

100

GREAT

★ VFW ★

National Military Services

IDEAS!

MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Help Troops • Help Veterans
Raise Funds • Get Noticed



VFW NATIONAL
MILITARY
SERVICES


Helping our Troops and Veterans Starts With You!



- Want to get involved?
- Want to make an immediate difference?
- Want to show you care?

Then VFW National Military Services is for you. Uniting three successful, longstanding programs, VFW National Military Services includes **VFW Operation Uplink™**, **VFW Unmet Needs** and the **VFW Military Assistance Program (MAP)**.

But VFW National Military Services is nothing without you... friends in the field who raise support and spread the word to the community. You are the heart of our grassroots efforts! That's why we wanted to share the following tips and ideas, collected from VFW participants across the country who make it possible. You'll see, getting started is fun and easy!

- 1. Make Contact**—Find the military installation closest to you. Contact their family support center...and offer to Adopt-A-Unit.
- 2. Build a Relationship**—Encourage military units to contact you if they need help. You can be available to support the unit before, during and after the deployment.
- 3. Anticipate Need**—MAP provides meaningful support for deployments and homecomings. If you read or hear about an upcoming deployment in the newspaper, go ahead and contact the military installation and offer to help.
- 4. Initiate a "Community Covenant" signing ceremony**— This type of occasion is frequently publicized and can dramatically raise your local community's awareness of the need for troop support.


- 5. Create a Community Network**—Build relationships with patriotic minded businesses, groups and organizations. Enlist their help with troop support activities: fundraisers, unit (MAP) events or projects.
- 6. Make Your Community Network a "Win/Win" Situation**—Give your network ample opportunity for recognition. Present a Certificate of Appreciation, advertise your supporters with posters and banners and include them in media coverage.
- 7. Pick an Accessible Location**—Make sure you and your volunteers, as well as the media, are able to be present for VFW sponsored events. If going on base presents a problem, suggest your local post.
- 8. Touch Base**—Once tentative plans have been set, double-check with everyone a week in advance to confirm details.



9. Celebrate the Holidays—Consider planning an event around a patriotic holiday like Veterans Day or Memorial Day. The community—and especially the media—will be more receptive and enthusiastic.

10. Time it Right—Avoid planning an event close to a major national event—such as the World Series or Election Day. That way you can gain maximum attention.

11. Make Offers—Offer your Post home for meetings and events for your Adopted Unit and/or their Family Readiness Group (FRG).

12. Build a team within your Post and Auxiliary—Look for individuals who can contribute various skills:  Computer and internet; truck for transporting items to events; experienced event planners.

13. Know Your Unit—specific unit name, their mission, mascot, deployment schedule and specific needs.

14. Work Smarter, not Harder—Utilize available technology; email, internet, social networking sites and blogs. All are used by today's military and their families.

15. Show Common Threads—Take time to remind service members that you understand what they have been through. It helps link the generations.

16. Support—provide meals or snacks to adopted Guard or Reserve units attending training close to your post.

17. Keep in Contact—Offer to keep in touch with the military unit, particularly if they are being deployed. Ask to be included in the units' newsletter and keep up to date on the latest happenings in the unit.

18. Cook up Some Fun—Offer a cooking class or BBQ cook-off competition for the FRG's of your adopted unit.



19. Share Your Success—Did something work particularly well? Share those techniques with fellow supporters by letting us know.

Ideas You Can Take to the Bank!

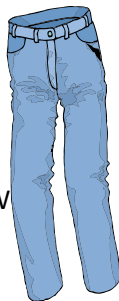
20. Restaurant Table—Approach a local restaurant and ask to set up a table to collect donations for U.S. troops. The welcome response may surprise you.

21. Golf Scramble—Many Departments have organized golf scrambles. Entry fees, local sponsorships, sometimes even winner's prizes can all benefit VFW National Military Services.

22. Patriotic Gala—The Department of Delaware organizes a "Red, White and Blue" Gala, complete with celebrity entertainment, fine dining and fun dancing.

23. Be a Scavenger—Organize a scavenger hunt with local businesses. The team who collects the right items wins!

24. Go Casual—One law firm chose to set aside a Friday as "casual day." Employees who wanted to dress down were asked to make a donation to VFW National Military Services.



25. Celebrate Differently—Many Posts and Auxiliaries have decided to forgo their annual holiday party...and instead host a benefit for our defenders. There's no better way to share the spirit of the season!

26. Create Competition—Challenge another Post or Auxiliary to see who can raise the most support for our troops and veterans in a one-two month period.

