

MARKETING & MEDIA RELATIONS



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One of the best kept secrets of the Veterans of Foreign Wars is the great works our Posts, Districts and the Department does in support of the communities in which we live and work and on behalf of our military service members, veterans and families.

How our Posts and Districts market themselves within their communities and with local news media outlets could set the stage for success in the years to come.

Media Advisories, Calendar Notices, Social Media posts and News Releases can serve to communicate the message of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, promoting the good work of our Posts, Districts and Departments, and engaging the communities in which we live and work.

Media relations not only works to improve our credibility and accessibility, but also aids in marketing our organization to potential members, donors and supporters. Today, media relations is much more than just distributing press releases. It's about taking advantage of a number of ways to best engage, educate and influence our audience.

When developing your Media Relations program, you will need to define your objectives and decide what you want to accomplish.

- Determine your audience. Who do you want to reach with your message? Different VFW activities appeal to different segments of the community.
- Define your message. Sticking to one message is essential. However, your message may presented in several ways through various outlets. Determine the best way to present your message for the various outlets.
- Develop a strategy. How can you best accomplish your goals? Look at the dynamics of your community. Build a relationship with the media in your area. Keep an up-to-date list of contacts for each outlet. You may have better results if you have one person at each news media outlet as your go to contact. Become the best source of information in your community on patriotic and veterans' issues.
- Make your Post, District and Department visible and active on social media.

From time to time you may need to evaluate your strategy. Listen carefully to feedback from members and officers, members of the community and the media. Take this information and fine tune your strategy, if necessary. Just remember developing a good public relations takes time and commitment.

There ways to promote your Post, District and the Department within the community. Media advisories, News Releases, and Social Media Posts are some of the most important ways you can promote what the organization is doing within your community. If you need help in developing a Media Advisory or writing a News Release, please contact me. I will be glad to answer questions or offer suggestions.

The Illinois VFW News – the official publication of the Illinois Veterans of Foreign Wars – is published quarterly - September, December, March and June. It is mailed to the Illinois VFW membership, select members of the VFW Auxiliary, and distributed to the Veterans Administration facilities in Illinois. While we print 55,000 copies quarterly, one copy of a newspaper can be shared by as many as five people, meaning one issue of the Illinois VFW News has the potential of reaching more than 250,000 people throughout the organization. The Illinois VFW News is also uploaded on our website.

Articles, news, and other items for the *Illinois VFW News* can be submitted via e-mail. If you do not have access to a computer, you can also mail the information to me at the above address. If sending via U.S. mail, please include name and telephone number of the person submitting the item; type or print news item legibly; and send original photographs. The deadline for submitting items will be the 1st of the Month preceding publication (August, November, February and May).

2020-2021 State Publications Contest

Editors of District and Post newsletters are invited to enter one issue of their publication in the 2020-2021 State of Illinois Publications Contest. The entry must have been published between January 1, 2020 and December 31, 2020.

The National VFW Publication Contest Guidelines will be used.

State Publications Contest first place winners will receive a beautifully engraved plaque. Awards will be given out at the State Convention in June 2021.

An independent panel will judge all entries in the Publication Contest.

All entries must include the following:

- Name of Newsletter
- Editor's name and contact information
- Frequency of publication (1-4 times per year or 5 or more times per year).

All entries must be received not later than **February 28, 2021**. As outlined in the National Guidelines, editors can submit their entries for judging in the National Publications Contest.

News Media Professional of the Year

Posts and Districts are invited to nominate a News Media Professional in your community for the State of Illinois News Media Professional of the Year competition. There is no entry form - please type a one-page nomination letter highlighting how your nominee has best told the VFW story or your Post's or District's work in your community. You may also include newspaper clippings and/or weblinks with your nomination. The deadline for nominations is **May 1, 2021**. The News Media Professional of the Year will be recognized at the Illinois State Convention in June. All nominations should be mailed to the Editor, Illinois VFW News.

Commander's Leadership Manual

The Commander's Leadership Manual is made available in a printed version for District Commanders and members of the Council of Administration as well as Post Commanders or Quartermasters who may request one. The Commander's Leadership Manual is uploaded to our website (www.vfwil.org). Periodic changes to the Commander's Leadership Manual will be uploaded to the website and also made available in the General Orders.

If anyone has questions, please feel free to contact me either via email or telephone.

Some of the activities planned to increase revenue for State Headquarters include:

Red, White and Blue Veterans Service Supporter Program

Districts, Posts, Auxiliaries and individuals can show their support for our Veterans Service programs through our Red, White and Blue Veterans Service Supporter program. We have established three levels of Sponsorships – Red for those making donations of at least \$1,000; White for those making \$500 donations and Blue for those making donations of \$250. Supporters will receive a beautiful plaque denoting their level of support, and special recognition at our Mid-Winter Conference and State Convention. Supporters donating to all three levels will receive a special plaque noting their support at all levels.

Program Books

– Advertising from Posts and Districts will be accepted in each of our three planned program books listed below. Full page inside cover ads will be \$300; the back cover is \$350; full pages \$200; half-pages \$125; quarter pages \$75. Watch the General Orders and our website for additional information.

- **Fall Program Book** – 2020 marks the 100th anniversary of the Illinois VFW. The theme of the 2020 Fall Program Book, which will be distributed in November, will be A Century and Beyond. The 2020 Fall Program Book will pay tribute to our past leadership, both VFW and Auxiliary, our Posts, and most importantly our membership. We want to highlight our Past State Commanders and Auxiliary Presidents, and our current leadership; the Posts, organized by oldest to newest, with information about each Post (namesakes, date of charter, their history); and our membership sharing their story of their military service, and their VFW service. Don't miss this opportunity to pay tribute to those who have proudly served or are still serving our country. Forms for both ads and veteran inclusion are in your packets and on the website.

- **Voice of Democracy Program Book** – We will publish our annual Voice of Democracy Program Book to be distributed at the 74th annual Voice of Democracy Banquet in Springfield in February. Congratulatory ads will be available to Posts and Districts to honor their students.

- **State Convention Program Book** – The 100th annual State Convention Program Book will be distributed at the 2021 State Convention.

Convention and Purple Heart Raffle Drawings

We are planning one raffle drawing this year - the State Convention and Purple Heart Raffle drawings, which will be held at the 2021 State Convention. The Raffle Drawing offers individuals the opportunity to support our Veterans Service programs and at the same time win a portion of \$20,000 in prize monies. Tickets will be mailed based on the National Headquarters schedule – generally February. Funds generated from these drawings help offset the reduction in grant funds from the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Cash Scratch Off ticket.

Other revenue sources

Exhibit Space at State Convention – Limited Exhibit Space is available on a first come first served basis. Space is available for \$250 for all three days of our Convention. If you or someone you know wants more information, have them contact our office.

Silent Auction - Our Silent Auction, which was very successful in past years, has been retained in our State Convention activities. We ask that each District donate an item with a value of at least \$75. There are limitations as to what will be accepted. Donation forms can be found in our General Orders from March-June.

Advertising space in the Illinois VFW News – We also work with businesses in selling advertising space in the *Illinois VFW News*. Ad sizes vary and color ads are available at an additional cost. Businesses wanting information about our advertising rates can contact our office.

Throughout the year, we will promote additional fundraising activities which will benefit Veterans Services programs. Those fundraising activities will be promoted through email notices, our General Orders, and through the Illinois VFW News. But we need your help in promoting these efforts.