

THE CALIFORNIA VETERAN

SUMMER 2025
VFWCA.ORG



EVERYTHING WE DO, WE DO FOR VETERANS

FROM THE BRINK OF COLLAPSE
TO ALL-AMERICAN: THE
RESURGENCE OF VFW POST 1679

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4TH ANNUAL VFW
DAY OF SERVICE

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WFW

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS®

**EVERYTHING WE DO,
WE DO FOR VETERANS**

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THE CALIFORNIA VETERAN

IS THE OFFICIAL
PUBLICATION OF THE
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
OF THE UNITED STATES,
DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA

It is an online magazine published four times a year to keep our members informed about important news affecting the VFW and veterans.

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MESSAGE FROM THE STATE COMMANDER

SUMMER 2025
VFWCA.ORG



STATE COMMANDER
Deb Johnson

As we enter our 105th State Convention, let me thank each and every one of you – for your service, your support, and your unshakable commitment to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of California, and to each other.

This role has been a great privilege and one of the most difficult challenges that I have personally and professionally ever had. As I reflect on this past year, I am filled with deep gratitude – for the unity we’ve shown, the challenges we’ve overcome, and the lasting impact we’ve made together.

When we began this journey, we set goals. Not just numbers on a page, but goals grounded in service, community, and legacy. We focused on strengthening our Posts, increasing membership, mentoring the generation that will be our future, honoring our fallen, and showing our communities the value of the VFW.

From packing food boxes in District 17, to chopping vegetables for Father Joe’s in District 1, packing care packages for our troops in District 13, handing out hand made quilts in District 2, and packing craft kits in District 3 and the many sight seeing tours to visit our beautiful state, I have been truly honored to be part of this organization.

I am confident in the leadership of this department, and will ensure that I provide support to SVC Kuta, JVC Jansen and the newly elected and appointed officers and council members of our department. Good luck to all of you in your upcoming year.

Deb Johnson
State Commander

“THIS ROLE HAS BEEN A GREAT PRIVILEGE AND ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT CHALLENGES THAT I HAVE PERSONALLY AND PROFESSIONALLY EVER HAD. AS I REFLECT ON THIS PAST YEAR, I AM FILLED WITH DEEP GRATITUDE – FOR THE UNITY WE’VE SHOWN, THE CHALLENGES WE’VE OVERCOME, AND THE LASTING IMPACT WE’VE MADE TOGETHER..”

-Deb Johnson, State Commander

As we come to the close of Commander Johnson’s year, we find ourselves in much introspection as a department. We started out our year with a great leadership team that pledged to build upon the changes started in the prior year. But of course, fate had other plans. Our Department A/Q Rodger Meier started showing signs of decline from his ongoing battle with cancer. We as a leadership team started immediately assessing what these signs meant for our friend and comrade’s ability to continue his best care and what that meant for our department’s current health as well.

In reviewing what we were faced with as a leadership team and the needed steps to continue to support our states posts, districts and those communities, we found ourselves in need of some rapid updating by means of staffing, processes, reporting and responding better to you, our members, our comrades because it’s what you deserve and what we promised to do. To quote the Commander Deb Johnson, “we can do better”!

On February 6th, 2025, our State Adjutant & Quartermaster of over 5 years, Comrade Rodger Meier passed away, losing his battle with cancer. This loss of knowledge, achievements and personal dedication became our focus to build up stronger and improve how we support our California VFW members. Not just in words but in actions. The state commander set out

to give a realistic status of where we are and said, ‘there’s nothing to hide” and began by hiring more staff to respond in a timely manner to our posts and those members we serve. She also appointed key members to review, and update needed policies and procedures. These changes are needed to respond to the requests that have been asked for over the past year. We are dedicated to making this State VFW the best department in support to our members and to the veteran community and with the continued help of our comrades and a committed leadership team we will be leader among the departments that make up our National Veterans of Foreign Wars.

I want to personally Thank Commander Deb Johnson for her leadership and guidance in what could have been a crushing blow to our department had she not taken proactive steps to rally our HQ staff and this leadership team to “Do Better”!

