

Happy New Year to each of you! As we welcome 2026 with hope and excitement, I want to extend my deepest gratitude for everything we accomplished together throughout 2025. Your dedication to our mission and your unwavering support of our veterans and their families continue to inspire me. I am truly thankful for each of you and for the heart you bring to serving those who have served our country.

December was a wonderfully busy month, filled with the joy and excitement of the holiday season. Our banquet room and Christmas trees were beautifully decorated by the children, and it was such a delight to see their enthusiasm and Christmas spirit. They did an amazing job! A special thank-you goes out to the Post members who helped decorate the lounge with festive lights and ornaments—it truly felt like Christmas throughout the building.

On December 6th, we held our Voice of Democracy, Patriot's Pen, and Teacher of the Year Awards Luncheon, which saw high attendance and enthusiastic involvement from the youth in our area schools. Congratulations to our First Place Post-level winners who will now be competing at the District 12 level: • **Voice of Democracy:** Chlorie Leandre • **Patriot's Pen:** Connor Clay • **Teacher of the Year:** David Deitz

The following day, December 7th, we gathered at Jen's property for the Pearl Harbor Remembrance Ceremony. It was a touching tribute and an honor to remember the veterans and families connected to that historic day. Thank you, Jen, for another meaningful year of reflection, honor, and participation.

Our Children's Christmas Party on the 20th reached record-breaking attendance. Santa delivered over 60 gifts, and the children enjoyed ornament painting, Pinning the Heart on the Grinch, and balloon creations from Teri. A huge thank-you to our Post's Rider's Group, who generously stepped in without hesitation to provide additional funds for the extra gifts needed—your support truly makes all the difference. Later that evening, we celebrated with our Adult Ugly Sweater Christmas Party, another highlight of the season. The sweaters were a hit, and the night was filled with laughter, games, dancing, and holiday cheer.

On Christmas Day, we joined the Post in cooking and serving over 100 meals for their Christmas Dinner. It was a wonderful day to share food, visit with our veterans and their families, and celebrate together. Thank you to everyone who provided delicious sides and desserts—your contributions helped make the event a tremendous success.

Another proud achievement this year was reaching 100% +3 in membership before year-end, a record-breaking milestone for our Auxiliary. This accomplishment reflects your commitment, your hard work, and the welcoming environment you help create. New membership applications have continued at a strong pace since July 2025, and I credit this to your fresh ideas, our smoke-free environment, and the warm reception people feel when they walk through our doors.

Looking ahead to January, we have several exciting events to kick off the new year. On New Year's Day, we'll be serving Kielbasa and Sauerkraut—many thanks to Auxiliary member Alan Huff for providing this delicious meal. On January 17th, we'll host our Chili Cook-Off, so bring your best recipe for a chance to win 1st, 2nd, or 3rd place—and earn bragging rights for the entire year. Then on January 31st, our Steak Dinner returns to the calendar.

As we step into 2026, I am excited for the rewarding year ahead for our Auxiliary. I am truly grateful for your contributions, your heartfelt words of encouragement, and the way you help create an environment where every member feels welcomed and appreciated. We are absolutely moving in the right direction—continuing our mission for veterans and their families while reaching new milestones along the way. Your spirit, kindness, and dedication are what make this organization shine.

With gratitude and warmest wishes for a joyful New Year,

Lori Maynard
President, VFW Auxiliary