**“ALWAYS A COMRADE, ALWAYS FOR A COMRADE”**

**AWARDS AND PROGRAMS**



**Comrades:**

We all understand that the Membership Program is a “Department Contest” based on annual achievements from year to year. This “contest” remains a way to gauge the teamwork, participation involvement of Post and District teams throughout the State. The program is not intended to be just about the awards, however a recognition of your individual and teamwork at the Post, District, State or National level in making our organization bigger and better. “All-State” and “All-American” recognition will be presented the Post or District as a whole for the hard work of ensuring that all the core requirements that have been designated are checked off the list as “completed” at the various levels.. Hat honors will only be presented to the Commanders and Quartermasters.

Remember, membership is just one part of the program to complete. The programs are designed to assist in increasing our membership that will in turn; help our organization help and assist the Veterans and families of Veterans’ that are still serving, retired and deceased as well as giving the Legislative team numbers for Oklahoma members to lobby for our benefits. Our membership has dwindled over the years but has re-kindled in the past year (as shown below). Our goal is to keep eligible Veterans coming into our organization and engaging them at the front door so we don’t lose them out the “back door” because we don’t show an interest or encourage their participation. When we don’t, they never come back or stay active within the post. Instead, they remain a number for a year and don’t return. Let’s break the mold. Let’s sign up new members and challenge their involvement by inviting them to participate in your community and our VFW events. Let’s check on them and show we care. I ask all those that recruit a new member to provide Post, District, and State information to keep that new member informed and engaged in the VFW.

**MEMBERSHIP GOALS**

1. Build a strong organization for the future by fostering active participation.
2. Work together to achieve the VFW’s goals.
3. Ensure VFW Oklahoma Headquarters is available to assist in coordinating programs, developing new membership initiatives and building awareness among our membership and the entire veteran community.
4. Retain annual members, recruit new members and reinstate unpaid members
5. Increase Annual, Life, and Legacy Life Membership.
6. Present a positive image of the VFW to our Veterans, families and communities.
7. Promote community support and participation of the VFW programs to ensure the community knows what the VFW offers.
8. Provide mentorship and assistance to revitalization existing posts needing a boost to prosper.
9. Provide membership recruiting tables and information tables at various events to recruit and retain VFW members within our communities.

**RETENTION**

Retention plays an important role in accomplishing growth within the post, district and state membership. The number of paid annual members in your Post on July 1, 2019 is your ensuing year’s “prior year total.” One more new or reinstated member is required to make up for each prior year annual member the Post fails to retain. Your Post retention is derived from six types of payment components based upon your prior year total of annual members:

Our goal will be to ensure:

* A prior year annual member pays his or her annual membership dues.
* A prior year annual member pays the life membership installment fee.
* A prior year annual member pays for life membership dues.
* A prior year annual member transfers to another Post and pays his or her annual membership dues to your Post prior to transfer.
* A prior year annual member transfers to another Post and pays the life membership installment fee to your Post prior to transfer.
* A prior year annual member transfers to another Post and pays life membership dues to your Post prior to transfer.

Note:

***(Above section information taken directly from the National Commanders Membership Program)***

**Department of Oklahoma Age Statistics of VFW Members, 2016-2017 – ending 30 June 17**

Under 20 = 1; ages 21-30= 106; ages 31-40= 555; ages 41-50= 896; ages 51-60= 1,044;

ages 61-70= 3,295; ages 71-80= 3,226; ages 81-90= 2,575; ages 91-100+= 1712

Just to give the membership an idea of the ages of our membership and “dwindling membership” in past years:

**Department of Oklahoma Statistics for Membership from 2012 – end of 30 July 2019**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Total Members** | **Percent** |
| 2012 | 16,793 | 97.87% |
| 2013 | 15,906 | 98.09% |
| 2014 | 15,543 | 97.72% |
| 2015 | 15,544 | 100.13% |
| 2016 | 14,562 | 95.75% |
| 2017  2018  2019 | 14,562  13,114  13,450 | 94.83%  99.68%  102.56% |

(Lost 5,170 / 25% of members in last 10 years)

(Data in both categories provided by VFW National Membership Department JUL 19)

**MEMBERSHIP / RECRUITING AWARDS**

**Largest Post Membership Increase Award (By Category)**

Category A: Posts with Membership of 10 to 75

Category B: Posts with Membership of 76 to 150

Category C: Posts with Membership of 151 to 250

Category D: Posts with membership of 251 to 500

Category E: Posts with Membership of 501 and up

The minimum post membership increase goal for the 2019-2020 membership year will be ten (5) new members for Category A & B. Fifteen (10) new members for Category C. Twenty (15) new members for Categories D & E.