I’ve learned that no matter what life brings us as a department, we WILL adapt and overcome because it’s what you deserve!

I look forward to another great year for the California Veterans of Foreign Wars. May God bless you all.

Thank you,
 Dave Kuta
 Senior Vice Commander
 VFW Department of California



SENIOR VICE COMMANDER
David Kuta

**“ON FEBRUARY 6TH, 2025,
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 & QUARTERMASTER OF
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 MEMBERS. NOT JUST
 IN WORDS BUT
 IN ACTIONS.”**

-David Kuta, Senior Vice Commander



JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER
Paula Jansen

“IT’S BEEN AN HONOR SERVING AS YOUR JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER THIS YEAR. I LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU ALL AT THIS YEAR’S CONVENTION. THANK YOU FOR YOUR HARD WORK AND YOUR COMMITMENT TO DOING WHAT WE DO BEST—SUPPORTING VETERANS.”

-Paula Jansen, Junior Vice Commander

This has been a challenging year for our department, but under the steady leadership of Commander Johnson, we've emerged stronger and more united than ever. Thank you, Deb, for your unwavering dedication, countless hours of work, deep knowledge, and personal sacrifice. You truly were the right person in the right place at the right time.

Now that elections are behind us, we enter a critical final stretch. In the weeks ahead, we will focus on Memorial Day ceremonies, leadership transitions, and preparing our Posts and Districts for the new VFW year. Let's give our incoming teams the best possible start.

First up: get those election reports submitted. Next, let's clear up any outstanding inspection discrepancies.

We're still pushing toward our membership goal—just shy of the finish line. Every day brings us closer to 102%. Let's finish strong and deliver Commander Johnson a well-earned All-American title as a parting gift.

When it comes to program reporting, you've all done an incredible job. We've seen fantastic numbers! A few Posts still have reports to submit—there's time. Reports will be accepted until June 25th.

Training has been a major focus this year, and it will remain a priority moving forward. We're expanding pop-up trainings, so if you have a topic in mind, please share it with a line officer. Our first training of the new year kicks off at the Department Convention on June 18th. We look forward to seeing many of you there!

The convention schedule will be posted on the Department website at www.vfwca.org under *News > State Convention*. It will be updated as details are finalized, so check back often. Also, be sure to review the Good Standing Delegate Report (under Members Only) to ensure your Post is eligible to vote. Every member in good standing deserves that right—whether at the Post, District, Department, or National level. Delegate strength is based on Post membership as of June 30th. When all the columns are green, your Post's voting strength will be visible on the right-hand side of the report. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to a line officer or the Department Headquarters staff.

It's been an honor serving as your Junior Vice Commander this year. I look forward to seeing you all at this year's convention. Thank you for your hard work and your commitment to doing what we do best—supporting veterans.

Paula Jansen
Junior Vice Commander
Jansen@vfwca.org

2025

CALIFORNIA STATE CONVENTION



JOIN US FOR THE 2025 VFW STATE CONVENTION JUNE 18–22, 2025

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VFW

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2025 NATIONAL CONVENTION

August 9-13, 2025

Greater Columbus Convention Center, Columbus, Ohio

Every year, thousands of VFW and Auxiliary delegates gather to represent the organization's more than 1.4 million combined membership at the weeklong VFW National Convention. While there, our mission is to approve new national priorities to guide our organization as we lobby Congress on issues important to the nation's veterans, service members and their families.

Convention delegates also elect new leadership, as well as recognize prominent individuals and organizations for their support of veterans and military personnel.

www.vfw.org/media-and-events/126th-vfw-national-convention





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NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.



FROM THE BRINK OF COLLAPSE TO ALL-AMERICAN: THE RESURGENCE OF VFW POST 1679

Two years ago, Ventura's Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1679 faced an uncertain future. The post, once a thriving center of camaraderie and support for veterans, was on the verge of having its charter revoked. Financial struggles, administrative challenges, and dwindling membership threatened to shut its doors permanently. However, through relentless dedication and an unwavering commitment to service, the post not only survived but has emerged as a model of success, now on track to earn the prestigious All-American designation.

