERSISTENT DEPARTMENT ISSUES.** The Department continues to receive requests to review procedures and activities in Posts across the Department. When there is a *prima facie* reason to believe that there is or may be a problem, a fact finding team is usually sent to conduct a review of the Post. The reviews conducted are not limited to the original *prima facie* reason for which the team was requested. Most disconcerting to the Fraternal review Teams is to find that the Post does not have even an almost current edition of the National By-Laws, Manual of Procedure, and Ritual of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. When “canteen” or “club room” issues are involved, it is bewildering to find that there is no copy of the Commander’s Handbook. The Commander’s Handbook each year reprints the current *Rules for the Operations of Club Rooms, Canteens and Activities in the State of Georgia* that regulate how canteens and club rooms are to be governed and operated by VFW Posts in Georgia. It is a given that a Post that strays from the Ritual in the conduct of the Post Meeting will have other problems; the more it strays, the more problems.
9. **STATE INSPECTIONS.** The National By-Laws require that the State Inspector, the Assistant State Inspector, or a Deputy Inspector inspect each Post for compliance at least annually. One of the primary purposes of the Post Inspection is to highlight problems that may affect the ability to safeguard the assets of the Post’s Membership. When the Post Inspection form indicates that everything is ship shape with the Post, and a Fraternal Review Team or a Trusteeship is established and discovers that the Quartermaster does not use the VFW System of Records and Accounts (or approved variant usually an automated one), the Post is not incorporated, or the Post does not have By-Laws approved by the Department Commander and National Commander-in-Chief, or that the House/Canteen Committee is not elected/appointed in the prescribed manner – the validity of the Inspection on file becomes immediately suspect along with the others completed by that Inspector. Those accomplishing inspections must see and touch what they are reporting on – no Articles of Incorporation (approved by Department and National) – not incorporated; no approved By-Laws on file – no by-laws; no ledger – not complying with VFW System of Records and Accounts. Trust but verify.
10. **PODIUM EDITION, NATIONAL BY-LAWS, MANUAL OF PROCEDURE, AND RITUAL.** There have been several major changes in the National By-Laws and Manual of Procedure from 2007-2008 and 2008-2009. Many of the changes were structural in nature: the By-Laws contain the law or rule and the Manual of Procedure contains the particulars or guidance. At the 2008-2009 National Convention, there were significant changes in how we do business specifically inclusion of the District and District Commander in the Chain of Command. Ignorance of the requirement is not a defense or argument for an exception. The edition is available in both the traditional podium edition and a compact disk (CD) edition.
11. **LEGACY LIFE MEMBERSHIP.** Got a hard-working and long-time dedicated member that never puts him/herself first? Have you considered buying them a Legacy Life Membership? The VFW’s Legacy Life Membership provides an opportunity for Life Members to leave their mark on the nation’s largest combat veterans’ organization. Available only to current Life Members, the new Legacy Life Membership not only offers expanded and exclusive benefits, but also helps ensure that the VFW’s good work will continue for generations to come. Legacy Life Members can select from three membership categories: Gold, Silver or Bronze. Each offers a selection of exclusive benefits. The cost is a one-time \$400 Bronze, \$800 Silver, and \$1200 Gold. You can purchase in \$400 increments so that if you decided to buy a Bronze this year and wanted to give Silver next year, it is just \$400 more and the same would apply to going Gold the following year. Once activated, the membership will endow additional income - made in the Legacy’s name - that will provide a stable financial foundation for both the Legacy’s Post and the VFW. Here are some of the benefits of becoming a Legacy Life Member:
 - a. A one-time (or annual) endowment will be made in the Legacy’s name to the VFW,
 - b. A personally engraved Legacy Life Membership card,
 - c. An official Legacy Life Membership certificate,
 - d. A Legacy Life Membership lapel pin,
 - e. Recognition at the Memorial Building kiosk in Washington D.C.,
 - f. Recognition at the VFW National Headquarters Museum,
 - g. Significant discounts on orders from VFW Emblem and Supply, and
 - h. Special Recognition of Legacy Life Members at State-level meetings and banquets.

