



# LAVA LEDGER



SEPTEMBER 2024, EDITION 3

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### Message from the Commander

Ben Fuata  
Commander, VFW Dept. of Hawai'i

Talofa Comrades,

Welcome to the September edition of the "Lava Ledger". As we observe Patriot Day, let us honor those who lost their lives on September 11th and reflect on the profound and lasting impact this day has had on our veteran community.

In this edition, we celebrate VFW's 125th Anniversary, a remarkable milestone in our enduring legacy of service to veterans and their families. We also proudly recognize Sr. Vice Commander Gregory Agonoy of VFW Post 12138 as our Comrade of the Month, and we commend VFW Post 10276 for their successful garage sale fundraiser, which supports their annual Christmas party.

We encourage all Posts to share their fundraising efforts, veteran outreach activities, and Comrade of the Month nominations for the next edition. Please ensure you provide a brief description and photos of your events and submit them to Comrade Chelsea Mack at [chelsea.mack@gmail.com](mailto:chelsea.mack@gmail.com) by the 25th of each month for consideration.

Until the next edition, stay healthy, stay positive, and always be ready to support a fellow veteran in need.

Fa'afetai ma ia faatasi le Atua,



# WE REMEMBER: THE LEGACY OF 9/11 AND ITS IMPACT ON VETERANS



On the morning of September 11, 2001, America changed forever. Terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, the Pentagon, and Flight 93, which crashed in Pennsylvania, left the nation in shock. Nearly 3,000 lives were lost that day, but the ramifications went far beyond the immediate tragedy. The attacks set off a chain of events leading to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, known collectively as the Global War on Terror.

In the aftermath of 9/11, the U.S. military embarked on its longest-running conflict. Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, which began in October 2001, followed by Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003. These wars, spanning over two decades, claimed the lives of more than 7,000 U.S. service members and left tens of thousands more physically and mentally wounded.

According to the Department of Defense, approximately 2,461 American soldiers were killed in Afghanistan and over 4,500 in Iraq.

## HAWAII'S ROLE IN THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR

For Hawaii, the impact of 9/11 was deeply felt, both by the local community and through its military presence. Hawaii's National Guard and Reserve units were repeatedly activated and deployed during these wars. For example, Hawaii's Army National Guard and 29th Infantry Brigade Combat Team served multiple tours in the Middle East. Families across the islands saw their loved ones answer the call to duty, often enduring multiple deployments that stretched over several years.

Today, the VFW Department of Hawaii honors those who served in these conflicts, including the growing number of post-9/11 veterans eligible for membership. These veterans, many of whom are younger and include a significant number of women, represent a new wave of VFW members. They bring with them unique experiences shaped by combat, repeated deployments, and the challenges of transitioning back to civilian life. The wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kuwait have created a new generation of veterans who deserve recognition and support.

## THE BATTLE CONTINUES AT HOME: PTSD AND SUICIDE

The warzone may be thousands of miles away, but for many veterans, the battle doesn't end upon returning home. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and mental health challenges are common among veterans who served in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kuwait. Studies have shown that repeated deployments significantly increase the likelihood of PTSD, anxiety, and depression. Along with spiked in PTSD and other disorders, the suicide rate among veterans is tragically high, with the Department of Veterans Affairs estimating that an average of 17 veterans die by suicide each day. Veterans who served in the Middle East face significant mental health challenges, with over 30,000 veteran suicides reported since 9/11.

## A CALL TO ACTION: THE VFW'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING VETERANS

The VFW is uniquely positioned to support these veterans. However, as older generations of veterans pass away, the organization must adapt. Recruiting younger veterans, including women, is crucial for the VFW's future. These veterans bring diverse experiences that will shape the VFW's evolution. The VFW Department of Hawaii, in particular, must embrace this change, reaching out to post-9/11 veterans to ensure they have the support they need.

## ADDRESSING TOXIC EXPOSURES: THE PACT ACT

In addition to mental health challenges, many veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan were exposed to toxic substances, such as burn pits. The PACT Act, signed into law in 2022, expands VA healthcare and benefits for veterans affected by toxic exposures during their service. This includes veterans who served in Southwest Asia and Afghanistan after 9/11. The law allows these veterans to access medical care and benefits without having to prove their conditions are service-related, providing much-needed relief to those suffering from respiratory issues, cancers, and other long-term health effects.

## MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

As we reflect on the legacy of 9/11, we honor not only those lost in the attacks but also the veterans who fought in the wars that followed. The VFW must continue to evolve, offering vital support to the next generation of veterans, ensuring that their service and sacrifices are never forgotten.

By embracing these new members, the VFW will remain a critical lifeline for veterans—offering camaraderie, advocacy, and support long after the guns fall silent. We will never forget the heroes of 9/11 and the wars that followed, and we will continue to fight for those who fought for us.

WE WILL NEVER FORGET!

# VFW DAY: CELEBRATE THE LEGACY

AS THE NATION'S OLDEST COMBAT VETERANS ORGANIZATION, THE VFW HAS CREATED AN ENDURING LEGACY IN THE LIVES OF VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES. FOUNDED ON SEPT. 29, 1899, THE VFW IS NOW CELEBRATING ITS 125TH ANNIVERSARY.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS  
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF  
AL LIPPHARDT

WASHINGTON — This Sunday, Sept. 29, we proudly celebrate VFW Day, marking the 125th anniversary of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). This extraordinary milestone is not only a testament to our rich history but also a reflection of the unwavering dedication of veterans across our nation and around the world.

Since our founding in 1899, the VFW has been a beacon of hope and assistance for millions of veterans and their families. We have fought for the rights, recognition and benefits that they earned and deserve. Our organization stands united in its mission of advocacy, service, camaraderie and honoring those who have sacrificed so much for our freedom.

As we look back on 125 years of service, we also look forward to the future. The challenges facing veterans today are ever evolving, and it is our duty to adapt and continue to be fierce advocates for those who came before us and those coming after us. Together, we will ensure that every veteran receives the care and support they need, and that their sacrifices are never forgotten.

On this special day, I call upon the more than 1.4 million members of the VFW and its Auxiliary to reflect on our shared achievements and renew our commitment to one another. Our strength lies in our unity and, together, we can continue to make significant impacts in the lives of veterans and their families. May the spirit of the VFW — our devotion to one another and to the communities we serve — remain unbreakable.

Thank you for your service, your comradeship, and your support to our great organization. Here's to the next 125 years of making a difference, honoring our heroes who have answered the call to defend our nation and ensuring that their voices are heard.

Let us all celebrate the legacy.

# 125 YEARS OF THE VFW

VFW DAY | September 29, 2024



# VFW POST 12138 COMRADE OF THE MONTH

VFW Post 12138 would like to recognize Senior Vice Commander Gregory Agonoy of Ewa Beach, for his dedication and selfless contributions to our Post 12138, Post 849, and Hawaii State Department. Comrade Agonoy has generously volunteered over 30+ hours, demonstrating unwavering commitment to making a difference for the VFW Ohana.

His efforts have gone above and beyond, driving 50+ miles to ensure he was always present and ready to lend a helping hand wherever needed. Whether it was organizing a bowling fundraiser, cleaning the Royal Mausoleum, helping with cooking duties, or setting up the IT table at the Council of Administration, he is always ready and willing to help. Comrade Agonoy is not just a volunteer but a true leader and an inspiration to all. He embodies the spirit of generosity, compassion, and dedication, and we are grateful for the profound impact he has had on the VFW Ohana. We are honored to call him our comrade!

Some of his volunteer highlights and impacts in the past 90 days:

- 02JUL2024 – Combined efforts with King Kamehameha Hawaiian Civic Club to clean Mauna Ala (Royal Mausoleum)
- 27JUL2024 – Volunteered to assist Post 849 to set up a tent and cook at Pokai Bay as part of Sovereignty Restoration Day. Also, assist with the kids fishing tournament.
- 25AUG2024 – Organized and Executed the Leeward 2nd Annual Bowling Fundraiser raising over \$1500 dollars, which was split with Post 849. He also provided raffle prizes and assisted with set up and clean up.
- 21SEP2024 – State Commander/Leaders requested an IT Table to be set up with Zoom to allow outlying post comrades to view the Counsel of Administration (COA) from home.
- Comrade Greg Agonoy also volunteers with the Post 12138 Chartered Cub Scouts for events with the Junior Vice Commander Dave Morris.