A FIGHT TO SAVE THE POST

The turnaround began under the leadership of then-Post Commander Paragon, now serving as Senior Vice Commander, and current Post Commander Jeremy Harman. Recognizing the dire state of the post, the two leaders embarked on a two-year journey of hard work, transparency, and cooperation. They understood that revitalization would require more than just internal restructuring—it would demand outreach, collaboration, and engagement with the broader veteran and civilian communities.

One of the most crucial elements of this transformation was the partnership with the Post Auxiliary. The Auxiliary stepped up to provide financial support and helped organize community outreach initiatives that reinforced the post's role as a central hub for veterans and their families. This alliance ensured the post had the resources to continue its mission and provide essential services to those in need.

NAVIGATING LEGAL AND FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

To address financial discrepancies and legal concerns, the leadership worked closely with multiple governmental agencies, including the Department of Justice (DOJ), the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), and the California Franchise Tax Board (FTB). Restoring compliance with these agencies was a crucial step in securing the post's future and regaining the trust of its members.

A key player in this recovery effort was the suspension committee, which included former State Commander

Marty Yingling, District Commander Larry Ramey, and District Quartermaster Wayne Wright. Their expertise and commitment provided essential guidance through the complicated process of financial reconciliation, ensuring the post met all regulatory requirements and restored its standing within the VFW community.

Former State Commander Tim Bryant also played a pivotal role in securing the post's future. His guidance and dedication led to a formal request for a stay of execution to the National Commander-in-Chief, allowing the post the necessary time to implement crucial reforms and demonstrate its commitment to recovery.

The leadership also received significant support from the VFW Department of California. Then-Senior Vice Commander Deb Johnson, who now serves as the State Commander, played a pivotal role in advising and assisting Post 1679 as it navigated these challenges. In addition to her strategic guidance, she provided essential education on the VFW Manual of Procedure and personally trained each line officer, ensuring that the post's leadership was well-equipped to operate effectively and in accordance with VFW's mission and values.

STRENGTHENING THROUGH INCLUSION AND EXPANSION

As the post reestablished itself, it also sought to expand its reach and reinforce its role as a home for all veterans. One of the most significant developments was the inclusion of American Legion Post 48 and its Auxiliary under the same roof. This integration fostered a stronger, united community of veterans, pooling resources and increasing the post's ability to serve Ventura County's veteran population effectively.

This collaboration has strengthened the post's ability to host events, offer assistance programs, and advocate for veterans' rights on a larger scale. The combined efforts of both organizations have not only enhanced the post's financial stability but have also created a more inclusive and supportive environment for veterans of all eras and branches of service.

**THROUGH TIRELESS EFFORT, UNWAVERING COMMITMENT,
AND STRATEGIC COOPERATION, VFW POST 1679 HAS TRANSFORMED
FROM A POST ON THE BRINK OF CLOSURE TO A THRIVING ORGANIZATION
ONCE AGAIN. TODAY, THE POST STANDS AS A BEACON
OF RESILIENCE, DEDICATED TO HONORING AND ASSISTING VETERANS.**



A MODEL OF RESILIENCE AND SUCCESS

Through tireless effort, unwavering commitment, and strategic cooperation, VFW Post 1679 has transformed from a post on the brink of closure to a thriving organization once again. Today, the post stands as a beacon of resilience, dedicated to honoring and assisting veterans. It has become a model for other posts facing similar struggles, demonstrating that even in the most challenging times, recovery and success are possible with strong leadership, collaboration, and an unyielding dedication to the mission.

With its remarkable comeback, VFW Post 1679 is now in line for All-American status, a prestigious recognition of excellence within the Veterans of Foreign Wars. This honor would serve as a testament to the perseverance of its leadership, members, and auxiliary, as well as to the enduring strength of the veteran community in Ventura County.

The story of VFW Post 1679 is not just one of survival is one of triumph. For other posts facing similar challenges, let this serve as a reminder that resilience, teamwork, and a commitment to the mission can turn adversity into success. By seeking guidance, fostering strong leadership, engaging with the community, and embracing collaboration, any post can overcome obstacles and rebuild stronger than before. The road to recovery may be difficult, but with dedication and perseverance, success is within reach. Let Post 1679's journey be an inspiration for all VFW posts striving to honor and support veterans while securing a thriving future.

