



Michigan Department VFW Auxiliary
MICHIGAN CONNECTION #5
February/March, 2026

www.vfwauxmi.org

Facebook Page: Auxiliary VFW – Michigan
517-487-3715 (Office); 517-420-9342 (Department Treasurer)
517-485-6432 (FAX)

National Theme: From Sea to Shining Sea Honoring Veterans Who Keep Us Free

Department Theme: We Don't Know them All, But We Owe Them All

MUST BE READ ON THE FLOOR

IMPORTANT INFORMATION!!!!

- **BEGINNING IMMEDIATELY, ALL DUES AND AUDITS MUST BE SENT DIRECTLY TO THE DEPARTMENT TREASURER AT:**
Cathy Sasse, Treasurer
1117 Michigan Street
Midland, MI 48640
- **EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2026, the Department Dues Per Capita will be \$10. Any dues received at the Department Office after December 31 must remit a total of \$20 for dues (\$10 for Department and \$10 for National).**
- **EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2026, a new membership application is on our website. Failure to use this new application will result in the application being returned. National will only process new applications on the revised 2026 application.**

Debbie's Corner

By the time this is read on the Auxiliary floor, we will have announced the Department VOD, Patriots Pen, and Teacher of the Year winners. The information will be made available on our Department Website and Facebook Page. Congratulations to all the winners and look forward to hearing who the National winners will be.

My special project, Blue Star Dogs, has raised \$6,886 to date and I thank you for your generosity. However, we still have auxiliaries that have not purchased the program pin, which the proceeds go to the Blue Star Dogs. Be sure to reach out to Pin Chairman Ruth Barnhill, to purchase pins. Reminder that all other donations to the program are to be sent to the Department Treasurer as I will be presenting one large check to the Blue Star Dogs at our Department Convention.

Thank you to all who braved the weather and attended our Department Mid-Winter Conference. Your attendance and participation are greatly appreciated. Since this Michigan Connection is being written before the Conference, watch our Facebook page for the winners of the Voice of Democracy, Patriots Pen and Teachers of the Year.

Dues

We still have around 120 members who have not paid their 2026 dues. Currently they are considered not to be in good standing and are not eligible for cancer grants, voting, and other consequences. Call your delinquent members and see how they are doing, or perhaps be a dues angel, or if they have fallen on hard times, their dues can be paid by the auxiliary with monies from the Relief Fund.

Department Fundraiser

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND: March Maina Raffle Tickets, \$10.00 per Ticket. We will draw a purchased ticket a day for 31 days in the month of March, for a total of \$10,000.00 in prizes. Each member who sells a WINNING ticket will receive a prize of \$40.00. To sell tickets or purchase a ticket contact: Edna Kiviniemi, 6468 Waubun Rd, Indian River, Michigan 49749, email maggieeli6507@hotmail.com or call 231-420-1410. We are doing well on getting these tickets sold but we still have a few 100 tickets left for someone to purchase or help us sell them. Proceeds from this fundraiser assists the Department in their efforts to assist our members and our auxiliaries. Please help us make this a successful fundraiser. GET YOUR TICKETS TODAY!!!

Deadline Reminders

The October - December audit is due to the Department Treasurer by February 28, 2026.

The Michigan Connection **must be read** on the floor upon issuance and can be found on our website under Resources/Michigan Connection, or under Resources/Downloadables.

Programs And Reporting

There are still numerous auxiliaries that have not reported in any program. **All Auxiliaries MUST complete at least one project, activity or donation that benefits veterans by April 30, 2025.** Department Officers and/or District Presidents will be contacting the Auxiliaries who have not yet met that requirement.

Reminder: Our reporting year ends on April 20th. Please be sure to get your reports entered by that date. If you need assistance, please call the Department Chairmen or the Department Office.

The National Organization is offering awards for auxiliaries under each of our programs. Review the guide sheet and submit an entry form. Entry form is required and available in MALTA Member Resources. **VFW Auxiliaries must send the required entry form to their Department Chairman by March 31, 2026, for judging.** Citations will be mailed directly to the winning VFW Auxiliaries from National Headquarters and money will be deposited into the winning VFW Auxiliary account after the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Reno, Nevada.

By Order of:

Deborah Scheetz

Deborah Scheetz
Department President

Cindy Peto

Cindy Peto
Department Secretary



Michigan Department VFW Auxiliary Americanism – February - March 2026

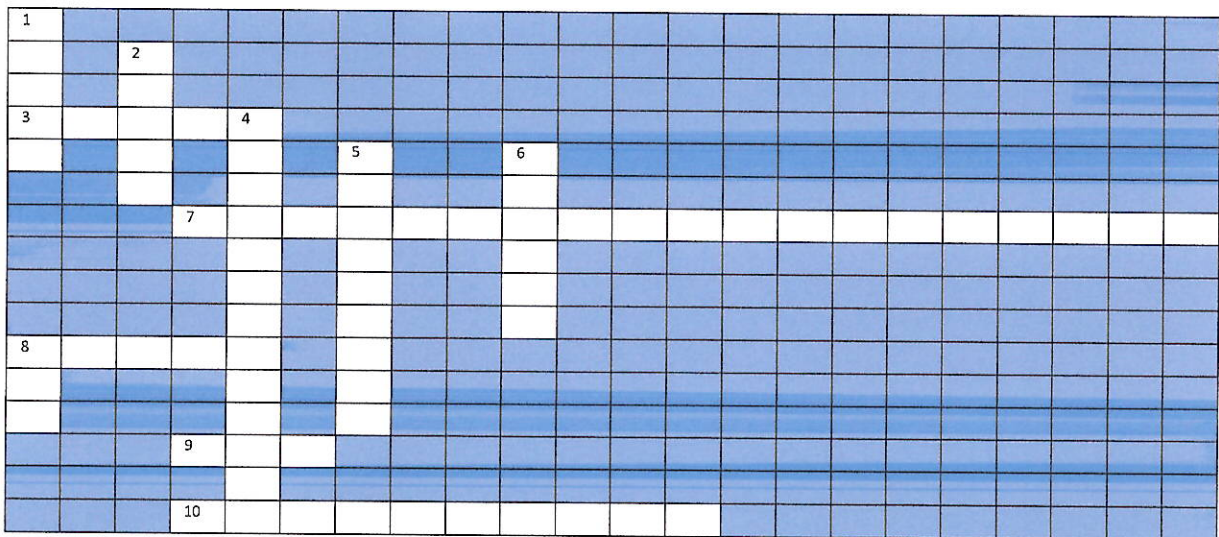
www.vfwauxmi.org

Facebook Page: Americanism - Michigan

National Theme: *From Sea to Shining Sea Honoring Veterans Who Keep Us Free*
Department Theme: *We Don't Know Them All, But We Owe Them All*

