



THE PATRIOT OBSERVER

Your link to the heart of the National Home

From the desk of the Executive Director

Dear Friends of the National Home:

I am pleased to introduce to you the updated, upbeat and revised Patriot newsletter! It has a new look and a new name: "The Patriot Observer." This is your link to the VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary's 78-year tradition of caring about—and sacrificing for—our noble veterans' children and families. Providing excellent and loving care to those in need has enabled this Home to shine brightly as a beacon of hope for thousands over the decades. To continue to shine, we must call many other people to action. Therefore, I am asking you to do three things:

First, I ask you to become part of the rich tradition of taking care of our veterans' children and families by using the enclosed envelope to send a gift today. You'll learn how by reading this issue of the newsletter. Second, please share the information from this newsletter with everyone you can, such as members of civic groups, faith-based groups, youth groups and senior centers. Proudly tell them what you are doing for the loved ones of our honored veterans! Third, I ask you to pass on your tradition of caring. Pass it on to like-minded friends and family members who, like you, appreciate our

veterans! You can use this newsletter as an introduction while inviting them to join you in this great cause of caring for our veterans' family members who are in need.

Our Nation's struggle with terrorism, wars, and threats of war highlight the fact that the mission of the VFW National Home for Children is as strong today as it was in 1925. Please tell your friends and family members that the vital safety net provided by the VFW and Ladies Auxiliary is still in place and holding firm. We are here to take care of the children and families of future victims of war. Please remind them that **now** is the time to strengthen the National Home, not after the next national crisis or the next war.



Michael F. Kessler, Executive Director

The Home needs financial strength to carry on the honorable tradition of caring for veterans' families. Although the National Home has continued to progress in meaningful ways—for example, in the quality of program services for the children and in the care of the individual homes and buildings—it has a shortfall of yearly revenue. I believe this is in part due to the failing economy and stock market

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The Patriot Observer is published four times a year by the:

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Michael F. Kessler

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Your link to the heart of the National Home

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and in part due to the fear instilled by the events of September 11, 2001. Charitable giving to many organizations has decreased since "9-11."

Our immediate challenge is to take care of the annual budget needs of the National Home to cover the basics of food, clothing, heat, lights, transportation fuel, wages for house mothers and so on! This year alone, we need to raise approximately 1 million dollars for the basic human needs of children and families in our care.

I am confident that with your help and with the help of people like you we can raise every penny of what is needed. It may not be easy; it may take some sacrifice; but we can do it. For the sake of our veterans' children and families we must.

You can help so much by doing the three things listed above. Remember, the many veterans who have gone

before us deserve our support and loyalty. Those brave men and women need you and I to boldly invite others to join in this effort to care for their loved ones. Through their valiant service and the sacrifices they made for each and every one of us, they have set the stage for us to perform in their honor. The way I look at it is this—the least I can do is to be loyal to their loved ones.

I consider it a privilege to serve our veterans, our country and our children at the VFW National Home for Children. I am certain that many others will be glad to have you and me extend the same privilege to them.

“THE TASK AHEAD
OF US IS NEVER
AS GREAT AS THE
POWER BEHIND US.”

~Ralph Waldo Emerson

Sincerely,

Michael F. Kessler

Michael F. Kessler
Executive Director





Vehicle Donation Program rolls onto National Home

The VFW National Home for Children Board of Trustees has authorized a Charitable Vehicle Donation Program. It is anticipated that this program will help the Home with fund-raising efforts while providing donors with another way to assist the Home with its mission of caring for our veterans' children. The National Home will only receive vehicles in good working order where the donor places no restriction on the

use of the vehicle. Donors will sign a waiver to this effect upon donation. The National Home reserves the right to refuse any vehicle donation. We will not tow or pick up any donated vehicles. The majority of vehicles will be sold for needed revenue while a few may be utilized in our programming. Please consider donating a vehicle. It may help change a life. For more information, or to arrange a donation, please call a member of the National Home's Development Department at 517-663-1521.

There's no place like home

Many thoughts fill my mind when I speak of the VFW National Home for Children. It's my stronghold, my constancy and the only place I can call home.

We live in a self-contained community with a neighborhood-style setting. The staff is your stability, your neighbors are your friends and your "house brothers and sisters" and "house parents" are your best friends and family. Sometimes children move here against their will. They find it difficult to accept the changes and adjustments. But soon they realize the love and support that surrounds this place, and it overwhelms them. They grow to love living here, and, like I can, call it their home.



Danielle Lightner, alumna

old. Because of our strong bonds, we were dreading the day we would all be split up. But God blessed us with the National Home. Yes, I use the word blessed because we truly have been. I try to imagine what my life would be without this place; where I would be; what I would be doing. My answers are not enjoyable. That is why I know I have been blessed. My life would not be the same if I had not come to the Home.