12. RETENTION OF CONTINUOUS MEMBERS 2008-2009. Key to Department Membership is the ability to retain the Continuous members that we had last year. The best time to retain them is now before they slip completely from our influence. The State Commander's emphasis through January 31, 2009 is to retain what we have and then, in the remaining months to recruit New and Reinstated to replaced those that were not retained and those who have departed our midst since last year. Currently, the Department has retained less than 4,000 of the 9,098 Continuous members from last year. RETENTION – not recruiting, is key to membership growth for the Department. Current District retention figures by District are as follows: 1st District – 57.86%, 2nd District – 49.33%, 3rd District – 49.33%, 4th District – 57.61%, 5th District – 53.73%, 6th District – 50.11%, 7th District – 64.45%, 8th District – 62.62%, 9th District – 70.38%, 10th District – 57.54, 11th District – 32.08%, 12th District – 57.80%. Discounting the number of members that died during 2007-2008, as of today, if the Department retained all of our Continuous members, we would be at 101.81% in membership. Given those numbers achieving membership growth to 29,584 would be significantly easier. Please contact everyone about renewing; it is much easier to get a member whose name, address, and eligibility that you know than to “bet on the come” to recruit among people that may not even be eligible.
13. MEMBERSHIP STATISTICS FOR DEPARTMENT OF GEORGIA VFW. The Department's OFFICIAL memberships statistics are on the GAVFW Web Site NOT in Nationals' MEMSTATS. The Department's statistics are updated weekly through January 2009 when they will be updated at least twice each week. The end of November statistics show that the current official figures for Georgia show the District statistics are as follows (including growth goals): 1st District – 69.25%, 2nd District – 58.68%, 3rd District – 72.37%, 4th District – 68.47%, 5th District – 67.39%, 6th District – 70.87%, 7th District – 69.69%, 8th District – 75.77%, 9th District – 76.47%, 10th District – 66.91%, 11th District – 48.69%, 12th District – 67.00% and the Department stands at 69.00% of the 2008-2009 Membership Goal.
14. GIVE THE GIFT OF MEMBERSHIP. Unpaid members are no longer “members” as of December 31, 2008 – no magazine, no State VFW News. Do you know a member that has not renewed? Do you know someone that is in a financial situation that might not qualify to have dues paid through the Relief Fund? Is your Post short of funds in the General Fund that could be used for renewing members? Know an eligible warrior or former warrior that would join except for the dues requirement? Why not give the gift of membership? It is a gift that will provide the recipient with a wealth of information and access that each deserves and only membership in the VFW can provide – we've been providing it since 1899.
15. RECRUITING EXPECTATIONS. Remember that the 2008-2009 Commander's Handbook lays on “recruiting expectations” for the Department leadership from the State Officers and Committee Members through the District Commanders to Post Commanders and Quartermasters. These Recruiting Expectations are that each of the listed will personally achieve credit for: State Officers – 15 N/R, State Committee Chairmen – 10 N/R, District Commanders – 15 N/R, Certified National Recruiters – 20 N/R, Post Commanders – 10 N/R, and Post Quartermasters – 10 N/R,
16. RECRUITING VENUES. If you believe that there is a venue in your area that has not been appropriately mined for recruiting purposes (e.g., antique car shows, hunting shows, fishing expos, gun shows), please advise the Senior Vice Commander so that the venue can be examined and perhaps reserved. In most cases the department will be able to fund the booth/recruiting area. We will not be successful doing business the way that we have always done business. The Department wants to help you recruit, we will assist you in every reasonable way; we will assist you in being successful. Requests have been few.
17. TELEPHONE BANKS FOR CALLING UNPAID MEMBERS. The Department set up a “trial” program at VFW Post 2785 using a Department-funded telephone bank to call unpaid members in the 2nd District to encourage their renewal as soon as possible. This permitted contact with those that may have forgotten to renew or just delaying paying for financial reasons. Most posts have programs to pay renewal dues for those unable to afford their renewals. There is also the advantage that we will be able to also determine those who may be deceased, express sympathies, and purge from the rolls. The “roll out” was on December 8. One interesting feature, one individual was ticked off at someone at the post, a post member came on line and discussed the issue and got the renewal. If your district is interested in a similar test, contact the Department Headquarters.
18. STATE (DEPARTMENT) CERTIFIED RECRUITER SCHOOL. The Department is scheduling a State Certified Recruiter School for dates to be determined for 35 to 50 interested and recommended individuals who desire to recruit new members to the VFW. Tentative dates are: 13-15 March, 27-29 March or 3-5 April of 2009. The school 's primary instructor will be from the National Membership Department. The school will

