

‘Let Us Take The Lead’

A VFW District commander in Missouri spearheaded an event that offered information and assistance to veterans

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Despite inclement weather and frigid temperatures, more than 100 veterans attended the first-ever VFW Department of Missouri’s District 5 “Veterans Helping Veterans.”

Held on the manicured lawn of the National World War I Museum and Memorial in Kansas City, Mo., on Oct. 28, the event was hosted by District 5 to help connect local veterans with the VFW and other veterans service organizations in attendance.

District 5 Commander Liz Jordan spearheaded the project after many encounters with veterans who expressed their lack of knowledge in the resources available at the VFW and elsewhere.

“I got tired of hearing veterans come up to me and say they did not know where there was help or that we could do anything like this [event],” Jordan said. “There are so many fabulous organizations out there. We are the first and the oldest, so let us take the lead and work with these other organizations to help our fellow veterans.”

Jordan spent months coordinating with several veterans groups and organizations to set up booths to provide local veterans with information on what they do. Among those in attendance were the Association of the U.S. Army (AUSA), Heroes on the Water, Wounded Warrior Family Support, Veterans Community Project and the VA.

“There were unfortunately about 20 groups that backed out due to the freezing cold,” Jordan said of the event, which ran from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. “But overall, the event did what we expected it to do.”

The VFW also provided its own resources in the form of booths with service officers willing to help any and all veterans who attended the event.

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“Commander Jordan did an amazing job coordinating with several veterans organizations and the Posts within her District to give local veterans PACT Act information, as well as helping them file VA claims,” said Ed Stefanak, a national eligibility coordinator with VFW’s national Membership Department.

Stefanak, who represented the national VFW headquarters in Kansas City, joined Jordan in making the rounds throughout the event, helping spread the gospel of the VFW.

“Events like these allow us to tell non-members what we do on Capitol Hill to expand benefits for veterans,” Stefanak said. “It helps us share that all veterans, regardless of being eligible or not for the VFW, can have our veterans service officers help them file VA claims without paying a dime. It is our way of letting them know they have a friend here in the VFW.”

Jordan added that despite the weather having an effect on the turnout, the event provided a blueprint for future events. She is adamant about her District joining forces with more and more veterans groups and service organizations to provide help to veterans based on their individual needs.

“We as the VFW do a lot of stuff for veterans, but sometimes what they need is something more personal, which working with other veterans organizations allows us to direct them to. Something that maybe we cannot do,” Jordan said. “So, we can work with and partner with other organizations to host events and turn veterans in the right direction.”

The District 5 commander already has plans for 2024, which include growing upon “Veterans Helping Veterans.” She is working on hosting two job fairs and the second “Veterans Helping Veterans” event, though the dates are tentative as of the publishing of this article.

“We are hoping to partner with more groups to build a community of joining in to help our fellow veterans,” Jordan said. “We are still serving, so let us show them what that really means.”

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