



February 2026 Newsletter



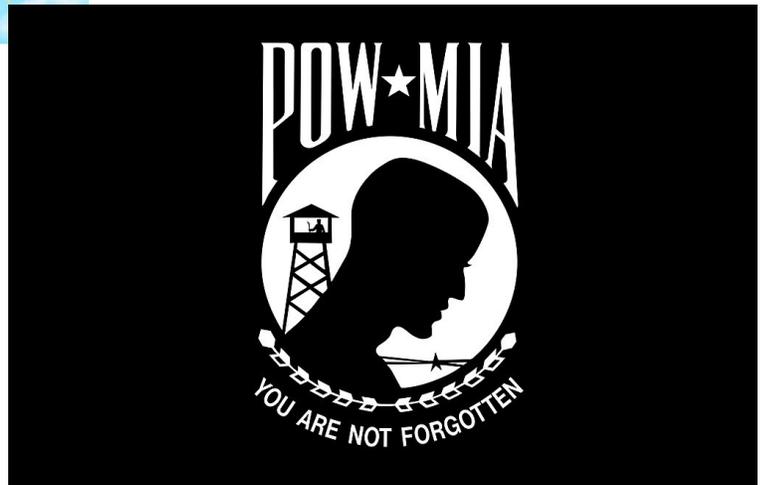
All American Post

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
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FROM THE POST COMMANDER
Gerald Donnelly
February 2026



From Commander Gerald Donnelly

Greetings Comrades:

I would like to congratulate our winners for the Post essay contests. The winner of Voice of Democracy was Jade Butler of Crescent City High School and Patriot Pen winner was Maddyson Buraty of Putnam Academy. Also, congratulations to the Post Teachers of the Year who are High School teacher, Michael Tomlinson of Palatka High and Middle School teacher, Sharon Merwin of Putnam Academy. A special thanks to the committee for judging the essays.

I will be traveling to Orlando on February 14th for Mid-Winter Conference and on February 21st to Lake City for District 14 Quarterly Meeting. District meeting starts at 1000 Hours.

I ordered the awards for the Post Fireman and Policeman of the Year. The awards will be given out at Palatka City Council and Putnam County Commissioners meetings. Further information will be given out later.

The post will be closed on Sunday, February 8th so there will be no Super Bowl get together.

Late news input! We were just notified from State Headquarters that our Post Firefighter of the year is the winner of the Department and will be forwarded to National to compete with all departments in the nation. Since this award from the Post has not been presented yet we will not announce the name at this time.

Gerald Donnelly
Veteran of Foreign War Post 3349
Commander





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FROM THE AUXILIARY PRESIDENT

Marian Chialastri

February 2026

Hello Members,

HAPPY VALENTINES DAY EVERYONE

February 4 Auxiliary lunch at Fillin Station on St Johns Ave at Noon.

February 11 monthly meeting at 7 p.m.

February 13 and 14 Mid Winter conference in Orlando. Joyce, Lisa and myself will attend and will report on everything we learn at the March meeting.

February 20 Auxiliary dinner - Lasagna \$8.00

February 21 District meeting in Lake City at 10a.m. breakfast at 9a.m, Sewing will be Feb. 25th at 9am. .

Respectfully submitted,

Marian Chialastri

Auxiliary President



Happy Birthday to Women Marines

There have been **women in the United States Marine Corps** since 1918, and women continue to serve in the Corps today

“A century of solidarity: Celebrating over 100 years of women serving in the Marine Corps” By Sgt. Justin Huffty, 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit

“On August 13, 1918, Pvt. Opha May Johnson became the first in a line of just over 300 women to join the United States Marine Corps. Over 100 years later, women are continuing that legacy, helping the Marine Corps progress in leaps and bounds. Since 1918, the Marine Corps has discovered that when dealing with a Marine’s sense of pride and work ethic, men and women have no differences.

After seeing her country at war for a year, Johnson decided to take the initiative and was first in line to enlist into the Marine Corps Reserves the day they opened up to women. She underwent the basic training that was offered at the time, and due to her prior skills gained from college and work experience she was assigned to be a clerk for Marine Corps Headquarters in Arlington, Virginia.

Just as Johnson had her own history and drive to break barriers by joining the Marine Corps, women who serve today come with their own unique stories and reasons for joining the world’s most elite fighting force. Prior to joining the Marine Corps, Sgt. Maria Hernandez, an engineer equipment electrical systems technician with the Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force – Crisis Response – Central Command 19.1, worked in the engineering field within the oil and gas industry. Like most Marines, she wanted more out of life than what her career at the time could offer.

The Marine Corps has been integrating women as a permanent part of its force since the Women’s Armed Services Integration Act was passed on June 12, 1948. Since then, women in the Marine Corps have been shattering expectations and breaking the stereotypes they have faced for so many years.

