



## VETERANS & FAMILY SUPPORT

Kim Cavallo, Chairman

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I am proud and excited to be returning as your Veterans and Family Support Chairperson for the upcoming year! The heart of our work in the VFW Auxiliary has always been the same: to honor, support, and uplift the Veterans who have given so much to our nation. Many of us joined this organization because we wanted to give back in a meaningful way — to say thank you, to stand beside our Veterans, and to support their families who share in their sacrifices. As we begin the new year, that commitment remains at the center of everything we do. United in purpose and driven by gratitude, we continue to find new and impactful ways to serve those who have served us.

Our focus for this year is **“Busy as a Bee Working Together for our Veterans.”** We will continue many of the successful initiatives already in place, including the ever-popular Holiday Cheer/Trees for Our Troops program, which has made such a meaningful impact over the years. At the same time, we’ll be exploring opportunities to introduce new projects that strengthen our support for veterans and their families. As I begin another year as your chairperson, I welcome your ideas and suggestions — working together is how we make this program stronger and more effective.

### **Mental Health Awareness and Suicide Prevention**

Sadly, many of our veterans continue to return home carrying invisible wounds — heavy hearts, difficult memories, and challenges that are not always easy to see. Post Traumatic Stress (PTS) and mental health awareness are the focus of the National Ambassador’s program this year. On the Department level we will continue to promote and remain committed to raising awareness in our communities and helping to break the stigma surrounding mental health. Your local VA Medical Center is an excellent resource for information on programs and services available in your area.

In September (National Suicide Prevention month), we will continue to work alongside the VFW to host **“Stop 22”** events across the state. These events help bring attention to the ongoing crisis of veteran suicide and proceeds directly support the VA’s Suicide Prevention Programs. The **Veterans Crisis Line** remains a vital resource for veterans, their families, and friends. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Please continue to educate your communities about this service: **Call 988, then press 1.**

### **Holiday Cheer / Trees for Our Troops**

We will once again be partnering with the Department VFW this year to send trees, decorations, and menorahs to our troops overseas. Each tree is \$25. Please complete the form included in the President’s Packet and return it to me by the deadline indicated.

### **“In Lieu of Cards”**

We will again be creating a special card to accompany the trees, menorahs, and decorations sent to our troops overseas for the holiday season. This card is a meaningful reminder that our active-duty service members are not forgotten. It will be available for signatures at OMTI and Fall Conference for a donation of \$5 per signature.

### **National Veterans Service (NVS)**

This program provides a nationwide network of nearly 300 VFW Service Officers who assist veterans and their families in navigating the VA system and obtaining the benefits they are eligible to receive. Support NVS by contributing through the Department of New York Donation Report Form found in our guidebook or on our website.

### **VFW Veterans and Military Support Program (VMS)**

Started by the VFW, this program serves active-duty and recently discharged military members. It consists of three key components:

- **Military Assistance Program (MAP):** Provides financial assistance to Posts, Districts, and Departments to sponsor events for active-duty military, including help with postage and care packages. For guidelines, contact the office at (816) 756-3390.
- **Unmet Needs:** Offers grants of up to \$1,500 to eligible veterans, service members, and military families.
- **Sport Clips Help a Hero Scholarship:** Awards up to \$5,000 to qualifying veterans and service members to support their educational goals. Visit [vfw.org/student-veterans-support](http://vfw.org/student-veterans-support) for details.

Support this program by contributing through the Department of New York Donation Report Form found in our guidebook or on our website.

### **Fall Department Conference**

- **“In Lieu of Cards”:** Sign our giant card. A \$5 donation allows you to sign and write a brief message that will accompany the Trees for Troops.
- **Participate in Stop 22:** Help raise awareness of suicide prevention and mental health. We will be holding an event at this conference — plan to join us.
- **Holiday Cheer / Trees for Our Troops:** Donate \$25 for a tree, menorah, or decorations.

### **Spring Department Conference**

- Promote VFW programs: Unmet Needs, Service Officers, MAP, Scholarships.

### **Awards**

- **National Awards:** Visit the National VFW Auxiliary website for criteria and entry forms.
- **Department Awards:** Year-End Report due April 1st to Chairman Kim Cavallo.



**“Serving America’s Heroes” because we stay  
“Busy as a Bee working Together for our Veterans”!**

