



Department of Oklahoma  
Veterans of Foreign Wars



P.O Box 1126 OKC. OK 73101-1126

405 850-0815/ [www.vfwoklahoma.org](http://www.vfwoklahoma.org)

July 2022 2022-2023 Series

*"Respect is earned. Honesty is appreciated. Trust is gained. Loyalty is returned"*

*Upjourney*

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

**General Orders No. 1 2022-2023 Series**

Attention is directed to: **National By-Laws, Sec 216, Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees.** Post Officers, elected and appointed, shall submit proof of eligibility to the Post Adjutant. Post Officers shall not be installed or assume the duties of their office until proof of eligibility has been submitted and properly reviewed. Such proof of eligibility shall be open to and reviewed by the Commander, Adjutant and Quartermaster prior to installation to office. In the event an elected or appointed officer fails to submit proof of eligibility within (30) days of election or appointment, any right of the officer to hold the office shall be forfeited, the office declared vacant and the eligibility qualifications of such officer shall be questioned in accordance with the provisions of Section 108 of the National Bylaws.

/os/

JEREMY OWEN  
STATE COMMANDER

OFFICIAL:

/ os /

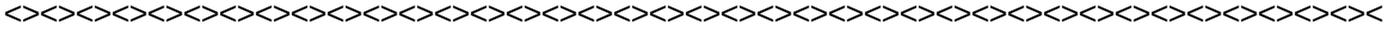
Andrea M. Melcher  
Adjutant

***Newly Elected Officers for Department High Office 2022-2023:***

- Department Commander > Jeremy Owen > Eufaula Post 8798
- Department Senior Vice Commander > Erica Traxler > Ft. Sill Post 5263
- Department Junior Vice Commander > Mike Iron > Enid Post 2270
- Department Quartermaster > Curt Watts > Stillwater Post 2027
- Department Chaplain > Gary Walker > Moore Post 8706
- Department Judge Advocate > James Dockemeyer > Shawnee Post 1317
- Department Surgeon > Jeff Harris Eufaula Post 8798.
- Department Budget & Finance Committee Member (3-year) James Patterson > Post 3916

***Newly Elected for National High Office 2022-2026:***

National Council of Administration-Oklahoma > Curt Watts > Stillwater Post 2027



# **Commander**

## **Jeremy Owen**

Greetings Comrades,

I hope you are all healthy and well. I want to thank you all for your continued support of me as I moved through our chairs. I want to congratulate everyone on their elections and let you know that I believe this will be a great year!

Please remember that we are here to work with all members to make our mission a success. This will hopefully be our first year of normal business as we navigate covid and try to get back to normalcy, so let's hit the ground running! We have several unpaid members to contact and bring back into the fold. We have several good things happening around the state so let's get out and be seen!

I want to touch on something that I have personally seen and would like to change. As many of us have noticed, our female comrade numbers are increasing. I want everyone to realize that these comrades have earned their right to be comrades in this organization and deserve the same treatment as any other member. We, as an organization, need to respect each other and be there for each other. We are comrades!

Our first school of instruction is scheduled for 9 July 2022 at Ft. Sill Post 5263 at 0900 hrs. We also have the national convention July 15-21 2022 in Kansas City. My hope is that we start this year off great and keep moving forward as members of this great organization.

Remember that together we can do great things but alone we may crumble!

\*\*\* We are TEAM OKLAHOMA! \*\*\*

### **Jeremy J. Owen**

State Commander  
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# ***Senior Vice Commander Erica Traxler***

Comrades,

I hope this month’s general orders finds you well. First, I would like to thank everyone for the tremendous support I have received from each and everyone in this department. I would not be here if it weren’t for you and I am greatly appreciative. Second, congratulations on finishing another year strong. We have areas to improve on as a department, but everyone does. We will accomplish more this year and the next and so on.

I hope everyone enjoyed the state convention. Is there anything that we can improve on for this next year? Did we do anything well? Give us feedback so we can continue to improve your experience when you attend events at the state level. There were a few of us that attended the Texas State Convention and that was very eye opening. I learned a lot as I know others did.

This year I will be heading up a women’s mentorship program. Zoom links will be sent out for everyone that will be participating. The dates for those meetings are Aug 14 & Oct 23 at 7pm. There will be more scheduled once I know how often people want to meet.

