

Mounted Guard Honors Veterans

A group of VFW and Auxiliary members in the Grand Canyon State promote patriotism while on horseback

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Toni Johnson has been riding horses since she was a young girl. Today, she rides Napoleon, a Morgan quarter horse with the Arizona VFW Rangers Mounted Color Guard.

Established in 2008 by four Vietnam War veterans from VFW Post 10254 in Tucson, Arizona, the group's mission is fourfold. It promotes veterans, the nation's flags, patriotism and VFW/Auxiliary membership.

Johnson, treasurer of VFW Post 5990's Auxiliary in Marana, Arizona, said the group of nearly 20 — the Rangers have numbered as many as 50 in the past — participates in parades and memorial services all over the state.

"I grew up on horses and have been riding with the Rangers since 2013," said Johnson, who also is the group's adjutant. "We also have participated in homecomings for commanders and Auxiliary presidents."

Johnson, who earned her Auxiliary eligibility through her grandfather, a World War II vet, said there are typically seven horses. Riders carry the U.S. flag, the POW flag, the Arizona flag and the Honor Service flag.

"We are proud to present retirement flags to servicemen," Johnson said. "We also have the honor of participating in send-off ceremonies and welcome home events for troops."

Another aspect of the Rangers Mounted Color Guard is its education component. Flag etiquette classes are held in the summer for youth.

Johnson said the group requires membership in either the VFW or Auxiliary. She added that they have signed up members after people have expressed an interest in joining the Rangers.

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

406 W. 34th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111

Office 816.756.3390
Fax 816.968.1157

WASHINGTON OFFICE

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

Office 202.543.2239
Fax 202.543.6719

info@vfw.org
www.vfw.org

“This has been an amazing experience for us,” Johnson said. “A lot of people don’t realize what horses can do. It is really something when little kids stand and put their hands over their hearts, as well as the veterans who are able to. It is a great honor to be a part of this.”

For more information and to see additional photos, follow the Arizona VFW Rangers Mounted Color Guard on Facebook at [Facebook/VFWRangers](https://www.facebook.com/VFWRangers).

This article is featured in the 2023 February issue of [VFW magazine](#), and was written by [Janie Dyhouse](#), senior editor for VFW magazine.