



VFW NEWS

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Land Of Enchantment

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*1st Row are VFW Post 9676 Members; Jack Lovato Jr., Quartermaster, Chet Pino Commander, Tony Griego, Jr. Vice Commander, and Raymond Sanchez, Project Chairman; 2nd Row are two employees and the Owner of I and C Kitchen Hood Cleaning, LLC, Patrick O'Connor, Jeremiah Moreno & I & C Owner, Chase Sutfin.
Photo Courtesy of Clara Garcia*

WWII HISTORICAL MOMENT

In July 2024, one of the officers of the Valencia County Historical Society (VCHS), John Taylor, called VFW Post 9676 Quartermaster, Jack Lovato Jr., to determine if the Los Lunas VFW Post, named after Medal of Honor recipient Daniel D. Fernandez, would be interested in joining the Historical Society in the restoration of a historical monument in Los Lunas, located on the southeast corner of Main Street and Luna Avenue in Los Lunas, NM.

This monument was established in March 1959 by the Los Lunas American Legion Post 85, when Jack Lovato Sr. was the Vice Commander of the American Legion Post that established the monument. In honor of "All War Veterans," the American Legion Post placed an M1A2 90-mm Anti-Aircraft Artillery Gun, pedestal with a plaque, and a flagpole on this small piece of Los Lunas Consolidated School property known as the Solomon Luna Park.

Because it was his father who was involved in the establishment of this monument, Post 9676 Quartermaster Jack Lovato Jr. told Mr. Taylor that he was sure his Post would be interested in partnering with the VCHS to restore the monument. It took almost a year of fundraising, planning, and seeking permissions from the Village of Los Lunas and the Los Lunas Superintendent of Schools to get the project started.

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VFW NATIONAL COUNCIL UPDATES

*Tori
Haddox*



Reflections from the National VFW Convention in Columbus, Ohio

This past week, I had the honor of attending the National Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Convention in Columbus, Ohio, where veterans from across the United States and around the world came together in a powerful show of unity and purpose.

A historic moment unfolded as Carol Whitmore, an Iraq War veteran, was elected the first female National Commander in the VFW's 126-year history. Her election is a landmark for the organization and a testament to the progress we continue to make in honoring all who have served.

As a member of the VFW National Council of Administration, I participated in two major meetings during the convention. One of our key responsibilities was selecting future host cities for upcoming national conventions. After thoughtful discussion and evaluation of safety, accessibility, and financial considerations, the Council voted to hold the 2029 National Convention in Reno, Nevada, and the 2030 Convention in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Even though the motion failed, I continue to fight for what we believe in here in New Mexico. I remain committed to advocating for the VOD winners to have the opportunity to go to Washington, D.C., and I won't stop pushing for what's right.

Equally meaningful was the opportunity to reconnect with fellow veterans I once served alongside in combat—many of whom now live in different parts of the country. These reunions are a powerful reminder of the lifelong bonds we share through our service.

The VFW continues to stand strong after more than a century, dedicated to advocacy, support, and community for all who have worn the uniform. No matter the challenges, our mission remains unwavering.

State Adjutant

Examples of what is missed when you don't attend Commander's Calls!

1. Emphasis placed on membership recruitment, with some progress noted. Mack encouraged a goal of 101% membership and committed to weekly follow-ups.

2. Recruiting PIN and Legislative Updates

Recruiting PIN Update: Recruiters must now recruit five members to earn a PIN.

Meeting Location Changes: Jim reminded districts to notify the department 14 days in advance of any venue changes.

National Convention Highlights:

Election of the first female Chief National Commander.

Legislative Updates: Possible inclusion of NDAA:

Major Richard Starr Act

Tap Protection Act in the National Defense Authorization Act.



VFW NATIONAL COUNCIL UPDATES

Recognition given to Joseph Gurule for resolving Mora County property tax issues affecting disabled veterans.

3. Administrative and Operational Updates

Balloon Fiesta Volunteers Needed: October 4–12.

Clovis Property Sale: Offer of \$48,000 pending council approval (reported by Bart).

Liquor License Renewal Issues: Problems with articles of incorporation documentation discussed.

Post 6216 Update: Progress on organizing records.

Missing audits and minutes from several posts noted.