## **Schools of Instruction**

We have three schools of instruction coming up this month and next. For us to work well as a team we should be training as a team. It is important that you come to learn, get to know one another as well as our auxiliary counterparts. Network with one another. Regardless of your reasonings for attending I look forward to seeing you as I will be attending all three. The dates are: July 9 @ Fort Sill post 5263, August 13 @ El Reno post 382, and August 27 @ Sapulpa post 1320.

I will be taking on the Oklahoma VFW Foundation this year. I will be working closely with the members of the board as well as Beth West from Texas to get grants written and money into our foundation. The sky's the limit to what we can achieve if we just come together to make it happen. If you have suggestions, questions, comments, or complaints on anything regarding the Foundation that I can help with please do not hesitate to reach out. Something to keep in mind is that we need 25 - \$1000 donations to have our Foundation founders. We still have quite a long way to hit that goal. It would be great if most, or all, of our founders were VFW members because it shows that we are invested in this and intend to be for many years to come. We have specific programs for the Honor Guard, Service Officers, and Youth Programs. The more that we receive in sponsorships and donations the better we are able to support these programs.

## Oklahoma VFW Foundation

Have you thought about supporting our very own Oklahoma VFW Foundation? There are several ways to do it: Amazon smile is a great way. Just go to <https://smile.amazon.com> once there then find Oklahoma Veterans of Foreign Wars Foundation. Post donations & personal donations are another great way to support our Foundation. Donations are tax deductible. Donating to the Oklahoma VFW Foundation is a way of donating back to Posts within our department and our programs. Donors may also designate where they want their donation dollars to go toward, for instance, Veterans Services, Honor Guards, etc. Donations can be sent to Oklahoma VFW Foundation, P.O. Box 1126, Oklahoma City, OK or by visiting the Foundation website at <https://okvfwfoundation.org> and selecting the donate button.

Yesterday we had 11,403 members. We still needed 730 to get to 100%. That is a lot of members lost from the previous year. What is causing our members to not renew their memberships? What can we do to get people involved? How do we get people to invest in life memberships and Legacy life memberships? Please consider these things moving forward. Oklahoma deserves to be near the top. There are other states that have been 100% in membership for decades. Don't we deserve that too? You deserve recognition for your hard work.

I am still fundraising for my State Commander year. I was originally going to do the drawing during the state convention, but needed to extend it until the Fall Festival. This is for a ¼ beef with a deep freezer. Tickets are \$10 for one or \$25 for three. You can purchase it at any time. The drawing will be on Saturday at the Fall Festival. If you live in Oklahoma, I will deliver the beef to you. I appreciate the support from every person so that I can continue these traditions.

Thank you for allowing me to serve you as the Oklahoma Senior Vice Commander. This has been an honor and I look forward to this next year with you.

Erica Traxler  
Senior Vice Commander  
Department of Oklahoma  
Veterans of Foreign Wars  
989-239-5999  
[ericatraxlervfw@gmail.com](mailto:ericatraxlervfw@gmail.com)





## ***Junior Vice Commander***

### ***Mike Irons***

Comrades,

I would like to extend my gratitude for the support I received in becoming your next Junior Vice Commander. I want to make it clear that I do not take the trust you have put in me lightly. I plan on working hard to help make this year a success. I would like to put a special emphasis this month (and every month afterwards) on Suicide Prevention! I don't think we are doing all that we could be doing and I would like to change that. I have included the suicide prevention information from our Department Website, which you can find under the Programs tab (Suicide Prevention/PTSD Resources) or under the Resources tab (Veteran's Outreach).

#### **SUICIDE PREVENTION/PTSD RESOURCES**

We have a National Crisis line 1-800-273-8255, or chat at VeteransCrisisLine.net,  
or text to 838255

Put this number in your phone, NOW! I hope you never need it, but if you do need it, you  
have it.

