

# 'Food Always Brings People Together'

## A New Jersey VFW Post hosts food truck event

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A VFW Post in the Garden State will host its third free food truck event on April 13. The Post's commander said that the event aims to represent the diversity of the community.

VFW Post Commander Maria Hamlin said that over the past couple of years, members of VFW Post 493 in Nutley, New Jersey, have increased community and veteran outreach.

"We discussed hosting some events that had not been done at our VFW Post and would bring the community and our veterans together," said Hamlin, an Air National Guard veteran. "Food always brings people together, no matter your ethnicity or cultural upbringing."

While the event is free, the Post accepts donations from those attending. Hamlin, who served with the 108th Air Wing, said donations received benefit VFW programs such as the VFW National Home, Buddy Poppy program, Patriots Pen, Voice of Democracy and VFW Department of New Jersey programs.

"Donations also benefit revitalization efforts at our Post," said Hamlin, who is an operations Noble Eagle and Enduring Freedom veteran. "Our building is more than 100 years old, and we are doing our best to restore it for our veterans as well as our community to enjoy."

Hamlin said that the events are a "great way to bridge the gap" between veterans, older and younger, and community members.

"This is our third food truck event, and we are hoping it will be our best," said Hamlin, whose husband, Herb, is the Post's quartermaster and adjutant. "We've invited back some of our favorite food trucks but are hoping to add a couple more. Nutley is becoming a very diverse town and we want to represent that diversity at all levels, including the type of food we serve at our events."

Hamlin said that the first food truck event hosted about 1,000 people. She added that the events would not have happened without the support of Post and its Auxiliary members.

### NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

### WASHINGTON OFFICE

406 W. 34th Street  
Kansas City, MO 64111

Office 816.756.3390  
Fax 816.968.1157

200 Maryland Ave., N.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20002

Office 202.543.2239  
Fax 202.543.6719

info@vfw.org  
www.vfw.org

“Our Auxiliary, led by Dee Robertella, always lends a helping hand,” Hamlin said. “The majority of our events are family oriented so our members can enjoy spending time with their families and their families can see the work we are doing in our community and for our veterans.”

At April’s food truck event, there will be music by DJ Rob Frannicola, whose late father is a veteran. The Post also will accept nonperishable food items for a local pantry.

Hamlin, an All-American Post commander, said that while the event is not aimed to be a recruitment drive, Post 493 membership has increased since the inaugural event.

“When local veterans see the work we are doing, they want to join and be a part of our great organization,” Hamlin said. “We are proud to say that we are #StillServing.”