Quartermaster Bonds: B.J. reminded all that bonds must be submitted by September 30.

Missing Documentation: Continued discussion on tracking and timely submission of required documents.

4. Upcoming Events and Initiatives

State Fair Recruiting Booth: September 9.

Air Races in Roswell: September 10–14 (Jason Burke).

Commander's Homecoming: October 25, with block rooms reserved at Crown Hotel. State Training October 24th @Post 401

Midwinter Conference: B.J. reported ongoing search for venue and discussions with quartermaster regarding hotel guarantees.

Membership Incentives: Mack encouraged participation for national convention incentives.

Insurance Concerns: Danny Cruz raised concerns over VFW insurance rates; B.J. to explore alternatives within national bylaws.

Scholars App Chairman Reminder: Posts need to submit appointments for vacant chairman positions.

Very Respectfully,

Victoria R. Haddox

VFW National Council Member

VFW Department of New Mexico Adjutant

VFW Foundation of New Mexico President

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vfwnmadjutant.com

505-203-5007

"A true leader has the confidence to stand alone, the courage to make tough decisions, and the compassion to listen to the needs of others. He does not set out to be a leader, but becomes one by the equality of his actions and the integrity of his intent."

- General of the Army, Douglas MacArthur

*Jim
Haddox*



Greetings New Mexico Comrades and Auxiliary members!

I am happy to be serving as your State Commander and have been busy these last few months. The pace from State Convention has been hectic but satisfying. We have been taking care of issues and making some positive changes as well. We have have great responses from the monthly Commander's calls. We have had 2 so far and will continue to do so in order to increase the amount of communication between the State officers and the posts. These are online with Zoom and have been well attended.

Myself and the Department officers have been travelling to the District meetings and ensuring that we are available to you in order to address concerns. There has been great feedback from these meetings and I appreciate those who take the time to attend and be an active part of our mission.

I attended the National Convention with many of our membership. Thanks so much to Sr Vice Mack Dyer, Jr Vice Mark Bowman, National Council member Victoria Haddox, Paul Golden, John Archuleta, Jay Poncho, Kathy Scheibel, Rich Nutt, Dale Huft, Warren Booker, Eloy Howard, BJ Lawrence, Joe Santillanes, Jason Burke, Rel Melon, Brian Ravak, and Mark Decker for representing your posts and the Department. Thanks so much to the New Mexico Auxiliary for showing up in force and representing! Congrats to Betty Decker and Shirley Frias for your new positions! The Convention was one that was historic in several ways, Carol Whitmore was elected as our first female National Commander in Chief. This is a great accomplishment for her and for our organization. We also had several roll call votes from the National Convention floor. This was another historic event and we ensured that our delegates votes were recorded as presented to me, We ensured that when we were called we could respond quickly, accurately, and professionally. At the end of the conference, we now have to turn our thoughts and energy to the mission of the VFW and to ensure that New Mexico is a department that is growing and moving forward.

I will be heading to the VFW Fall Legislative Conference and will be representing our interests to our Congressional members and their staff. Once I get back I will ensure to have an update that I can share in the next Commander's call and any other meetings we have. I currently have set meeting times with all of the Congressional offices and anticipate that our Legislative priorities will be heard and hopefully enacted into law. I hope that the Major Richard Star Act and the TAP protection acts will still be in the NDAA (National Defense Authorization Act) and believe that they will be. We can make positive changes with the right focus and follow thru.

~CONTINUED ON PG 4

COMMANDER

I would like to take a moment and ensure that we recognize Joseph Gurule', 1131 Post Commander from Mora. He has been able to stand up to the Mora County commission and have them realize that they were improperly not giving 100% disabled veterans their earned tax credits. His efforts have led to a correction of a policy that has been wrong for 27 years! Thanks so much for representing veterans and veteran interests and making sure the government is held accountable to the law. This is an amazing result and a testament to us all.

We have many upcoming large events such as the State Fair, Roswell Air races, International Balloon fiesta, and the Commander's homecoming/ Department training/ C of A. Please help out with any of these events and continue to be involved. Your local communities see you out there doing the good work and the post level. Your work and efforts make this Department successful and a positive impact on our community.

Thanks so much for allowing me to represent you and the interests of our Veterans.

