## 2022-2023 Board of Trustees*

*As of December 31, 2022

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Conference</th>
<th>Locations</th>
<th>Term</th>
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<tr>
<td>District 1</td>
<td>Eastern Conference</td>
<td>Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont</td>
<td>2019-2025</td>
<td>Vice President, Keith Jackson</td>
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<td>District 2</td>
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<td>Europe, New Jersey, New York</td>
<td>2019-2025</td>
<td>Art Scheuneman</td>
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<tr>
<td>District 3</td>
<td>Eastern Conference</td>
<td>Delaware, Pennsylvania</td>
<td>2021-2027</td>
<td>Jodie Hollinger</td>
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<td>District 4</td>
<td>Big Ten Conference</td>
<td>Maryland, Ohio, West Virginia</td>
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<td>Sandi Kriebel</td>
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<td>District 5</td>
<td>Southern Conference</td>
<td>Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North &amp; South Carolina, Virginia, Latin/Caribbean</td>
<td>2020-2026</td>
<td>Mark Winn</td>
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<td>Southern Conference</td>
<td>Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Tennessee</td>
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<td>Michael Rhew</td>
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<td>Iowa, Michigan, Wisconsin</td>
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<td>President, Annabelle Fergason</td>
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<td>Illinois, Indiana</td>
<td>2020-2026</td>
<td>Jerry Blake</td>
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<tr>
<td>District 9</td>
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<td>Minnesota, Nebraska, North &amp; South Dakota</td>
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<td>Past President, Steve Van Bergen</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2022-2028</td>
<td>Shirlee Frias</td>
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<tr>
<td>District 12</td>
<td>Western Conference</td>
<td>California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Washington</td>
<td>2017-2023</td>
<td>Renee Fulk</td>
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### Ex-Officio Trustees
- **Commander-In-Chief**: Tim Borland
- **Adjutant General**: Dan West
- **Quartermaster General**: Marc Garduno
- **National President**: Jane Reape
- **National Secretary/Treasurer**: Ann Panteleakos

### Staff
- **NH Executive Director**: Mike Wilson
- **NH Secretary/Treasurer**: Barry Wickman
- **Attorney**: Mark Kellogg

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3573 S Waverly Rd., Eaton Rapids, MI 48827
517.663.1521
www.vfwnationalhome.org
**HIGHLIGHTS of the year**

**Hired an EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

The Board of Trustees selected Michael Wilson as the Executive Director. Michael succeeded Fred Puffenberger, who retired in October 2021. Michael began this new role on January 3rd, 2022.

Michael is a retired Army National Guard Command Sergeant Major with many years of leadership experience in civilian and military organizations. Michael most recently was the CEO and Principal Consultant for Pro Leader Consulting LLC, supporting non-profit agencies and organizations in organizational leadership and development.

Michael is a veteran of Desert Storm and Iraqi Freedom and has spent much of his time over the last several years working with veterans and veteran organizations in efforts to increase veteran services and support throughout the state.

**Updated our MISSION STATEMENT**

“The VFW National Home assists military, veterans, and their families with children, by creating a foundation of services and resources to achieve their personal and family goals in order to move forward in a positive, safe and healthy environment.”

**Opened the VETERAN & FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER**

Gives families one stop for the resources they need.

Now our recovering veteran and military families can navigate the local communities less for the resources to help them get back on their feet, because we’ve made many available to them right here on campus.

Located in the lower level of our Health & Education building, this strategically designed center was officially proclaimed open at a long awaited ribbon cutting ceremony on October 22, 2022.

**Refreshed our LOGO**

We recently refreshed our logo and have begun reverting to our original name of “VFW National Home”. This is the name we were established with in 1925 and better reflects our program today as we serve families, not only children. As you can imagine, the “for children” can be misleading.
Brad and Sherry are part of an active family of four.

“We’re busy bees,” claims Sherry who besides being a mom to Max, 8 and Daphne, 5 is a claims specialist for the State of Washington’s family leave program.

Brad just completed two master’s degrees while at the same time working as a mental health counselor in a private practice.

The couple owns their own home and drives a paid off car.

Yet, their story was one of desperation only a few years before. The couple were broke, ready to split up, expecting a baby, and without a home to call their own.

Hard Times for a Returning Veteran

“Life sucked,” asserts Brad honestly who in 2013 after three overseas tours left the military with two purple hearts and lots of PTSD.

“I was pregnant and we had a lot of debt, no savings, and no skills. Neither of us had finished our degrees,” explained Sherry. “We were at each other’s throats.”

The couple moved in with Brad’s parents who Sherry hardly knew having met Brad in her home state of Washington a few years earlier. While Sherry was homesick for her own family, both found minimum wage jobs to stay afloat. Brad worked in landscaping and Sherry at a café.

In the meantime, Brad’s father suggested the VFW National Home as an option for the floundering couple since it was located nearby in Eaton Rapids, Michigan right where Brad had grown up and they were now living.

“It sounded like Never Ever Land,” laughed Brad when he describes how he felt when he first learned about what the VFW National Home had to offer.