I hope all of you enjoyed the MidWinter Conference as much as I did. The students are just amazing! For those who attended, it was good to see you again and connect to share our love for Americanism and show our patriotic spirits. I hope you got at least one thing from the program presentations that will help you in your Auxiliary.

FLAG ETIQUETTE DURING MEETINGS – Let's have a little fun. Answers will be on Facebook



ACROSS	DOWN
3. What type of salute is used in meetings	1. When facing the members, on what side of the President's station is the Patriotic Instructor's flag placed
7. Who ensures flags are properly arranged (2 words)	2. What do you do when flags are moving during the meeting
8. How many times do you salute the flag during a regular meeting	4. What direction does the eagle face (2 words)
9. Can a veteran member use a military salute instead of heart salute	5. Proper method for retiring torn/tattered flags (3 words)
10. What is another resource for flag etiquette (3 words)	6. In the Bylaws, where do you find info about flag placement/etiquette
	8. In traditional meetings, how many U.S. flags are on the floor

PRESENT PATRIOTIC APPRECIATION CITATIONS/CERTIFICATES OF APPRECIATION OR RESPECT FOR THE FLAG CITATIONS

While talking to a member, she made a statement about there really isn't much to do this time of the year. This is the best time of year to work hard on promoting patriotism and Americanism because there are fewer events and holidays to light the patriotic spirit. The best way to do this is to acknowledge and thank those around us who show their patriotism through flying their flags or doing things for our veterans. Citations and certificates of appreciation are an awesome way to help businesses; members and our communities know that we appreciate what they do and have them take pride in displaying their Americanism and patriotism. There are several certificates and citations available on MALTA under Member Resources in the Americanism section. You can use those or develop one of your own. Make sure to report this as I have very few reports about passing out citations. Please remember when reporting this, tell me how many you gave out.

FROM OUR NATIONAL AMBASSADOR – DIANA RUSSEL-MILTON

Check out the blog on the MALTA website under Member Resources. In Ambassador Diana's Blogs, she reminds us to work with schools and other groups to teach the kids proper flag etiquette. Teaching kids builds a commitment in them to show their pride in America and what great things they have by the sacrifices that our veterans have made. There are many tools available on MALTA to help members promote patriotism and Americanism.

REPORTING

We just completed the third quarter reporting period on January 31, 2026. Thank you for all of the wonderful reports that you are sending in. All of the Auxiliaries are doing a fantastic job promoting the program and working in their communities to light the American spirit. Great job. If you have anything that you haven't reported from prior quarters, it's not too late. You can still submit it. Just put activity date as the date you are reporting and put the actual activity date in the description. Time flies - we only have a couple months left of this reporting year. Check your Guide Sheets to see what you might be missing.

NATIONAL AWARD FOR AUXILIARIES

This award is for the most outstanding activity and/or event displaying or educating others about the proper ways to display and respect the American flag. The form is available on the Department website (vfwauxmi.org) and on MALTA under the Americanism program under Member Resources. **You must have the form to me via email or regular mail by March 31, 2026.**

HOLIDAYS & OBSERVANCES

February 1 – National Freedom Day – On this day in 1865, President Lincoln signed a joint House and Senate resolution which later became the 13th Amendment to the Constitution outlawing slavery. This day celebrates the end of slavery and recognizes America as a symbol of liberty. National Freedom Day was established by President Truman on June 30, 1948.

National G.I. Joe Day – G.I. Joe was created as a cartoon on June 17, 1942 by former Army Sergeant David Breger. The action figure was released in 1964 to represent heroism.

February 3 – Four Chaplains Day – In 1943, the *SS Dorchester* was torpedoed by a German submarine and as it sank, the four chaplains assisted civilians and military personnel onto lifeboats and gave up their own life jackets to save others. They were awarded the Purple Heart.

February 12 – Abraham Lincoln's Birthday – Also known as Lincoln's Day it commemorates the birth of our 16th President and the role he played in the end of slavery and leadership during the Civil War.

February 15 – Susan B. Anthony Day – Although not a national holiday, this day is observed as remembrance of the work she did to establish women's right to vote. Unfortunately, she died in 1906 – 14 yrs prior to the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution.

February 16 – Presidents Day/Washington's Birthday – Became a federal holiday in 1879 to celebrate our Founding Father and first U.S. President's birthday which was actually February 22nd. It was moved to the third Monday in February in 1968 as part of the Uniform Monday Holiday Act. It is also intended to honor all American Presidents.

February 19 – Iwo Jima Day – commemorates the Battle of Iwo Jima and the successful capture of the Japanese island during WWII. The image of six Marines raising the American flag has stood as a legacy of patriotism and Americanism.

U.S. Coast Guard Reserve Birthday – The Coast Guard Reserve was established 1941 and will celebrate it's 85th birthday. It was modeled after the Naval Reserve. After WWII, these reservists performed coastal patrols and port security work.

February 8-14 – National Salute to Veteran Patients Week – Established in 1978 by the Veterans' Administration, the week is dedicated to veterans in VA hospitals and facilities to honor and thank them for their service.

March 1 – Asiatic Fleet Memorial Day – Established in 2002 by President George W. Bush, this day serves as a memorial to the naval veterans who lost their lives in 1942 as the *U.S.S. Houston* – a part of the Asiatic Fleet was sunk during WWII defending against the Japanese fleet.

