



VFW Post 7539
Bloomingdale, IL

Nomination for All American Post

To: Vince Long, Illinois State Commander
Al Yankle, 19th District Commander
Fm: Joe Palmer, Commander VFW Post 7539, Bloomingdale, IL

Subject: Nomination of VFW Post 7539 for All American Post Status

In this presentation is supportive documentation for the nomination of VFW Post 7539, Bloomingdale, IL, for the high honor All American Post for 2008/2009.

One of the criteria needed for All American status is the submission of the National Citizenship Education Teachers' Awards form. This program is a National VFW Program of which our Post had no control since according to the plan, nomination forms were sent to schools and then were to be submitted to the local post for submission to District, and then to Department. The Post does not have a high school in the area that is assigned to Bloomingdale; Lake Park High School is designated to Itasca. Thus, we had no submissions. In evaluating VFW Post 7539 for as an All American Post, "Would it have been better for us to submit the forms just for the sake of meeting a program under false pretense or was it not better to honor our oaths to uphold our purpose?" We chose to honor our oaths.

I submit that for every rule there are exceptions when merited. This is time for that exception.

VFW Post 7539 has earned the status of All American status and this report will lay out why VFW Post 7539 should be an All American Post.

Our Post, with a yearend membership of 150 has accomplished more on a per member percentage than posts with members totaling 3-4 times or more our size. Also, we do not have a post building (meeting in the local library) which hinders us in one respect when considering fund raising and such, but in another way, it allows us to spend our funds on projects for the Post and to reach VFW goals—not for rent. Thus, virtually every dollar we take in goes to support veterans, the troops, and their families, along with other Post sponsored events. Our meetings are attended on a monthly basis with 20-30 members present, again, higher than many posts larger than ours. In sum, our members come to meetings not to socialize, but to serve.

As Post Commander it is my duty to submit to you what we have done to *earn the right to be called an All American Post*. I owe it to the members of my Post and to those who have supported our efforts.

Support of Hospitalized Veterans

- Sponsored a 130 student grammar school youth concert at Hines VA Hospital

VFW Post 7539 has always supported our hospitalized veterans, particularly those at Hines VA Hospital. In December 2008 members and volunteers from our Post visited the Spinal Ward at Hines and donated Christmas “stockings” filled with sweatshirts, pens, pads, gifts, and hats, and other items for the vets. Aside from this effort, the group also sang Christmas carols while going from room to room.



While there, the Activity Director made me aware of the fact that after Christmas, the patients are seldom visited until around Easter. With that information, we contacted Trinity Lutheran Church and School to inquire if their Bell and Choir group could perform a concert at Hines. While they said they could put on a concert, they had no funds for the three (3) buses needed to transport their 130 students. Our Post voted to pay the \$500.00 for the buses, and thus in March, they were able to put on the concert for the patients. In addition, the entire school spent the months of January and February putting together some 150 “care packages” for the patients, and these were distributed throughout the wards to patients, who were unable to attend the concert.

At a recent church event, one of the 7th grade students came to me and asked, “Mr. Palmer, can we go back to the hospital next year?” This alone speaks to the merits of developing our youth through a VFW effort sponsored by our Post.

- Sponsored 30 high school students for dance and singing concert at Hines VA Hospital

In line with the efforts of Trinity Lutheran, I had the opportunity to contact the Music Director of Lake Park High School to see if they could put on a concert in April for the patients at Hines. In April, thirty (30) students from the *Jazz Dance Ensemble and Men's Choir* put on a performance for Hines patients. Additionally, some 100 gift packets were also distributed to the patients. On the way out of Hines, one of the patients (in his wheelchair) came out to the bus and yelled to the students, “Thank you from all of us!” Lake Park now is planning on a Christmas event.



Donated \$400.00 in canteen coupons for 4 BINGO dates at Hines Hospital

Our Post received a request from the St. Isadore's Single Group to help buy canteen coupons at Hines VA for Bingo nights. Without hesitation, we voted to donate \$400.00 to purchase coupons which will be used by the patients to buy necessities from the hospital canteen.

In addition to the "major events" previously described, members of our Post will drive other vets to Hines for appointments and visit patients independent of post sponsored functions.

Support Programs and Community Activities

As Post Commander, I have viewed it as one of my responsibilities to generate as much cooperation with outside agencies, whether they are churches, schools, individuals, clubs, or other service organizations, to help fulfill the motto, "*To honor the dead by supporting the living!*"

To that end, our Post has established contacts with various individuals and organizations that have helped us perform the following:

- **Donated electric hospital bed to a fellow VFW member**

A supporter of our Post works for a medical supply company and informs us when articles are available for us to seek appropriate disposition. We recently were donated an electric hospital bed from this company, but, our Post did not have an immediate need for it. I emailed posts within our District and within one day had a reply from a fellow VFW member who needed the bed. Mission accomplished!

