



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

December 2023-2024 Series

*“Pride is concerned with who is right. Humility is concerned with what is right.”
— Ezra Taft Benson*

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

General Orders No. 6 2023-2024 Series

Commanders on all levels are reminded that according to Section 105 of the National Bylaws, a member whose dues are unpaid after their anniversary date ceases to be a member in good standing and loses all rights of membership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars. They shall not attend meetings or conventions and shall not participate in Post, County Council, District, Department or National functions.

BY ORDER:

o/s

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

ATTEST:

o/s

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

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. We are partially through the holiday season. I hope that you enjoy them with your friends and families. Please check on your buddies as this is the time of year that many struggle with. If you are thinking about someone, call, text, and/or video chat them.



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Let them know you are thinking of them. There is a lot of power in reaching out to others, offering a smile or a hug and a listening ear. There are a lot of accidents this time of year. Please be safe when on the road and be aware of drunk drivers. If you are traveling for the holidays, please be safe and enjoy yourselves. I look forward to seeing everyone in the new year.

Last month I talked about the Auxiliary, The Military Order of the Cooties, and the VFW Riders motorcycle group. Please do not forget about how they add to this amazing organization to make it what it is. We would not be as successful without their efforts. The Oklahoma Veterans of Foreign Wars is what it is today because of the membership, not because of the department. The department is here to help the posts and districts be successful. Please do not hesitate to reach out for assistance.

I want to thank everyone for their hard work so far this year. You are working on your programs, membership, getting out into your communities, and supporting veterans and their families in the best way possible. You are doing amazing things. I am so grateful to be a part of the best department in the organization. Please be safe over the holidays that are upcoming. I look forward to attending more district meetings and I hope to see people at the upcoming Mid-Winter in February.

Erica Traxler
State Commander
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989-239-5999
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*State Senior Vice Commander
Dan Fuller*

*State Junior Vice Commander
Jeff Harris*

Comrades,

Well, Thanksgiving is done, and I pray that everyone had a great time with family and friends. Some of you even had to travel out of state, so I hope you all had safe travels and enjoyed your time with loved ones.

Christmas is right around the corner, and you will be going out and doing a lot of shopping and driving. Please be careful when the weather and roads are unsafe. If you know someone that needs help getting things done, please lend a hand.

This is the time of year when people will be getting sick, so please be careful when you are out and around the crowd. COVID is still affecting a lot of people, so please be careful.

I did send a Jr. Vice report last month but sent it to the wrong email address. So, I apologize for that. I will check more next time.

In closing, I am running for the office of State Sr. Vice Commander. I have been out visiting districts and posts asking for support.

Thank you.
State Jr. Vice
Jeff Harris



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State Surgeon Tony McGrew

Comrades,

All of us are at different stages of health, mobility, and fitness. For the last few months, I have been encouraging you to take charge and know where you are as far as your health is concerned. Again, no one knows your body better than you. Taking charge of your health will set you up for success, and a better life. I believe there are things we can do to improve our well-being, even with the limitations we have.

Eating a plant-based diet, exercising, controlling weight, not smoking, limiting alcohol intake, and getting enough sleep are all pillars of a healthy lifestyle. They're linked to lower risks of chronic disease and a longer life.

Many other activities contribute to good health, too. Some seem so minor that it's easy to forget about them, especially when you're focused on the big goals of exercising and eating nutritious meals. Use this guide to help you fit more "little things" into your day.

Every half-hour

Set a timer and take a break every 30 minutes to do the following activities.

Get up and move. Too much sitting is associated with increased risks for obesity, diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and early death. On the flip side, moving — even just a little — is linked with reduced risks for chronic disease. An activity break doesn't have to be fancy. For example: "Just standing up helps improve how your body uses blood sugar," says I-Min Lee, a senior exercise researcher and a professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School.

She suggests giving this routine a try every 30 minutes: Stand up, reach your arms to the sky, stretch, and twist your trunk to the left and right. Then walk around to get your heart and lungs working a little harder. You might do a quick household chore (unload a dishwasher, fold a load of laundry), climb up and down the stairs, get the mail, or dance to a favorite song. "Make sure you move your arms and legs. That's good for your muscles, which get tight when you sit too long. And it's good for your posture, which tends to be hunched on a couch and slouched at a desk," Lee says.

Drink a little water. Staying hydrated keeps every cell in your body functioning well. And it takes a concerted effort to make sure you're getting enough fluids (which can come from water, juice, or watery foods like berries or soup). To find out how much fluid your body needs, divide

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your body weight in pounds by 3. (For instance, a 144-pound person would need 48 ounces of fluids per day, or about six cups.) If you don't want to guzzle a cup of water here or there, just drink an ounce or two every half-hour. You'll ensure that you've met your hydration needs by the end of the day.

Every few hours

It's important to practice some habits every few hours. Schedule them at times when it makes the most sense for your day, such as a break in between two tasks.