March 3 – National Anthem Day – Francis Scott Key wrote the poem that was standardized by John Philip Sousa which became The Star-Spangle Banner which was first performed on December 5, 1917. However, it did not become our National Anthem until President Herbert Hoover signed it into law in 1931.

Naval Reserve Birthday – Established by Congress in 1915. By WWII, the Naval Reserve Force made up 84% of the U.S. Navy's fighting force. It was renamed the Navy Reserve in 2005.

March 4 – Hug a G.I. Day – Founded in 1996 as a way to show appreciation and support for military personnel, both active and retired.

March 13 – National K-9 Veterans Day – Serves to mark the establishment of the U.S. Army's War Dog Program in 1942 which officially recognized dogs as part of the military. It honors military working dogs who have served alongside U.S Armed Forces since WWI.

March 16 – Robert Goddard Day – Honors physicist, Robert Goddard, who successfully launched the first liquid-fuel powered rocket in 1926. He is considered the father of modern rocketry and space exploration. His work and inventions laid the groundwork for space exploration and, therefore, the U.S. Space Force.

March 18 – National Supreme Sacrifice Day – Established in 2004 to honor those who gave their lives for the safety and freedom of others. It has been expanded to include emergency responders as well as military personnel.

March 21 – Rosie the Riveter Day – Established by Congress in 2017, this date honors the women who took up their patriotic duty in the work force to support the WWII war effort. For the first time ever, there were more than 19 million women in the work force working in factories for heavy artillery and steel mills.

March 25 – National Medal of Honor Day – First celebrated in 1991 having been signed into law and established by President George H. W. Bush. The Medal of Honor is the highest military award for valor and was created in 1861 to honor the heroism and sacrifice displayed by members of the military. The date commemorates the presentation of the first Medals of Honor in 1863 to six members of the "Andrews Raiders" during the Civil War.

March 29 – National Vietnam War Veterans Day – On this date in 1973, the last troops left Vietnam and the Military Assistance Command was disbanded. President Obama proclaimed March 29th a day to recognize those who served in Vietnam on the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War in 2012. It was signed into law by President Trump on March 28, 2017.

March 1-7 – National Invest in Veterans Week – Dedicated to honoring veteran entrepreneurs and their contributions to global economy through mentoring and funding opportunities.

Feel free to reach out to me any time if you need assistance or help with this or any program. If you have questions about reporting or what goes where. I love hearing from the membership and love helping.

Diana Ward, Americanism Chairman
11463 Skyline Dr.
Fenton, MI 48430
(810) 955-2931
legalblaze@aol.com



Michigan Department VFW Auxiliary AUXILIARY OUTREACH – February-March

www.vfwauxmi.org

Facebook Page: Auxiliary Outreach-Michigan

National Theme: *From Sea to Shining Sea Honoring Veterans Who Keep Us Free*
Department Theme: *We Don't Know Them All, But We Owe Them All*

Hello everyone, Happy New Year, let's make 2026 the best year yet. Your reporting activities have been amazing thus far keep up the good work and keep volunteering. Be creative in helping other organizations and thank you for being part of our VFW Auxiliary Organization.

What is Auxiliary Community Outreach?

Auxiliary Community Outreach is volunteer work performed by an Auxiliary under the direction of another organization, for the benefit of their community or its institutions. It is a donation of time, not in-kind or monetary donations. It's about partnering with other organizations in our communities to help improve where we live.

Auxiliary Community Outreach can:

- Be performed by people of any age, skill set or ability level.
- Benefit any group of people such as youth, senior citizens and those with disabilities.
- Benefit animals, the environment and public spaces.
- Be done in communities of all types and sizes – rural, suburban and urban, small and large. What's Considered Auxiliary Community Outreach Examples include:
 - Working walks or runs that benefit other organizations as an event spotter, water station volunteer, timekeeper, etc. (Walking or running in the race is not part of Auxiliary Community Outreach; that's participation, not partnering.)
 - Working with local police on child ID kits or with EMTs to host CPR Training.
 - Working with firefighters on fire safety and prevention.
 - Working with parks and recreation departments to plant trees, develop non-veteran related community art installations and on adopt-a-park initiatives.
 - Helping with a spay and neuter animal clinic. • Handing out food at soup kitchens.
- Reach out to local groups and organizations to see how your Auxiliary can be of assistance.

If you are unsure of whether your project will count toward the Auxiliary Outreach Program, contact me feel free to contact me with your questions. Good bless you all

Rachel Rhode
2253 Co Rd 451
Rogers City, MI 49779
989-745-4966
picklefreak@outlook.com



Michigan Department VFW Auxiliary "Buddy"® Poppy/National Home – Feb/Mar 2026

www.vfwauxmi.org

Facebook Page: "Buddy"® Poppy/National Home-Michigan

National Theme: *From Sea to Shining Sea Honoring Veterans Who Keep Us Free*
Department Theme: *We Don't Know Them All, But We Owe Them All*

Buddy Poppy

I want to thank everyone who brought a Buddy Poppy display to Mid-Winter. They were all wonderful. I do have some great news for you. The VFW is having their own Buddy Poppy contest and have invited all the Auxiliaries that had displays at our Mid-Winter to bring them to June Convention. They are asking that anyone who didn't do a display at mid-winter to pair up with the VFW and turn in a display for June Convention. The rules for this contest are the VFW National Buddy Poppy contest rules. You can find them on our website. There are three categories and the rules are the same as our contest. The idea behind this is to get the VFW and Auxiliaries working together on these displays. The Winner in each category will then be sent on to National. I am so excited and think this is such a great Idea. If you have any questions at all please feel free to contact me. I can't wait to see them all at June Convention.

We have shared a lot of great ideas on how to use your poppies. Keep reporting and using your poppies. Valentine Day is just around the corner. Share how you incorporated your poppies in to your dinners Center pieces and decorations. I can not wait to see how you use them. Also do not forget to keep getting out and educating our communities on what the Buddy Poppy is. Thank you for all you have done this year and I can not say it enough keep reporting.