- **Donated canes, walkers, and toiletries to local senior center**

Through this same company we have donated canes, walkers, puzzles, and other items to the Bloomingdale Senior Care Center, all in the name of the VFW. We are one of the few organizations in the area that supports this center.

- **Established a support program for families of service members serving in Iraq and Afghanistan**

Recognizing the need to support families of those who have sons or daughters serving overseas, we sponsored a breakfast get together for those with relatives in the military. From this event, we were able to distribute information about the VFW and the various support programs the families could use upon the return of their family member, including information on PTSD. Throughout the year we have maintained contact with these families and monitored their need for any help from our Post.

We are staying true to our motto!



- Supported and made donations to veterans homeless shelter

The issue of homeless veterans has long been largely ignored. Our Post has been an active supporter of the Midwest Shelter for Homeless Veterans located in Wheaton, IL. Aside from providing financial assistance, we have donated clothing and food to the Shelter. Most recently, we have enlisted the aid of non-VFW members in providing donations and meals to the Shelter. We have not forgotten our fellow veterans, and we make others aware of their plight as well! These efforts lead to increased awareness and support for homeless veterans.



- Chicago Sandwich Run

This program begun by a Vietnam Veteran has been in process for almost 20 years. One of our members has been making sandwiches for 15 year. Every weekend volunteers make around 1100 sandwiches, load them in a truck and deliver every Sunday to some 800+ homeless (30% veterans) in Chicago. Our Post created an awareness program for this effort and is matching donations up to \$300 from donors.

- Acquired living space and food for a homeless enlistee entering the ARMY. Did this to help an ARMY recruiter.

When we were made aware of the plight of a young enlistee, our Post donated funds to support him until and opened up a private home for him to stay until he shipped out. This man may never come back to Illinois, but he will remember that a VFW Post helped him out!

In another case we were made aware of a recently discharged Iraqi veteran who needed shelter until he got a job. In conjunction with other posts in the area we donated funds to support his living costs till he was employed. He joined a VFW Post close to his new home, and while he didn't add to our new members list, our efforts helped him to decide to join the VFW.

- Donated and provided support to local shelter for battered women

Our Post has been active in support of a local shelter for battered women. While the purpose of the VFW is to focus on veteran issues, we cannot be responsible citizens and partners in the community without recognizing this hidden sector of our society, some of whom are veterans. We have donated cases of toiletries and clothing to the shelter and will continue support in the coming years.

- Donated to PADS, community homeless shelter program

PADS (Public Action to Deliver Shelter) is a DuPage county agency that helps the homeless (many of who are veterans). Our Post has donated cases of toiletries, clothing, and food to the shelter for distribution to the homeless. This is an ongoing program.

- Participated in local church health and awareness clinics

VFW Post 7539 has been an active supporter of local church clinics designed to help the needy and homeless. Through these clinics we have helped direct veterans to proper agencies for assistance whether through the VA or public sector agencies. In many cases, these veterans would not qualify for VFW membership, but they needed help and the VFW was there.

We have also participated in municipal senior programs where our members have helped those seniors who are veterans that need help.

- Participated in Bloomingdale Septemberfest festivities, parade, presenting the National Colors at the start of the Fest and operating a VFW information area.

Through this community event our Post exposed the community to our purpose, what we do, and how we serve.



Aside from taking part in these community sponsored events, the Post also participates in the Character Counts yearly program where we present the Colors. The Post has also presented colors at Lake Park High School and other area schools where their local VFW Post did not have a color guard. We have also partnered with the local Lions Club in their fund raising activities.

- Participated in Snow Man Crossing Decorating Christmas Trees with a patriotic theme.

Participating in this community event, our Post is one of the few organizations that are asked to participate.



- Provide Color Guard for regional gymnastic meets held in Bloomingdale and area events.



Our Post's color guard has continuously been asked to perform presentations and local events, parades (even outside our Post area), and conferences as well as Memorial Day. The color guard also marches in the annual Loyalty Day parade.



At a local cemetery our Post donated and installed a “reflection bench” where visitors can come and think and remember their loved ones.



- Provided color guard for veterans who have passed on, including non-VFW members

One of the hardest duties to perform is that for a color guard at the wake or viewing of a fallen comrade. Not only have we performed this task for members of our Post, but at the request of others within our community. We serve all fallen comrades and support their family by providing either a flag case or bible at the end of each service.

- Promoted awareness of PTSD and veteran benefits to families of service men and women

Through combined efforts of local churches and other service organizations our Post provided copies of “*Veterans and Families’ Guide to Recovering from PTSD*” as well as providing information on local Vet Centers. This is a program, implemented in January 2009 that has met with great success and will continue as we continue to serve the veteran and their family. Additionally we have worked with the Veterans Administration, State and County Veterans agencies in providing to the public programs they offer and how to take part in them.

