

'Small But Mighty'

Annapolis VFW Post 304 debuts VFW's Destination Post Series for its work in the community and the city's ability to attract some 4 million visitors a year

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As VFW prepares to kick off its 125th year of service, VFW magazine is launching in this issue a "Destination Post Series." The series will feature 125 VFW Posts located in sought-after tourist destinations around the globe.

Featured VFW Posts are those that make a real difference in the communities in which the Posts are located. Not surprisingly, most of the VFW Posts mentioned throughout the series are All-American Posts.

The first destination VFW Post in this series is in "America's Sailing Capital" — Annapolis, Maryland. Located one hour from Washington, D.C., and 35 minutes from Baltimore, Annapolis, the nation's capital from 1783-84, is a top tourist destination.

VFW Post 304 members are out and about in Annapolis, which is how Post Commander Kurt Surber came to join VFW in 2007. A retired Army warrant officer, Surber was at the Anne Arundel County Fair where he visited the VFW Post 304 booth.

Then-Post Commander Ken Smith mentored Surber and took him to District meetings and Department of Maryland Council of Administration meetings.

In 2010, Surber, who served in Bosnia and Iraq, became Post commander and has held that position ever since. He also is in his sixth year as District commander.

Unlike many VFW Posts, VFW Post 304 does not have a bar or restaurant. It does not have regular hours. Members meet the first Thursday of the month at 7 p.m. to discuss how to best serve their community. If a member cannot get to the Post home at 1838 Generals Highway, the meetings are also accessible via Zoom.

"We are a no-stress, no-drama Post," Surber said. "We are focused on the community and

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legislative activities.”

During the Anne Arundel County Fair each year, the Post is present for the five-day event. Members distribute VFW’s Buddy Poppies, VFW’s national flower, and veterans’ benefits information. And just as Surber signed up for membership in 2007 at the fair, the Post recruits veterans for its roster.

Octoberfest is another popular festivity in Annapolis, which means the Post members are present. Members regularly distribute Buddy Poppies at the Navy Exchange.

Surber said the Post is working to make a tighter connection with the United States Naval Academy, also located in Annapolis. Last fall, Post members had the opportunity to set up a booth in the Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium at the Academy before the season-opener football game. This was the first time Post 304 members had the opportunity to do this. VFW Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Carol Whitmore also helped out at the booth.

Another key part of the Post’s community involvement is its honor guard service. On a recent Friday, Surber said that four veterans were buried, and the VFW Post 304 Honor Guard performed the appropriate ceremony.

The Post is involved in VFW-sanctioned activities, too.

MARYLAND POSTS MAKING COMMUNITIES BETTER

VFW Post 350 6420 Orchard Ave. Takoma Park, MD 20912 301-270-8008 Commander Kathleen Fitzpatric https://www.facebook.com/VFW-Post350	VFW Post 10067 6309 Ebenezer Road Middle River, MD 21220 410-335-8933 Commander Willie West https://www.facebook.com/Gun-powderVFWPost10067
VFW Post 8065 Bowie, Maryland 301-464-8899 Commander Megan Bogley (Members meet the first Thursday of the month at 7:30 p.m. at DAV Omaha Chapter 7, located at 8205 Laurel Bowie Rd., Bowie, MD 20715) https://www.facebook.com/vfw-post8065	VFW Post 10076 107 South Main St. Mt. Airy, MD 21771 301-829-1682 Commander Matthew Harris https://www.facebook.com/groups/VFWpost10076 https://vfw10076.org/di/vfw/v2/default.asp
VFW Post 8950 9800 Goodluck Road Lanham Seabrook, MD 20706 301-459-4775 Commander Eddie Key https://www.facebook.com/vfw-post8950	VFW Post 10077 4107 Maryland Highway Deer Park, MD 21550 310-334-9109 Commander Calvin Friend https://www.facebook.com/groups/VFW10077

“We do all the youth programs,” Surber said. “We have a good tie-in with one of the private schools in town which employs a lot of veterans and Reserve members.”

Surber said that the Post’s nearly 200 members easily fill the positions because “everyone shares the load.” He especially credits members such as Mike Blackwell for the success of VFW Post 304.

“I’m still working full-time, and he is retired,” Surber said. “By working together, we can cover more territory and take care of more things.”

Blackwell said that among the many things that make VFW Post 304 vital is the work its members do on behalf of active-duty troops.

“We interact with Maryland state legislators as advocates for laws benefiting uniformed services and their families,” Blackwell said.

Member Michael O'Neill concurs, calling VFW Post 304 a "powerhouse of activity." A major in the Army Reserve, O'Neill said Post members are always on the lookout for ways to support the Annapolis community.

"Like the '80s TV show 'Cheers,' sometimes you just want to go where everybody knows your name," O'Neill said. "VFW Post 304 is the crossroads of camaraderie, and its members are always glad you came. You can continue to expect big things from our small Post."

Member Peter Speier said he appreciates the way VFW Post 304 members take care of their fellow vets. He noted that they all look after a nearly blind veteran.

Speier added that the Post also recognizes individuals at all levels for their service in the community, which includes police officers, firemen and teachers.

"We are small but mighty," Surber said. "We are banded together with a purpose. We want to do good things in the community and good things for veterans."

The Destination Post series was initially featured in the [2024 April issue of VFW magazine](#), and was written by [Janie Dyhouse](#), senior editor for VFW magazine.