include background and techniques instruction, practical exercises, field recruiting, and lessons learned/critique. This is a school for those interested in recruiting not for those seeking a "ticket punch". The Department will fund most if not all the expenses. Graduation will be conditional upon actual performance for the six months following graduation. Those ultimately graduating will receive appropriate distinctive Official VFW caps, nametags and certificates indicating their status as State Certified Recruiters. As soon as location is determined and details are worked out, information will be provided.

19. EASTMAN GUN SHOWS – GEORGIA. Gun shows and similar events are good venues for recruiting new members, THE Department can assist with recruiters and funding. Currently scheduled shows that the Department is aware are: Dalton – Jan 24-25, 2009 at the NW GA Trade and Convention Center; Gwinnett County – Jan 31-Feb 1, 2009 at the North Atlanta Trade Center; Macon – Feb 7-8, 2009 at the Macon Coliseum; Hampton – Feb 14-15, 2009 (conflicts Mid-Winter Conference in Macon) at the Atlanta Motor Speedway; Rome – Feb 21-22, 2009 at the Forum Civic Center; Perry – Feb 28-Mar 1, 2009 at Georgia National Fairgrounds; Gainesville – Mar 14-15, 2009 at the Georgia Mountains Center; Savannah – Mar 28-29, 2009 at the Savannah Civic Center; Marietta – Apr 18-19, 2009 at the Cobb County Civic Center; Gwinnett County – Apr 25-26, 2009. If your post or district are interested at setting up a recruiting table at these venues, please contact Al Spears at the State Headquarters.
20. NATIONAL MILITARY SERVICE. National Military Service is responsible for the management and operations of the Operation UPLINK, Military Assistance, Unmet Needs and related programs. The Chairman for National Military Services in the Department of Georgia is appointed to oversee and manage those programs in the Department. To increase the correlation between the UPLINK cards and the Department in the minds of those receiving them, the Department Commander will present the cards in coordination with the Georgia Chairman and the requestor. National will ship all Operation UPLINK cards to the Department Headquarters for presentation by the Department Commander, the Georgia Military Services Chairman, in coordination with requestor (post, district, VAVS representative).
21. COMMANDER'S SPECIAL PROJECT FUND. With the downturn in the economy, many veterans and their families are hurting economically and financially. Last year, we received an average of two calls a week requesting assistance with an electric bill, a water bill, a rent payment, or a car repair. We are receiving calls daily at the current time. We screen these calls (and callers) carefully before we even consider assistance and we never provide cash or money directly to an individual. Frequently there are several bills and we pay one and try to keep the expense to \$250 or less. The fund needs donations to be able to continue to support our veterans and their families and donations are appropriate from post relief funds. Ensure that any donation is earmarked "Commander's Special Project Fund".
22. DEPARTMENT'S OPERATION SANTA CLAUS. Every year the Department sponsors an "Operation Santa Claus" to collect toys for the families (children) of our deployed service members and of needy veterans. The generosity of Georgia VFW and LAVFW members never ceases to amaze us all. Santa Claus' primary helper (Ed Grealish) says that the efforts this year were phenomenal in both the toys collected and the donations for toys made. A thorough report will be made at the Mid-Winter Conference in Macon in February 2009. If you have any questions, please contact Santa's primary helper (PSC/Chief of Staff Ed Grealish) directly at 678-227-4314.
23. BUDDY POPPIES. Start ordering your Buddy Poppies now – do not wait. Many found they could not obtain them on time for their planned distributions in 2007-2008 when waiting too late. To qualify for All-American a Post must purchase ten Buddy Poppies per member. To qualify for All-American, all Posts within the District must submit a Buddy Poppy order.
24. PERSONAL APPEARANCE WHEN REPRESENTING POST OR DISTRICT AT PUBLIC FUNCTIONS. Recruiting of new and reinstated members will be more of a necessity than ever during the next few years if the VFW is to survive. More and more of us will be out in the public eye and drawing attention to us as member of the VFW. Just as a reminder that each of us is the public face of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States when we wear the official VFW hat and attend functions such as the unveiling of monuments, dedication ceremonies, flag raisings, and other activities in the public eye. When we are wearing the emblems of this organization, we must all strive to put the best foot forward. Please, dress and act appropriately. Do not feed the stereotype that still portrays us negatively. Do not wear the official VFW cap during any meal.