The cut-off for judging the membership increase by Category Award will be May 15, 2020. Each Category winner will receive an award to be presented at the June 2020 State Convention.

**Legacy Life Membership Award**

An award will be presented to the post with the highest increase of Legacy Life Members. A minimum of three (3) new Legacy Life Members is required for Category A through C. Five (5) New Life Legacy Members in Category D and E. The cut-off for entry of this award will be May 15, 2020. The award will be presented at the June 2020 State Convention.

**100% Membership Streamer**

Each Post/ District will receive a distinctive 100% Membership Streamer for exceeding 100% membership as of June 1, 2020. These streamers will be forwarded and the Post/ District will be recognized at the June 2020 State Convention.

**ALL-STATE (POST)**

The prestigious title of “All-State Post” demonstrates that the post membership has been dedicated and involved in the VFW programs. The All-State verification form will be attached to the March 2020 and April 2020 General Orders for completion and submission and arrival at the Department HQs no later than May 15, 2020. Cut-off for all criteria reporting will be May 15, 2020 unless stated otherwise. All outstanding documentation and/ or reports must also be submitted to Department HQ by that date to allow Awards Committee to meet, select, and prepare the awards for State Convention. The prestigious cap will be awarded to the Post Commander and Post Quartermaster for their efforts of guidance, tracking and submission of the requirements. The post will receive a mounted certificate/ plaque for their achievements.

Membership requirements, each Post must:

* Reach 100% + one (1) in membership
* Each Post Commander and Post Quartermaster must each recruit three (3) N/R members.
* Post Senior-Vice and Junior Vice Commanders must each recruit two (2) N/R members.

Submission requirements, each Post must:

* Submit a minimum of one (1) Voice of Democracy entry
* Submit a minimum of one (1) Patriots Pen entry
* Submit a minimum of one (1) National Education Teacher Award from the post to district level for judging
* Submit either, one (1) entry for the Safety Award (Law Enforcement, Fireman, Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)) **or** Scout of the Year. Duplicate entries will not be accepted as part of the Department program.
* Submit minimum of six (6) community service reports
* Must submit a minimum of two (2) event reports per quarter (July- Mar) and at least one (1) in fourth quarter (Apr-May). Reports must be submitted NLT 30 days after an event to the Community Service Chairman or online reporting system. It is HIGHLY recommended for posts to submit these reports through online reporting, so that hours, miles, monies donated can be tabulated and more accurately reported. Only reports tabulated prior to May 15, 2020 will be used for judging purposes.
* Submit Quartermaster Bond, proof is required NLT September 2, 2019
* Submit donations to the National Home for Children **and** the National Veterans and Military Support Services. Submit a minimum of $50 for posts with under 100 members and a minimum of $100 for all other posts. Donations must be sent to the State QM for credit NLT. May 15, 2020
* Submit a minimum of $50 NLT May 15, 2020 to the Department of Oklahoma Foundation.
* Submit accurately completed Post election reports. Election reports MUST be received at HQ via OMS or hardcopy NLT 22 May 2020.
* Submit by write-up and provide proof of a minimum of three (3) recruiting events conducted by your post for the year (2019-20).
* A completed post inspection report must be submitted to HQ, along with quarterly audits NLT 30 days after each quarter has ended. Proof of 990 filing must be filed with current inspection form NLT December 31, 2019.
* Submit proof of registered delegate(s) for the 2020 National Convention NLT May 29, 2020.
* Provide payment of State delegate fees NLT May 29, 2020.
* Purchase three (3) Buddy Poppies per member based upon end of 2019 membership strength as of July 1, 2019.
* Must appoint a Post Service Officer (by appointment order) whom must attend scheduled Service Officer Training provided by the State Service Officer/or by his appointed Instructors.