Paragon (10607142)

Sr. Vice Commander / Adjutant Post 1679

Jr. Vice Commander District 7

VFW Dept of California, SVA Chairman

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4TH ANNUAL VFW DAY OF SERVICE

America’s veterans are #StillServing every day and all across the country. On May 3, 2025, the 4th annual VFW Day of Service marked the start of a month-long effort to organize veteran-led community service projects. These grassroots projects are organized on the ground level, to benefit veterans, their families, and their communities.

California hosted 119 official events in honor of the VFW Day of Service. From blood drives and food drives to community clean ups, veterans have been out in the community putting in the work to make a difference.

However you participated in this year’s events, **THANK YOU!**

VFW Post 9148 La Mirada

Members served burgers, chips, and drinks to homeless veterans at the Los Angeles VA — honoring service with service.



VFW Post 8470

On May 3, members helped organize the Annual Kerman Almond Festival, hosted a Membership & Buddy Poppy booth, and even welcomed new veteran members.

VFW Post 10965 Paso Robles

Local volunteers teamed up with members to clean a stretch of Highway 101 near Camp Roberts.



VFW Post 8070

State Commander Deb Johnson, Junior Vice Commander Paula Jansen, and Inspector/Grand Commander Kenny Lindberg joined VFW Post 8070 to help clean up and improve the local community.



#StillServing



MEMBER HIGHLIGHT

Sal Cota

District 6 Commander, U.S. Army Veteran, VFW Member Since 2015

From serving overseas in South Korea to serving fellow veterans across California, Sal Cota's path to leadership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars Department of California is grounded in gratitude, service, and community.



After 13 years of military service in the U.S. Army (2002–2015), Sal earned his VFW eligibility during a deployment in South Korea from 2007 to 2008. However, it wasn't until 2015, during a challenging period for his family, that he truly experienced the power of the VFW community. His local post in Paso Robles, VFW Post 10965, awarded him a grant that helped his family avoid eviction. "That was the moment that changed everything for me," Sal recalls. "I knew I had to give back to the organization that gave me hope."

FROM SERVING OVERSEAS IN SOUTH KOREA TO SERVING FELLOW VETERANS ACROSS CALIFORNIA, SAL COTA'S PATH TO LEADERSHIP IN THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA IS GROUNDED IN GRATITUDE, SERVICE, AND COMMUNITY.

From that point forward, Sal leaned into service. He started as Junior Vice Commander of his post, quickly rising to Commander — a role he held for six to seven years. Quartermaster Milton Black became both a mentor and father figure to Sal, encouraging him to attend district meetings where he met then-District Commander Deb Johnson (now the Department Commander), whose mentorship further solidified Sal's path. "I wasn't there for recognition — I did the work because it was the right thing to do," he says.

As District 6 Commander, Sal's mission was clear: to make the department commander's home district shine. Through shared resources, mutual support, and a collective commitment to excellence, District 6



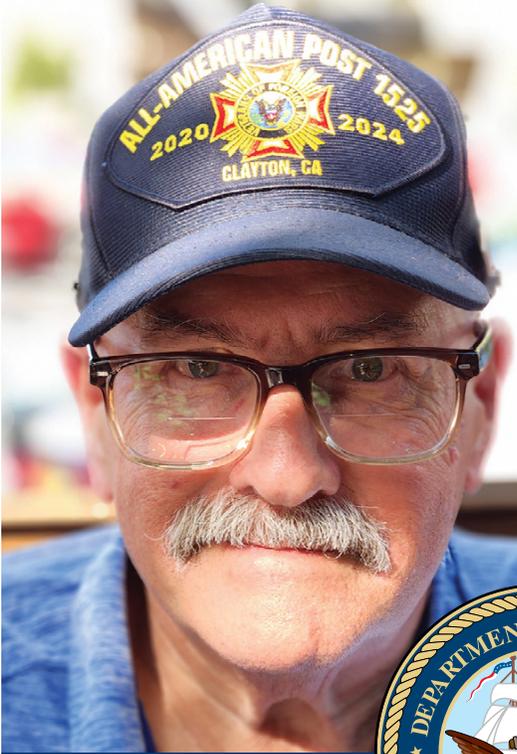


earned All-State and All-American honors under his leadership. One highlight was a donation that allowed Post 10965 in Maricopa to secure life memberships for all non-life-member officers in the district — a true testament to VFW comradeship.

