



**Department of Oklahoma
Veterans of Foreign Wars**
P.O. Box 1106 OKC, OK 73101-1126
(405) 850-0815 / www.vfwoklahoma.org

October 2023-2024 Series

*“The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between, the leader is a servant.”
—Max DePree*

**DEPARTMENT OF OKLAHOMA HEADQUARTERS
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES**

General Orders No. 4

2023-2024 Series

1. Attention of Post Commanders is directed to the Commander-in-Chief’s decision in response to questions raised concerning alcoholic beverages and smoking/vaping in the Post meeting room during the Post meeting as set forth below:

“It is held to be objectionable and contrary to accepted rules of order and proper decorum implicit in the ritual of the Veterans of Foreign Wars to permit alcoholic beverages or the use of smoking/vaping products in the Post meeting room during the Post meeting. Accordingly, the presence, dispensation, and/or consumption of alcoholic beverages or the use of smoking/vaping products in VFW meeting rooms during VFW meetings are unacceptable and are prohibited.”

It is the intent of the Commander-in-Chief’s decision, regarding this response, to include Post, County Council, District and Department meetings, whereas it is held to be objectionable. Please refer to section 1001 (25) of the National Manual of Procedure.

BY ORDER:

ATTEST:

o/s

o/s

Erica L. Traxler
State Commander
Department of Oklahoma
Veterans of Foreign Wars

Michael L. Merit
State Adjutant
Department of Oklahoma
Veterans of Foreign Wars



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State Commander

Erica Traxler

Department Convention Co-Chairman

Student Veterans of America Liaison

Citizenship Education Chair

Comrades,

Hello Comrades. I hope this month's general orders finds you well. I am proud of the members of this great organization. You are out in your communities making a difference for veterans and their families. I have had the pleasure of visiting some posts and meeting new people. I got the opportunity to work the Oklahoma City Fair and the Tulsa Fair. We are at Officer Training this weekend and have Fall Festival in Clinton, OK at the Frisco Conference Center October 13-15. I am impressed with the number of attendees at the Schools of Instruction and Officer Training School. Thank you for taking the time to invest in your future as a leader in this organization. We will be putting out an AAR to get feedback on our training sessions.

The District Commanders are full swing into their jobs. You should expect to see them at your post meetings. I expect all post commanders or their representative to attend the district meetings as it falls in the bylaws. We are in the beginning stages of redistricting the department due to losing so many posts from lack of participation, negative actions, and other reasons. I do not want to continue losing more. Instead, I want us to recruit, recruit, recruit. I want us to get members involved and invested in the great work that we do. We have about 330,000 veterans in Oklahoma... our goal should be to have at least 10% of that population in this organization. We can meet this goal! By getting more people involved we will help to relieve the people who have been in positions for many years and allow them a reprieve. Our largest population of veterans in the VFW is Vietnam veterans. When we lose those members where will we be? If we want to be around in another 100 years, we must recruit! I have faith in you.

Don't forget about EPIC Charter Schools. They reached out to us and have opened their doors for the Voice of Democracy, Patriot's Pen, and Teacher of the Year programs. They are located all over the state of Oklahoma with 1000 teachers



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and many students. The two POCs are Mark and Lauren Williams. Their email addresses are as follows: Mark.williams@epiccharterschools.org; lauren.williams@epiccharterschools.org I hope that you find many more teacher and student applications this year and for many years to come.

I want to thank everyone for their hard work so far this year. You are working your programs, membership, getting out into your communities, and supporting veterans and their families in the best way possible. You are doing amazing things and I look forward to seeing what the rest of the year brings. I am excited to see everyone at Fall Festival.

Erica Traxler

State Commander

Department of Oklahoma

Veterans of Foreign Wars

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<https://vfwoklahoma.org/>



State Senior Vice Commander

Dan Fuller

To all the 405 crew that worked the OKC State Fair great job, The Tulsa State Fair is ongoing and is doing well. The Department numbers are growing!

The Officer Training in OKC had a great turn out, Thanks to all that attended and thanks to the instructors.