#### **Resources**

VFW Mental Wellness Campaign – [vfw.org/assistance/mental-wellness](http://vfw.org/assistance/mental-wellness)

Give an Hour – [giveanhour.org](http://giveanhour.org)

The Campaign to Change Directions – [changedirection.org](http://changedirection.org)

Patients Like Me – [patientslikeme.com/join/vfw](http://patientslikeme.com/join/vfw)

One Mind – [onemind.org](http://onemind.org)

The Elizabeth Dole Foundation – [elizabethdolefoundation.org](http://elizabethdolefoundation.org)

Help Heal Veterans (therapeutic craft kits) – [healvets.org](http://healvets.org)

Veterans Voices Writing Project – [veteransvoices.org](http://veteransvoices.org)

#### **Suicide/Crisis Prevention:**

VA Crisis Line 1-800-273-8255

COPES (Tulsa) 918-744-4800 <https://www.fcsok.org/services/crisis-services/>

Eagle Ops Foundation (Tulsa) 918-600-1911 <https://eagleops.org/>

#### **PTS/PTSD/Moral Injury:**

Combat Reboot (Faith Based) <https://rebootrecovery.com/military/> (Blanchard, Elgin,

Lawton, OKC, Tulsa)

Warrior Hope (Tulsa area- in-person, entire state- Online) 405-486-9126 (Zoom option available) <https://warriorsonmission.org/#1>

**Warrior Hope Podcasts:**

[https://www.amazon.com/Warrior-Hope/dp/B09V94NMF5/ref=sr\\_1\\_115?crid=1PM4CNZIW3094&keywords=warrior+hope&qid=1648241360&refinements=p\\_n\\_feature\\_nine\\_browse-bin%3A3291437011&rnid=3291435011&s=books&sprefix=warrior+hop%2Caps%2C572&sr=1-115](https://www.amazon.com/Warrior-Hope/dp/B09V94NMF5/ref=sr_1_115?crid=1PM4CNZIW3094&keywords=warrior+hope&qid=1648241360&refinements=p_n_feature_nine_browse-bin%3A3291437011&rnid=3291435011&s=books&sprefix=warrior+hop%2Caps%2C572&sr=1-115)

Mike Irons  
Junior Vice Commander  
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***National Council Member  
Curt Watts***

Comrades, our 101<sup>st</sup> Annual VFW Oklahoma Convention in Oklahoma City is over, and we successfully conducted the business of our department as needed. It was great to have our National Commander-in-Chief Fritz Mihelcic as our National representative on the VFW side and Past National President Armithea “Sissy” Borel as the National Representative on the Auxiliary side. I want to congratulate all the recipients of various awards given out and to say “THANK YOU” for a job well done! I want to thank Past State Commander Jim Bassett for his leadership throughout the year and to all Post, District & State Officers, who have served diligently over the past year, THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE AND SACRIFICE TO OUR COUNTRY AND TO OUR GREAT ORGANIZATION! It is through your leadership and efforts that allow our VFW to continue to remain strong and move forward in our purposes of our organization.

The convention delegates in attendance conducted the necessary business of our department and elected our department officers for next year. Congratulations to State Commander Jeremy

“Gator” Owen on his election to State Commander and to all other officers elected. As your duly elected national council member for 2022-2026, I vow to diligently perform the duties of this position and strive to represent every comrade within our department. I thank every one of you for your confidence in me.

## **Current VFW National Topics and Issues:**

### Meeting & Events:

Our 123<sup>rd</sup> National Convention is soon to be convened in Kansas City. Convention housing has now downloaded the rooming lists to the various VFW hotels. Anyone with a question about their reservations e.g., changes, cancellations, must contact their assigned hotel directly at this point. Oklahoma Convention attendees have been assigned to the Crowne Plaza along with five other Departments Convention attendees from the Southern Conference. The Convention Event App is available. This is a great tool if you are planning on going to the National Convention. You can go to [vfw.org](http://vfw.org) to get information on downloading the app.

As many of you are probably aware, Comrade Herschel “Woody” Williams, a Gold Legacy member from VFW Post 7048 in Fairmont, West Virginia passed away on 29 June 2022. Woody was the last living WWII Medal of Honor recipient. If you are interested in reading about the life of this comrade who epitomized the term “STILL SERVING”, please go onto our national website and read about his life. He set an excellent example for all of us!

VFW 2022 Voice of Democracy State Winners Attend Spirit of America Youth Leadership at Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge

Over 30 VFW 2022 Voice of Democracy state winners traveled to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, to attend the Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge’s Spirit of America Youth Leadership program. For years, the two organizations have been connected through the VFW’s Voice of Democracy program, a patriotic audio essay competition that, in 2022, had nearly 25,000 high school students competing for the \$30,000 national grand prize scholarship.

