

## **Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) 120 Years Old**

On 29 September 1899 in Columbus, OH under the leadership of James C Putnam, the VFW was founded. Membership consisted of Veterans who served our nation in wars, campaigns and expeditions on foreign soil or in hostile waters. The original members were mostly Veterans of the Spanish-American War along with campaigns in Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippine Islands. Similar groups were formed in other parts of the county but it wasn't until August 1913 that the several organizations merged and became the VFW. To be eligible to join the VFW, one has to have served in one of the 42 wars, campaigns and expeditions as defined by the VFW. The Veterans service must have been honorable and he or she must be a citizen of the US. The earliest eligibility dates are from the Navy Expeditionary and Marine Corps Expeditionary of 1874.

The VFW was formed was to provide a way for war Veterans to foster camaraderie among the war Veterans. However, it became much more than that. Many of the returning Veterans were wounded or ill but there was no medical care or Veterans pensions in our country. Some of the accomplishments listed on the VFW website are establishing the Veterans Administration (Department of Veterans Affairs), development of the national cemetery system (the North Dakota one just had its grand opening) compensation for war illnesses such as Agent Orange and treatment of Gulf War Syndrome. The VFW helped fund memorials for Vietnam War, Korean War and World War II Veterans plus the establishment of the Women in Military Service memorial. The core values, as listed on the VFW webpage are: Always put the interests of our members first, Treat donors as partners in our cause, Promote patriotism, Honor military service, Ensure the care of Veterans and their families, Serve our communities, Promote a positive image of the VFW and Respect the diversity of Veteran opinions.

In 1914, the Ladies VFW Auxiliary was founded with the purpose of uniting Americans from all walks of life with a common purpose to improve the lives of Veterans, active-duty service members and their families, and their communities. Originally membership was only open to female family members of Veterans eligible to join the VFW. However, in 2015 at the VFW's national convention, the rules were change to allow male membership in the newly named VFW Auxiliary. In the January 2017 issue of the VFW Auxiliary magazine, was a story of a husband and wife VFW Auxiliary and VFW leadership team in Rhode Island. She was the first female State commander of the VFW while he was the first male department president.

Our local Minnesota VFW post 1223 is located on Highway 10 East in Dilworth. You need not be a VFW member to join us for social activities, fund raisers and food.