



May 2026 Newsletter



All American Post

VFW POST 3349

3201 REID ST., PALATKA, FL 32177

Phone: 386-328-2863

VFW3349.org



VFW
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.



VFW POST 3349
P.O. BOX 218, PALATKA, FL 32178
PHONE: 386-328-2863



FROM THE POST COMMANDER

Gerald Donnelly

May 2026



Greetings Comrades:

From Commander Gerald Donnelly

April was a very busy month for the Post.

On April 9th we attended the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) meeting and announced that the State VFW Fire Fighter of the year award was going to be Ben Stevens.

On April 11th we provided the Army Reserve with lunch at our Post.

On April 14th we hosted a State and County Veterans Service Officers seminar providing valuable veterans benefits information to the 40+ veterans in attendance. Many thanks to Chuck Foster the Florida State VSO and Allen Buquo the Putnam County VSO for their outstanding presentations.

On April 25th we attended the Putnam County Freedom Festival and provided first hand information on what the VFW does for community service and the support of veterans. We talked with many new prospective members.

May 2nd the Post will be having a day of service with the Blood Mobile from Life South at the Post from 10 to 3. Additionally, we have scheduled a band for outside (weather permitting). We may have to move inside, but we will adapt and overcome.

On May 12th we will be back at the Putnam BOCC to honor our Firefighter of the year, Boomer Davis; The Paramedic of the Year, Matt Lucher; and Police Officer of the Year, Sheriff Deputy Holly Griffith.

May 25th we will participate in the Palatka Memorial Day Parade at 10AM with a ceremony at the river front after the parade. Then we will return to the Post for an open house from 12 to 4. I will be out of town from May 26th to June 5th.

Sincerely,

Commander Gerald Donnelly





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FROM THE AUXILIARY PRESIDENT

Marian Chialastri

HAPPY MOTHERS DAY TO ALL MOTHERS AND GRANDMOTHERS

May 2 Spring Fling at the post

May 6 Auxiliary lunch at noon at Hog Wild in Interlachen..

May 13 Monthly meeting at 7 p.m.

May 16 District Meeting in Gainesville at 10 a.m. breakfast at 9 a.m.

May 25 Open House at noon Post will supply chicken the auxiliary will bring sides to share.

THERE WILL BE NO AUXILIARY DINNER IN MAY

I will rep

Respectfully submitted,

Marian Chialastri

Auxiliary President



VFW HONORS OFFICER, FIREFIGHTER



Photos by SARAH CAVACINI/Palatka Daily News

Palatka Police Department Officer Matthew Keith, above, and Palatka Fire Department Firefighter Ben Stevens, below, hold the certificates Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 3349 awarded them for being the group's Police Officer of the Year and Firefighter of the Year. Police Chief Jason Shaw said Keith was chosen because of his integrity, compassion, leadership abilities, commitment to public safety and his high standards in law enforcement. Stevens, who was also named VFW's statewide Firefighter of the Year, was honored locally because he entered a burning mobile home in May to save a woman and two children.



May 25, 2026 Key Memorial Day Facts

- **When?** Last Monday of May. **What?** It honors fallen service members of the U.S. military. **How do I honor it?** Take a moment of silence at 3 pm, take part in local activities, or display a flag at half-staff from sunrise to noon.

The History of Memorial Day

Americans began to recognize Memorial Day in 1868, and the country established it as a federal holiday in 1971. Originally known as "Decoration Day," the holiday started with communities coming together to decorate the graves of those who died during service.

On May 1, 1865, thousands gathered for a procession led by 3,000 school children carrying flowers and singing patriotic songs.

In 1966, the federal government declared Waterloo, New York, the official birthplace of Memorial Day when President Johnson signed a presidential proclamation stating Waterloo celebrated the first Memorial Day. That day, in 1866, the city closed all businesses so residents could decorate the gravesites of soldiers with flowers and American flags.

What Memorial Day Means to Those Who Serve

Many service members, veterans, and others in the military community spend Memorial Day mourning those they've lost. They think about their fallen brothers and sisters, and find their own ways to remember and honor them.

"Memorial Day is important to me because I honor those who have sacrificed their lives and their family's lives in pursuit of freedom for our nation," said Army veteran Edwin Martinez. "What greater gift can one man or woman sacrifice to keep the U.S. free and maintain our way of life?"

U.S. Marine Corps veteran David Daly also holds Memorial Day close to his heart. He recognizes that many look forward to the long weekend, but encourages us all to look beyond the day off and remember the bravery of the men and women who served.