Every year the top 53 VFW Department winners from the 50 U.S. states, and from overseas areas in Europe and the Pacific, come to Freedoms Foundation each June to participate in a Spirit of America Youth Leadership program - a transformative four-day residential program that engages high school students from across the country with the first principles of freedom. Their experience is filled with inspiring and educational activities, including a mock congressional debate, free enterprise challenge, workshops, and historical site visits while developing their leadership skills and identifying their future contributions to society.

“For more than 75 years, the VFW has remained committed to connecting America’s youth with the importance of patriotism and freedom, so teaming up with the Freedoms Foundation was a natural choice,” said VFW Programs Director Lynn Rolf III. “Being able to provide our nation’s best and brightest high school students with an up-close and personal experience with their civil liberties in action helps to fortify them as America’s next great generation of leaders.”

“The students participating in the Voice of Democracy program represent the finest of America’s rising generation,” said David Harmer, CEO of Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge. “We’re honored to work with the Veterans of Foreign Wars in equipping these future leaders with a deep understanding of both the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Here in Valley Forge, crucible of the American Revolution, they are not merely informed, but transformed into the thoughtful, informed patriots we need to safeguard our freedoms.”

### National Legislative Service

The newly titled Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022, known as the Honoring our PACT Act, passed the Senate with an 84–14 vote. “This is an enormous victory for veterans, service members, and their families,” said VFW National Commander Matthew “Fritz” Mihelcic. “The Senate-amended PACT Act must now go back to the House for a vote before it can be sent to the president for signature. Thanks must go out to each of you in Oklahoma who reached out to their senators urging them to support this historic legislation. (BTW, Oklahoma Senator Inhofe voted for this bill, Senator Lankford did not.)

VFW National Legislative Service Director Pat Murray testified at a Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs hearing to review VA’s budget request for fiscal year 2023 and 2024 advance appropriations. “We would like to thank this committee and especially the staff. We are on the eve of passing one of the largest veterans’ benefits expansions in generations,” said Murray. The aging infrastructure and budget are crucial now more than ever as we look to support VA into the future and with the impending passage of the Honoring our PACT Act. Watch the hearing or read the testimony.

### Member Services

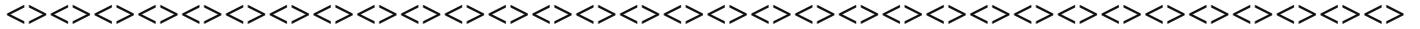
As of the publishing of this article, the Online Membership System will have been cut off by June 30 at 6:30 p.m. CDT. As in the past, IT will require a short period of time to reconcile our final year-end processing and will keep you posted as to when the systems will be returned online in early July.

VFW Foundation

The Wounded Warrior Project has awarded a \$250K renewal grant to the VFW in support of sustained operations for our Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) component of VFW’s National Veterans Service (NVS) program at 12 sites: Fort Stewart, Fort Riley, Joint Base Andrews, Nellis Air Force Base, Fort Drum, Fort Hood, Fort Bliss, Fort Belvoir, Fort Bragg, Naval Station Norfolk, Fort Campbell and Joint Base Lewis-McChord. This grant reaffirms the incredible service of excellence of VFW’s NVS and its exceptional reputation among other veterans' service organizations.

Comrades, I will continually state that as your National Council Member, it is my duty, privilege, and desire to represent Oklahoma VFW and its members. Therefore, please do not hesitate to contact me at my email address or my cell number below if you desire. I am always willing to listen to your comments and/or share information from the National side.  
Respectfully,

Curt Watts  
National Council of Administration 2021-22, & 2022-26  
Oklahoma  
vfwokncm@outlook.com  
405.590.8577



Past Commander

*Jim Bassett*

I had planned to say a few parting words at the Convention banquet, but I was honestly so overwhelmed by the support and generosity displayed by both the VFW and Auxiliary, I was just speechless! From the bottom of our hearts, Sandy and I thank you!

