

“WARRIORS ARE WHO WE ARE.” GEORGIA’S AL LIPPHARDT NAMED VFW NATIONAL COMMANDER



Georgia’s Al Lipphardt was selected as the 116th Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) at the 125th VFW National Convention earlier this month.

For his first official stop as national commander, Lipphardt visited the GDVS to discuss how to best serve veterans and their families as partners.

The VFW is the oldest and largest combat veterans service organization in the nation and is comprised of more than 1.4 million eligible veterans from many periods of war. More than 10,000 VFW members from across the nation attended the convention and voted for national leadership.

At the convention, Lipphardt shared his vision for the year, known as “Operation All In.”

Calling on all VFW members to embrace their warrior spirit, Lipphardt encouraged his fellow VFW members to remember their core tenants—ensure veterans are respected for their service, receive their earned entitlements, and are recognized for the sacrifices made on behalf of the nation.

Lipphardt fondly remembers the servicemembers who inspired him when serving in the Army and veterans in his life who inspired him to dedicate his time to helping others.

“Veterans of Foreign Wars Posts are some of the very few places where heroes gather and warriors meet,” said Lipphardt. “Too many people in this nation have forgotten what it is to be a warrior. Heroes are what others think of us. Warriors are who we are.”

Lipphardt served in the United States Army from 1965 – 1979, serving in Vietnam in two tours from 1967 – 1968 and from 1970 – 1971. He has received many honors during his years of service, including a Vietnam Campaign Medal with Silver Star and two Bronze Stars, Bronze Star with Valor device, Bronze Star Medal for Meritorious Service, and a Purple Heart.

Lipphardt first joined the VFW in 2002 and has served in elected and appointed positions at the Post, District, and Department levels. He served as the Department of Georgia commander from 2014-2015 and has served in several national VFW positions.

VA LAUNCHES UPDATED BURN PIT REGISTRY

VA recently announced updates and a redesign to the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry. The database combines veteran and service member data to research and improve treatments for veterans exposed to airborne hazards and burn pits.

The redesigned registry is now easier to use and includes changes from extensive veteran feedback, automatically includes eligible participants, and simplifies participation requirements.

More than 4.7 million veterans and service members who meet participation criteria based on Department of Defense records will now be automatically listed in the database.

Service members who served in certain locations in or near the Middle East between August 2, 1990 and August 31, 2021, will automatically be included.

Participating in or opting out of the registry does not impact or determine eligibility for VA health care or benefits.

Data will be accessible only to select researchers and VA staff. No medical information is stored in the registry.

To find the full list of locations, opt out, or to learn more about the data collected, visit <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/burnpits/registry.asp>.

CELEBRATING SUCCESS – KEVIN WHITLOCK NAMED GDVS EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER



Milledgeville office manager, South region district manager, and guest trainer are just a few of the hats Kevin Whitlock dons when helping his fellow veterans. In recognition of his hard work and dedication, he was recently selected as the next GDVS Employee of the Quarter.

Whitlock joined the GDVS in 2019. He retired from the U.S. Air Force in 2014 as a Master Sergeant after serving for 21 years.

Whitlock is well-known for his problem solving prowess when faced with a difficult situation from a veteran or family member seeking help. His office is located inside of the Georgia War Veteran Home—Milledgeville, which also shares space with a VA clinic. He is quick to lend a supporting hand to those in need

and has an aptitude for finding resources in rural areas.

His exceptional support and selfless service sets a standard of excellence at every office he supervises, as well as an outstanding example of a veteran service officer. His open, approachable, and positive attitude helped lead to a spot as a guest trainer at the department’s annual training conference this year.

Whitlock is inspired to keep learning how to best serve others by the hard work he witnesses at GDVS veteran service offices.

“I enjoy being surrounded by consummate professionals within our department. The people that surround you are what make the biggest impact in my opinion,” said Whitlock. “The support, communication, and positivity of our department are truly unparalleled.”

GDVS WELCOMES NEW HOMELESS COORDINATOR



The GDVS recently expanded services for veterans and families with housing instabilities. Homeless Coordinator

Jarelle “JT” Thompson joined the GDVS in July to

help find housing and resources across the state for those facing homelessness.

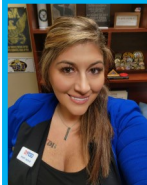
“Everyone is entitled to live in a safe and warm environment where they can reach their fullest potential,” said Thompson.

Her desire to be a change agent within the community is the reason she applied for the position with GDVS.

Some of her new responsibilities include providing relevant data about Georgia’s homeless veteran population, and connecting veterans and their families to resources and support systems which meet basic needs and lead to stabilized housing.

“Veterans have done their part by serving in our military forces and I believe it is my duty to ensure that they have what they need to live a purposeful life after leaving the military,” said Thompson.

CELEBRATING SUCCESS: OUR 20 UNDER 40 CHAMPION



GDVS LaGrange office manager and Suicide Prevention coordinator Amber Haire was recently selected as one of *LaGrange Daily News’s* “20 Under 40” in 2024.

Haire served as a cryptologist technical technician in the United States Navy and completed four overseas deployments. She medically retired in 2014 as Petty Office First Class.

She was surprised and honored to receive the recognition. She believes society has an obligation to support veterans.

“What truly matters is ensuring that veterans and their family members receive the benefits they are entitled to,” said Haire.

A native of Houma, Louisiana, Haire first moved to Troup County after meeting her husband, where she lives with her family. Haire chose to settle in Georgia after leaving the military due to job prospects and quality educational opportunities for her growing family.

SOWING SEEDS OF SUCCESS

Georgia veterans interested in starting or returning to a career in agricultural production can receive free training from the University of Georgia.

Through a \$750,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), free agricultural training is now offered on a monthly basis through Farm Boot Camp.

The program was developed as more veteran farmers and ranchers with disabilities sought training through existing programs, like AgrAbility and Farm Again, but needed to develop foundational skills for success.

Farm Boot Camp is designed to equip veterans with the knowledge, resources, and network they need to sow and sustain their agricultural careers.

Learn more and sign up for monthly trainings at <https://www.farmagain.com/farmbootcamp>.