Attendance requirements. Each Post must:

* Attend District Meetings. Attendance must be by the Post Commander or Senior Vice Commander or Junior Vice Commander at all scheduled district meetings. The State Commander may excuse an attendance for the post leadership, provided that this is an excused absence that is noted in the minutes and involves all top three post officers. A designated representative meets the quorum requirement, but NOT the All-State attendance requirement (unless absence is approved by the State Commander).
* Attendance at State conducted School of Instruction. Minimum attendance by:
  + Post Commander
  + Post SR-Vice Commander or Post JR-Vice Commander
  + Post Quartermaster
  + one (1) Post Trustee
* Participate in a 2020 Loyalty Day Program (Post, District or State level).

**ALL-STATE (DISTRICT)**

The prestigious title of “All-State District” demonstrates that the District and Post level leadership and members have been dedicated and involved in the VFW programs and have shown to involve all aspects of membership and community to promote and support the Veterans within their communities. . The All-State verification form will be attached to the March 2020 and April 2020 General Orders for completion and submission and arrival at the Department HQs no later than May 25, 2020. Cut-off for all criteria reporting will be May 22, 2020 unless stated otherwise, all outstanding documentation and/ or reports must also be submitted to Department HQ by that date to allow Awards Committee to meet, select, and prepare the awards for State Convention. The prestigious cap will be awarded to the District Commander and District Quartermaster for their efforts of guidance, tracking, collection and submission of the requirements. The District will receive a mounted certificate/ plaque for their achievements.

Membership requirements. The District must;

* Reach 100% + one (1) in membership
* Each District Commander and Quartermaster must each recruit three (3) N/R members. This requirement is separate if they are also post level Commander/Quartermaster.

Submission requirements, each District must:

* Submit a minimum of one (1) Voice of Democracy entry per post in District
* Submit a minimum of one (1) Patriots Pen entry per post in District
* Submit a minimum of one (1) National Education Teacher Award from the district to state level for judging per post in District

All reports concerning these programs must be submitted by the District Chairman by the due dates given by the VFW National Programs Director.

* Submit Quartermaster Bond, proof is required NLT September 2, 2019. If the bond is not through the VFW, proof is required.
* Submit District donations to the National Home for Children **and** the National Veterans and Military Support Services. Submit a minimum of $50 for districts with under 700 members and a minimum of $100 for all other districts. Donations must be sent to the State QM NLT May 15, 2020 for credit.
* Submit proof of registered delegate(s) for the 2020 National Convention NLT May 29, 2020.
* Paid State delegate fees for State Convention NLT May 29, 2020.
* Submit completed initial post inspections NLT January 31, 2020.
* Successful completion of District inspection MUST be completed by the State Inspector NLT 29 May 2020. Any extensions must be approved the State Commander.
* Submit all district quarterly audits NLT 30 days after each quarter has ended, IRS 990 must be submitted along with the audit NLT December 31, 2019.
* Submit complete District election reports, MUST be received at HQ NLT May 22, 2020
* Submit community service reports. At least 2/3 of the posts within your district must complete the Post Community Service requirement.

Attendance requirements. District must:

* Conduct at least three (3) meetings within the VFW year. In case of inclement weather or other emergencies causing a travel hazard preventing a meeting, the District Commander must coordinate and/or report to the State Officer representative assigned to attend the meeting.
* Attendance (as required) by all District Commanders (or District Senior Vice, or District Junior Vice Commanders) at all scheduled Council of Administration meetings and any other meeting that is called by the State Commander. Only the State Commander can excuse a District Commander due to certain circumstances. The District designated representative meets the quorum requirement, but NOT the All-State attendance requirement for District Level judging.
* Attend a State School of Instruction (SOI). (Dual positions accepted if currently holding an attendance required Post position. Minimum attendance by:
  + District Commander
  + District SR-Vice Commander or Post JR-Vice Commander
  + District Quartermaster
  + one (1) District Trustee
* Participate in a 2020 Loyalty Day program at your own post, district, another post, or state level
* Must appoint a District Service Officer (by appointment order) whom must attend scheduled Service Officer Training provided by the State Service Officer/or by his appointed Instructors within 90 days of appointment.
* Validate Post’s visit within your District (at least once/ preferably twice or more) to show involvement and provide assistance as needed. (Item checked by visiting Line Officer)

**STATE COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS**

**HOSPITAL/ COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD**

Visiting and supporting our hospitalized, bed-reddened, home-bound, medically challenged and recovering Comrades and family members is a very important necessity. It is vitally important for us to let them know and realize that we care about them, are ready to assist as needed and haven’t forgotten about our promises to fellow Veterans. Together we can provide a lot of assistance to those that need. If your post doesn’t visit a nearby VA Medical Hospital, or one of the seven (7) Oklahoma Veteran Centers, nursing homes; I ask that you get your Post and District involved especially around the various holidays throughout the year.