Have a snack. "Smaller, more frequent meals can help you keep up your energy, keep your blood sugar levels stable, and increase the variety of foods in your diet," says Liz Moore, a registered dietitian at Harvard-affiliated Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center. She recommends having a small snack between a light breakfast and lunch, and then another between a light lunch and dinner.

"It needs to be nutritious. Combine protein and carbohydrates to keep it filling and well balanced," Moore advises. What makes a great snack? Moore recommends half a cup of nonfat Greek yogurt with berries, a handful of nuts, an apple or banana with a spoonful of peanut butter, half a cup of whole-grain cereal with milk, a hard-boiled egg with whole-grain crackers, or even just a small portion of leftovers from your last meal.

Be mindful. Being mindful is being present in the moment and taking in the sights, sounds, smells, and feelings you're experiencing. Practice mindfulness by simply stopping what you're doing and focusing on what your senses pick up. While washing your hands, for example, notice the temperature of the water, how your hands glide over each other, what the soap smells like, how the process makes you feel.

Or go on a brief mindful walk outside, observing the shapes and colors of leaves on the trees, the smell in the air, the sounds of birds, and how it all makes you feel. This process of being mindful is associated with reduced stress and anxiety; improvements in sleep, mood, focus, and concentration; and better management of pain and chronic disease.

Use eye drops. It takes only the blink of an eye to keep your eyes moist — literally. Blinking stimulates the production of tears and oils that lubricate the eye surface. Aging slows tear production, and when you add a lot of electronic screen time to your day — watching TV or



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looking at a smartphone or computer, which makes us stare more and blink less — we can get dry eyes. The fix is using artificial tears periodically throughout the day. The drops don't have to be preservative-free unless you use them more than six times per day.

Once a day

Some activities bring rewards just by doing them once a day. Make time for the following.

Learn something new. Learning strengthens existing brain cell connections (synapses) and makes new ones, which helps keep thinking and memory sharp. The more synapses you build, the better shape you'll be in later, as you start to lose synapses naturally with age. Schedule a time each day to learn something new, whether you watch part of a documentary, listen to a new type of music, read a nonfiction book, or watch an interesting lecture on YouTube (search "university lecture" for endless options). "Write down what you learn and share the information with someone in your life. That reinforces the recording process in the brain and helps you retain the information better," says Dr. Andrew Budson, a neurologist and chief of Cognitive and Behavioral Neurology at the VA Boston Healthcare System.

Chat with someone outside your household. Social connection thoroughly engages the brain. And when you have an enjoyable or meaningful interaction with someone, it increases brain cell connections, boosts mood, reduces isolation and loneliness, and may play a role in reducing the risk for chronic disease and premature death. Try to schedule some sort of social connection at least once per day. It may just be a phone visit with a friend or a chat with a neighbor. "And if it's someone you don't see every day, that's even better," Dr. Budson says, "because it will facilitate new connections in your brain, rather than simply strengthening existing ones."

Meditate. Meditating activates the relaxation response, the antidote to the body's stress response. In the short term, stress temporarily triggers a cascade of physiological changes that prepare us for "fight or flight." If we're always stressed, however, those effects can lead to chronic inflammation, high blood sugar, high blood pressure, and more. Eliciting the relaxation response at least once a day, by meditating for example, helps reduce stress and makes you better at coping with it. There are lots of ways to meditate, such as doing 10 or 15 minutes of deep breathing, yoga, mindfulness, or transcendental meditation. Until next month.

Respectfully, Tony



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State Chaplain Jason Burns

Comrades,

As the Christmas Holiday approaches, I encourage each one of you to pick 5/10 Names off your post roster and call and check on your Comrades. Watch for signs of depression and talk to them. refer them to your Chaplain if you are uncomfortable talking to them. Don't forget to get them Chaplain of the Year award Nominations into me by midwinter. Talk to you soon.

Chaplain Burns

With Blessings,
Chaplain Jason Burns
OK State VFW Chaplain
(580)439-4627
Combat.ministry1@gmail.com
Matt 11:28-30

State Adjutant Mike Merit

Comrades,

I know that a lot of people are frustrated concerning the Department Dashboard. Comrade Randy Traxler is working diligently to fix all the issues that are going on. Last month, I worked on everyone's login, but there are still some 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.

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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

Department Membership Info

COMMANDER'S CHALLENGE WINNERS

Commander-in-Chief Duane Sarmiento challenged all VFW Departments to increase their New and Reinstated members for November 2023 by at least 10% over last November, and you all did not disappoint! The Departments listed below showed a 10% increase or more in New and Reinstated members and will receive a \$500 cash award and a special plaque to display at their headquarters!

| | | | |
|---|---------------|----------------|---|
| ★ | Alaska | Nevada | ★ |
| | Arkansas | New Jersey | |
| ★ | Connecticut | New York | ★ |
| | Hawaii | Ohio | |
| ★ | Indiana | Oklahoma | ★ |
| | Iowa | Pennsylvania | |
| ★ | Kansas | South Carolina | ★ |
| | Louisiana | Tennessee | |
| | Maryland | Utah | |
| | Massachusetts | Vermont | |
| ★ | Minnesota | Wisconsin | ★ |
| | Mississippi | Wyoming | |
| ★ | Montana | Europe | ★ |
| | Nebraska | | |
| ★ | | | ★ |

Thanks to everyone's hard work, the VFW saw a total increase of 19.83% in New and Reinstated members this month, showing that

NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS

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COMMANDER'S CHALLENGE

December brings us halfway through the membership year, and we want to see our membership continue to grow! This month, Commander-in-Chief Duane Sarmiento is issuing a challenge to our Posts to increase their membership percentage in December!