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Congratulations to Post 2027 STILLWATER the first Post to make it to 100% they are 103.00%! There are many other Posts that are close. I will provide a 50\$ gift card to any Post Commander that attends the Fall conference that has their post at 102%

The second round of District Meetings will start next week, I'll see many of you there.

V/R

Dan M Fuller SVC

*State Junior Vice Commander
Jeff Harris*

Greeting Comrades,

I hope that all is doing well and healthy, Covid is here again so please be safe. The Oklahoma State fair went well, and the Tulsa State is right around the corner, so please help with the membership event when you can. The schools of instruction are over, and all went well, hope everyone got the chance to go to one of them. The officer training is next so please try and go to the event for good training. The VFW is always busy, and a lot of members are working to make it better. Remember there is always someone there if help is needed. Stay safe and we will see you soon.



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State Adjutant Mike Merit

Comrades, Brothers and Sisters,

Greetings! I hope all is well with you and yours and if not, I pray for a speedy recovery. We have had a very busy month between SOIs, OTS and planning for our upcoming Fall Festival in Clinton in a couple of weeks and Southern Conference 2023.

I know that a lot of people are frustrated concerning the Department Dashboard. Comrade Randy Traxler is working diligently to fix all of the issues that are going on. Last month, I worked on everyone's login, but there are still some with issues. Until we figure out what the issue is, please try this process to login in for reporting.

1. www.vfwoklahoma.org
2. Login drop-down, select Members Only, NOT Report Entry.
3. Member ID#: Your VFW member number.
4. Password: Your last name. (It is not case sensitive.)
5. Once you are logged in, select Program Reporting to continue to enter your reports.
6. If you are still having issues, please let me know at:
vfwokadj@outlook.com

I hope all of you are finding the resources added to the GOs Constant Contact emails useful. This will be the last edition of the multilink format. Next month will be the first edition of "The Grand Land Magazine" which will include the GOs and all other information that we are sending out. The idea is that everything will now be in one file to print off like a magazine to put out at your Post and District for all the membership to read. Additionally, any Districts, Posts, Auxiliaries, Cooties and Riders that would like to show off what they have done over the last month can submit an article and pictures to be included in the magazine. They



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will also be able and highly encouraged to submit upcoming events for the month so we can get that information out to the entire Department. We can all help each other that way.

I look forward to seeing everyone at Fall Fest and Southern Conference over the next month. You stay classy Oklahoma.

-Adj.

State Surgeon
Tony McGrew

Comrades, Last month I encouraged you to take charge and know where you are as far as your health is concerned. No one knows your body better than you, not even your doctor. You know when something is just not right and that is when we seek medical help. Hopefully you are taking the best care of you that you can. Do you know what your glucose number is today and your blood pressure? Remember you are in charge!!!! Taking charge of your health now will set you up for success in the coming months.

This month I want to encourage you to **KEEP MOVING**.

We were not made to sit still. We do better when we are active. Here is a list of benefits for living an active life.

Top 10 Reasons to start your fitness journey now:

1. Increases bone density and decrease risk of injury when completing everyday activities.
2. Decreases your risk of falling and improve your balance.
3. Improves your energy to better participate in activities with your loved ones.



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4. Decreases the negative effects of stress on the body and mind.
5. Sleep more soundly and deeply.
6. Increases your libido.
7. Enhances your body and mind connection for therapeutic benefits.
8. Exercising can provide opportunities to connect with your community and decrease social isolation.
9. Strength Training can help you maintain or improve your independence with your activities of daily living.
10. Learning new types of exercise promotes neuroplasticity and benefits your cognitive function. Next month we will talk about Chair Yoga.

Respectfully and keep moving,

Tony

State Chaplain
Jason Burns

Hello Comrades,

Comrades how are your Post & District Chaplain's doing so far? I cannot physically make it to every Post or District meeting to check on them, so I am relying on the membership to let me know. Now that Officer training is over, I will be available to come and help if needed at Post and District levels for Memorial events and dedications, all you need to do is have your Chaplain or Commander reach out to me and we will set a date and time and make it work. If I can't make it, I will try to get someone out there.