Sherry who was concerned about how she would work once she had the baby was most excited about the free childcare, and initially thought they would just take advantage of that after the baby was born.

In the end the couple received the full VFW National Home treatment and experienced dramatic life change as a result.

No Need Unmet

“Naomi was our caseworker and she was a godsend,” said Sherry. “She understood our struggles and helped provide solutions.”

“Once we moved into the National Home it was a complete improvement in our lives. With childcare we could find better paying employment and I could go to school,” said Brad who went first to Lansing Community College and completed his Associates Degree and then finished at the University of Michigan with a bachelor’s degree in Psychology in 2018.

Sherry pursued and finished her business degree at Davenport.

The childcare for Max and later when Daphne was born went beyond just free babysitting.

“We offer quality care for kids with comfort, learning skills, preparing for milestones in a loving and caring environment,” explained Ivy Bush, Director of the VFW National Home Early Education Center.
Bush recalls that Max made two very good friends at the center and Brad and Sherry became close friends with the children’s parents offering community connection for the family.

**Help for Even Deeper Struggles**
“We were also having marital struggles and they even paid for marriage counseling. It’s a big safety net and it helped us improve our life so we didn’t have to worry about just surviving. It was a huge relief,” added Sherry.

With PTSD from his numerous involvements with firefights in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as serious physical injuries, Brad appreciated the beauty and serenity of the campus.

“It was definitely very peace inducing. I love and enjoy the outdoors and being there was a godsend. I never feared for my safety and it definitely helped me work on my PTSD through therapy,” shared Brad.

**Healing in a Safe Environment**
“It’s kind of ‘Mayberry-ish,’” explained Sherry. “Your kids could wander around safely and the lawns were always green and manicured. It felt really safe.”

“Having access to multiple levels of resources to improve all areas of life including a house, utilities, food, and childcare allowed us opportunities to improve our lives in other ways. We always had back up. When our car got crashed, they let us borrow one of the National Home’s vans. Whatever we were dealing with they were there to help us out,” said Brad.

We’ve been married 10 years now and I don’t think we’d still be married or have our daughter if it weren’t for the VFW National Home paying for the counseling,” confessed Sherry.

The couple express the honor and gratitude they feel having received a hand up from the VFW National Home.

“We will spend the rest of our lives giving back. It changed our life trajectory”

~ Sherry

**Staff Highlight: ANGIE HARKINS**

Angie accepted the position of Program Director in March 2022. Prior to that she spent 16 years working in the Michigan National Guard Family Programs Department as the Lead State Child and Youth Services Coordinator. Angie has spent most of her adult life working with veteran and military families with children. Angie has a master’s degree from Michigan State University in Family and Community Service, and a bachelor’s degree from Central Michigan University in Family Studies. She is an Army Master Resiliency Trainer and certified in Steven Covey’s 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens. Angie is an Auxiliary Life Member of the Jean R Anderson VFW Post 7309 in Mason, Michigan. She is married to Tom, a retired Army veteran and Life VFW Member, and they have three children. They enjoy building wood furniture, and other crafts.
CHILDREN ARE ALLOWED TO BE CHILDREN
An Army veteran who was living in a homeless shelter in Indiana was in desperation. His wife, who would stay with a friend with their youngest child while their other two children were being passed between relatives could not find suitable work while not having an address to call home. He worked at an RV manufacturer but couldn’t get enough hours and work to pay off some debt and rent a house for his family. The VFW National Home was contacted by the Army veteran’s veteran service officer who had heard about us at a recent training. Three weeks later, the Army veteran and his family moved to campus. He is working in a steady job in a local town, and his wife is looking for something that will allow her to help the children and offer her an opportunity to go back to school. They enjoy all the events and supportive services on campus for the family and children. They are saving some money while they are paying down debt. They like Eaton Rapids schools and look forward to living locally when they finish their time at the National Home. This is one of many families on campus who are destined to be successful while they grow and learn, and their children are allowed to be children.

GOOD DAD, SUPPORTING HIS CHILDREN
A veteran who was living in his parent’s basement with his two children, his wife had left him, and moved far away. He was wrongfully discharged from the Army due to some significant disabilities, though there were mistakes on his DD214. A decorated combat veteran, struggled with PTSD, and other physical issues, he couldn’t hold a steady job, and started and stopped going to college several times. Finally, he reached out to the VFW National Home through our website. After about 4 weeks, it was clear that this veteran and his children belonged here. After about 8 months he is working and going to college while he works on starting his small business. His children love the VFW National home and all the activities. His DD214 was corrected, and he is now receiving his VA benefits. Though he is still working to become a better veteran, and citizen, he has a great destiny ahead, and is excited for his future. He has joined the VFW and looks forward to being part of his local post and supporting other veterans in need. His victories since coming to campus has motivated him to charge ahead and do all he can to be a good dad, support his children, and work towards a promising career.