27. Hold a Raffle—Ask a local business to donate a "high-ticket" item. Then sell raffle tickets, with all proceeds benefiting VFW National Military Services.

28. Flip some Pancakes—An old favorite! Hold a pancake breakfast and be sure to invite military families of deployed service members.



29. Bake sale—Set up "shop" at a local business and sell goodies made by VFW and Ladies Auxiliary members.

30. Recipe Book—Here's a "recipe for success!" Compile a recipe book from members, and offer the books for a minimum donation to VFW National Military Services.

31. Find Your Allies—One local realtor in Minnesota is donating 10% of her profits to VFW. Suggest a similar arrangement with a local business.

32. Ask the media—In Minnesota, the major TV networks have donated thousands of dollars. Approach your local media and see if they would consider a similar drive.

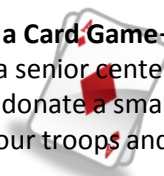
33. Tap a Celebrity—Ask a local celebrity—a news personality or government official—to help spread the word about VFW. Invite them to be present at your fundraiser.

34. Fishy, Fishy—Host a fish fry, especially during Lent.

35. Check Please!—Ask local restaurants to put a quick "ask" in the check presentation folders presented at restaurants. The dollars can quickly add up!

36. Organize a Food Tasting—See if local restaurants might be willing to participate in a "food tasting" contest at your local Post. Attendees pay a small fee, benefiting VFW.

37. Host a Card Game—Set up a card party at a senior center or VFW Post. Entrants donate a small entry fee to support our troops and veterans.



38. Bingo!—Never forget this tried-and-true fundraiser. Host a game with the winner splitting the prize with VFW.

39. Make it Easy—Ask local retailers if you can place coffee can collections by their registers. Coins add up quickly!

40. Take to the Street—Choose a patriotic holiday and work the streets collecting donations. Be sure to wear your VFW hats!

41. Get in the Game—Rent a big-screen TV for the Post, and host a "Game Day Party." Charge a small fee to participate and collect donations for food and beverages.

42. Anyone Crafty?—Put together an all-star craft making team and collect donations for the wares during the holidays.

43. Wrap it Up—Donate time at a local mall wrapping gifts in exchange for donations to VFW.



44. Host a Chili Cook-off—Perfect for fall, gather chili chefs from your Post and community and organize a cook-off. Charge a small donation for admission.

45. King of the Barbecue—Host a barbecue contest. Ask local businesses to donate the food and beverages, and charge a small admission fee.

46. Spread the Word—Approach a local newspaper and offer to sell newspapers on the street corner, in exchange for a portion of the proceeds.



47. Honor the Dead by Helping the Living—Ask a local florist to create a small grave marker flower arrangement for Memorial Day or Veterans Day. A portion of the proceeds from their sale can benefit VFW.

48. Get Going—Host a 5K walk or run. Ask community members to pledge a donation.

49. Work Concessions—Arrange a team to work concessions at a major event like an Air Show. Collect donations at the counter or in the crowds.

50. Donut Day—Ask local bakeries to set aside one morning to sell donuts to support our troops and veterans.



51. Talk Time—Ask members of the community to pledge a certain amount (like 5 cents) for each minute they talk on their cell phone over a designated period.

52. Go Retro—Organize a “sock hop” at the local Post, Complete with retro attire.

53. Everyone Loves Ice Cream—You can’t go wrong with this! Spice it up by making a sundae bar!



54. Discounts—Work with local retailers to create a discount card, which can be sold to benefit VFW.

55. Spring Cleaning—Clean out attics and basements for a sale at the Post. All purchases support VFW.

56. To Your Door—Ask local chefs to prepare their best meals. Encourage volunteers to provide home delivery for a generous donation to VFW programs.

57. Silent Auction—Gather donated items from local retailers and host a Silent Auction.

58. Game Show—Everyone enjoys a good game show. Host a “mock” version of the Newlywed Game or other favorite to support VFW.

59. Sing for Your Supper—



Rent a karaoke machine and hold a contest. The best—or worst—singer wins. All refreshments benefit VFW.

60. Commander-Napped!—“Mock” kidnap the Commander of your Post, District or Department. The group that raises the most donations “springs” the leader.

61. Go Hog Wild—Organize a motorcycle ride in which participants solicit pledges that can be donated to VFW.

62. Casino Night—Set up a “Vegas-style” event, with winnings being donated to VFW.

63. Get Personal—Enlist the support of family members of local service members.

Involve Young People

Working with schools is a great way to not only raise support for VFW, but also remind young people of the importance of our nation’s veterans and troops. Here are just a few ideas that you could try:

64. “Coins for Calls”—A Maryland school has been collecting pennies... and proving that they add up. Propose a similar campaign in your local grade schools.