VFW National Home

As The VFW National Home goes into its 101 year of serving our Veterans They are asking we get out in our Communities and promote the VFW National Home. There are so many Veteran Families out there that need a fresh start. Talk to your service officers in your area make sure they are aware of this great place. The Helpline is also a great way to promote the Home. The VFW National Home has many resources to help Veterans and their families even if the program is not right for them they may still have resources to help the Family.

You can no longer get a Centennial Life membership. Life memberships are still offered and are now \$100. If you have not bought a life membership yet this year it is time to do that now.

Have you sent in your Health and Happiness quotas of .10 or .25 cents a member. If not now is a good time to do that. Make sure you report it

If you would like to do a special project for the National Home give them a call and they will find one that will fit you. Thank you for all of your support for this special place.

I can't say it enough Report! Report! Report!

Annabelle Furgason
8765 S. Old Elm Ln. #62
Newaygo, Mi 49337
231-329-0445
bittersweetgolf@gmail.com



Michigan Department VFW Auxiliary Extension & Revitalization/Chief of Staff February/March 2026

www.vfwauxmi.org

Facebook Page: [Extension & Revitalization-Michigan](#)

National Theme: *From Sea to Shining Sea Honoring Veterans Who Keep Us Free*

Department Theme: *We Don't Know Them All, But We Owe Them All*

Reminder: Chief of Staff National Awards

If you'd like to nominate someone for one of this year's two National Awards, now's your chance. Any Auxiliary or member can nominate a fellow member or a District President. You'll need to fill out the official entry form, which you can find in the MALTA Member Resources. Please make sure your form reaches me by March 31, 2026.



1. National Awards for Members

Citation and a \$25 VFW Store gift certificate to one member in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the best assistance to the Chief of Staff in establishing a new VFW Auxiliary with the approval of the Department President.

2. Awards for District Presidents or Official Representatives

Citation and a \$25 VFW Store gift certificate to one District President or Official Representative in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the best assistance to the Chief of Staff with a struggling VFW Auxiliary by mentoring and maintaining a close relationship until the VFW Auxiliary becomes healthy, with the approval of the Department President. Use of MALTA Healthy Auxiliary tools and mentor training is required.

Mentoring and Performance Improvement Plans (PIP): This year, our mentors and Auxiliaries have a new resource to help them tackle challenges. As Karlene Beams, National Extension & Revitalization Ambassador, explains on her blog, the PIP was designed so Auxiliaries can take the lead in figuring out how, who, and when to address their own problems. When Auxiliaries take charge of their improvement process, they're more likely to solve issues and stick with the changes that help them stay healthy. What's especially helpful about the PIP is that it kicks in during the "yellow flag" phase—before any suspension is on the table. That gives Auxiliaries a chance to work things out while keeping their operations running smoothly.

Extension: How many times do you travel to other cities in Michigan and the first thing you do is look to see if they have a VFW there? If they do, check with them to see if they also have an Auxiliary. If they don't then start talking fondly of the Auxiliary and letting them know all the wonderful things we do for veterans. If they sound interested, let me know and I can assist them with starting a new Auxiliary!

Show off what your Auxiliary is accomplishing! Did your group support the Voice of Democracy or Patriot's Pen contests this year? Are you involved in the VFW Auxiliary Patriotic Art or Illustrating America programs? These Youth and Scholarship activities are great opportunities to

spread the word about what we do. Share your efforts—let people in the community see how you're making a difference for both our youth and our veterans.

New Auxiliary Organizers: If you attended my training session at the Mid-Winter Conference, thank you for joining me! If you're currently an organizer and would like a copy of the PowerPoint text, just reach out—either by email or phone, using the contact information below—and I'll be happy to send it your way. And if you're interested in becoming an organizer, let me know! There are several VFWs across Michigan hoping to launch new Auxiliaries, and we'd really appreciate your help.

Healthy Auxiliary Resources: You'll find a ton of helpful materials for your Auxiliary on our national website, www.vfwauxiliary.org. Once you log in, head to the "Member Resources" section — it's packed with tools designed to make your work easier. One standout is the Healthy Communication Phone/Text Tree. Good communication is the foundation of a strong Auxiliary, and this tool maps out exactly who should contact whom to share news fast and keep everyone in the loop. Plus, it encourages a personal touch by reaching out to members directly with a phone call or text.



R U Healthy Checklist reminders for February:

- ✓ Dues must be paid on at least ten (10) members on or before February 1, 2026
- ✓ 100% +1 in membership
- ✓ Reported in all programs
- ✓ October/November/December Audit is due to Department by February 28, 2026
- ✓ Attend your District meeting
- ✓ Purchase 2026 Bylaws and Ritual from the VFW Store

R U Healthy Checklist reminders for March:

- ✓ 101% + in membership.
- ✓ Reported in all programs.
- ✓ Project, promotion and/or donation made to each National Program by March 31, 2026.
- ✓ Submit any entry forms for National Awards to your Department chairmen by March 31, 2026, check your Guide Sheets for information on these awards.
- ✓ National Home Health & Happiness donation made by March 31, 2026.
- ✓ All monies owed to Department must be paid in full by March 31, 2026.

If there is anything that I assist you with, don't hesitate to contact me using the following information. Continue to honor our veterans who keep us free!