At the post level, Sal continues to innovate and inspire. His post's "Taco Takeover" events — monthly gatherings in partnership with veteran-owned and veteran-friendly businesses — have become a major draw for community engagement and new membership. "We're nearly at 200% membership," he says proudly. "Our goal is to be number one in our division for the remainder of this year."

Looking ahead, Sal remains committed to strengthening the organization. "I'll always support District 6 and serve as a source of innovation," he says. "To the next district commander, I'd offer the same advice that was given to me: you don't have to do it alone. Lean on your team, your post, and your mentors. That's how we succeed together."

Above all, Sal is driven by a deep commitment to the VFW's future and a strong support system at home. "None of this would've been possible without my wife, Priscilla and our four boys — Emilio, Lucas, Salvador, and Lorenzo. I hope people see me as part of the future of the VFW in California, because I'm just getting started."



MEMBER HIGHLIGHT

Mark Steinberg

**POW/MIA Committee Chairman,
Navy, Post 1525**

For Mark Steinberg, service is a lifetime commitment. As evident through the work he has done for his country, his community and his fellow Veteran, Mark has embodied the selfless #StillServing mindset that has empowered and improved the lives of Veterans.



Mark is a powerful advocate for Veterans, serving in positions and appointments that span all levels of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of California (VFWCA). As a Vietnam veteran, Mark is deeply aware of the value of camaraderie and has benefitted first-hand from finding his community within the VFW. His legacy of service has evolved over the years to allow him to give back to others and make a difference in the lives of those around him.

**MARK IS A POWERFUL
ADVOCATE FOR
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IN POSITIONS AND
APPOINTMENTS THAT
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VETERANS OF FOREIGN
WARS, DEPARTMENT
OF CALIFORNIA (VFWCA).**

EXPANDING POW/MIA RECOGNITION EFFORTS

In his role as the POW/MIA Committee Chairman, Mark has focused on expanding efforts to raise awareness for POW/MIA servicemembers both inside and outside of the Veteran community. His goal is simple, “to connect with POW/MIA and their families and ensure that these men and women know they will never be forgotten.”

The VFWCA holds an annual POW/MIA recognition event, led by the POW/MIA Committee. The 2024 event was held in northern California for the first time, at Mark’s behest. He hoped to reach a broader audience with the event and believed switching up the location was the way to do it. The POW/MIA Committee is currently exploring central California locations for the 2025 event to create a tradition of bringing Californians from across the state together in honor of POW/MIA servicemembers and their families.





A LIFETIME OF SERVICE

Prior to joining the VFW, Mark spent 25 years as a volunteer youth sports coach. After stepping back from that role, he was in search of a new way to get involved in his community. He caught the attention of a VFW table while wearing his Vietnam Veteran hat at the Cajun Catfish Festival in Conroe, Texas. They encouraged him to join the organization, renewing his dedication to service. He soon transferred to Post 1525 in California and upgraded to a life membership in 2014. This was just the beginning.

Mark served as the Commander for Post 1525 for seven years, as the Quartermaster for three years, as the District 10 commander for four years. His Post received All-State recognition for all seven years he served as Post Commander, and received All-American recognition for five of those years. He has personally recruited over 100 new members to the VFW and remains active at the Post level.

STEPPING FORWARD, NOT STEPPING DOWN

#StillServing can look different for everyone. For Mark, it means being involved in any way he can. Either as a leader, or a mentor. After years of major leadership roles, Mark now he says he is looking forward to passing the reins. He will continue serving on various committees but has encouraged others to step into leadership roles at the Post and District levels. He is excited for the future of the organization and has been supporting the involvement of younger members. He said, “the future of the VFW is the younger Post members. But it is up to us, the older ones, to mentor them without telling them how it’s done, because they are going to have new ideas.”

