

THE VFW—NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS!

For over 100 years, the Veterans of Foreign Wars has held an unwavering mandate of service to our nation and to those who protect it. We have been relentless, tenacious and resolute, fighting to ensure America lives up to its sacred obligation to care for those who put their lives on the line in defense of our nation and our way of life. There's a reason we claim, "No One Does More for Veterans."

Think back to the challenges faced by our founders. In 1899, returning Spanish-American War veterans were left to fend for themselves, with no access to health care, no compensation for their injuries, and no support for their families. But, on the evening of September 29, 1899, 13 brave men gathered in a small tailor shop in the heart of Columbus, Ohio, to correct these egregious wrongs and address the issues plaguing our country's returning veterans. They shared their personal stories of sacrifice, and more importantly, they asked the crucial question: "What can we do for our brothers-in-arms and their families?"

What followed was the birth of two powerful organizations, the American Veterans of Foreign Service and the Colorado Society of the Army of the Philippines, later renamed the National Society of the Army of the Philippines. In 1913 these organizations realized that by joining together they could better serve their members. By banding together, they could create a veterans' organization that would give America's veterans and their families one voice ... a voice that would advocate and defend their benefits and rights. It was an organization that would outlast its founders and survive as long as Americans put on uniforms to defend our country. The veterans who founded the VFW bravely challenged the status quo and by doing so, helped shape the future for millions of patriots ... and every generation of future veterans to come.

I believe the founders of the VFW were like many of us; ordinary citizens who became extraordinary because of their willingness to make a difference ... to stand-up and to make things right for those who deserve it most – those who have and continue to serve our nation.

And for 127 years, the Veterans of Foreign Wars has not stopped at only taking care of veterans. The VFW has been steadfast in its determination to ensure that the values and principles upon which this great country was founded are maintained and protected. The mission is as clear today as it was in 1899: *to ensure our nation honors its promises and responsibilities to the veterans of the wars it creates.*

Today's VFW is more diverse and impactful than ever. Our programs continue to grow and evolve to meet the ever-changing needs of those we serve. Throughout the world, VFW members' generosity and commitment is demonstrated in many ways – from our National Veterans and Legislative Services, community service programs, youth and veterans scholarship programs, youth activities and our Military Assistance Program, the VFW and its Auxiliary also raise and contribute millions of dollars and donate millions of volunteer hours to support and give back to their local communities.

But the importance of what we do as an organization has become even more evident today. We recognize and take great pride in the fact the VFW continues to play a vital role in helping to lead and unite our nation. Under our belt is more than a century of patriotic spirit, advocacy in action and concern to draw upon, and we look forward to an even better and more impactful century ahead.

As in previous decades, you will find today's VFW just as persistent while engaging Congress whenever veterans' benefits are threatened. And we remain steadfast in doing all that we can to improve the quality of life for today's service members, veterans and their families.

While the VFW's legislative influence is vast and well known, the effect the VFW has had on the lives of America's heroes and their families extends far beyond its advocacy efforts. Its programs and services continue to provide America's heroes and their families with the vital support they need.

In the last year alone, our support included helping veterans recoup \$14.6 billion in earned VA benefits, including new claims for nearly 150,000 veterans, awarding nearly \$1.6 million in college scholarships to help more than 330 service members and veterans achieve their post-military academic goals, providing nearly 50 military and veteran families facing military-related financial hardships with more than \$40,000 in assistance, and VFW and VFW Auxiliary members volunteering 5.9 million hours of time annually to their local communities. Today, members of the VFW and its Auxiliary continue to act as pillars of support in communities across America and abroad.

Through the years the VFW has had huge impacts on the lives of so many, and the VFW remains a dedicated and staunch advocate for America's veterans, service members and their families. If you are a U. S. military veteran who has served in a foreign war, we invite you to join us. We need you! If you are a family member of a veteran who has served in a foreign war (*spouse, son, daughter, brother, sister, grandchild, etc.*), we invite you to join our Atmore Post 7016 Auxiliary. We need you!

Lloyd Albritton is a U. S. Marine Corps veteran who served overseas in the Vietnam War. He is the Commander of Atmore's VFW Post 7016. Veterans interested in joining the VFW or the VFW Auxiliary may call or text Lloyd at (850)281-3233 or email him at cmd@vfw7016.org for more information. Visit our Post website at www.vfw7016.org to join, make a donation or purchase a ticket in our fantastic raffle.