Chaplains, please fill out the Chaplain reports and send them up monthly. This year I submitted a Chaplain of the year award program to State and Commander Traxler has added it to her Commanders Program. In the November General Orders, I will post the Qualifications and Guidelines for it.



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We have a lot of work going on with the Chaplains right now from building a full range resource page, a Memorial/Honor service for the Dept to a Chaplains Program.

Comrades, I just that you be patient with us as our Chaplain team builds a strong Chaplain service for the Dept of Oklahoma VFW.

Thank you all for the Work you do. I will be reaching out to all Chaplains Post and District levels in November to get your feedback and to get help on the different projects the Chaplain services are doing.

Chaplain Jason Burns
VFW State Chaplain
Post 1192 Commander
D14 QM
All American District 14 Commander
All State District 14 & Post 1192 Commander

Grand Commander Military Order of the Cootie Ron Albert



Listen Up Cooties (This is all straight speak)

The Last Cootie Season (2022-2023) is complete, recorded, filed, and forever emblazoned in our hearts and minds. During the Fall Feast I need all Pup Tents to bring all the records for yearly Inspections. All the Put Tents need make sure they are *Recruiting and turning Hospital work, doing Special Projects, (Suicide Awareness) and Blood reports*. If the Put Tents have question, please call or email.



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The Southern Conference is coming quickly and need all Cooties to help with Cooties Hospitality room to work and stock with food and cootie juices. We will be having another zoom to discuss the Cooties Hospitality room.

However, there are many more milestones yet to be attained. Then there are *special challenges* that are unique to every individual. I urge you to **NOT** face them alone. ***WE ARE HERE!!!***

REMEMBER

*“In your Darkest Hour,
When the Demons come.
Call upon me Brothers and Sisters,
And WE will fight them together.*

COOTIES are the *Honor Degree of the Veterans of Foreign Wars* and as such we must recruit as many VFW members as possible. By doing so, we will expand our own recruiting pool. The challenge is, by year’s end, we recruit 10,500 new Comrades and at the same time ***“Increase and Multiply”*** our own ranks to 10,500 in total Cootie membership.

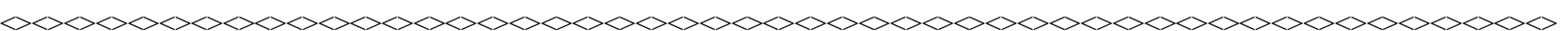
LET’s have FUN as we

Ron J. Albert

Oklahoma State ALL Star 2022-2023 Grande Commander MOC

580-512-0510

Ron200656@yahoo.com





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Youth Essay Programs *Mike Devenitch*

Voice of Democracy, Patriot Pen & Teacher of the Year

VFW YOUTH SCHOLARSHIPS: We are in the final MONTH! Put your program hard. Successful essay programs: Email, call and visit the schools. Make sure you make a connection with a teacher, Speech Teacher, English, Counselors or Administrators that will help you. For the 2023-2024 school year the following topics have been released: Voice of Democracy (VOD) audio-essay program theme is - "What Are the Greatest Attributes of Our Democracy?" and the Patriot's Pen (PP) youth essay "How Are You Inspired by America?" Both are due to the local VFW Post by midnight, Oct. 31. This is our VFW signature program, so get out and make us proud! If you have any questions or need help, please contact me! Don't forget to get your auxiliary involved. Be on the lookout for input from EPIC Charter Schools. See <https://www.vfw.org/community/youth-and-education/youth-scholarships> for more info.

TEACHER OF THE YEAR (ToY): 2023-2024 Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award: Every school has a special teacher that is doing something extra, so built a team (school/town/post) to work on the package! VFW has 3 different categories annually: Elementary, Junior High and High School teachers who teach citizenship education topics and promote America's history and traditions. Teachers who promote civic responsibility, flag etiquette and patriotism are great candidates for this award. Call the school principal and ask, which teacher fits this bill? Nominations can be submitted by fellow teachers, supervisors, you, or other interested individuals. They should be at the local VFW Post by midnight, Oct. 31. Submit all nominations to me, not district competitions. Remember: Help make your teacher, your post, district, and the state shine with a win! National has request supporting documents be limited to 5 pages. SEND ALL ENTRIES TO ME AT STATE LEVEL! <https://www.vfw.org/community/youth-and-education/teacher-of-the-year>