Slowly over the years, my real brothers and sisters began graduating and leaving the Home. Strangers from all over, with their own unique circumstances, in a sense, replaced them. By my senior year, I was in a house with seven other people, and the house was comprised of five different last names. But over time, these "strangers" became "housemates," "housemates" became friends, and friends became brothers

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“A MAN NEVER STANDS AS TALL AS WHEN HE KNEELS TO HELP A CHILD.”

~Knights of Pythagoras



A look inside the National Home's Program Department

The Program Department at the National Home is made up of the dedicated employees who work one-on-one with the children and families residing at the Home. These special staff members are first in line for assuring the residents receive the love, care, help and guidance they need. All National Home staff and volunteers teach and model good character traits like responsibility, charity and fairness. It is however the members of the Program department who build the strong relationships with the children and families that are needed to foster change and growth. Case workers with strong social work education background and experience are assigned to each family.

Many exciting things have recently been happening with the Program Department:

The AmeriCorps program at the Home is one of those things. This program has enabled us to provide more one-on-one programming to our residents to assist them in meeting their needs. This program brings volunteer members to the National Home to work on the areas of child mentoring, job coaching, family transition and work on community service-learning.

The AmeriCorps program has had a major impact in the lives of the children during its first year. Children's grades have improved, mothers were helped in finding jobs

that fit their skills and the children have participated in many different community service activities that emphasized learning experiences.

The Young Citizens for Patriotism program continues to provide training to youth about what it means to be a good citizen. At the National Home youth have the opportunity to participate in Memorial Day and Veterans Day services. They learn to care for others through visiting

Senior Centers and Veterans' Hospitals. They learn to honor those who served our nation by cleaning up a cemetery and placing flags on the graves of veterans. They learn some of the problems this country is facing when they donate their time at a local homeless shelter serving food.



Debbie Webster,
Program Director

Community

Involvement is important at the National Home and the members of the Program Department help our children and families recognize this. Residents are taught the importance of being community minded. A Neighborhood Watch Program has been developed. Residents want to participate together to keep their community safe. As new residents move to campus, they are participating in advisory meetings and community meetings to help make the community strong. Parents are volunteering to welcome newcomers, assist with child reading groups and tutoring, and host Bible study classes.





Facilities Update

The Facilities Department is responsible for maintaining the homes and other buildings as well as the landscaping, roads on campus, vehicle maintenance, water and sewer treatment and campus security. This past year has brought many changes to the campus in our efforts to maintain the highest standards possible in our buildings and grounds. We are preparing the National Home for the future—new water treatment plant, upgrading wastewater lift station, improving the appearance of campus through landscaping, renovation of the Fire Barn. Here's a look at the projects:

In the spring of 2002 we completed the project of a new water treatment plant on campus. Currently, we are in the process of upgrading our wastewater lift station.

Visitors to the National Home during the summer and fall of 2002 saw firsthand the result of the hard work the facilities crew did landscaping. Our grounds have never looked better. Spring 2003 will see further improvements in the beautification of our property that serves as a living memorial to all who served our country.

We are pleased that at the 2002 National Convention in Nashville, the Military Order of the Cootie approved the Supreme Commander's project for then Commander H.

Steve Mason of Maryland as the renovation of the Fire Barn. The MOC was responsible for the original construction of the Fire Barn in 1952 and has contributed significantly to its maintenance since then. When the proposed renovation is completed we will be able to expand our use of the facility. The proposed renovation will include kitchen remodeling, replacement of the air conditioning and remodeling of the dispatch room.



Todd Marriott,
Facilities Director

This needed renovation will allow the National Home to meet our future needs. Our goals include the further development of our own emergency response capability, which will allow us to not have to rely as heavily on outside agencies for first emergency response

services. Campus fire protection, EMS, fire education and Homeland Security are areas for future expansion in the remodeled facility.

Our plan supports the President's emphasis on the volunteer community to assist in Homeland Security. The events of September 11 helped our country recognize the need for agencies of our type to look at emergency contingencies and improve our self-support and ability to lend assistance to our neighboring communities if called upon. The generosity of the Military Order of the Cootie will enhance our ability to meet these goals.

“ONE HUNDRED
YEARS FROM NOW
IT WILL NOT
MATTER WHAT
KIND OF HOUSE
I LIVED IN, HOW
MUCH MONEY
I HAD, NOR WHAT
MY CLOTHES WERE
LIKE. BUT THE
WORLD MAY BE
A LITTLE BETTER
BECAUSE I WAS
IMPORTANT IN
THE LIFE
OF A CHILD.”

~Anonymous



Getting the Light Out

The Public Relations team at the National Home is responsible for the many activities, tours and special events held at the Home each year. But most importantly we “tell the story” of the VFW National Home for Children and promote the Home’s services. To assure ongoing support of our great mission, we must tell our story. As our good friend, Past VFW Commander-in-Chief, Howard VanderClute said, “it is time to get the light of the National Home out from under the basket.”

Historically VFW members, Posts and Auxiliaries, and Departments together with the Military Order of the Cootie, and the DADS have provided sufficient support. As VFW membership has changed we have discovered that many newer members don’t know who we are or what we do. Our PR team is committed to educating them about our mission and about the wonderful work done at the National Home.