REUNITING FAMILIES
A veteran living in an RV, traveling around the United States from campground to campground for work and money, felt like he was letting his wife and 3 children down. His children were being home schooled and missed being a part of a classroom. They were receiving some money from his war time disabilities but couldn’t muster up enough to put a down payment on a house, the cost of the RV was just too much. He reached out to the VFW National Home. Though it only took about 4 weeks to be approved, it took him 6 weeks to get here from California. Once he settled into a local job, sold his RV and paid it off, and now is saving money to buy a house in a neighboring town where his children currently attend school. Two of his three children have special needs and need their mother’s care, which makes it hard for her to work, but she does help with his ailing parents who live within driving distance, and sometimes volunteers on campus. They were able to purchase a second car so that they can both get around during the day. The children enjoy many of the campus activities and are often seen playing with other children around the neighborhood, and the playgrounds. One of the children caught their first fish in our lake, and it was a monster! A few pics of his prize fish were taken, and he let it back in the water to be caught again another day. The children enjoy school, the neighborhood, and they seldom look back at the camping days. The security of living on campus has been good for this veteran, and he can confidently enjoy the quiet time, as he continues to heal from the wounds of war.
Donor Spotlight: **TRENTON PAULEY**

A self-described man who loves God and country, Trenton Pauley first heard of the VFW National Home from his VFW State Commander while he was State Senior Vice Commander in West Virginia.

“He told me about the National Home,” Mr. Pauley said, “and how impressed he was with his visit, encouraging me to be sure to visit it too.”

Which Mr. Pauley did... and was instantly impressed by the superb facilities and dedicated staff. However, something unique caught his eye. “I was impressed with the time devoted to the children and families in goal-setting and developing plans to meet their goals.”

Having served the United States Air Force proudly for 21 years, and with service in Vietnam, Mr. Pauley has flown the F-4 Phantom, A-7D, A-10 Warthog, and O-2A. He was also a paratrooper supporting the 82nd Airborne Division and XVIII Airborne Corps. His father, also a veteran, served 7 years in the U.S. Navy during World War II, all aboard the USS Trenton.

So, naturally, veteran and military causes are dear to his heart. But it was the people who drew him to support the VFW National Home.

“I feel an obligation to support the children and families of our nation's warriors,” he said, “who paid a dear price in defending our country.”

In fact, he intends on making a legacy gift to the VFW National Home, just as he did as a Gold Legacy Life member of VFW Memorial Post 3081.

Because, in his own words, “It’s a small way I can help ensure continuing support from the VFW to current and future veterans.”

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**FINANCIAL Summary**

*Summary of Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Audited Financial Statements*

Finance period: July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022

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<thead>
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<th>Revenue</th>
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<td>Direct Care</td>
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January 3rd of this year marked my one-year anniversary as a member of the VFW National Home team. It's been an exciting time, to say the least! We hit the ground running with the Board of Trustees and Director Staff joining together to create a map for the way ahead in our strategic plan and develop a new mission statement to set the foundation.

Once relieved of most of the pandemic restrictions, I got to work with the Director Team to create an aggressive plan to complete the goals we set for ourselves and the National Home. One goal we set was to increase efficiency in the application and assessment process and reduce the time from application to move in to 30 days or less. We've accomplished this goal, and in more than one instance, we've gotten it done in two weeks!

We've increased efficiencies in turn-around time on homes being vacated and ready for occupancy from several months to just 30 days or less in most cases. We've also improved the regular inspection process to keep things maintained more effectively and efficiently.

We cut the ribbon on the new Veteran and Family Resource Center in the Health and Education building and have begun to receive tenants to support our veterans and families on campus, so they don’t have to drive 25 miles into Lansing or Jackson to receive support. This has proven very effective in employment and education support, with several residents increasing their eligibility and finding better paying work.

We are a growing and learning community. Together, staff and residents will increase their productivity by continuing to provide education and training in areas of need. The day we stop learning is the day we stop growing. The success of the National Home depends on it.

I look forward to the year ahead and the celebration of 100 years of service to our veterans and their families in 2025. These are exciting times, and I am proud to be the Chief Executive of this incredible organization.

Mike Wilson
Executive Director, VFW National Home

What a fantastic year 2022 has been! Taking over as President from being Vice President this year has been very exciting. We began the year refocusing our mission and developing a strategy for the way ahead in the next 3 to 5 years. So many exciting things are coming up and we plan to roll up our sleeves and get it done.

Our new Executive Director has been doing a fantastic job getting the National Home back up and running after two years of a pandemic. We are in a state of growth that we haven’t seen in a long time. From increasing staff to near pre-pandemic levels and entering 15 new families into the program, the year went by very quickly. So much has been done to increase our overall effectiveness for the families who rely on us.

Our residents truly deserve the best we have to offer, and it’s my sincere hope in my presidency to retool the organization for success in the next three to five years and beyond. We will make good on the VFW’s promise that “Nobody Does More for Veterans.”

I can speak for all the Trustees when I say the future is bright at the National Home. To those who have supported us through donations and services, we are grateful and look forward to our continued partnerships as we move toward our 100th anniversary in 2025. The VFW National Home will remain a place where families can grow, learn, and build foundations for continued success.

Annabelle Furgason
Board President, VFW National Home