VOD/PP/ToY CONTACT: Michael H. Devenitch, (405) 819-9914. 4224
Manhattan Dr. Moore, OK, 73160 sentrymike@yahoo.com



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Training and Development *Randy Traxler and Jim Bassett*

FROM JIM:

When we join the VFW, everyone takes an oath as part of an initiation. If your post is not doing the initiation, you should start. The Initiation Ceremony brief form can be found on page 22 of the VFW Ritual. The Ceremonial Initiation starts on page 29 of the VFW Ritual. The presentation of the VFW insigne is found on page 43. When you read about the insigne, you can present them the VFW insigne lapel pin (item 00201), Gold filled VFW lapel pin (item 00211), or even the Membership Medal (item 00090) all available from the VFW Store. Or some other appropriate VFW insigne.

On page 9 of the VFW bylaws is the simple statement that “Every application for membership shall comply with the rules and regulations as prescribed in Section 102 of the Manual of Procedures.” Section 102 of Article I discusses applications and affiliation of new members.

This is where the initiation ceremony comes into play. All new members should be initiated into the VFW and take the member’s obligation.

“You will raise your right hand, touch the flag of our country with your left hand, pronounce your name when I pronounce mine, and repeat after me:

MEMBER'S OBLIGATION

In the presence of Almighty God and the members of this order here assembled I, (your name) do of my own free will and accord, solemnly promise and declare that: I will bear true allegiance to the Constitution of the United States of America and I will always be loyal thereto. I do further solemnly promise and declare that I will comply with the Congressional Charter Bylaws and Ritual of this order and I will always be loyal thereto that I will never wrong or defraud this organization nor a member thereof nor permit any wrong to be done to either if in my power to prevent it. I will never propose for membership any person not eligible nor one whom I know



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to be unworthy. I will never make known to anyone not authorized to receive it any of the work of this order. Should my affiliation with the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States cease in any way I will consider this pledge as binding outside

of the order as though I had remained a member of same. All this I promise and pledge upon the honor of a true comrade and a member of our great republic.”

The presentation of the insignie is simple and follows:

My comrades, I shall now decorate each of you with the Cross of Malta. It is a real foreign service decoration and the official insignie of our beloved order, recognized and protected by the United States Government as such. It is a time honored cross and has been worn with dignity from the days of the Crusades and is especially fitting for its present purpose. I trust you will wear it with credit to yourself and honor to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Comrades, you are admonished to cherish this your latest decoration, to live up to high ideals that have won it for you, to serve honorably in the new and greater war of American citizenship. I now give you the hand of comradeship, assuring you that in this great organization you will find help and comradeship, just as you will give the same to others who have proved worthy.

The oath is something that shouldn't be taken lightly. Are you living up to what the VFW stands for? How do we coach those who may have drifted from our path back into being good stewards of the VFW vision and intent?

FROM RANDY:

Comrades,

As we move into the holiday season we want to give a brief overview of two models that can help us all communicate with others in a more effective manner.

Transactional Analysis (TA) and Johari Window are two psychological models that can be used to improve communication and relationships. TA is a theory of personality and communication that helps us to understand how we interact with

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others. Johari Window is a model that helps us to understand how much we know about ourselves and how much we share with others.

When used together, TA and Johari Window can help us to have more productive and meaningful discussions. Here are some tips:

1. Be aware of your ego states.

TA identifies three ego states: Parent, Adult, and Child. (1) The Parent ego state is based on the internalized values and beliefs of our parents and other caregivers. (2) The Adult ego state is the rational and objective part of our personality. (3) The Child ego state is the emotional and spontaneous part of our personality.

When we are in a discussion, it is important to be aware of which ego state we are operating from. If we are in our Parent ego state, we may be judgmental or critical of the other person. If we are in our Child ego state, we may be emotional or defensive.

