



THE GRAF-O'HARA MESSENGER

3230 S. WAGNER ROAD PO BOX 2509, ANN ARBOR, MI 48106

Post: (734) 662-3972 - Commander: (734) 994-0444

Post Web Site: www.vfw423.org

Meetings – 2nd Monday Each Month at 8:00PM

February / March 2009

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS AND AUXILIARY POST 423

Commander's Message - John Kinzinger

Comrades and Friends, 2009 is ahead of us with promises of a very good year for our VFW Post 423. If you are in the area, I hope you make at least one event we will be putting on at our post this year. Our meetings are not bad either. Marilyn West always has great food for us at least 30 minutes before our 8 pm meeting, so you can come hungry, or just plan on a little snack on your post.



John K. Vietnam 66-67

We continue our every other month Support Our Troops packing before our membership meeting. We packed 24 boxes before our February meeting. We meet around 6:15 at the post, make the boxes, pack the boxes, label them, complete custom's forms and load them in a vehicle to go to the post office the next day. At that point they are on their way to our troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. They usually arrive there in 8 to 14 days.

We have received several letters from our troops thanking us for what we do. We have also been given American Flags which had been flown over different posts in those war zones. These are all being saved by our Quartermaster for future display.

If you are unable to help with the packing, but would like to support our effort, you can send the post your gift made out to 'VFW Post 423 – Support Our Troops', and mail it to VFW Post 423, PO Box 2509, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. These packages weigh between 15 and 20 pounds. These are not small boxes. The average cost for postage for one package has been about \$17 each.

The following is an example of the thank you notes we get back from our troops. It was post-marked 15DEC08.

(See Commander page 2)

Auxiliary President's Message - Marilyn West

We had another very successful Christmas Party this past year. A special thank you to Milton and Kay Davis, they did so much. Not only did they do all of the gift shopping, but because of the bad weather they did all the wrapping, so no one had to come to the post and do it. They were also responsible for purchasing and preparing the major food items.

This year we hope to have some Sunday afternoon pot luck get-togethers. This would be a nice way for you to bring friends and family to see our post.

We will have our annual Memorial Day weekend and as usual some of us will be there early with our trailers. This is a good time to spruce up and plant. Anyone wishing to help will be more than welcome.

President, Marilyn West

Poppy Sales

Our annual Buddy Poppy sales will be May 7, 8 and 9. The proceeds from this fund raiser go towards our programs to help Veterans at the VA Medical Center and others. So, I hope you volunteer to help sell poppies this year. This will help us make an even bigger difference for others.

If you would like to help, but are unable to sell poppies, you can help by sending a gift made out to VFW 423 – Poppy Sales and mail it to VFW 423, PO Box 2509, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

We will have volunteer signup sheets passed around the next couple of membership meetings. I hope you can find the time to help with this program. If you would like to help sell, but cannot make a meeting, please call me and I will get you signed up. – John K

This is from a General in Afghanistan. These officers pass all the items down to their troops.

“My team and I send our heartfelt thanks to you and the members of VFW Post 423 for the thoughtful and generous gift of athletic shoes you sent us.

They will come in very handy and we appreciate your thinking of us. It’s an honor to serve Great Americans like you. Thanks again for your support.

Sincerely, Walter D. Givhan”

In December we received a large group of new athletic shoes. So, we mailed them to our troops. There was 145 pairs in that shipment to different troops in the two war zones. They often get time to workout in gyms in their off duty, so they will come in handy.

Personally, I wish to thank all of you for helping with these Care packages. Comrades, we know how important it is to receive a Care Package. And together we make a difference.

If you or a loved one is having critical health issues, please contact me (734-994-0444) so we may report it at our next meeting and add you to our prayer list. Murl Eastman is our Post Chaplain, he too would be getting in touch with you.

Thank you Comrade Eastman for all your work at the Ann Arbor VA to help our local hospitalized Veterans. Murl, WWII Veteran, every morning goes to the VA Medical Center and visits with the 20 or so new patients that arrive each day. We also do our monthly bingo for them too. That is thanks to a handful of our regular members. Post members have a lot of fun doing bingo with them. If you are interested in helping in any way to help our hospitalized Veterans, please contact me and we will gladly get you signed up. Please remember to try to make it out to one of your post’s special events in 2009. We would be happy to see you come out. So, put the special event dates on your calendar. Also be sure to mark down our monthly meetings, which is always the second Monday of each month at 8pm.

Commander Kinzinger

Membership

We can always use more members. The more we have the more we can do to help other Veterans. I really wish all members would be actively in-

involved in recruiting new members and get more involved more in our post. Then we could make an even greater difference. At this time our post has about 240 members. Some of you still need to get your annual dues in, so please take a moment and keep up your membership. We need you and your membership.

Info only; at a recent District 6 meeting, it was noted that in our district we have 4,553 members in our District 6 VFW posts. District 6 runs from Monroe to Lansing.