25. **CONSOLIDATED HOSPITALITY ROOM.** The consolidated hospitality room concept has received overwhelmingly favorable response from most posts/districts and attendees. The Department Headquarters has secured the booking of the largest meeting room on the Plaza level of the Ramada Plaza Hotel – the Plaza Room. After a review, we will continue for the 2008-2009 and we can continue to coordinate for the individuals to manage and work, the food, the spirits, entertainment, etc. with a charge of \$200 per district for the Fall and Mid-Winter Conferences and \$250 for the State Convention. Districts may remit their checks for each meeting or one check for the year (\$650).
26. **VFW E-MEMBERSHIP.** VFW *eMembership* online allows you to perform the following functions: renew members, change member addresses, decessate a member, request a duplicate card for a member, convert an annual member to life membership, add a new member, and transfer a member. To access VFW *eMembership*, follow these steps: 1.) Go to www.vfw.org; 2.) Scroll to the bottom of the page, click on *Quartermaster Tools* link; 3.) Click on VFW *eMembership* link in the middle of the page; and, 4.) Log in and select function.
- Automatic Payments
Members can now enroll in the Life Membership Installment Plan and set up payments to be automatically deducted from their bank account or credit card account. No more invoices and monthly mail in of payments. Members can enroll on line at eMembership or mail in the required forms. This also works for Legacy Life and annual dues. The member and not the post Quartermaster due to legal authorization and disclosure requirements must initiate the on-line transaction.
27. **VFW DEPARTMENT RESOURCES.** Visit www.vfwdepartmentresources.org – your place for the latest program information, ideas and promotional tools from the Development Department. Download ad slicks, press releases, banner ads and buttons for your department publications and/or website. Recent mailings and mailing schedules are also posted on a regular basis. While you're there, be sure to click on these icons: Promotional Tools, What's New, and Mailings. Use the Department Resources website to help strengthen your department programs. Check it out today!
28. **NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION HOTLINE AT THE VA.** Suicide is the eleventh (known) most frequent cause of death in the United States. Some studies show that suicide ranks as high as the eighth leading cause of death. There are approximately 30,000 deaths each year and someone dies by suicide every 16 minutes. The demographics of suicide mean that it is an issue with which we as veterans and veteran's advocates must deal. Although women attempt suicide more frequently than men, men more frequently complete suicide to a staggering degree. More suicides occur in white men over 65 years of age than any other group. In recognition of this demographic propensity, the VA has established a 24-hour, seven day a week hotline: 1-800-273-8255 (TALK) to assist a veteran or anyone concerned about a veteran.
29. This bulletin may also be used to advertise items that your post may have for sale or to list items of interest to others in the Department such as your monthly fishing tournament, your annual golf tournament fundraiser, or the need for bottled water for fire fighters in your area.

Get R Done for our Veterans and Families,

H. Dwayne Epps
State Commander

Official:



Albert R. Spears
State Adjutant/Quartermaster