



Illinois VFW Posts Serving Community Needs

The “Windy City” attracts millions of visitors each year and not far from the city are two vibrant VFW Posts waiting to welcome travelers through the doors

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This month, VFW magazine continues its “Destination Post Series.” The series features 125 Posts located in sought-after tourist destinations. Featured VFW Posts are those that make a real difference in the communities in which the Posts are located. This month’s article takes VFW magazine readers to two Posts located near “Chi-Town.”

A little more than 30 miles south of Chicago is VFW Post 311 in Richton Park. Not only is the Post a favorite spot in town to gather for a little fun, but it also is a community advocate.

VFW Post 311 Commander Aretha Spurlock said helping homeless vets is something of which the Post members are especially proud. The Post hosts an annual Veterans Stand Down and also supports the Midwest Shelter for Homeless veterans through clothing drives.

“We find ourselves in a great position to support our veterans through stand downs and resource fairs,” Spurlock said. “Thanks to a local woman, we provide equine therapy at the stand downs. She brings her horse for the vets to experience. We are very proud to be able to offer this.”

Spurlock said the Post also provides scholarships for high school students and supports career days at schools. For the past nine years, VFW Post 311’s emphasis on higher education has led to more than \$30,000 in scholarships awarded to high school seniors with family ties to veterans in Richton Park.

What began in August 2014 with three \$1,000 scholarships, the Benjamin O. Davis Post 311 Commander’s Scholarship program has since awarded up to six \$1,000 scholarships a year

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to more than 30 recipients.

On the second and fourth Fridays at the Post, veterans and military affiliates are invited to attend “Coffee Chats.”

Spurlock, who is the first female Post commander in her District, said these twice monthly events are hosted by VFW member Nekohl Johnson.

Coffee is provided by VFW member and Army vet Melissa Farmer Hill, who has her own coffee company, Sip Nation.

Spurlock said that several of the Post’s older veterans have died throughout the past year. A member asked the commander about having professional grief counseling for VFW members. That led to a “Grief and Loss” series at the Post presented by Dr. Renee Dickerson. The series focused on understanding the effects of grief on the mind, body and spirit, among other topics.

“I take my position as Post commander seriously,” said Spurlock, who is in her third year in that role. “We are a service organization, and we are here to serve veterans and the community. If they walk in, hopefully they will want to join us or support us in some sort of way.”

WORKING ‘HARD AT SERVING’

Among the good times had at VFW Post 311 are First Friday events. Food trucks and live music are two of the ways the Post celebrates the first Friday of each month.

In February, the community turned out for a pre-Valentine’s Day celebration with a catered meal and live entertainment.