Marilyn J. Malick
Department Chief of Staff/Extension & Revitalization Chairman
15903 Venice Ave.
Clinton Township, MI 48035
586-536-6004
MJMalick@msn.com





Michigan Department VFW Auxiliary Historian/Media Relations Bulletin February 2026/March 2026

www.vfwauxmi.org

Facebook Page: Historian/Media Relations-Michigan

National Theme: From Sea to Shining Sea Honoring Veterans Who Keep Us Free
Department Theme: We Don't Know Them All, But We Owe Them All

Historians, we are now into February and getting close to when the Auxiliary Scholarships and contest due dates are going to be coming, March 31, 2026. The ones coming due then are Continuing Education Scholarship, Young American Creative Patriotic Art Contest, 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contest (Scholarship Program) and the VFW Auxiliary National Illustrating America Art Contest (Youth Program). You need to be promoting all the VFW Auxiliary Programs on social media so members and the community can be aware of the many activities we are doing to help our veterans, youth and community. Remember to always attach the hashtag #AuxiliariesinAction to your Social Media Reels. The Historian/Media Relations VFW Auxiliary National Award Form and Reel are also due March 31, 2026, to the Historian/Media Relations Department Chairman. The National Award is for the "Most Outstanding Social Media Reel Highlighting the VFW Auxiliary in Action." The form also qualifies your Auxiliary for the Department Auxiliary Award and the completion of the first goal on the Guide Sheet. Be sure to fill in that form and send it me. Your Reel of your "Auxiliary in Action" on social media is unique to your auxiliary and may be the one with the right touch!



Kristin DiGiacomo, our National Historian/Media Relations Ambassador has tips on how to send your Reel's link using 4 easy steps!

1. **Find the Reel:** Locate the Reel you want to share
2. **Tap Share:** Tap the Share icon below or on the righthand side of the reel.
3. **Copy Link:** Select the Copy Link option.
4. **Send:** Paste the Link into an email and send it with the completed award form.

Remember you can find the award form on our Department Website

vfwauxmi.org>programs>historian/media relations>award form

or find it in Malta:

vfwauxiliary.org>login>member resources>historian>award forms



When you have activities that are benefiting our veterans, youth, scholarships or assisting a community organization you can promote them on social media along with other media platforms like newspapers, T.V., radio, flyers, magazines, newsletters, billboards and signs. Stay in contact with the people who can help you on

these platforms, so they know who you are and what your mission is for the veterans and community. Soon they will be reaching out to you when they have a project that would benefit your post or auxiliary. It becomes a partnership. If your contact is unable to attend your auxiliary event, you can send a Press Release to the contact. Print a copy of event photos and write up an article about the event (include the 5 W's) and send to your contact.

Before you contact anyone to cover an event your auxiliary is hosting or participating in, answer the following questions:

- Are local people involved?
- Is the event happening in the near future?
- Will non-members be interested in attending or hearing about the event?
- Will the event help the community? And how?
- Is the activity or event unique?
- Does the activity or event promote a new idea or concept?

Remember to report your reels, activities, and events you put on social media and other media platforms showing members and community your achievements. Place the information and photos in your 2025-2026 auxiliary scrapbook for memories, accomplishments, and ideas for future years. Post on the Historian/Media Relations-Michigan Facebook page to show your ideas and help other auxiliaries with new ideas.

Blanche Brown
 Dept. Historian/Media Relations Chairman
bbrownvfw@gmail.com
 517-896-7752
 10975 Irish Rd.
 Vermontville, MI 49096





Michigan Department VFW Auxiliary Hospital – February/March 2026

www.vfwauxmi.org

Facebook Page: Hospital - Michigan

National Theme: *From Sea to Shining Sea Honoring Veterans Who Keep Us Free*

Department Theme: *We Don't Know Them All, But We Owe Them All*

Now is the time of the year when we can look back and remember the holiday celebrations, as well as look ahead to all we still need to accomplish. This past holiday season was emotional for many veterans, so we must make a point to reach out to our veterans with fun-filled activities. We are the best volunteer organization for our veterans. We also need to reach out to the staff at VA facilities, non-VA facilities, state veterans' homes to let them know how much we appreciate them. Be sure to report these activities, along with your reports. If you have pictures, be sure to post them on our Department Hospital page.

Reporting: In addition to reporting, let's be sure to post your auxiliary's hospital activities. By posting pictures and descriptions of what your auxiliary has done, it might spur another auxiliary looking for ideas to think "Hey that's an idea! Let's try it." Sharing each other's activities helps us bring smiles to our veterans.

Has your auxiliary reported your hospital work? There are about 1/3 of our Michigan auxiliaries who have not turned in one hospital report or even said they were reading the Hospital Bulletin at their meeting. You can let me know you are reading the Hospital Bulletin when you put the MASH code word in your report. The code word is always highlighted in bold letters and italicized.

VFW Auxiliary Hospital Program Guide: A helpful guide is available FREE on MALTA Website. If you, as Hospital Chairman, have not yet downloaded and printed out, do it now. It is a wealth of information. In it you will find information about reporting hospital work, hospital service pins and recognition awards. This leads us on to the next topic – Hospital Awards.

Hospital Awards: Now is the time to think about hospital awards, specifically, Outstanding Hospital Volunteer of the Year (Award No. 3), deadline this nomination is due to Department Hospital Chairman by March 31, 2026. Also, due March 31, 2026, is the Hospital Volunteer Recruiter Award No. 1 and No. 2. Copies of these nomination forms can be found on MALTA.

For more on Hospital Awards and Program Goals go to the (Program) Guide Sheet 2025-2026 where you will find the Membership Categories, Achievements, and Department Awards. If you can't find yours, let me know and I can email you a copy.

[VOUNTEER RECOGNITION](#): Don't forget to recognize the hospital volunteers in your auxiliary.
Again, go to MALTA where you will find:

- Application for Hospital Service Pins & Bar Guard. Fillable online.
- Hospital Volunteer ***Appreciation*** Certificate forms. There are two which are fillable online

Ann Backhurst
1106 N. McClellan Ave
Marquette MI 49855
Phone: 251.604.5998
vfwaux.annbackhurst@gmail.com

UNWAVERING SUPPORT



FOR UNCOMMON HEROES®

Michigan Department VFW Auxiliary Legislative – February/March 2026

www.vfwauxmi.org

Facebook Page: Legislative-Michigan

National Theme: *From Sea to Shining Sea Honoring Veterans Who Keep Us Free*

Department Theme: *We Don't Know Them All, But We Owe Them All*

Happy February and March

Let us make the most of these months when it comes to creating a Thank You Note Event with your Auxiliary to provide Thank you's to our Veterans while inserting the QR codes for Action Corps Week and/or the QR code for the VFW Priority goals. They have just revised them if you'd like to give them a look they can be found here:

<https://www.vfw.org/advocacy/national-legislative-service>

This is a great time to think about what kind of Thank you card event you'd like to hold. Valentines are a sure way to share the love and gratitude we have for our Veterans. It will let them know they are not forgotten and we and the VFW are still fighting for them on Capitol Hill. This is a reminder of our National and Department award:

NATIONAL AWARDS FOR AUXILIARIES

1. Most outstanding activity and/or event to create thank-you notes and cards to veterans that include links to VFW Action Corps Weekly and/or the VFW Priority Goals.