"For me, the day reminds me of friends lost and the horrors of war," David said. "At the same time, it reminds us all that while the day-to-day events of the world often paint a picture of gloom and doom, we still live in a place where heroes are among us. While these brave souls have passed in service, their memory is honored on Memorial Day to remind us that we had the privilege of existing on the same plane as them, even if it was only for a moment."

May 2026

Canteen Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday - 3:00 to 9:00 PM Thursday, Friday - 12:00 to 9:00 PM Sat - noon to 5:00 PM

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1st Loyalty Day 6PM CINCO De Mayo	2nd Spring Fling 10-4
<i>3rd</i>	<i>4th</i> Bowling 5:30 PM	<i>5th</i> BINGO 6PM	<i>6th</i> Queen of Hearts 7:00 PM	<i>7th</i> 7 PM Darts / Bowling House Comm 6:00PM	<i>8th</i> VE DAY 6PM Grilled Pork Chops	<i>9th</i> In House Bowling 1:00 PM
<i>10</i> Mothers Day	<i>11</i> Bowling 5:30 PM	<i>12</i> BINGO 6PM	<i>13</i> Queen of Hearts 6:50PM Joint Mtg 7PM	<i>14</i> 7 PM Darts / Bowling	<i>15</i> Peace Officer Memorial Day 6PM Bill's Burgers and fixings	<i>16</i> Armed Forces Day
<i>17</i>	<i>18</i> Bowling 5:30 PM	<i>19</i> BINGO 6PM	<i>20</i> Queen of Hearts 7:00PM	<i>21</i> 7 PM Darts / Bowling	<i>22</i> TBD	<i>23</i> In House Bowling 1:00 PM
<i>24</i>	<i>25</i> Memorial Day Open House 12 to 4	<i>26</i> BINGO 6PM	<i>27</i> Queen of Hearts 7:00PM	<i>28</i> 7 PM Darts / Bowling	<i>29</i> TBD	<i>30</i>
<i>31st</i>						

POST OFFICERS

Commander	Gerald Donnelly
Sr Vice Commander	Tammy Spaulding
Jr Vice Commander	Jack Gibbs
Judge Advocate	Weldon Taylor
Adjutant	Gerald Shuler
Quartermaster	Gerald Shuler
Chaplin	Kevin Donnelly
Surgeon	Vacant
Service Officer	Bruce Howe
Trustees 1 yr	Weldon Taylor
2 yr	Valerie Johns
3 yr	William Thompson
Membership Chairman	Commander
Employment Officer	Weldon Taylor
Legislative Officer	John Dillingham
Disaster Preparedness/Relief	Bill Thompson
Historian	John Dillingham
House Committee Chairman	Gene Nieman
National Home for Children	Quartermaster
Communications/Media Relations	Commander

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Chairman	Gerald Donnelly
Members	Commander and ALL Members

COMMUNICATIONS/MEDIA RELATIONS

Chairman	Commander
Members	Adjutant and Quartermaster

HOUSE COMMITTEE

Chairman	Gene Nieman	
Members	Gerald Donnelly	Kevin Donnelly
	Gerald Shuler	Jack Gibbs
Canteen Manager	Vickie Dixon	

AUXILIARY OFFICERS

President	Marian Chialastri
Sr. Vice	Joyce Donnelly
Jr. Vice	Malinda Taylor
Treasurer	Lucie Barnette
Secretary	Jan Stephens
Chaplain	Kathie Thompson
Conductress	Valerie French
Guard	Betty Burnham
1Yr. Trustee	Joyce Donnelly
2Yr. Trustee	Valerie French
3Yr. Trustee	Robert Stephens
Patriotic Inst.	Kathie Thompson

DISTRICT 14 MEETING SCHEDULE

Qtr	Date	Post	Location	Time
3rd	5/16/26	2811	Gainesville	10:00 AM

Useful Web Sites

Get copy of DD Form 214 or other discharge documents: <http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/>

Request Lost and Replacement Medals: <http://www.archives.gov/st-louis/military-personnel/public/awards-and-decorations.html>

VFW National Headquarters Web Site: www.vfw.org

VFW Magazine: <https://www.vfw.org/media-and-events/vfw-magazine>

VFW Store Online: www.vfwstore.org

VFW Department of Florida Web Site: <https://vfwfl.org>

National Do Not Call Registry www.donotcall.gov

VFW Post Website <http://vfw3349.org>

From the Publisher:

Please forward any news, pictures, or article submissions to:

MediaVFW3349@gmail.com

by the 20th of each month.

Thank you

Newsletter Editors — Bill and Kathie Thompson