To share a few thoughts:

We certainly had an interesting and challenging year; we endured ups and downs, lost dear friends and gained new ones. We started the year under a National investigation (definitely not something we planned on). We moved on and learned from the mistakes that were made. We tried some new things, some worked well, others not so much. Through it all, we have continued to move forward and that’s the whole point! I want to thank all of the VFW and Auxiliary members that I had the pleasure of spending time with; we have had many interesting conversations. I hope you know I listened and took action on suggestions whenever possible and feasible. My main goal was to make sure my fellow comrades know that this is a volunteer

member driven organization; as Commander I was not “in charge”, my goal was to guide us in the direction that the members desire and in a way that will benefit us all now and in the future.

To my Auxiliary counterpart, Polly McCord, it’s been a fun ride together. I can’t find enough words to express how much I appreciate you and your friendship, but I think you know; Unity Forever!

I also want to thank my family for their support. A special thank you to my wife, partner, confidant, and best friend, Sandy. She supported me through the thick and thin of my efforts to serve.

Lastly, thank you all for the opportunity; it has been a pleasure serving you throughout the past few years and I will continue to serve veterans, the VFW, Auxiliary and our membership to the best of my ability.

### ***Jim Bassett***

Past State Commander  
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Oklahoma

*If not you, then who?  
If not now, then when?  
Hillel the Elder*

## **Department of Oklahoma Recognition Program Recipients**

### **All State Posts:**

Glenpool VFW Post 9126  
Bruce January Memorial VFW Post 8706  
General Lesley J. McNair VFW Post 5263  
Tulsa VFW Post 577

### **Buddy Poppy Program:**

Gold – Ollie O. Dykes VFW Post 2027  
Silver – General Lesley J. McNair VFW Post 5263  
Bronze – Bruce January Memorial VFW Post 8706

### **Patriots Pen:**

1<sup>st</sup> Place – Bruce January Memorial VFW Post 8706

2<sup>nd</sup> Place – Carter County Memorial VFW Post 4574

3<sup>rd</sup> Place – Owasso VFW Post 7180

**Scout of the Year:**

Butch O’Neal VFW Post 4876

**Veterans and Military Service:**

Deric Duncan, VFW Post 4938

Mike Irons – VFW Post 2270

Lee McCullum – VFW Post 7192

Nancy Everett-Salsman – VFW Auxiliary Post 382

**Voice of Democracy:**

1<sup>st</sup> Place – Owasso VFW Post 7180

2<sup>nd</sup> Place – Carter County Memorial VFW Post 4574

3<sup>rd</sup> Place – Bruce January Memorial VFW Post 8706

**Scott P. Squyres Award:**

Glenpool Post 9126

**VFW and Auxiliary Team Spirit of the Year:**

Bruce January Memorial VFW Post 8706

Bruce January Memorial VFW Auxiliary Post 8706

**Oklahoma Comrade of the Year:**

Lee McCullum – VFW Post 7192

**State Commander/President’s Challenge:**

Diana Faris – Auxiliary Post 8706

Don Bosley – VFW Post 8403

**Past State Commander Troy Hensch Memorial Top Recruiter of the Year:**

Dan Fuller – VFW Post 577

**Membership Recruiting Awards:**

Deric Duncan - VFW Post 4938

**Oklahoma VFW Foundation Recognition:**

Dr. Curtis and Juanita Bohlman

Gordon and Bonnie Wheeler

Fred and Freda Zacher

Oklahoma VFW Riders Group

**Program Recognition**

**National Home for Children:**

Richard Cook – VFW Post 1320

**POW/MIA Program:**

John Arambula – VFW Post 8706

**Safety Program:**

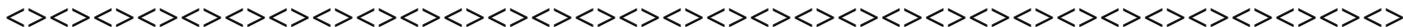
Ron Albert – VFW Post 5263

**Scout of the Year:**

Clint Stidd – VFW Post 4518

**VoD/PP/Teacher of the Year:**

Mike Devenitch – VFW Post 8706



***Voice of Democracy, Patriot Pen & Teacher of the Year Chairman  
Mike Devenitch***

**2022-2023 VFW YOUTH SCHOLARSHIPS NEW THEMES ANNOUNCED :**  
Deadline is still October 31, 2022

**Voice of Democracy: The 2022-23 theme is: "Why is the Veteran Important?"**

<https://vfworg-cdn.azureedge.net/-/media/VFWSite/Files/Community/Youth-and-Education/Voice-of-Democracy-Entry-Form-Fillable.pdf?v=1&d=20220408T154506Z&la=en>

