

January 1, 2025

Happy New Year!

On behalf of our Executive Committee, I want to thank our membership for a spectacular 2024 by giving over \$75,000 to organizations that help veterans less fortunate than we are. Here are some of our accomplishments.

Each year we dedicate ourselves to helping veterans causes. We donated \$30,000 to the Veterans Memorial Home in Vineland to improve their quality of life. Our project is a plaza display of military services outside of the front entrance that will give the veteran residents and their families a point of reflection and being proud of their service to our country. The VA, while taking care of the housing and medical needs of these veterans, falls short on some of the obvious things that make these veterans and their families proud. We are very excited to be funding this extensive project.

We have donated \$15,000 to Veterans Haven South, which is a transitional housing facility in Hammonton led by General Patrick Kennedy, which provides a program to help veterans live independently and earn a living. Many of these veterans have had mental, drug or medical issues that have made them homeless and/or addicted. Our donation is helping fund a new vehicle that can transport them to medical treatment or employment. We have partnered with Burke's Motors and Seashore Ace to make this purchase a reality. Both the Veterans Home and Veterans Haven South serve all of South Jersey.

Additionally, we have made a \$17,500 donation to CVAC, which is Citizens Veterans Advisory Council. CVAC was formed about 10 years ago by Johnny Walker, himself a veteran, with the purpose of helping Cape May County veterans with everyday problems such as homelessness, paying bills, medical transportation, building access ramps to homes and many other difficulties that they face.

We have also made donations to Cooper Hospital, which is a designated VA community hospital, local Fire and EMTs, and the Avalon and Stone Harbor schools to promote Americanism in the classroom, along with annual scholarships.

Our other sizeable donation of \$7,000 was given to the Middle Township Naval Cadet program. Middle Township High School has a cadet program where high school students participate like a ROTC program. This program centers itself on developing our future leaders and those that would like to make the military a career. These cadets are active in supporting our flag day ceremonies, Veterans Day, and Memorial Day. They also earn a community service badge by working our annual spaghetti dinner at the Yacht Club of Stone Harbor each September. The proceeds of this dinner always benefit a local veteran's organization. There are many smaller donations that we make too.

I would also like to mention that we have further improved our historic building by continuing to make sure the structural integrity of the building is sound. We replaced our building's rear door with a mahogany door to withstand the elements and replaced our handicap ramp with a \$20,000 Home Depot Foundation grant. Additionally, we were awarded a \$110,000 Home Depot grant which enabled us to finish phase II of our paver project and regrade our lot. We also received a new dumpster for the rear of our building which was donated by the Borough of Avalon. Stone Harbor continues to support our Post through reimbursement for public events and helps us with the grounds and exterior of the building. They have been very generous in helping us with material and workmanship around our building. All these accomplishments, together with our veterans' donations, exceeded \$200,000. We should be very proud of our Post.

In 2025, our goal is to continue to stay the course in our fundraising and dedicating ourselves to supporting our veterans in need. You have been instrumental in having our post have the ability to significantly donate to these veteran causes every year. Post 331 stands tall compared to other Cape May Posts and has been recognized as such at County meetings. We are the Jewel of Seven Mile Island. I am sure that you are as proud as I am of what we have accomplished.

Have a healthy & Happy New Year.

Tom McCullough
Commander Post 331