‘Proud To Be’ Concert

For all Veterans in the area, the Dexter Cornerstone Elementary School puts on a wonderful annual program to honor local Veterans. This is a unique event. These young students singing their little hearts out. It is something special to see. I have attended several of these over the years and I am still moved each time by their singing and reciting patriotic verse.

All Veterans in the area who can make it there are very welcomed. They perform the songs they have been learning all year. Just wear a Veteran hat, shirt, etc. to identify yourself as a Veteran.

This year the event will be Wednesday, May 20th starting at 7 pm. I would suggest that you get there before 6:45. Cornerstone Elementary School is located at 7480 Dan Hoey Road, Dexter. Dan Hoey Road, on the east side of Dexter, goes between Baker and Dexter-Ann Arbor Roads.

I hope you are able to attend. – John K



Sr. Vice Commander Houser and Quartermaster Davis presenting Carl Ernst (center) a certificate for 65 years of continuous membership in Post 423. Carl served in the US Navy during WW II.

We had a wonderful party 38 children and 42 adults were able to attend, a few children unable to attend due to illness.

Our main dishes were turkey and ham and we had so many other dishes and deserts.

I would like to thank everyone who brought dishes to share.

Our special friend to the post Mary Sougstad made these beautiful baskets of beanie babies and dolls to give to the children. A big thanks to her and of course thank you Marv Konkle for collecting the baskets.

Because of the weather on the 6th we had to cancel our decorating and gift-wrapping at the Post.

Milton and I wrapped the gifts at home, and John, Jane and George decorated the post.

Sunday morning however Marilyn and Ralph West, Don and Jan Meabon came bright and early so we could set up the tables and finish the food. Also, thanks goes out to Ann and Gene for all their help.



A big thank you for helping with the clean up after the party goes to Horace, George, Marv and Carolyn. Also helping were Marilyn and Ralph, Don and Jan, Diane Mraz and Brandon. Thank you to everyone that helped and supported the Christmas Party.

A special thank you to Milton for all of his help. I could not have got it done without his help. Thanks Santa. I hope everyone had a good time, I know the children had fun. The children drew pictures on 54 pillowcases to send to our troops.

Again thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Respectfully, Kay Davis

WASHINGTON (Dec. 18, 2008) - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced immediate actions to quickly identify and pay surviving spouses who are eligible to receive a one-time compensation or pension payment for the month of the veteran's death.

"This benefit payment is long overdue to many of our beneficiaries," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "In these difficult economic times, it is imperative that we take aggressive action to fix this situation for the families of our veterans."

Problems in VA's implementation of a change in law that was effective in 1997 resulted in some surviving spouses not receiving the veteran's compensation or pension payment for the month of death. This problem was recently brought to VA's attention by Sen. Daniel K. Akaka, chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Peake immediately directed the formation of a special task force to identify and pay the beneficiaries who never received the benefit or were inadvertently required to repay the money issued for the month of a veteran's death.

Surviving spouses most likely to be affected by this processing problem are those who never applied to VA for survivors' benefits following the death of a veteran.

The task force is in the process of reviewing VA's payment records for veterans who died after December 31, 1996, and who are survived by a spouse. The review will identify those to whom VA owes retroactive benefits for the month of the veteran's death. Current address information is being obtained for as many of these beneficiaries as possible.

VA will begin issuing retroactive payments to eligible surviving spouses at the end of this month. Payments will continue to be issued as additional unpaid beneficiaries are identified and VA is able to obtain current address information.

Because there are deceased veterans for whom VA does not have marital status information, a special Survivors' Call Center has been established for spouses who believe they may be entitled to this retroactive month-of-death benefit.

(See Veterans Affairs next page)

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Veterans Affairs continued

Surviving spouses are encouraged to contact the Survivors' Call Center at the toll-free telephone number, 1-800-749-8387. Call center agents will assist surviving spouses in providing VA with the information needed to determine their eligibility.

The Call Center is open Monday through Friday from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm central standard time. Inquiries may also be submitted through the Internet at <http://www.vba.va.gov/survivorsbenefit.htm>.

Election of Officers

Post election of officers is approaching. We will have nominations open at the March meeting and prior to the election at the April meeting. So, be thinking about stepping up and running for one of the post positions.

Calendar of Events

April, June 6:30 p.m. Packing Boxes For Troops
May 7, 8 & 9 Poppy Days
May 17 Installation of Officers Dinner
May 22-25 Memorial Day Weekend Museum Display
At the Post
July 19th Post Picnic
August 2nd - Veterans Picnic for all local veterans.
October 11 Past Commander and Past Auxiliary Presidents Dinner.
October 31: Post Halloween Party

Post Web Site

Comrade Margaret Gersh is our web master. She has created a very nice Post web site that has pictures of past events and our newsletters for you to view online or download. Please take a moment and check out our site at www.vfw423.org. Her email address is VFWPost423@gmail.com.