Respectfully,
Jim Haddox
State Commander



SR. VICE COMMANDER



*Mack
Dyer*

Comrades,

The 2025–2026 year is off to a powerful start, and the momentum across our posts and districts is truly inspiring. I’ve had the privilege of attending multiple district meetings already, and everywhere I go, I see dedication, unity, and meaningful impact in our communities. At the VFW National Convention, Commander Haddox led the New Mexico delegation with pride and purpose. Our state was well represented, with numerous commanders honored as All-American Commanders—both on stage and in spirit. Congratulations to each of them for their outstanding service and leadership.

Commander Haddox has also launched a new initiative to strengthen communication across the department:

the monthly Commander’s Call via Zoom. This is your opportunity to connect, ask questions, share best practices, and grow together. Let’s make the most of it.

Now, it’s time to roll up our sleeves and tackle the core programs that define our mission. Voice of Democracy, Patriot’s Pen, and Teacher of the Year are coming in fast—let’s stay ahead of the curve and ensure every veteran and community member feels our support.

As we move forward, let’s embrace Commander Haddox’s motto: “Do Better. Be Better.”

That means setting aside distractions, rising above petty differences, and channeling our energy into service, leadership, and teamwork.

Every elected and appointed officer has a vital role to play. Fulfill the oath you took with pride:

- Submit your minutes to the adjutant on time
- Ensure your trustee reports of audit are accurate and timely
- Support your trustees in doing their job with integrity
- Lead by example and work as a unified team

This is our year to elevate, inspire, and deliver. Let’s stay focused, stay fired up, and make a lasting impact across New Mexico.

Let’s get to work—and let’s make it count.

Mack Dyer

State Sr-Vice Commander

Department of New Mexico



JR. VICE COMMANDER

*Mark
Bowman*



Greetings and salutations y'all from Southeast New Mexico.

Having the opportunity to move up in the chairs to Department Jr. Vice Commander, I wanted to say thank everyone for their support during my year as Chaplain. There were lots of highs and lows and we endured them and continued to charge forward as warriors do.

As your Jr. Vice Commander, I vow to do better at things I struggle with and that is public speaking. I need to improve this so I can better advocate for you, the membership and give high praise to those in department that lead by example and exemplifies our commitment to excellence!

If you have ideas or anything that you need a listening ear, I'm here 24/7 and just a phone call away (575) 390-6245. Be advised I'm early to bed and early to rise. But, if it's important to you, it's important to me and I assure you, I will answer and listen.

In closing, let's excel in everything we do, programs, membership and community service. Our respective posts should be looked at as central hubs in our communities. Supporting our veterans (All veterans) and their families.

Respectfully yours,

Mark B.



MEMBERSHIP CORNER

*Mack
Dyer*



Membership Corner: Building Strength Through Unity
Comrades,

Last year, we achieved something remarkable—102% membership as a department. That's not just a number; it's a testament to your dedication, your outreach, and your belief in the mission of the VFW. This year, our target is 101%, and I believe with every fiber of my being that we can reach it—before May 1st. Let's be clear: All-State and All-American awards are not our endgame. They're the byproducts of excellence. What truly matters is sustaining the momentum we've built and ensuring our programs remain strong, impactful, and enduring. Why does membership matter? Because every single member is a voice—one more advocate for veterans at the Roundhouse in Santa Fe, one more vote on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. At this year's National Convention, we learned a hard but vital lesson: every delegate counts. If we want New Mexico's voice to be heard, we must grow, we must show up, and we must participate—at the District, Department, and National levels. Otherwise, our silence speaks louder than our intentions.

Every comrade is a recruiter. Every day is an opportunity to strengthen our ranks. But growth isn't just about numbers—it's about retention. I challenge every post to build a mentorship program. Don't just sign them up—call them, invite them, engage them. Let them be part of the process, part of the future, part of the legacy. Encourage annual members to become Life Members. Inspire Life Members to become Legacy Life Members. These transitions bring stability, financial strength, and long-term commitment to your post. Let's reward excellence with membership upgrades. Recognize participation in VFW activities. Celebrate your recruiters. Host training at the post and district level. If you need ideas, reach out to those who are already leading the charge—success leaves clues. New Mexico is home to incredible events that offer prime recruiting opportunities: Balloon Fiesta in the north, Roswell Air Races in the southeast, Bataan Memorial Death March in the southwest, let's show up with purpose and presence. And here's a call to action: we have 1,955 unpaid relocated members across New Mexico. They're out there waiting for a reason to come back. Make the call. Send the letter. Knock on the door. Let's bring them home to the VFW. Early recruiting leaders are already stepping up: Gilbert Romero: 4 new members, Joe Santillanes: 3 new members. Let's follow their lead. Let's rally together. Let's make this year one of growth, connection, and unstoppable momentum. Together, we are stronger. Together, we will succeed.