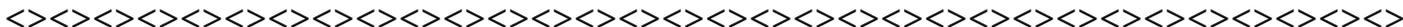
**Patriot's Pen: The 2022-23 theme is: "My Pledge to Our Veterans."**

<https://vfworg-cdn.azureedge.net/-/media/VFWSite/Files/Community/Youth-and-Education/Patriots-Pen-Entry-Form-Fillable.pdf?v=1&d=20220408T154335Z&la=en>

It is time to visit the school and get ready for summer programs **for the essay programs.**

**V/R,**

**Mike Devenitch**



***Veterans and Military Services Committee Chair  
Tony McGrew***

Hello Comrades,

VMS Programs are an integral part of the VFW’s never-ending obligation to assist members of the active-duty military, National Guard and reserves, as well as their families. VMS is broken down into 3 distinct stand-alone programs.

- Unmet Needs
- Military Assistance Program (MAP)
- VFW “Sport Clips Help a Hero Scholarship” program

\* Unmet Needs provides financial assistance to service members, veterans, and their families experiencing a financial hardship directly related to their military service.

\* Assistance, not a hand out.

- \* The financial assistance is in the form of a one-time grant in an amount up to \$2,500. All grants are paid directly to the “creditor” companies (such as the electric company, mortgage company, landlord, etc.) and not to the individual.
- \* Funds can be used for rent, car repairs, medical expenses, infant-care items and many other necessities.
- \* Each case is reviewed individually and acceptance determined by a committee.
- \* Applied for on line at: <https://www.vfw.org/assistance/financial-grants>

Posts, Please report all MAP Grant Applications and Acceptance, any VFW Program Activities your Post has completed or planned each month. We need this to report to National.

### **Adopt a Unit**

Did you know a Post can adopt a Military Unit and provide support for Family Days, Yellow Ribbons, Deployments, Holiday Events, Meeting and Support Seminars, Direct Assistance and more.

This is an excellent way to locate and enlist new members into your Post. If you need more information on Adopting a Unit, Please get in touch with me.

Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities and Events:

### **Concert for Veterans Homes:**

We are looking at having a band go to each of the Veterans Homes and putting on a concert for the residents sometime in the middle of September. In order to do this we will need to do fundraisers to help with the cost for the band. I am asking each Post to hold one or maybe two fund raisers in August to raise money to support this event. We are still in the planning phase and will send out details as they are available. Comments and suggestions welcomed.

### **Oklahoma Army National Guard Crossroads Events:**

Location: 3535 NE Military Circle, OKC 73111

Dates:

16-Jul, 6-Aug, and 17-Sep

Times: 0800 Until

\*\* Crossroads Events are sponsored by the OKANG, and provides information to troops on transitioning to civilian life and their VA Benefits.

All for One; One for All

Tony McGrew

VMS Chair

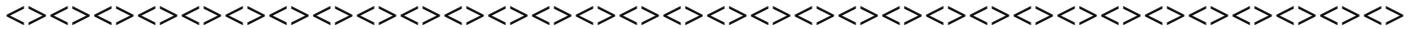
Department of Oklahoma

405-820-6467

[Tony.vfw8706@gmail.com](mailto:Tony.vfw8706@gmail.com)

<https://www.vfwoklahoma.org>





**DATES TO REMEMBER:**

16 Jul> 123<sup>rd</sup> VFW National Convention 2022, Kansas, City, MO begins

**SCHOOLS OF INSTRUCTION 2022-2023 DATES TO REMEMBER:**

**July 9<sup>th</sup>, Ft. Sill Post #5263**  
**August 13<sup>th</sup>, El Reno Post #382**  
**August 27<sup>th</sup> Sapulpa Post #1320**

**OKLAHOMA VFW/VFWA 2022-2023 EVENTS**

**FALL FESTIVAL 7-9 OCTOBER 2022**  
**MID-WINTER CONFERENCE 10-12 FEBRUARY 2023**  
**VFW- VFWA OKLAHOMA CONVENTION 15-18 JUNE 2023**