Up to five (5) posts will be recognized for their community service/ hospital related volunteerism.

**SCOTT P. SQUYRES AWARD**

Sooner State Memorial Post 405 contributed a beautiful plaque to the Department of Oklahoma in memory of Oklahoma’s own 1931-1932 Past State Commander and 1937-1938 Past Commander-in-Chief, Scott P. Squyres. This plaque is intended to serve has a traveling memorial recognizing the excellence a Post has demonstrated in engaging and supporting their community throughout the year. It will be once again awarded to the Post that’s judged to be the Most Outstanding Community Service Post at the State Convention in June 2020.

**VETERANS AND MILITARY SUPPORT PROGRAM and NATIONAL HOME FOR CHILDREN**

Any post that donates a minimum of $100 to both the Veterans and Military Support Program **and** the National Home for Children prior to March 15, 2020 will be recognized with a certificate at the June 2020 State Convention for their contributions. Donations must be submitted to the State QM for credit.

**VFW/ AUXILIARY TEAM SPIRIT AWARD**

One Post per category will be recognized with this joint award for exhibiting the most spirit, teamwork, cooperation, in working together through the year as a VFW and Auxiliary TEAM. The selection of these posts will be up to the State VFW Commander and the State Auxiliary President. Support of the various VFW and Auxiliary programs, involvement in your local community, working as a VFW/Auxiliary TEAM are key criteria for consideration. Every post will have all opportunities to earn the coveted TEAM SPIRIT Award. (All eyes will be out taking notes and providing recommendations, so always show your great spirit)

**POST & STATE SERVICE OFFICER OF THE YEAR AWARD**

A VFW Post, District, or State level officer may submit a Service Officer for the Post Service Officer of the Year and the State Service Officer of the Year Award. The nomination letter at a minimum must include information about the work the service officer has performed, hours volunteered, miles driven to assist other service officers or/and Veterans throughout their areas. Additionally should include any other service officer pertinent information that makes them standout against others at their same level. Submissions will be accepted NLT May 15, 2020. The State Service Officers and the Supervisor of the VFW Veteran Service Office in Muskogee, OK will decide the recipient of these two awards.

**INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS**

**Veteran of the Year**

This award is one of the most prestigious award given by the Department of Oklahoma. Nominations will be taken in letter format for a VFW Comrade that has shown exemplary dedication, volunteerism, support, hard work, and performing above all others through the 2019-2020 year. The selection committee will be comprised of various past and present leaders within the Oklahoma VFW. The winner of this prestigious award will receive a plaque/ mounted certificate in honor of his/her outstanding achievement at the annual June 2020 State Convention Banquet.

**Mr./ Mrs. VFW**

This award was established by Past State Commander Bill Beane and will be judged and given by the Department of Oklahoma past Mr. VFWs. Requirements for this award will be posted in the March –May 2020 GO/ newsletter. Nominations will be taken in letter format. The selection committee will be comprised of various Past Mr. VFW Award winners. The winner of this prestigious award will receive a plaque in honor of his/her outstanding achievement at the annual June 2020 State Convention Banquet.

**Membership Recruiting Awards**

If you recruit five (5) new or reinstate d members you receive:

* “5” member National recruit pin (presented by National membership).
* State Commander’s Decorative Coin

If you recruit ten (10) new or reinstated members you receive:

* “10” member National recruit pin (presented by National membership).
* One (1) entry into the Department raffle. (potential $1000+ winning)

If you recruit ten (15) new or reinstated members you receive:

* “15” member National recruit pin (presented by National membership).
* State Commander’s gift set

If you recruit twenty-five (25) new or reinstated members you receive:

* National Commander-in-Chief Membership coin & citation (presented by National membership).
* One (1) VFW Oklahoma Embroidered polo shirt (color of choice) from the VFW Store

If recruit fifty (50) new or reinstated members you receive:

* National Commander-in-Chief’s leather travel bag (presented by National membership).
* One (1) VFW Embroidered jacket (color of choice) from the VFW Store
* One (1) ticket entry in Department raffle (potential $1000+ winnings)

If you recruit seventy-five (75) new or reinstated members you receive:

* National Membership Commemorative medallion set (presented by National membership)
* One (1) free night’s lodging at the June 2020 State Convention
* Add one (1) ticket entry in Department raffle (potential $1000+ winnings)

If you recruit one hundred (100) new or reinstated members you receive:

* National Membership Century cap and citation **or** Commander in Chief KA-BAR knife (presented by National membership)
* Add one (1) free night’s lodging and one (1) banquet ticket at the June 2020 State Convention
* Add Two (2) tickets entry in Department raffle (potential $1000+ winnings)

**TOP Recruiter Will Receive**:

* The “Troy Hensch Top Recruiter Award”, named in Honor of Past State Commander, Troy Hensch, United States Army Recruiter
* Add one (1) banquet ticket at the June 2020 State Convention
* One (1) Gift card for $250

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**Recruiter Award Disclaimer**:

The cut-off for the Awards for recruiting will be on close of business on 1 June 2020. On that day, the total amount of N/R that a Comrade has will be the Recruiting Award that Comrade will receive.

**State Adjutant’s Essay Contest**:

The State Adjutant’s Essay contest is structured to solely generate thought and provide insight regarding our Veterans’ thoughts and needs. This is provided so all Comrades can share and shed light on a particular subject. The topics to choose from are:

* “What does it mean to be a Comrade?”
* How can we make the VFW more relative to Veterans of all generations?

The State Commander will also be giving special recognition to the recipient of this award. More information will be given about this award at the School of Instruction by the State Adjutant.

STATE ADJUTANT’S CHALLENGE: We as comrades need to work with and support our fellow comrades. Even though I might not have served with you, we still have liked experiences. We have all served in a foreign war. WE ARE COMRADES!!! The winner of the State Adjutant’s Challenge will be asked to verbally present his/her essay at the 2020 State Convention Banquet. The winner will also receive a free one-night’s stay at the Wyndham Garden Hotel where the convention is being held. In addition, the winner will receive two (2) free tickets to the Convention Banquet.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE? Any member in “Good Standing” within the VFW Department of Oklahoma.

WHAT IS THE THEME? “What Does It Mean to Be A Comrade” or “How Can We Make the VFW More Relative to Veterans Of All Generations?”

WHAT ARE THE RULES?

Essay length must be 600-700 typewritten words, (plus or minus 15 words). You must write your own essay. All essays should by typed in English with no color or graphics and cannot be less than 600 or greater than 700 words in length. Every word is counted regardless of length. The essay title (theme) or added footnotes do not contribute to the word count.

HOW AM I JUDGED? You will be judged on how well you understand, develop, and present the theme. A positive approach is recommended to express your viewpoint.

* Knowledge of the theme is worth thirty (30) points: You must show a thorough knowledge of the theme in your work.
* Theme development is worth thirty-five (35) points. Incorporate all relevant facts about the theme such as the who, what, where, when and why. Relate the theme to your own experiences.
* Clarity of ideas is worth thirty- five (35) points. Write your essay in an easy to understand format. Leave your reader and/or audience with a clear understanding of your explanation of the theme.
* Proper grammar, punctuation, spelling and referencing of footnotes is worth five (5) points.
* The State Adjutant along with two other people will comprise a three (3) person panel to judge your work and determine the winner.

WHAT IS THE DEADLINE FOR ENTRY & WHERE DO I SEND IT? Entries must be completed and sent to the State Adjutant Curt Watts NO LATER THAN 1 April 2020. The entries can be mailed to VFW Department of Oklahoma Attn: State Adjutant, 1103 N. Blackwelder Ave. Oklahoma City, OK 73106 or dropped off at State Headquarters.

VFW OKLAHOMA 2019-2020 PROGRAM DUE DATES

Quartermaster Bond Submission: September 2, 2019

IRS 990 Filed and copy provided to State: December 31, 2019

Initial Post Inspections completed/submitted (District) January 31, 2020

Membership Increase Cut-off May 15, 2020

Community Service Events Submission May 15, 2020

National Home Donation May 15, 2020

Veterans & Military Support Services Donation May 15, 2020

Oklahoma VFW Foundation Donation May 15, 2020

2020-2021 Post Election Report May 22, 2020

All- State Verification form submitted May 29, 2020

Delegate(s) Registered for 2020 National Convention May 29, 2020

Delegate(s) Registered for 2020 State Convention May 29, 2020

District Inspection (completed by State Inspector) May 29, 2020

100% Membership Streamer June 1, 2020