Mack Dyer
Membership Chair



VFWA PRESIDENT



Jeanette D Garcia

Hello New Mexico,
Time is flying by so fast. It is now September. Thank you for all your hard work this year. As I travel to districts for my official visits, I can see the work that our Auxiliaries are doing and your passion for our Veterans. At National Convention we had 20 Auxiliary members from New Mexico attend. We heard from the new National Ambassadors and the goals for this year. We are already a step ahead and moving forward with our programs. We saw Betty Decker, our new National District 15 Council Member and Shirlee Frias, Assistant Conductor get installed during the convention. Congratulations to the both of you. As for awards, our department did very well. Congratulations to Renee King and all who received awards:

Circle of Excellence: Renee King

Veterans & Family Support: Award #1 - Auxiliary 401- Division 3

Americanism: Department 1 st Place - Marsha Short

Buddy Poppy: Award #1 - Auxiliary 401 - Division 3

Department 2 nd Place - Barbara Santillanes

Historian: Award #1 - Auxiliary 401 - Division 3

Hospital: Award #1 - Auxiliary 401 - Division 3

Department 2 nd Place - Jeanette D Garcia

Membership: Department 2 nd Place - Kelly Fouse

Recruiting 20 members or more: Marsha Short

Scholarship: Award #1 - Auxiliary 401 - Division 3

Resolutions didn't take as long as we thought it was going to be. There was discussion on some

of the resolutions, the results are as follows:

Resolution #1: Life Membership - Passed

Resolution #2: National District Council Members - Passed

Resolution #3: Eligibility - Passed

Resolution #4: Meetings, Regular and Special - Tabled until more information provided

Resolution #5: Suspension & Revocation of District Charter - Passed

Resolution #6: National (A) - Was not presented

Resolution #7: National (B) - Passed

Resolution #8: Trustees Duties of (All Levels) - Passed

Resolution #9: Solicitation of Funds - Passed

Article XI Disciplinary Action - Passed with Amendments

~CONTINUED ON PG 9



VFWA PRESIDENT

It was a busy convention. The changes still have to be presented to the VFW and they will need to approve these changes. Once approved changes will be made in the bylaws and a new book will be available for your auxiliaries to purchase or you can see the book on MALTA.

We will be having our Council of Administration meeting on September 27, 2025 at the Veterans Memorial. There will be a tour at 9:30 am and the meeting will begin at 10:30 am. All members are welcome to the meeting. This is not only for the Council Members. There will be a couple of presentations, we will have a silent auction/raffle for the Pink Warrior House. Each District is asked to bring a Pink Basket that will be auctioned or raffled off at the end of the meeting. Proceeds made will go towards the needs of the Pink Warrior House. Lunch will be provided.

Attached you will find an order form for National President Lois Callahan's Sparkle Shirt. The Deadline to order is November 1st and they are \$24.00. Penney will also have her pins available for purchase at the Council of Administration meeting

Thank you for all your hard work. Keep working your Membership. We are currently at 89.04%. Would like to see us get to 100% by the end of December. As a department, district and auxiliaries, we can make this happen. Remember that we are each a piece of the puzzle, let's work together and complete our picture.

Please let me know if you need any help, our Line Officers will be attending one of your meetings beginning now in September through December. Our department is here to support you and help with any concerns you may have.

Please also let us know about the great things you are doing. How did you help Veterans and Families, tell us about your fundraisers, how are you working with your new members? Let us highlight your Auxiliary and/or your District and its members.

Thank YOU!!