Throughout the month of December, we're going to track our Posts' membership percentages. This means new members, reinstated members, renewals, dues-paying transfers - we want to see more active paid members in the Post!

As a reminder, to figure your membership percentage you take your total current paid members, and divide it by your prior year total. Or you can just go check out Memstats and we do the math for you!

This challenge will compare the Post's membership percentage as of December 1st and compare it to where your membership percentage is at close of business on December 31st. The Post in each membership division that shows the greatest increase will receive a \$500 award plus a custom Commander-in-Chief Jacket!

We have eleven membership divisions, so that means there will only be eleven of these jackets ever made! If you want everyone to know that your Post has met the challenge for membership excellence, now is your chance!

This is a season of giving, and now is the time to give your best when it comes to strengthening our membership. We want you all to continue to build this organization, engage with our members, and to always go out there and

MEET THE CHALLENGE!

This contest will compare the Post's membership percentage from December 1 to December 31st. Applications and payments processed online before close of business will be credited that day, payments and applications made through the mail will be processed when received. Questions about this or other membership programs can be sent to membership@vfw.org.



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Comrades,

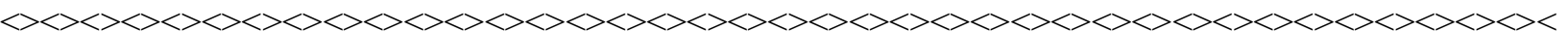
As of today, we are four months into the membership year. One-third down, two-thirds to go. We are currently slightly behind our goal of reaching **102%** membership.

To figure this number, we looked at how many life members we had in the September payout (**8417**). If you subtract that number from our current membership as of today, December 4th, 2023, (**9371**), what is left is the combination of New and Reinstated members (Annual + Life) and Continuous members (all prior Annual members who've paid their dues this year). If we take that total and divide it by the current day of the year (we are **156** into the membership year) we can figure out our Growth Per Day, on average.

Right now, that number is **+6.115** members per day that we have received dues for, either New, Reinstated, or Renewing. If we keep this average up for the rest of the year, we take those members per day number, multiply by 365 and we get **+2232**. Add that to the Life Members we paid in September, and we get a projected year-end total of **10,649**. We need to be averaging **+6.94** members a day to reach our **102%** goal of **10950**. It's time to step up and make it happen!

Right now, we have five Posts who are at or above 100%. Congrats to them! But on the opposite side of that coin, we have twenty-nine Posts who have not recruited or reinstated a single member. That's twenty-nine too many! Work those At Large, Relocated and Unpaid Rosters. If you need a copy of those rosters to work, please reach out to the HQ at vfwokadj@outlook.com and we will be happy to furnish you with them.

Let's get those numbers up! Keep recruiting!



Youth Essay Programs *Mike Devenitch*

VFW YOUTH SCHOLARSHIPS: District entries have been arriving! Next deadline is December 15th, if your district is able to get your entries to me by this date, please let me know.



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For judging VOD: Originality, Content and Delivery. PP Judging: Theme Knowledge, Theme Development and Clarity of Ideas. Make sure you take a picture of the winners and send the awards presentation to your local newspaper.

Judges should be from outside your Posts/Auxiliaries and should represent your community. Leaders from education, broadcasting, corporations, small business, and other fraternal and civic groups are ideal. Judges must not be connected in any way with the students in the competition. For reference I have attached the VOD/PP Guide. If you have any questions or need help, please contact me! Don't forget to get your auxiliary/post involved. 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: Be sure to build 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. Remember, nominations can be submitted by fellow teachers, supervisors, you, or other interested individuals. **SUBMIT ALL NOMINATIONS TO ME!** 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

District Meeting Dates

D1 Feb 3, 1100, Grove 8380 Sr Vice Fuller

D3 Feb 3, 1100, Wilburton 3649 COS Bates

D4 Feb 3, 1100, Boswell 1048 Surgeon McGrew

D5 Feb 4, 1400, Mannford 7441 Jr. Vice Harris



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D7 Feb 3, 1100, Okmulgee 1189 Cmdr. Traxler

D8 Feb 4, 1199, Ponca City 1201 Surgeon McGrew

D9 Feb 3, 1000, OKC 9265 Jr. Vice Harris

D10 Jan 20, 1000, 11600 S Penn Okla City Cmdr. Traxler

D13 Jan 6, 1100, El Reno 382 Jr. Vice Harris

D14 Jan 6, 1100, Ardmore 4574 Sr. Vice Fuller

D15 Jan 13, 1100, Lawton 1193 Cmdr. Traxler