# VFW POST 10276 GARAGE SALE WAS A HUGE SUCCESS

## Garage Sale

Patsy's house

Sat, 13 Sep 2024 0700 - 1400



\*\*\*Post 10276 Garage Sale volunteers paused for a group photo on Saturday, 14 Sep. The garage sale was hosted by Post Adjutant, Patsy Takemura (standing, third from left). Net proceeds exceeded \$1,300. All monies will be used for door prizes at the Post annual Christmas Party on 21 Dec.  
—Post 10276 marquee photo courtesy Susan Sagara.  
Story courtesy of Howard Sugai

(Maunawili, HI, 14 Sep 2024) — Comrades and spouses from Post 10276 gathered on Saturday, 14 September, from 0700-1400 hrs, to stage the Post 10276 Garage Sale, at the home of Post Adjutant Patsy Takemura, deep in the heart of Maunawili.

“This was a huge undertaking spanning two days. We could not have pulled this off with outstanding results, without the help of all our volunteers who showed up to help,” said Post QM, Clyde Yoshimura.

Yoshimura and his wife, Arlene, came to Patsy’s home the night before, with about 20 other volunteers, to set up tents and merchandise display tables. They also organized, sorted, categorized and priced all the donated goods from other Post comrades.

“We had a lot of good stuff,” said garage sale organizer, Patsy Takemura. “We had a lot of kitchen appliances, still in the original box, unopened, and a lot of nice unused clothing with the price labels still attached,” Takemura added.

The garage sale also provided a great fellowship event. Virtually everyone brought food for a Friday night dinner potluck, Saturday morning breakfast, and Saturday lunch.

“We had ‘choke food’ (lots of food) and lots of chance to catch up and meet other new Post members,” said Post comrade, Herman Encarnacion.

All the hard work paid off. The Post netted more than \$1,300. Takemura said, “All profits will go to fund our door prize lucky numbers at our Post Christmas party on 21 Dec”.

# VFW POST 10276 GETTING TO KNOW THE NEW AKAKA CLINIC

((Kapolei, HI, Sep 20, 2024) — Post 10276 Comrades, spouses, family members and caregivers took an orientation tour of the new Daniel Kahikina Akaka Veterans Clinic in Kapolei, on Friday, 20 September, from 1200-1330 hours.

"The whole purpose of having our tour was to make the clinic more welcoming, familiar and inviting, especially for our first-time patients, their family members and caregivers," said Ray Loo, Post 10276 VSO (Veterans Service Officer), and tour organizer. "It is ultimately a family member or caregiver that brings their family veteran to his/her appointments at the clinic," Loo added.

The impressive and imposing Akaka Clinic with its tall ceilings and airy open spaces, opened on April 4, 2024; was completed on time and on budget at a cost of \$130 million, and occupies more than 88,000 square feet behind the Kapolei Costco. Akaka Clinic host and tour guide, was JARRIN AKINA, Clinic Business Manager.

"Since its opening on April 4th, four-and-a-half months ago, the clinic is still growing to attain its authorized staffing and all the clinical services it will eventually offer," said Akina. "Currently the clinic serves more than 16,000 veterans from the Waianae west coast, leeward and central Oahu."

"The Clinic currently offers primary care and specialty services, laboratory services, a pharmacy, imaging services, eyecare, physical therapy, audiology, mental health services, a variety of therapies to cope with PTSD, a prosthetics clinic, the 'Brew Cafe' with coffee, beverages and light snacks, women's health care, 'rapid-action' capability for walk-ins, and so much more," Akina said. "Coming soon, MRI imaging, a dental clinic, and urgent care."

Arriving at the Akaka Clinic one immediately realizes they did not compete with morning traffic to get to the Clinic, they did not have to worry about having the right 'ID' to access the Clinic, and there was lots of parking.

"The Akaka Clinic boasts 528 parking spaces; 43 reserved for handicapped veterans, and 19 with electrical charging stations," Akina said. "In the future, a valet service is being planned in addition to courtesy shuttles that will pick up from nearby neighborhoods."

"The Veteran Transportation Service (VTS) will pick up eligible veterans from their homes and bring them to their appointments at the Clinic," Akina said. A Veterans Benefits Office is located in the left side of the Clinic building. Veterans can check on the status of their claims when arriving for care.

The West Oahu Vet Center is expected to relocate to the Akaka Clinic by the end of the year. The VFW liaison office is located next to the pharmacy. There are a lot comfortable, spacious sitting and waiting areas, with cushy sofas and chairs, to complement its high, cathedral-like ceiling and expansive open areas. It's a great place to relax, enjoy a beverage, socialize and 'talk story.'