It is also important for the PR team to talk about our programs. Posts and Auxiliaries are the best source of referrals of children and families. We want all of you, every member in every Post and Auxiliary, to have the information you need to refer children and families with the confidence that we are the **best** option for children and families in crisis.

For many years the National Home has offered a video that tells the story of the Home and our programs.

This is an excellent tool to introduce the National Home to members and non-members. Recently we have completed a new video about the Home. This newest video tells our story by residents themselves, both past and current. It speaks of lives changed and opportunities taken. Opportunities that literally have given new life and new hope where there was none. We have given copies of the videos to all

Department National Home Chairmen. Additionally, both of these videos are available for \$10.00 each. We encourage you to purchase and show them at Post and District meetings. Once you learn about the National Home you will want to lend your support to this wonderful place.



Barry Walter,
Public Relations Director

The PR team of the National Home extends into each and every VFW Post and Auxiliary. The Post and Auxiliary Chaplain, the Post Service Officer and Auxiliary Rehab Chairman, the National Home Chairmen and the other officers of the Post and Auxiliary are our eyes and ears. A knowledgeable member that promotes all the programs of the VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary, *including* the VFW National Home for Children is our best PR team member.

Thank you for all that you do in helping us get the light of the National Home out from under the basket!





You are the Children's Chance

Sweet little Sarah had just turned 5 when her family came to the National Home for help. "We are here for you,"...we said.

I am pleased to tell you that because of the National Home, Sarah's story is going to have a happy ending.

As long as there are generous people like you, making the National Home for Children your "children's charity of choice"—we will be here for Sarah and little children like her.



This year alone, the National Home needs to secure approximately \$1 million for basic human needs for children and parents. Please send a gift today. Your National Home Seals will be sent with your thank you letter. Thank you on behalf of our veterans' children. Please call 517-663-1521 for more information.

To see the full appeal letter, please visit the Home's Web site at www.vfwnationalhome.org.

VFW Will Power

Last year private charitable support in America made up \$145 billion of the Gross Domestic Product. Of this support 83 percent came from individuals, yet only 6 percent of this money was left to charity by will. America is in the middle of the largest intergenerational transfer of wealth in history. Over the next 10–20 years, more than \$12 trillion will be transferred to the next generation or to charity. American charities must promote the need for gifts by bequest or they will miss many opportunities for support. The VFW National Home for Children is no exception.



Brad Patterson,
Development Director

For information on creating a bequest for the VFW National Home please contact us at 517-663-1521.

A form can be provided to you with sample language covering the four most common types of bequests. The following is proper legal language to create a bequest to the VFW National Home for Children:

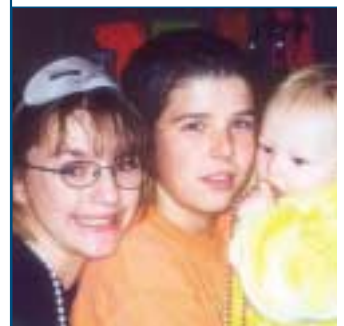
"I (*your name*) bequeath (*percentage or specific amount*), or, the rest and residual of my estate, to The VFW National Home for Children, a Michigan (501)c3-Non-Profit, located at 3573 South Waverly Road, Eaton Rapids, Michigan, 48827, for (*specific purpose*) or, to be used where most needed."

We are actively encouraging our friends to consider a bequest to the VFW National Home for Children. Adding the National Home to your will by codicil, or establishing a will which includes us, is a lasting legacy.

You must contact an attorney to create a will, or add a codicil to your existing will. This information is not intended as legal advice.

“THERE ARE NO SEVEN WONDERS OF THE WORLD IN THE EYES OF A CHILD. THERE ARE SEVEN MILLION.”

~ Walt Streightiff





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and sisters. Our connection was unique because we were forced to live together but we voluntarily grew close. We laughed together, played together, and of course, fought together. Now that I have graduated and moved out, I still visit there frequently. The family atmosphere hasn't changed, and I am welcome at any time. To my houseparents, the National Home was no longer their job...it was their family. We have connected in a way I can never explain. I thank them so much for the laughs they have given and the confidence they have instilled in me. I thank them for showing God's love to me and how awesome God truly is.

“...THANK YOU FOR
SIMPLY LOVING
CHILDREN THAT
NEED TO BE LOVED.”

~Danielle Lightner

This article cannot possibly show the depth of gratitude I have for the Home. To the Posts, Auxiliaries, Cooties, and to all the individuals who support the Home, thank you for simply loving children that need to be loved. To the staff, thank you for your behind the scenes work that may go unnoticed, but never unappreciated. To my neighbors here, thank you for your friendships. To all houseparents, thank you for taking us as your own. To my house brothers and sisters, thank you for letting me be your family. My final thank you goes to God, for bringing my family and I to the VFW National Home for Children.

VFW National Home for Children
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