“The importance of integrating females is just the same as integrating anyone from any walk of life,” said Sgt. Rachel Busch, a meteorology and oceanography analyst forecaster with the SPMAGTF-CR-CC 19.1.

Today in the Marine Corps, women have the opportunity to work in many military occupation specialties. Back in 1918, the first female Marines were not afforded this opportunity. Originally, women were only permitted to do clerical work and operate within the continental U.S. **Continued Next Page**

“A century of solidarity: Celebrating over 100 years of women serving in the Marine Corps” By Sgt. Justin Huffty, 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit. Continued

“I think we have completely progressed into a positive direction,” said 1st Sgt. Diana Bacolod, SPMAGTF-CR-CC 19.1. company first sergeant. “Now we are everywhere. We have the Lioness Program; we have the first two infantry officers that have graduated; we have first sergeants in combat elements. We are no longer just clerical workers.”

Similar to the early restrictions on occupational choices, women were also barred from becoming commissioned officers or earning leadership roles. Change began in 1943 when Capt. Anne Lentz, a woman who tailored female Marine clothing prior to joining, became the first commissioned female officer in the Marine Corps. Since then, hundreds of women have taken on higher roles and achieved the most senior enlisted ranks such as Master Gunnery Sgt. Geraldine M. Moran, the first female Marine to be promoted to the rank in 1960, and Brig. Gen. Margaret A. Brewer, the first female general in 1978.

The Marine Corps today comprises of approximately 8 percent of women – all bearing the title Marine. The number continues to grow as women become more prevalent working in all occupational specialties and solidify the importance of their role within the Marine Corps.

“The change has to occur,” said Bacolod. “You have to put us in those positions, give us the proper guidance, and just treat us like Marines.”

The integration of women into the Marine Corps’ forces has progressed tremendously over the last 100 years since Pvt. Opha May Johnson signed her name on a line to become part of the Marine Corps. Women have gone from clerical occupations to combat roles, from lower enlisted Marines to general officers. The progression has not slowed down and shows no sign of receding. Women throughout history have proven that they are a key part of the U.S. Marine Corps and are here to stay.

“The opportunities for many of us are being opened,” said Bacolod, “just because some women chose to challenge the standards.”

February 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	2nd <i>Ground HogDay</i> Pizza & Bowling 5:30PM	3rd BINGO 6:00PM	4th <i>Aux Lunch Noon @ Fillin Station</i> <i>Queen of Hearts</i> 7:00PM	5th House Cmty 6:00PM Darts 7:00PM	6th Sloppy Joes 6:00PM	7th
8th Super Bowl 60 Post Closed	9th <i>Pizza & Bowling</i> 5:30 PM	10th BINGO 6:00PM	11th <i>Post Meeting</i> 7PM <i>Queen of Hearts</i> 6:50PM	12th Darts Bowling 7:00PM <i>Mid Winter Conference</i>	13th Steak Night 6:00PM <i>Womens Marine Birthday (1943)</i> <i>Mid Winter Conference</i>	14th Valentines Day In House Bowling 1:00 PM <i>Mid Winter Conference</i>
15	16 <i>Pizza & Bowling</i> 5:30 PM Presidents Day	17 BINGO 6:00PM <i>Mardi Gras</i>	18 <i>Queen of Hearts</i> 7:00 PM Ash Wednesday	19 <i>Darts / Bowling</i> 7:00PM	20 <i>AUX Dinner Lasagna \$8</i> 6:00PM	21 District Mtg Lake City 10:00 AM
22	23 <i>Pizza & Bowling</i> 5:30 PM	24 BINGO 6:00PM	25 <i>Aux Sewing</i> 10:00 AM <i>Queen of Hearts</i> 7:00PM	26 <i>Darts / Bowling</i> 7:00PM	27 Bills RIBS 6:00PM	28 In House Bowling 1:00 PM
March 1st	2nd <i>Pizza & Bowling</i> 5:30 PM	3rd BINGO 6:00PM	4th <i>Queen of Hearts</i> 7:00PM	5th House Comm 6:00PM Darts 7:00PM	6th Sloppy Joes 6:00PM	7th

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HAPPY MARDI GRAS



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	Rubin Myers
Service Officer	Bruce Howe
Trustees 1 yr	Valerie Johns
2 yr	William Thompson
3 yr	Weldon Taylor
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	Rubin Myers
	Jack Gibbs	Bruce Howe
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	2/21/26	2206	Lake City	10am
4th	5/16/26	2811	Gainesville	10am

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 25th of each month.

Thank you

Newsletter Editors — Bill and Kathie Thompson