No matter when or where they served, VFW members support each other. Mark is prioritizing connecting with younger Veterans and has seen increased membership among Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans, along with other recent conflicts. While their experiences may have been different, they all have one thing in common: a commitment to serving. “We want these younger Veterans to know that we have been where they are,” he said. “We have fought hard for the benefits we have, and we are going to keep fighting for their benefits too.”





WINNERS OF VFW PUBLICATIONS CONTEST ANNOUNCED THIS YEARS' WINNERS REPRESENT THE BEST OF THE BEST

www.vfw.org

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) has announced the winners of the 2024 National Publications Contest. More than seven years ago, the contest changed significantly to encourage more participation. This created two new categories: Best Magazine and Best Feature Article. This year's competition retained those changes.

Two non-VFW-affiliated journalism professionals served as judges for the competition. This is designed to ensure impartiality and objectivity in the judging process. To reiterate, VFW staffers play no part in judging the entries.

The winning publications in each category are:

BEST MAGAZINE

Grand Award:

California Veteran, Rodger Meier, Editor

Silver Award:

Department of South Carolina Sentinel, Bill LaMonte, Editor

BEST FEATURE ARTICLE

Grand Award:

“Vietnam vet plays ‘TAPS’ every day with Boy Scout Bugle”
Jarrod Schoenecker, *Montgomery Messenger*
Department of Minnesota

Silver Award:

“Alachua VFW Post 2811 Auxiliary President honors son with service”
Michael P. Mauer, *Alachua County Today*
Department of Florida

Bronze Award:

“WWII POW’s Remains Return to Illinois Following Identification”
Barbara Wilson, *Illinois VFW News*
Department of Illinois

DEPARTMENT PUBLICATIONS

Large Frequency (printed 5+ times per year)

Grand Award:

Wisconsin VFW News, Marla J. Morgan, Editor

Small Frequency (printed 1-4 times per year)

Grand Award:

Illinois VFW News, Barb Wilson, Editor

Silver Award:

Michigan Overseas Veteran, Alyssa McElfresh, Editor

DISTRICT/POST PUBLICATIONS

Large Frequency (printed 5+ times per year)

Grand Award:

Ssg Dozier VFW Post 2894 Newsletter
Dan Eaker, Editor, Department of Virginia

Silver Award:

Cannon News (VFW Post 7589)
Rick Raskin, Editor, Department of Virginia

Bronze Award:

The Chatter (VFW Post 7591)
Cole Slominski, Editor, Department of Wisconsin

Small Frequency (printed 1-4 times per year)

Grand Award:

VFW News (Post 1318)
Gundel Metz, Editor, Department of Wisconsin

Silver Award:

VFW Post 2113 & Auxiliary Joint Newsletter
Randy Hansen, Editor, Department of Wisconsin

Bronze Award:

Waverley VFW Post 1272 Newsletter
D. Bruce Pahlm, Editor, Department of Massachusetts



HOW TO CONVINCe SOMEONE TO GET HELP FOR THEIR MENTAL HEALTH

By Stan Popovich



There are many reasons why some people are reluctant to get help for their mental health or addiction issues.

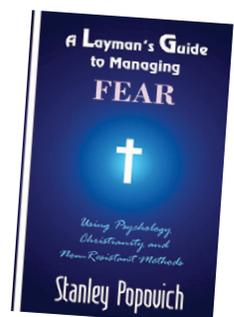
In addition, many people are not sure what to do when encouraging someone to get the help they need for their mental health.

As a result, here are seven suggestions on how to convince a person struggling to get some assistance.