● Citation and \$25 to one VFW Auxiliary in each of the 10 Program Divisions with the most outstanding activity and or event to create thank-you notes and cards to veterans that include links to VFW Action Corps. Weekly and/or the VFW Priority Goals. Entry form required and available on MALTA Member Resources. VFW Auxiliaries must send the required entry form to their Department Legislative Chairman **by March 30, 2026**, for judging. Citations will be mailed directly to the winning VFW Auxiliaries from National Headquarters and money will be deposited into the winning VFW Auxiliary account after the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.

Also we can share with still active military to let them know what our Organizations are doing to ensure their voices are heard also for when they are no longer serving. The VFW will stand for them. You do not have to be a veteran to sign up for the VFW Action Corps. Weekly you just need to be a person who cares about Veterans. Speaking of Action Corps Weekly lets make sure we are clicking on the links in the email when they arrive in our inbox.

Now as some of you might be aware we have an opportunity to share our stories to help legislators understand how the actions or in actions are not only affecting Veterans, but also us, their families.

Please take the time and opportunity to share your stories about any of the following topics and how they have affected you:

- VA Health care Access/Delays
- Community Care
- Toxic Exposure (Agent Orange, Burn Pits, Camp Lejeune, etc.)
- Concurrent Receipt (Major Richard Star Act)
- Women Veterans' Health
- VA Benefits
- VA Disability Claims/Appeals Process
- VA Education/GI Bill
- Employment
- Transition
- Mental Health & Suicide Prevention
- Homelessness & Housing Assistance
- Military Readiness
- Military Retirees
- Food Insecurity/Hunger Among Military Families
- Child care & Family Support
- Survivors Benefits (DIC) & Gold Star Families
- Burial and Memorial Benefits
- Caregiver & Family Support

VFW Voices of Service

Stories in Action



The VFW is gathering real stories from veterans and military families. These experiences help show how decisions made in Washington affect real lives.

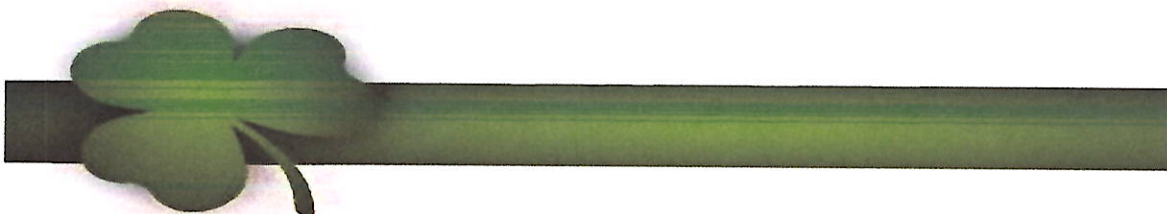
Scan the QR code to share your story.



Share Your Story. Shape the Future.

If you have any questions about your guidesheet or about the Thank you events please reach out. I would be happy to hear from you.

Arcadia Porter
414 East Shaw St.
Charlotte, MI 48813
(805) 743-7890
NowWhatArcadia@gmail.com





Michigan Department VFW Auxiliary Membership - February / March 2026

www.vfwauxmi.org

Facebook Page: Membership- Michigan

National Theme: *From Sea to Shining Sea Honoring Veterans Who Keep Us Free*
Department Theme: *We Don't Know Them All, But We Owe Them All*



I know us Michiganders are used to the frigid cold weather we've been having lately, especially those brave souls who live north of "the bridge" in the UP. That's why it sounds so good this time of year to look forward to the warmth of summer as we set our sails and head around our inland "seas", the Great Lakes, guided by our numerous lighthouses.

The 2026 calendar year is well underway and I know if you're like me, your New Year's Resolution is already in the rear-view mirror. It's hard to believe that about 25% of these "goals" are broken within the 1st week of January and scarcely 10% actually make it thru the entire year.

The unique thing about life is we don't need to wait for Father Time to knock on our door as another year leaves us. We can make a resolution any old time we want to, or need to. I would suggest to you, it's never too late. As that old saying goes, "Some people have to be out on a limb before they turn over a new leaf." Let's not be "those people".

Our resolution? Just as that beam of light from the lighthouse is transformed and refracted into a powerful stream of light thru the Fresnel lens as it reaches out miles over the seas showing ships the way to safe harbor, each and every one of us...you...me...we all need to resolve to recruit **ONE** new member...**NOW...TODAY**. Just as that beam of light stretches out for miles, so should our reach.



You will never know when that seemingly daunting task of finding a new member will pay-off. But, it'll never pay-off if you don't keep searching for that one elusive "member" as the lighthouse does as it guides sailors with its powerful beam of light. Be that beam of light.

The eligible members are out there. They are, literally, everywhere. As I mentioned in my last bulletin, our organization is shrinking in membership due to deaths, aging member, and to "walk aways". Attracting younger members can be difficult. They work, they have young families, they have kids in school and have a multitude of activities that their kids are involved in. Let's face it, some things are out of our control, but there are things we can do, such as contacting former members that let their membership lapse. Have your membership committee contact them. Maybe invite them to an Auxiliary "Meet and Greet" event. Serve appetizers, play games. Get to know them all over again. Make it simple and fun. Find out what caused them to walk away and really listen to them.