To have a productive discussion, it is important to be in our Adult ego state. This means being rational, objective, and respectful of the other person's point of view. This is our goal state.

2. Disclose from your Open Self.

The Johari Window is a four-quadrant model that represents the different areas of our personality:

- **Open Self:** These are things that we know about ourselves and that others know about us.
- **Blind Self:** These are things that we know about ourselves but that others do not know about us.
- **Hidden Self:** These are things that we do not know about ourselves but that others know about us.
- **Unknown Self:** These are things that we do not know about ourselves and that others do not know about us.

When we are in a discussion, it is important to disclose from our Open Self. This means sharing our thoughts, feelings, and experiences in a way that is honest and authentic.

Disclosing from our Open Self can help to build trust and intimacy with the other person. It can also help us to better understand ourselves and our own motivations.

3. Be open to feedback.

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One of the benefits of using TA and Johari Window in discussions is that they can help us to receive feedback more effectively. When we are in our Adult ego state, we are more open to feedback and we are less likely to take it personally.

If we receive feedback from the other person, we should ask ourselves if it is something that we can disclose from our Hidden Self to our Open Self. By doing this, we can learn more about ourselves and we can also improve our relationships with others.

Here is an example of how to use TA and Johari Window in a discussion:

Imagine that you are having a discussion with your Senior Vice Commander about a disagreement you had earlier in the day. You are feeling angry and frustrated, and you are tempted to lash out at your Comrade.

However, you remember that you want to have a productive discussion, so you take a moment to calm down and center yourself. You then ask yourself which ego state you are operating from. You realize that you are in your Child ego state, so you take a few deep breaths and try to switch to your Adult ego state.

Once you are in your Adult ego state, you are able to communicate your feelings and needs to your Comrade in a calm and rational way. You also listen to your Comrade's perspective and try to understand their point of view. It is important to understand that understanding does not mean that you must change your point of view, just display empathy.

At the end of the discussion, you feel better about the situation and you have a better understanding of your Comrade's perspective. You have also learned more about yourself and your own triggers.

Conclusion

Transactional Analysis and Johari Window are two powerful tools that can be used to improve communication and relationships. By using these tools in discussions, we can have more productive and meaningful conversations.

Here are some additional tips for using TA and Johari Window in discussions:

- Be mindful of your body language and tone of voice.
- Use "I" statements to communicate your feelings and needs.
- Avoid blaming or judging the other person.
- Be open to compromise.
- Remember that the goal of the discussion is to understand and be understood.

By following these tips, you can use TA and Johari Window to have more meaningful and productive discussions with the people in your life.



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Comrades, we hope this information is helpful and wish you a great holiday season.

Southern Conference Mike Merit

Comrades, Brothers and Sisters,

Southern Conference is literally one month away as of today. Your committee is working diligently to ensure that the Conference is going to be a great way to showcase Oklahoma. But to do that, we need volunteers! Included in the links in this month's GOs email is a link to the volunteer form. If you are interested in helping us out, please go and sign up. We will not turn anyone away from helping. We look forward to seeing all of you in a very short month!

-Mike

District Meetings

- District 1: October 28th @ 1100 Stillwell Post 10829 SV Fuller, JV Harris
- District 3: October 28th @ 1000 Muldrow Post 8384 CDR Traxler, COS Bates, SG McGrew
- District 4: November 18th @ 1100 Antlers Post 3658 SG McGrew, JV Harris
- District 5: November 12th @ 1400 Claremore Post 2976 ADJ Merit
- District 7: October 7th @ 1100 Eufaula Post 8798 CDR Traxler, COS Bates
- District 8: October 29th @ 1100 Sapulpa Post 1320 SV Fuller
- District 9: November 18th @ 1000 Edmond Post 4938 SV Fuller, SG McGrew
- District 10: January 20th @ 1000 Moore CDR Traxler, SG McGrew
- District 13: November 18th @ 1030 Fairview Post 6141 CH Burns, COS Bates
- District 14: October 7th @ 1100 Lawton Post 5263 JV Harris, SG McGrew
- District 15: January 13th @ 1100 Lawton Post 1193 CDR Traxler, CH Burns