65. Principal Challenge—One middle school principal offered to sleep on the roof for a night if a certain amount of donations were raised. And they were!

66. Boy Scout Pride—Enlist the help of a local Boy Scout pack to collect donations door to door. See about getting them a community patch in recognition.



67. Children’s Art—Ask local schools to have children create their best patriotic art. Collect donations in a Post Art Show. Award the winners!

68. Encourage Reading—Work with teachers to organize a reading contest, with donations pledged by local businesses.

69. Perform Perfect—Ask schools to put together skits with a patriotic theme. Charge admission from parents and other community members to support VFW.

70. Pizza Party!—Ask local pizzerias to donate pizza on a patriotic holiday. Invite parents to come celebrate for a donation.



71. Play Ball!—Organize an intramural basketball or volleyball game between the local high school and a local business or radio station. Donate the proceeds to National Military Services.

72. Sweet Tooth—Sell candy bars or other sweets around town to benefit VFW.

73. Lawn Work—Offer lawn work donated by middle and high school kids

74. Babysitting Drive—This is a great idea, especially during the summer or the holidays. Ask young people to baby-sit for area youngsters on a volunteer basis. Parents can donate to VFW.

75. Cookie Day—Similar to a bake sale, organize a “Cookie Day” with cookies donated by parents. Student use pocket change to donate to VFW.



76. Clean Cars—Ask high school kids to host a car wash, with proceeds benefiting VFW.

77. Stimulate Competition—Encourage competition between grades.

78. Host a “Pet Fair”—Have students bring photos of their pets for display. Select category winners (best looking; friendliest; most talented; etc) by voting with coins.



79. Bad Hair Day—Elementary students allowed—for a nominal fee—to come to school with an unusual hairdo.

Getting Noticed!

80. Capture Your Event!—Make plans to take photos at your event, so you can get the most attention. Provide photos—preferably in digital form—to your media contacts.



81. Target Your Efforts—Keep watch on who reports on “good news.” Make a personal call to introduce yourself and the VFW.

82. Increase Positive Exposure for VFW/Auxiliary Projects and Activities—Utilize local online “community” calendars. These are usually available on the website of local newspapers, TV/radio stations, colleges and cable stations.

83. Provide Complete Information—Who, what, when, where, why! Don't forget the essentials when submitting a press release or details about an upcoming event.



84. Dress For Success—Be sure to wear your VFW hat to all events. It makes you easy to spot.

85. Make it easy—The less work required for publication, the more likely it is your story will be run.

86. Be Available—Provide all your phone numbers and email addresses to interested media. That way, they can contact you for last-minute details.

87. Follow Up—If you've submitted a press release, make a quick follow-up call to encourage placement.

88. Time it Right!—When sending information to media contacts, it's important to send it out just right—not too early, not too late. For daily papers, send info 4-5 days prior; weekly publications, 8-10 days in advance. Contact monthly or quarterly publications regarding their deadlines.

89. Be Persistent—Just because they didn't cover your event one time doesn't mean they won't in the future. Keep at it!

90. Watch for Tie-in Opportunities—Holidays...deployments... local relatives of deployed personnel who make the news...look for related story opportunities and “tag along.”



91. Acknowledge Coverage—When you get a story featured—or even a mention—send a quick note or email to the reporter thanking them for the coverage.

92. Return Reporter's Calls Promptly—Most reporters are on a tight deadline and if they call with questions, they typically need an immediate answer.

93. “Toot Your Own Horn”—Don't assume that you'll get news coverage, just because you have a good story. Contact local media well in advance to let them know what is happening.

94. Let Us Know—Getting media coverage is a victory for us all. Send copies of your published story to VFW.

95. “Merchandise” your success—Be sure to let fellow Post members and VFW supporters know of your success.



Taking Photos

96. Use Photo Releases—Talk to your contacts about getting photo releases signed at the event. This will help ensure your photos can be eligible for placement in national VFW publications. The photo release form can be downloaded at www.vfwdepartmentresources.org under the VFW National Military Services section.

97. Select a Photographer—Ask one individual to handle photography. This eliminates confusion.

98. Get in Close—A common mistake is trying to “get everyone in the picture.” Focus in on faces for a better picture.

99. Be Candid—A posed photo is okay, but a candid one is even better. Take photos when the action is happening.

100. Get Names—Be sure to identify who is in your photos. The media will need this information for captions.

Questions?

Call VFW National Military Services at 816-756-3390.