



**VETERANS & FAMILY SUPPORT
DORIS “DEE” IPPOLITO, CHAIRMAN
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Veterans and Family Support is the heart of our organization and a program in which every member can and should participate. We are united in our passion for this organization, and we are all here for the same purpose; to support our veterans, service members and their families.

“Soaring Into the Next Century of Service With Our Veterans and Their Families” is our focus for the coming year! We have reflected on the past 100 years of the VFW Auxiliary and now we are on to the next 100 years. This year we will be encouraging all to participate in the VFW’s National Veterans Service and the three Veterans and Military Support Programs. We are also continuing our efforts in providing Mental Health Awareness and Suicide Prevention and reducing Veteran Homelessness. We have joined with the VFW, particularly Ben Thompson of Proctor-Hopson Post, in providing Trees for Troops and sending our giant “In Lieu of Card” along with the trees, menorahs and decorations to our troops serving overseas.

Mental Health Awareness and Suicide Awareness

Many Veterans returning home do so with heavy hearts and minds. Help to raise awareness and foster community engagement by working with other organizations to change the stigma surrounding mental health, i.e., Elizabeth Dole Foundation, Give an Hour, etc. Become educated about “mindfulness”. Discover and use the **10 Steps of Mindfulness Meditation**. Contact Veterans Affairs Hospital for information on their Community Outreach/Suicide Awareness program for assistance.

At our Fall Conference, we will be working closely with the VFW to do another “Stop 22” Walk. “Stop 22” gets its name from the suicide rate among veterans that has again risen to 22 lost per day. Help “Stop that 22!” Walk with us. Create your own “Stop 22” event in your own community. Walk, sit, play baseball, or whatever activity you choose for 22 minutes. Exercise and educate your community on the resources available to help our veterans.

The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat or text. Support is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Educate all on the **Crisis Line – Call 988, press 1**.

As part of Mental Health this year, we will be focusing on the mental health of our military serving overseas by assuring that their children at home are receiving excellent childcare. New York State is the first state to provide the Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood (MCCYN-PLUS) offered by the DoD. 48,000 eligible military families are now able to choose from 15,000 state-licensed childcare providers to receive childcare assistance.

Holiday Cheer/“Trees for Troops”- Again this year, we will be working with the Department’s VFW to send trees, decorations and menorahs to our troops serving overseas. Trees are \$25.00 each. Donate on the form included in your President’s Packet. All donations are due by **November 10, 2024**.

“In Lieu of Cards”- A specially designed card will accompany trees, menorahs and decorations to troops overseas in time for the holidays. The card will be available for signatures at OTI, Fall conference. Donate \$5/member to sign the card Form in your President’s Packet. All donations are due by **November 10, 2024**.

HELPING HAND



National Veterans Service (NVS) This program helps Veterans, service members and their families obtain the benefits they deserve – at no cost. NVS provides a nationwide network of nearly 300 VFW Service Officers who help veterans and their family members navigate the Veterans Affairs system. Examples of claims and resources provided are: • Disability compensation, • Rehabilitation and educational programs, • Pension and death benefits and • Employment and training programs.

Support NVS by making a contribution on [the Department of New York Donation Report Form](#) found in our **2024-2025 Program Guidebook**.

VFW Veterans and Military Support Program (VMS) Initiated by the VFW, this program serves active-duty and recently discharged military. The three components include: Military Assistance Program (MAP), Unmet Needs and VFW “Sport Clips Help a Hero Scholarship.” Support VFW Veterans and Military Support on the **Donation Report Form** in our **2024-2025 Program Guidebook**.

Military Assistance Program (MAP) This program helps forge and nurture bonds with military units by providing financial assistance for Posts, Districts and Departments to sponsor morale-boosting send-offs, homecomings, and casual get-togethers. It offers ways to connect with troops. Posts and Auxiliaries participating in *Adopt-a-Unit* and *Family Readiness Group* events can receive assistance. MAP can cover the cost of postage for sending care packages. For guidelines to apply for MAP funds, contact the VFW Veterans & Military Support office at (816) 756-3390.

Unmet Needs Can help in a crisis ... a soldier serving overseas ... who has rent due back home ... whose family car needs a major repair ... and many more situations that the family cannot afford. Grants of up to \$1,500, payable directly to a creditor, can bridge the gap to cover these bills. To learn more visit vfw.org/assistance/financial.grants.

“Sport Clips Help a Hero Scholarship” Up to \$5,000 is awarded to qualifying veterans and service members to help them complete their educational goals, without incurring excessive student loan debt. To learn more, visit vfw.org/student-veterans-support.

***Fall District meeting** – Go to MALTA/Resources/Veterans and Family Support and complete the National Award #1. Bring your report to your Fall District Meeting. Donate to “In Lieu of Cards” and Trees for Troops. Do a “Stop 22” event and seek donations of \$1/person or more.

***Spring District meeting** - Promote VFW programs-Unmet Needs, Service Officers, Military Assistance Program, Sport Clips Scholarships.

***Fall Department Conference:**

1. **“In Lieu of Cards”** –Sign our giant card which accompanies the trees, menorahs and decorations sent overseas at holidays. For each donation of \$5.00, you will be able to sign and write a brief message to our troops. President Darlene Baker will also be bringing “The Card” with her for donations when she visits District meetings this fall.
2. **Participate in Stop 22 Walk!** -Help raise awareness of suicide prevention and mental health through your participation. Encourage all your friends to participate!
3. **Holiday Cheer/”Trees for Troops”** : Donate \$25/tree, menorah, decorations.

***Spring Department Conference:** Promote VFW programs-Unmet Needs, Service Officers, Military Assistance Program, .Sport Clips Scholarships. Donate to the programs.

DEPARTMENT AWARDS: See Program Guide p.5 End-of-Year Report due April 1st to Chairman D. Ippolito.

NATIONAL AWARDS FOR AUXILIARIES: Criteria and entry form available at vfwauxiliary.org/resources
Most outstanding activity and/or event that increases awareness of military suicide and mental health.

- Citation to every Auxiliary that hosts an activity and/or event that increases awareness of military suicide and mental health. Entry form due to Department Veterans & Family Support Chairman Dee by March 31, 2025.
- Citation and \$25.00 to one Auxiliary in each of the four Conferences with the most outstanding activity and/or event that increases awareness of military suicide and mental health. Winners announced and awards presented at 2025 National Convention.

Thank you for all your service to and for our Veterans and their families as we “Soar into the Next Century!”

Loyally, Doris “Dee” Ippolito, Veterans and Family Support Chairman 2024-2025