Attracting Younger Members Might Be Tougher

Here are some suggestions to help you “navigate” attracting younger people:

- Try to provide a babysitting service so the moms and dads can come to the meetings.
- If you have youth groups, maybe they can pitch in and play games with their kids on meeting nights.
- Have them do arts and crafts, serve cookies and punch.
- This would be a great time to explain the Illustrating Art contest for all school aged children.
- Maybe a local bakery will donate cookies.

I feel the BEST way to get people interested in our organization, is to go out and SHOW them what we are about. Show them how proud we are of who we are and what we do. Wear the membership pins with the QR code. Do you have a badge? Wear it. My auxiliary purchased shirts that are patriotic and boldly states our Post / Aux number with the QR codes for each. It makes a statement and it stands out. That’s what we should do for our veterans...STAND OUT AND UP. They deserve all we can do for them. We don’t know them all, but we owe them all. If your Post is having a Valentine’s Day party or a St. Patrick’s Day dinner, make sure you have your membership board on prominent display with the Auxiliary QR Code plainly visible along with applications!

I hope you enjoyed the presentation at Mid-Winter along with Cathy Sasse’s explanation of the new rules for the new membership application. Making sure the application is filled out correctly will ensure that the new member will be getting his/her card very soon. I know some of you have gotten your Membership pin for recruiting 5 members from National. Congrats!! You will also be in a drawing for a \$100 Visa gift card. For any member who recruits twenty new/rejoined members, you will be in a drawing at National Convention for \$400 Visa gift card.

I know we are on track to get the GOLD Award from National for reaching 100% PLUS in paid by April 30th. Why”? Because Michigan ROCKS!

God Bless you, our Veterans and the United States of America.

Marian Belaire
17384 Doris St.
Livonia, MI 48152
248.345.2442
mbelairemvf@yahoo.com





Michigan Department VFW Auxiliary Scholarships – February 2026/March 2026

www.vfwauxmi.org

Facebook Page: Scholarships-Michigan

National Theme: *From Sea to Shining Sea Honoring Veterans Who Keep Us Free*
Department Theme: *We Don't Know Them All, But We Owe Them All*



Congratulations to Voice of Democracy, Patriot's Pen and Teacher of the Year winners.

It is time to concentrate on the Continuing Education Scholarship, 3 Dimensional and Young American Patriotic Art contest. Let's get the word out. Social media is great way to get the word out. When posting on Facebook, try using the hashtag #auxiliarscholarship. All the forms and instructions can be found on the Department website. Brochures can be found on the National website www.vfwauxiliary.org.

CONTINUING EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP

Each year, one (1) recipient will be selected from each of the four (4) VFW Auxiliary Conferences and will be awarded a \$1,250 scholarship to be used within the academic year following completion of the contest. The scholarship will be paid directly to the American college/university or vocational/technical school of the awardee's choice upon the completion of the scholarship activation requirements. The deadline for submission is February 15. The entries are sent directly to National. The entry forms are on the Department website. National President Lois Callahan's special project this year is the Continuing Education Scholarship. Donations can be made through Malta or send a check to National Headquarters earmarked National President's 2025-2026 Special Project

YOUNG AMERICAN PATRIOTIC ART CONTEST

The scholarships are: First place - \$15,000 Second place - \$7,500 Third place - \$3,500 Fourth place and Fifth place - \$1,500 Sixth place and Seventh place - \$1,000 Eighth place through Nineteenth place - \$500

- Students do not have to be related to a VFW or VFW Auxiliary member to participate.
- Students in grades 9-12 by March 31 deadline who are enrolled in a public, private, parochial or home school program in the United States, its territories and possessions, or dependents of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools.
- Although U.S. citizenship is not required, students must be lawful U.S. permanent residents or have applied for permanent resident (the application for which has not been denied) and intends to become a U.S. citizen.
- Foreign exchange students, students aged 20 or older, GED and adult education students are not eligible.
- Previous winners of VFW Auxiliary National Young American Creative Patriotic Art Contests are not eligible.

3D DIMENSIONAL ART CONTEST

The scholarships are: First place - \$2,500 Second place - \$1,500 Third place - \$1,000 Fourth place \$500.

- Students do not have to be related to a VFW or VFW Auxiliary member to participate.
- Students in grades 9-12 by March 31 deadline who are enrolled in a public, private, parochial or home school program in the United States, its territories and possessions, or dependents of U.S.

- military or civilian personnel in overseas schools.
- Although U.S. citizenship is not required, students must be lawful U.S. permanent residents or have applied for permanent resident (the application for which has not been denied) and intends to become a U.S. citizen.
 - Foreign exchange students, students aged 20 or older, GED and adult education students are not eligible.
 - Previous winners of VFW Auxiliary National 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contests are not eligible.

Both art contests entries are due to me by April 15. Send the art contest applications to your local schools or drop of at the library. Maybe your community center offers art classes or an art school.

NATIONAL AWARD

Most creative/unique activity and/or event educating their community about the scholarship opportunities in the VFW and the VFW Auxiliary. Fill out the form and send to me by March 31. I would like a lot of entries.

DeeAnn Miller
5742 Harrison St.
Garden City, MI 48135
auxmischolarships@yahoo.com





Michigan Department VFW Auxiliary Veterans & Family Support – February/March 2026

www.vfwauxmi.org

Facebook Page: Veterans and Family Support-Michigan

National Theme: *From Sea to Shining Sea Honoring Veterans Who Keep Us Free*
Department Theme: *We Don't Know Them All, But We Owe Them All*

Supporting the Caregivers Who Serve Every Day

Behind every veteran who is healing, adapting, or aging, there is often a caregiver quietly serving alongside them. These caregivers—spouses, parents, children, and friends—provide emotional support, medical assistance, transportation, and daily care, often at great personal sacrifice.



Caregivers may experience burnout, isolation, financial strain, and stress-related health issues. As an Auxiliary, we can be a lifeline by reminding caregivers they are **seen, valued, and supported**.