- 1. Talk to the person instead of talking at them:** Nobody wants to be lectured or yelled at. The person who is struggling is scared and they need help in overcoming their fears and resistance to getting some guidance. Treat others the way you would want to be treated if the roles were reversed.
- 2. Find out why the person won't get help:** Ask the individual who is struggling the reasons why they are reluctant to get some assistance. Although most people may not admit it, a sense of fear of the unknown and/or some kind of frustration are usually the main factors. It might take a few tries, however, try to find out what is stopping your friend from getting treatment.
- 3. Address the reasons why the individual won't get help:** Once you get the reasons why he or she won't get some help, the next step is to find the ways to address those factors that are preventing the individual from getting assistance. Addressing one's fears and concerns may convince them to take some action that will get their life back on track.
- 4. Get some advice from a professional:** Talk to your doctor or a mental health counselor for recommendations on how you can help someone who is struggling. A medical professional in the mental health field will be able to give you some ideas and options that you can use to help convince someone you know to get some help.
- 5. Find someone who understands:** Try to find someone who used to struggle with their mental health for their advice. For example, a person who used drugs and alcohol in the past could use their past experiences and insights to convince the individual to seek treatment. A person who used to struggle with addiction or their mental health may be better able to relate to the person who is struggling.
- 6. Get them to attend a support group:** Another way to convince someone to get help is to get them to go to a mental health support group. This may or may not work depending on the individual, but it is still worth a try. A person who goes to a support group can at least listen to those who are also struggling, which may convince the person to get some assistance.
- 7. Be persistent:** Continue to be persistent with your loved ones in getting them the help they need. Keep in contact with your doctor and any mental health counselor on your progress. If things do not improve, continue to find other alternatives in getting the person some help.

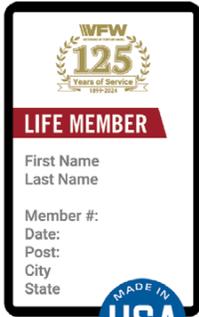
BIOGRAPHY

Stan is the author of "A Layman's Guide to Managing Fear" which covers a variety of techniques that can drastically improve your mental health. For more information, please visit Stan's website at <http://www.managingfear.com>





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WE DO FOR VETERANS

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CARL'S JR. "STARS FOR HEROES" PROGRAM DELIVERS FOR LOCAL VFW POSTS



For over two decades, Carl's Jr. has quietly pursued a mission close to its heart—supporting veterans through its annual Stars for Heroes campaign. Held every year from Memorial Day to the Fourth of July, this national fundraiser invites customers to donate at the register—whether it's fifty cents or more—to help make a difference in the lives of those who have served.

This year, Carl's Jr. in Palm Desert, California, proudly made generous donations to two local VFW Posts: Post 3699 in Indio and Post 7264 in Joshua Tree. Each post received a contribution of \$8,300, acknowledging their exceptional commitment to supporting local veterans. Additionally, a third donation was made to the Marine Corps Air Station in Yuma, Arizona.

Mimi Villarreal, Chief People Officer of Carl's Jr., shared the inspiration behind the program. "Carl Karcher, the founder of Carl's Jr., was a Vietnam Veteran. This fundraiser reflects his values and our company's deep appreciation for the service and sacrifice of our nation's heroes," Villarreal said. "These donations go toward essentials like housing, food, and community programs for veterans nationwide."

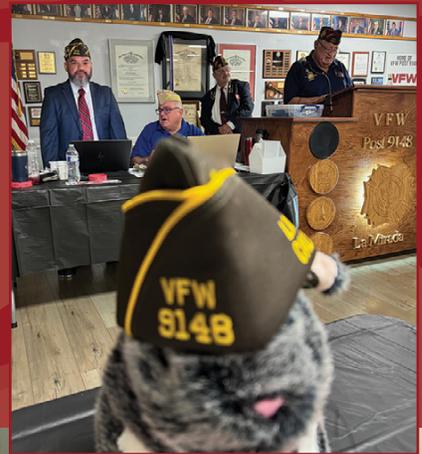
Thanks to the continued excellence and impact of VFW Posts 3699 and 7264, both have been nominated once again to receive support from the 2026 Stars for Heroes campaign.

The VFW is proud to stand alongside partners like Carl's Jr., who share our mission of honoring and supporting veterans in tangible, lasting ways. Their continued partnership is a powerful reminder that when businesses and veterans' organizations unite, communities grow stronger, and heroes are never forgotten.



CHEWY ON THE MOVE





WHERE WILL CHEWY GO NEXT?