Jeanette D Garcia
Department President

VFW POST 1547

Ludi calls being grand marshal an 'unexpected honor'

For Gary Ludi, the honor of being named grand marshal for the 2025 Fiestas de Las Vegas was an "unexpected honor," but also a chance to do what he often does - support veterans.

Ludi helped kick off the Fiestas celebration on July 4 at Plaza Park with a speech that outlined the sacrifices made by the American Armed Forces since the country's inception.

"Today, we come together to celebrate the most significant beginning in American history," Ludi said as he began his speech. America's first soldiers, Ludi said, fought against Great Britain. They risked their families, homes and lives to stand up "against tyranny," he said.

Ludi noted that on the morning of July 4, 1776, John Hancock was the first of 56 individuals to sign the Declaration of Independence.

Since then, Ludi said, it has taken "generations of sacrifices to make sure our nation's independence endures."

"With freedom comes a great responsibility," he said. "Our service members have proven repeatedly they stand ready to defend (our freedom)."

Ludi thanked all service members from all branches of the Armed Forces.

"It is because of them we truly have a reason to celebrate," he said.

Ludi then gave a special thanks to Vietnam veterans, noting that 2025 marks 50 years since the end of the Vietnam conflict.

"There were no parades, there was no recognition," Ludi said of the milestone anniversary. "But you know what? Las Vegas is proud of its veterans, especially our Vietnam veterans."

Ludi asked the Vietnam veterans in the crowd to raise their right hand "as you did when you took that oath to defend our country."

Ludi asked the crowd to say 'welcome home Vietnam veterans' at the count of three. He thanked the veterans for their service.

Born and raised in Las Vegas, Ludi said he lives in the same home in which he was raised. He served in Kuwait in the 1990s and retired as an Army Sgt. 1st Class in 1997. He serves as commander of the local Veterans of Foreign Wars and is district commander of the VFW's District 5, which covers Mora, Raton, Clayton and Cerro.

Ludi said that when he was initially told he was to be the Fiestas grand marshal, he thought he didn't deserve the title, but accepted it in order to represent veterans and share initiatives aimed to help them. He said he is currently working on a suicide prevention program for veterans. "We're just trying to get a coalition going to help our veterans," he said. "That's my main thing. That's what I'm all about is helping our veterans."

*Gary
Ludi*



VFW POST 3274



Blakey VFW Post 3274 named after Army PFC Yelverton Blakey, a Hobbs native died onboard ship from the Spanish flu, he was buried at sea. The family donated the property for the first post home some 90 years ago.

On 4 July 2025 the post was renamed after a Lea County combat veteran and post member after his first tour of duty in Iraq was KIA in Fallujah, Iraq. Our post is now proudly named Marine LCpl. Aaron C. Austin VFW Post 3274.

The ceremony attracted approximately 100 guests to include local residents and dignitaries.

Gold Star Mother Deon Miller (LCpl Austin's mother) was in attendance and was the first person in the vestibule to see the transformation, honoring our past and embracing our present and future.



To: All VFW Posts in New Mexico
Subject: Inaugural VFW Post Golf Match – Who Will Take the Cup?

Dear Comrades,

The VFW New Mexico Foundation is excited to invite your Post to take part in our Inaugural VFW Post Golf Match – a spirited competition where fellowship, fun, and pride come together on the fairway.

This is your Post's opportunity to join a brand-new tradition – one that celebrates our service, our camaraderie, and our shared commitment to veterans.

What's on the line?

The VFW Loving Cup – engraved with the winning Post's name
And of course... statewide bragging rights as the top golfing Post in New Mexico!

Event Details:

Date: Saturday, October 4, 2025
Location: Red Hawk Golf Club – Las Cruces, NM
Hosted by: The VFW New Mexico Foundation

We encourage each Post to assemble a team of four and come ready to compete, connect, and carry your banner proudly. Whether you're in it to win it or just to enjoy a day of golf and fellowship, you'll be part of something special.

Contact us to reserve your spot or ask questions:

Len Hampton – (575) 405-9001 | vfastgolf@gmail.com
Felipe Rodriquez – (575) 640-4751 | vfastgolf@gmail.com

Let's find out which Post rules the fairway.

One team. One trophy. One chance to make history – and support the work of the Foundation.

Yours in comradeship and service,

L Hampton

On behalf of the VFW New Mexico Foundation