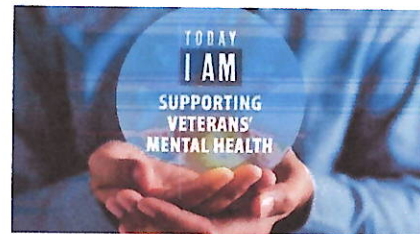
How You Can Help Caregivers:

- Offer respite support through meal trains, errands, or check-in calls
- Provide information about caregiver resources and benefits
- Send handwritten notes or care packages to show appreciation
- Advocate for caregiver recognition at local and state levels

Sometimes, the simplest act—listening without judgment—can make the greatest difference.

Mental Health Matters

Mental health challenges affect veterans of all eras. Experiences related to military service—such as trauma, loss, or long separations from family—can surface long after a veteran returns home. Depression, anxiety, PTSD, and substance misuse are real struggles, but **help and hope are available**.



Reducing stigma and encouraging open conversations about mental health is vital. When veterans feel safe asking for help, healing can begin.

How You Can Support Veteran Mental Health:

- Share information about local and national mental health resources
- Encourage veterans to seek professional help when needed
- Promote awareness programs and suicide prevention initiatives
- Be present—sometimes companionship is the first step toward healing

Your compassion and advocacy can help save lives.

Reintegration into Civilian Life

Transitioning from military to civilian life can be challenging. Veterans may face difficulties finding employment, adjusting to a different pace of life, reconnecting with family, or translating military skills into civilian careers.

Successful reintegration takes time, patience, and strong community support. The Auxiliary plays a critical role in helping veterans feel welcomed, understood, and empowered in this next chapter of life.

Ways to Support Reintegration:

- Assist with job fairs, resume workshops, and networking opportunities
- Support education and training initiatives for veterans
- Encourage participation in community and Auxiliary activities
- Foster environments where veterans feel a sense of belonging

Every veteran deserves the opportunity to thrive beyond their service.

Upcoming Patriotic Holidays & Recognition Days (February/March)

Please consider hosting an event, reaching out, or taking a moment to honor these important dates:

- February 3 – Four Chaplains Day
- February 19 – Coast Guard Reserve Birthday
- February 22 – George Washington's Birthday
- February (all month) – National Caregivers Month
- March 3 – Navy Reserve Birthday
- March 13 – K-9 Veterans Day
- March 25 – Medal of Honor Day
- March 29 – National Vietnam War Veterans Day

April Lowery

7820 Heritage Drive Apt 4

Lansing, Mi 48917

707-495-2195

asmith0725@gmail.com



Michigan Department VFW Auxiliary Youth/Camp Trotter Bulletin – Feb/Mar 2026

www.vfwauxmi.org

Facebook Page: Youth Activities/Camp Trotter - Michigan

National Theme: *From Sea to Shining Sea Honoring Veterans Who Keep Us Free*
Department Theme: *We Don't Know Them All, But We Own Them All*

Youth:

Valentine's Day is fast approaching with many Posts/Auxiliaries hosting events. Get your Youth involved! Make them feel like belong by letting them setup, decorate, prep, and serve.

Keep your eyes open for opportunities to award Youth with one of the Citations found on Malta and the Department website. Award the **Youth Acts of Kindness Citation** for Youth that go out of their way to help and be kind. Utilize the **Patriotic Youth Citation** for those who readily demonstrate Patriotism. And don't forget to honor those youth groups who support our Veterans with the **Youth Groups Supporting Veterans Citation**. Let the schools, after school group leaders, church group, and Boy/Girl Scout leaders know you are looking for Youth that go out of their way to serve, help, and be kind to others.



Continue to promote the **Illustrating America Art Contest**. Young artists are everywhere – Homeschool groups, church youth groups, in our neighborhoods, and in our own families. Auxiliary deadline is March 31st. District deadline is **BEFORE** April 15th so your entries can get to Department by April 15th, and the National deadline is May 5th.

Keep your **Reading Buddy Program** alive or get one going by partnering with a classroom or school that would like volunteers to do one on one reading with a child. Or invite children to your post and have them practice reading to your Veterans and Auxiliary members. Teach those children about Patriotism by incorporating books from the Patriotism Through Literacy book list.

Remember, every way that you interact with the Youth in your community is an opportunity to build relationships with their families and grow your membership! Also, remember that you should have parental consent for all activities, so get those waivers signed!



Keep in mind that the Youth Activities National Program Awards form is due to me by March 31, 2026. So often there are no entries in a category,

so complete the form and send it to me by the deadline. Don't let a category go unawarded!

Reporting:

Keep up the good job reporting! While I want to know all you do, focus on the Achievements and Department Award categories. I enjoy reading each and every report that is submitted! You are amazing! Please remember to include the number of Youth Groups or individual Youth on your report. When in doubt, report it anyway. If you have any questions, please call or email me!



[This Photo](#) by Unknown

Camp Trotter Table Fundraiser:

Districts 8, 9, 10, & 11 should be putting together their baskets for the Mid-Winter Conference. Some theme ideas are Sports, Coffee, Games, Camping, and Easter. Use your creativity! All items should be new or like-new. Districts are welcome to donate multiple baskets, and Auxiliaries may donate their own baskets, as well. We will draw half the baskets on Friday and half on Saturday. Please get your baskets to the Auxiliary Camp Trotter table first thing Friday morning.

Mid-Winter – Districts 8, 9, 10, 11

Conventions – Districts 12, 13, 14, 15



Some of our Camp Trotter Board members have been at camp working on maintenance projects. Camp will be open this year. It is the Board's intention to have the applications available at Mid-Winter. There will be an increase in price to offset the cost of running camp. As generous as our Auxiliaries and Posts are, our donations are not enough to keep the camp out of the red without the price increase.

And, as always, please reach out if you have any questions, comments, concerns, or just want to say hi. Also, please note that I have a new address.

Kelly Smyczynski
10032 Fox Run Dr.
Davison, MI 48423
810-441-9996
auxcampchair@gmail.com