VETERANS FREEBIES OR DISCOUNTS

The California Veteran Magazine is excited to be including valuable information on how our readers can access an array of exclusive Veteran Discount programs. From a variety of companies, these discounts are a small token of appreciation for your service. Stay tuned for details on how you can take advantage of these special offers, designed to support you in your daily life and beyond.

The VFWCA is not affiliated with these companies, and has not been paid for their inclusion in any list or article.



SUNGLASS HUT:

Summer is just around the corner, and it's time to soak up the sunshine in style! As the days grow longer and brighter, ensure your eyes are protected with a fresh new pair of shades.

Sunglass Hut is showing appreciation for those who served by offering a 15% discount. To take advantage of this offer, veterans can follow these simple steps:

- 1. Verify Eligibility:** Visit the Sunglass Hut website, scroll down, select "Special Offers," and select "Verify with ID.ME."
- 2. Sign In or Create ID.me Profile:** Continue to sign in.
- 3. Enjoy the Savings:** 15% off sunglasses, exclusions apply.

www.sunglasshut.com



MLB SHOP:

Baseball season is in full swing—are you game-day ready? Whether you're cheering from the stands or watching from home, now is the perfect time to gear up and show your team pride. MLB Shop is honoring veterans with a 15% discount on your favorite MLB merchandise:

- 1. Verify Eligibility:** Pick out your favorite MLB merchandise, at checkout, verify your status.
- 2. Sign In or Create ID.me Profile:** Continue to sign in.
- 3. Enjoy the Savings:** 15% off your favorite MLB merchandise.

www.mlshop.com



LOWE'S:

Spring has sprung, and it's the perfect time to dive into your next outdoor project! Whether you're planting a new garden, sprucing up your yard, or building a backyard oasis, Lowe's is here to help—and they're proudly offering a 10% discount to all veterans. Obtaining these exclusive savings is simple; just follow a few quick steps:

- 1. Verify Eligibility:** Visit the Lowe's website, scroll down, and select "Military Discount" and select "Get Started".
- 2. Sign In or Create ID.me Profile:** Continue to sign in.
- 3. Enjoy the Savings:** 10% off every day online and in store.

www.lowes.com

SOCIAL MEDIA CORNER



THE RISE OF “DE-INFLUENCING” AND “AUTHENTIC” CONTENT

The evolution of social media in recent years has created the “Influencer”, with carefully curated and polished content designed to give off a specific aesthetic. Influencers could be found in various communities, interests and fields. They were aptly named, because their goal was to influence users in some way, including selling products, lifestyles, or belief systems. As our social media habits continue to change and grow, we are entering an era where many users are shifting away from blindly trusting these influencers. Instead, authentic content is on the rise.

WHAT IS AUTHENTIC CONTENT?

Authentic content is pictures, videos, captions, or any other aspect of a social media page that are developed to be genuine, instead of perfect.

HOW TO DO AUTHENTIC CONTENT FOR YOUR POST?

To maintain an “authentic” page, Posts can regularly share content as it happens, instead of waiting until weeks later. Sometimes there is a pressure to craft the perfect caption or gather as many photos as possible before sharing about an event. But current trends promote the idea of sharing as you go, with photos of real members and attendees at events.

ARE THERE DRAWBACKS?

One of the biggest drawbacks of “authentic content” is trying to find the balance between looking real and looking disorganized. Make sure the content you are sharing is representative of your Post and the VFW, and genuine in nature.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Share photos and videos on your Facebook and Instagram story as you go. And then in the days after an event, gather those photos and videos and create a full event recap post.

#VeteranVoices

We want to hear from you, our fellow veterans. Starting this month, we will be sharing stories from our members on the California VFW Facebook page.

STORIES WILL HIGHLIGHT:

- Upcoming Community Events
- Veteran History and Remembrance
- Important Local and National News
- Plus Other Veteran Stories and Photos You Wish to Share

Do you have a story to share? Need a platform to get the word out? Message our Facebook page, @VFWCA today! Our team will share it with followers using #VeteranVoices.

#TheCaliforniaVeteran #vfwpostpride



CALIFORNIA VETERANS – GET THE INSIDE STORY.

THE CALIFORNIA VETERAN

SUMMER 2025



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