



NILES MEMORIAL POST 3579

SENTRY NEWSLETTER

OFFICIAL NEWS PUBLICATION—Summer -2026

Commander's Column

Greetings Comrades,



I would like to thank the members of Niles Post 3579 for electing me as your new Commander. I feel honored to lead this Post for the 2026-2027 membership year. It is, indeed, an honor, and I along with my team look forward to working with you. The Veterans of Foreign War family. Thank you **John Tomzik** who served as our Post Commander for the year 2025-2026, a job well done. **John Tomzik** and **Harry Benjamin** with their dedication to duty and commitment made Niles Post 3579 the All-State Post for this coming year. I also would like to thank the following individuals for contributing their time to the upkeep of our Post, **George Pearson, Tom Davidson, Ed Tully, John Tomzik, Mike Bunyon** and **Bob Fuggiti**. If I missed anyone, I apologize. Thanks to **Jim Henks** for organizing a successful Poppy Day 2026 Event and to all who volunteered to distribute poppies and collect money. Also, thanks to our Auxiliary devoting their time to count proceeds. As we're starting a new year, the focal point should be recruiting new members, hopefully with our scholarship program it can be achievable. I hope everyone will have safe and relaxing summer.

Thank you, God Bless you & God Bless America

Joseph Kowalczyk
Commander

Niles Memorial VFW Post 3579

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Poppy Day Event 2026

We had a successful 2026 Poppy Day Event. I would like to thank those Post members and friends of the Post who participated in making it so. This year 11 Post members volunteered three hours of their time to distribute poppies and collect donations. Six of those members volunteered twice.

I would like to especially acknowledge and thank the Niles VFW Post 3579 Auxiliary. Four members of the Auxiliary volunteered to distribute poppies and collect donations for the Post for a three hour period. During that time, they collected over \$1,200. Additionally, one of those members sponsored a collection container at a local cafe and collected another \$114. One friend of the Post collected over \$500 and Mary's Place at 6300 on Milwaukee Ave. sponsored a collection container and collected \$245. The Post mail in donation appeal to the Post membership resulted in 47 responses.

Thank you for your support, *Jim Henk*

Americanism

On 18 April 2026, Niles Memorial VFW Post 3579, hosted an Americanism Quiz competition. Six high school seniors from the civics classes at Notre Dame College Preparatory were invited to the Post to test their understanding and knowledge of democracy and how the structures of government work. Categories included U. S. Government, U. S. Military, U. S. Constitution, State of Illinois Government and U. S. Geography. (*Sample Question #1: Who is the current Speaker of the U. S. House of Representatives?*). There were 24 questions with multiple choice answers, and one write in answer question. Post members read the questions to the students who then chose their answer on their answer sheet. The tests were scored by Post members, and members of the VFW Auxiliary. (*Sample Question #2: What is the name of the current U. S. Military Operation against the Middle Eastern country of Iran?*). While the tests were being scored the students were given the opportunity to view and discuss a copy of the quiz showing the correct answers. All six students were then awarded a check with amounts based on their score placement. (*Sample Question #3: Who was the only elected American President to resign from the presidency thus not completing his elected term.?*) All the students did well. There was a tie for first place as three students each missed 3 questions each. How did *you* do on the Sample Questions????

Answers: #1 Mike Johnson, #2 Operation Epic Fury, #3 Richard Nixon

Does your family know where your DD 214 (Discharge papers) are???



Scholarship Update

The Scholarship Committee continues to meet and has made progress toward the goal of making scholarship awards. We have approximately \$25,000 in the Post Scholarship Fund and we are on track to award our first scholarships in 2027. We are working toward receiving additional funding.

USO DAY OF SERVICE

May 2nd was our Day of Service. Commander John Tomzik delivered convenience items to the USO at O'Hare International Airport and to Great Lakes Naval Station. Thank you to all who contributed to the effort.



SUPPORT THE VETERANS CLUB

We are open every day!

Monday-Saturday	11:00 am-10:00 pm
Sunday	11:00 am-6:00 pm

Operation Gratitude Letter-Writing Initiative

"We need to ensure that all who serve know that his or her sacrifices are appreciated." That simple but powerful statement reflects the mission of Operation Gratitude, an organization that sends more than 200,000 care packages each year to deployed troops, veterans, new recruits, first responders, and wounded warriors. While the packages contain

many useful and comforting items, recipients consistently report that the most treasured contents are the personal letters of appreciation enclosed inside.

According to Operation Gratitude, the goal is to include several letters and colorful drawings in every care package as a reminder to our nation's heroes that their service and sacrifices are valued and appreciated.

Beginning in August, the Auxiliary will dedicate a brief period following each monthly meeting to participate in a letter-writing program for Operation Gratitude. Members will have the opportunity to write messages of encouragement, gratitude, and support that will be included in future care packages.

This simple act of kindness requires only a few minutes of time, yet it can have a lasting impact on someone serving our country or community. The Auxiliary is proud to support this worthwhile effort and encourages all members to participate as we continue finding meaningful ways to serve those who serve us.

Council Fun

At Commander **John Tomzik's** last meeting He presented incoming Commander **Joe Kowalczyk** with a Commander's VFW Post 3579 electric Jeep.

Note: John converted a Pink Barbe jeep into this lean mean fighting machine.



4th of July Parade

Our Post will be the Color Bearers at the annual Niles Fourth of July Parade steps off at 8:45 AM from the Notre Dame College Prep parking lot (7655 W. Dempster St) and ends at Grennan Heights Park, where a community festival features live music,

games, food, and family activities.

The Post is still in need of members to serve in our Color Corp. Uniform will be supplied by the Post.