- Shipped more than 400 packages to troops in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2008/2009

Since 9/11 our post has been active in sending packages to the troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the period from 9/11 till now, our Post has sent over 3500+ individual packages to the men and women of our Armed Forces, whether they are from our area or not. We have shipped everything from Christmas trees to golf clubs to the food stuff they need. Additionally, we sought out and located Military Working Dog groups and have sent milk bones and pig ears (they all serve) as well as packages to the handlers. In this ongoing project, our Post has remained true to our motto and our oath.



- Post Web Site

Our Post web site (www.vfw7539.org) serves the community (as well as the nation through the internet). When "Veterans Information" is searched, our post website comes up as #10 (first page) out 11,100,000 hits on the Google search engine. Our site has provided uncounted aid to members of our community as well as providing a source for those who wish to donate to support our programs.

VFW Programs

- Supported programs of VFW including Patriot Pen and VOD

Our Post has long supported all VFW programs, particularly the Patriot Pen and VOD contests. In very year we have increased the number of entries and are forecasting increased numbers for the coming year. While taking time, we have successfully instilled in younger students the need to continue to participate in VOD after taking part in Patriot Pen. In supporting the Patriot Pen and VOD dinners we are able to meet with parents and again expand on what the VFW does and how we participate in the community and look to them for support.



- **Donated time and money to the National Home**

Not only has our Post continuously supported the National Home, but even though we are a small Post, our donations to the National Home were often greater than that from some Districts or larger Posts in the State. We have always participated on the trip to the National Home with at least four (4) members accompanying Post officers.



- **Vietnam Memorial support and other donations**

When asked for donations to the Vietnam Memorial Visitors Center, our post contributed. We have contributed to Navy Seal Support Foundation, Air Force Association, and Operation Uplink/MAPS to name a few. Our Post has supported all State Commander programs throughout our Post history.



- **Poppies**

Our Post has long recognized the value and purpose of poppies. Not for what they do for the Post, but for the vet's who make them. We have long continued an aggressive support program and participate in the Poppies display contest both at State and District level.

- **Membership**

While not a criteria for this year's All American award, our Post has again achieved over 100% and qualified for a second year in a row as an All State Post. Growth in membership is a result of our activity and service within the community.

Family at Home Support

Some of the MWD USAF personnel had wives at home who would be alone for their first Christmas with their husbands being deployed. With the approval of the men, we got their wives home addresses and launched an email campaign to "ok" folks on our email lists asking that a Christmas card be sent to the family. Over 1000 hand written Christmas cards we sent out to these families from all around the country.

We also remember the families of those who serve!

The Post has participated in Operation Support the Troops and other fund raisers held for veterans and the Armed Forces. We recently provided funds for a “party” for 1st Cav troops who had just returned from Iraq. As an aside, from that support, we gained two (2) new members.



In sum, all of the above, the attached, and more, has been done by VFW Post 7539. To not be considered for All American status, in my opinion, is a disservice to the members of our Post and goes against the very foundation of what the VFW is supposed to be about.

Is not our motto, "To honor the dead by supporting the living"? If we truly believe this, then VFW Post 7539 has met, and indeed surpassed, any criteria for the status of All American Post.

The Post has kept the faith in honoring that creed.

I am just a Post Commander, but is it not the Post Commanders who must honor and try to uphold the image and purpose of our organization from the base up?

For our Post to have submitted a form that would have been *markedly untrue* would have been a violation of our oath and a lowering of the standards by which the VFW was established and a disservice to those who have served before. What this Post has done cannot and should not be ignored. This presentation shows the value of the Post, the character of its members, and the efforts it has made to attain, and in many cases surpass the high standards and goals of the VFW.

It is my duty as Post Commander to ask that VFW Post 7539 be honored as an All American Post. It is a deserved honor.

Submitted by:

Joseph M. Palmer
Commander
VFW Post 7539
Bloomington, IL

The following documents are a summary of our X Sheets, hours, service, as well as some of the “pic’s” from those who we have send packages to.

I offer these not to belittle or degrade any other Post, for that is not my purpose, but rather to offer additional support for our case of being an All American Post.

1. The first letter from Brigette Nolan is the mother of a young Marine who was killed in a automobile accident. He served in Iraq. The family knew no one in the area that could provide a service in the funeral home and then contacted our Post. This moving letter is a tribute to how well we did in paying honor to a fallen comrade—not a member of the VFW, but a vet. The letter, sent from France, was only addressed to VFW Post 7539, Honor Guard.
2. The next four (4) letters are just some of the many letters and emails we received from service people to whom we send packages.
3. The next set of pictures is from some of the units we have supported. Even in Iraq golf is popular. The MWD (Military Working Dogs) were located by the Post Commander after contacting various air bases in the US to identify those USAF personnel serving in Iraq. One of the most unusual requests we had was for “pigs ears” for the dogs.
4. These documents are printouts of yearend totals for our Post in District 19 showing, hours, etc as well as X sheet