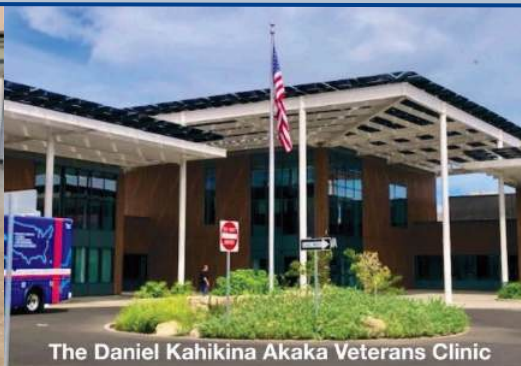
After the tour, the group returned to their meeting room to enjoy sandwiches, fruits and light snacks provided by the Akaka Clinic Community Outreach Office. While enjoying their snacks the group learned about the Akaka Clinic food distribution programs and other initiatives the Akaka Clinic supports and sponsors.

A big mahalo to AL DOMINGO, from the Akaka Clinic Outreach Office (and a Post 10276 Comrade) for our refreshments at the end of our tour.

When asked his opinion about the tour, Post Comrade DENNIS SEKINE said; "This clinic is a game changer for all veterans here in Hawaii and throughout the Pacific basin which the Akaka Clinic serves." "It is very easy to get here, and all veterans should consider transferring their health care to this Clinic."

Spouses SHARYN SEKINE, GAYLE SUGAI and Post Comrade MADELINE BALLESTEROS, checked out the restrooms. They reported the restrooms were "Spacious, clean, well maintained, and stocked with free women's feminine products."

Finally, as Post 10276 members left the Clinic, walking back to their cars, Post QM, CLYDE YOSHIMURA stopped, and looked back. A couple of seconds later he said, "If the Akaka Clinic had beds and a surgical suite, this would be a 'full-on' hospital!"



TO CHANGE YOUR MEDICAL CARE TO THE AKAKA CLINIC, CALL (800) 214-7982



# LAVA LEDGER ANNOUNCEMENTS



## VFW ACTION CORPS: SIGN UP NOW!



The VFW Action Corps is a national grassroots advocacy network of over 300,000 VFW members and supporters dedicated to veterans' issues. They stay informed on challenges facing veterans, the military, and their families, and are ready to take action by contacting lawmakers. Open to all patriotic Americans, the Action Corps is free to join and helps amplify the voices of veterans' advocates across the country.

### MEMBERS RECEIVE:

- The VFW Action Corps Weekly newsletter, covering advocacy efforts.
- Access to contact information for elected officials nationwide.
- Regular "Action Alerts" to engage when veterans' issues require attention.

The VFW Action Corps strengthens the VFW's mission to support veterans, working closely with the National Legislative Service in Washington, D.C., to drive change.

### RECENT LEGISLATIVE VICTORIES INCLUDE:

- The PACT Act, expanding VA healthcare for veterans exposed to toxic substances.
- The SERVICE Act, improving VA mammogram eligibility.
- Reforms to the Uniform Code of Military Justice on sexual assault and harassment.
- VA's maternity care coordination program for women veterans.
- The PAWS for Veterans Therapy Act, providing service dogs for veterans with PTSD.
- Inclusion of bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and parkinsonism as presumptive conditions for herbicide exposure.
- The Deborah Sampson Act, addressing healthcare barriers for women veterans.
- Removal of the 12-year limit on using Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) benefits.



JOIN THE VFW ACTION CORPS TODAY, OR ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO DO SO, AND BE PART OF THE MOVEMENT MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR VETERANS.

TO SIGN UP, VISIT: [HTTPS://VOTERVOICE.NET/VFW/REGISTER](https://votervoicenet.org/vfw/register)



# LAVA LEDGER ANNOUNCEMENTS



## NATIONAL HOME DONATION

Comrade Lawrence  
Enomoto from VFW Post 110  
has donated \$1000 towards  
the VFW National Home.

MAHALO COMRADE  
ENOMOTO FOR YOUR  
GENEROUS DONATION!

## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Share your upcoming Post  
events, fundraisers, service  
projects, and community  
activities with us to be  
featured in an upcoming  
edition of the Lava Ledger.

We also welcome  
summaries of events and  
photos for publication, so  
don't hesitate to send them  
our way!

Email your information to:  
[chelsea.mack@gmail.com](mailto:chelsea.mack@gmail.com)