MEMORIAL DAY 2026 CEREMONY AT NILES VETERANS WATERFALL

Led by Post Commander John Tomzik, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Niles Memorial Post 3579 performed a solemn Memorial Day ceremony at the Niles Veterans Waterfall on May 25th. A wreath was placed by our Post and Vietnam Veterans of America Chicago Chapter 242 in memory of all service members that gave their full measure of service to our nation. The VFW Post 3579 Color Guard rendered Taps. The Mayor of Niles, **George Alpogianis** addressed those in attendance, and the Niles Police Chief and Niles Fire Department Chief also spoke. The Notre Dame College Prep Marching Band played patriotic music.

MEMORIAL DAY COOK OUT AT THE POST

Immediately following the Memorial Day ceremony, the Post hosted a Vietnam Veterans of America Chicago Chapter #242 **COOK OUT** at the Post. Food was prepared by volunteers from the VVA, burgers, brats and even a pig roast was part of the fare. Thank you to the many volunteers which included VVA and VFW members. Singer and guitar player Tom Losik provided music enjoyed by all. Thank you, Tom! A bountiful dessert table was provided by many in attendance, including the Post Auxiliary.

VFW POST 3579 AUXILIARY

Our Auxiliary meets the First Wednesday of each month 1:00 pm at 7255 N. Caldwell Ave., Niles, IL. 60714

Guests and all who may be qualified for membership are always welcome to join us!

Myrna Schiro, Treasurer
773-775-4567

Email: myrnaschiro1@gmail.com

Website: vfwauxiliary.org

Auxiliary News

On May 3, 2026, the Auxiliary held its Installation of Officers for the 2026–2027 year. Congratulations to our newly installed officers:

President – **Mary Ann Miller**

Senior Vice President – **Nancy Henk**

Junior Vice President and Trustee No. 3 –
Donna Dye

Secretary and Guard – **Ann McAlexander**

Treasurer – **Myrna Schiro**

Conductress and Trustee No. 1 – **Alice
Gockenbach**

Chaplain and Trustee No. 2 – **Rickie Kowalczyk**

We look forward to another productive year of service to veterans, their families, and our community.

Our efforts to promote **RED (Remember Everyone Deployed) Friday** continue to be very well received. Each Friday, Auxiliary member **Judie Reilly** places informational signage and free red ribbons in the VFW lounge for patrons. In June, we had to replenish our ribbon supply due to strong community support. As long as support for RED Friday continues, we'll keep making ribbons!

Auxiliary members participated in the Post's *Day of Service* project by donating suggested items to support active-duty military personnel through local USO locations at O'Hare International Airport and Naval Station Great Lakes.

After consulting with her contact, **Julia Marino**, at the Chicago Veterans Home, President **Mary Ann Miller** organized the purchase and collection of cases of soda and individually wrapped snacks to be used as game prizes for residents.

One surprising request from the Activities Department was for small stuffed animals as prizes. Recognizing the cost of purchasing these items, Mary Ann came up with a creative solution. She donated 75 Beanie Babies from her personal collection. The donation was enthusiastically received by the staff, and these once highly sought-after collectibles will now bring joy to veteran

residents. Future donations may include additional Beanie Babies and similar items.

The Chicago Veterans Home currently houses 119 residents and hopes to open an additional floor soon, increasing occupancy toward its 200-resident capacity.

June 12 marked **Women Veterans Recognition Day**. Thirteen female veteran members of Post 3579 were honored for their service and sacrifice, the Auxiliary mailed each woman veteran a personalized note enclosed in a Veterans Recognition card as a small token of our gratitude and appreciation.

Quilt of Valor



Vietnam Army veteran **Patricia Wood** received a well-deserved Quilt of Valor on June 9 prior to the monthly VVA meeting held at VFW Post 3579.

During the presentation, Pat's daughter shared an overview of her mother's distinguished military service. After earning her Registered Nurse credentials and joining the Army Nurse Corps, Pat attained the rank of First Lieutenant and volunteered for assignment to Vietnam. She was eventually stationed in Pleiku, where she helped establish the 18th MASH unit, providing critical medical care to wounded service members during the war.

When Pat's brother was later deployed to Vietnam, she was transferred back to the United States and assigned to Valley Forge Army Hospital in Pennsylvania. It was there that she met the man who would become her husband—a wounded Vietnam veteran and Bronze Star Medal recipient, whose own service and sacrifice reflected those of so many treated at the hospital.

The Quilt of Valor serves as a tangible expression of gratitude and recognition for veterans who have been touched by war. It was a fitting tribute to Pat's dedication, courage, and compassionate service to

her fellow soldiers and her country.

Special Discount Special
Dues Information

ANNUAL VFW MEMBERS: Please note that VFW Post 3579 is currently offering a discount for new and current members who wish to convert their Annual Membership to Life Membership. The discount provided by the Post is 25%. These are dues needed to be paid in order to take advantage of this offer depends on your age as of December 31th of the current calendar year. You may pay with a check, cash or credit card. This offer also extends to qualified veterans that wish to join VFW Post 3579.

As a life member, you will not pay any increases and never pay dues again. To take advantage of this offer, please contact the Post Quartermaster at 847-825-4588

Life Member Dues			
Attained Age	Cost	Discount	Net Cost
Through 30	\$425	\$106	\$319
31-40	\$410	\$103	\$307
41-50	\$375	\$94	\$281
51-60	\$335	\$84	\$251
61-70	\$290	\$73	\$217
71-80	\$225	\$56	\$169
81 plus	\$170	\$43	\$127



TAPS



The following V.F.W. Post 3579 members have passed away.

Rest in Peace Comrade
Carmel Abbate U.S Special Forces

Post Activities



Commander Tomzik Speaks at 4th District meeting - Joe Kowalczyk Sworn in as New Commander



Pictures from St Patrick's Party