



VFW POST 4575

JANUARY 2026

POST OFFICERS

Commander

Carlos T. Rawls Sr.

Sr. Vice Commander

Keith R. Prather

Jr. Vice Commander

TK Kast

Quartermaster

Jerry Stewart

Chaplain

James Long

3 Year Trustee

Ross List

Adjutant

Beth Sharp

2 Year Trustee

Bruce Rogan

Judge Advocate

James L. Mann

1 Year Trustee

Brian Morris

Surgeon

Richard L. Adcock

Service Officer

JoAnna Johnson

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COMMANDER'S CORNER



Comrades,

As we begin a new year, I want to take a moment to sincerely thank the members of VFW Post 4575 for your hard work, dedication, and commitment to our Post throughout the past year. Your efforts—whether seen or behind the scenes—are what keep our Post strong, active, and relevant in our community.

January is a time for renewal and focus, and one of our most important priorities moving forward is membership. I encourage each of you to continue working hard to recruit new members, retain our current comrades, and reach out to veterans who may not yet know what the VFW has to offer. Membership is the lifeblood of our organization, and every new member strengthens our voice and our mission. I also ask you to consider upgrading your membership to a Life or Legacy Life Membership if you are able. These memberships are an investment in the future of Post 4575 and the VFW as a whole. By upgrading, you help ensure long-term stability for our Post while continuing to support programs that benefit veterans, their families, and our community.

Thank you again for everything you do. Let's start this new year with renewed energy, a strong focus on membership, and continued pride in serving Post 4575. I am honored to serve as your Commander and proud to stand alongside each of you.

Yours in Comradeship,
Commander Carlos T. Rawls
VFW Post 4575



CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

A New Year, Same Brotherhood

January always carries a strange mix of things. There's the quiet after the holidays, the cold that settles into the bones, and the feeling that everything has reset whether we're ready or not. For many of us, winter slows the world down—and sometimes it slows us down internally too. That's not weakness. That's human. The turning of the calendar doesn't erase what we've carried, but it does give us a chance to decide how we carry it forward.

This month isn't about grand resolutions or reinventing yourself. It's about steady ground. Showing up. Checking in on one another. Keeping the fire lit when the nights are long.

Looking Out for Each Other

January can be one of the hardest months for veterans. There's less daylight, fewer social gatherings, and cold weather that keeps people isolated.

If you notice someone missing meetings, going quiet, or just not quite themselves—reach out. A phone call, a cup of coffee, or a simple “You good?” can matter more than you realize.

And if you're the one carrying more than usual, say something. You don't have to explain everything. You just don't have to carry it alone.

Chaplain's Thought for the Month

You don't have to see the whole road—just the next solid step.

We were trained to endure, adapt, and push through. But endurance doesn't mean isolation. Strength doesn't mean silence.

This new year, let's measure progress not by what we accomplish, but by how well we stay connected.

January Focus

Check in on one veteran you haven't seen in a while

Get outside when you can, even briefly

Keep routines simple and steady

Ask for help early, not late

Closing

As we step into another year together, remember this: you are still needed. You still matter. And you are not walking this road alone.

If you need someone to talk to, I'm here. No judgment. No pressure. Just a listening ear.

Stay warm. Stay connected. We'll take this year one step at a time—together.

Respectfully,

James Long

Chaplain, VFW Post 4575

Chaplain, VFW District 5 – Tennessee



UPCOMING EVENTS



Post Calendar

Post TShirts

TN Veteran Resource Guide

We Are Building Lives Organization

**MORE INFORMATION ABOUT WE ARE BUILDING
LIVES ON PAGE 16**

4575 AUXILLIARY

VETERANS NIGHT OUT AT HEROES DEN

January 21st from 1700-1900

1257 NW Broad St Murfreesboro



EVENTS AND RESOURCES



About The Building Lives Foundation

The Building Lives Foundation is a federally recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to helping U.S. military veterans successfully reintegrate into civilian life. Through its core programs, Project Advance and The Academy, the organization provides veterans with housing, employment assistance, and essential resources to support long-term stability and independence. The Foundation fulfills its mission through dedicated volunteers, comprehensive veterans services, and the generous support of donors and partners. Our annual gala is our biggest fundraiser each year. Every ticket, bid, and donation makes an immediate impact—90% of all proceeds go directly to our veterans in need.

Event Overview

A Magical Masquerade Heroes Gala is an unforgettable evening benefitting homeless veterans. Guests will step into a night of mystery and elegance featuring immersive casino-style games, enchanting magic performances, live music, and an exciting live auction. The experience is elevated with fine dining and handcrafted signature cocktails, all in support of honoring and uplifting those who have bravely served our country.



Event Details

Saturday, September 19, 2026

5:30 - 9:30p.m.

Rocketown 601 4th Ave S, Nashville, TN 37210

Contact Tiffany for tickets or for information about sponsorship packages.



Tiffany Childers

Director of Marketing and Development

(615) 785-5986

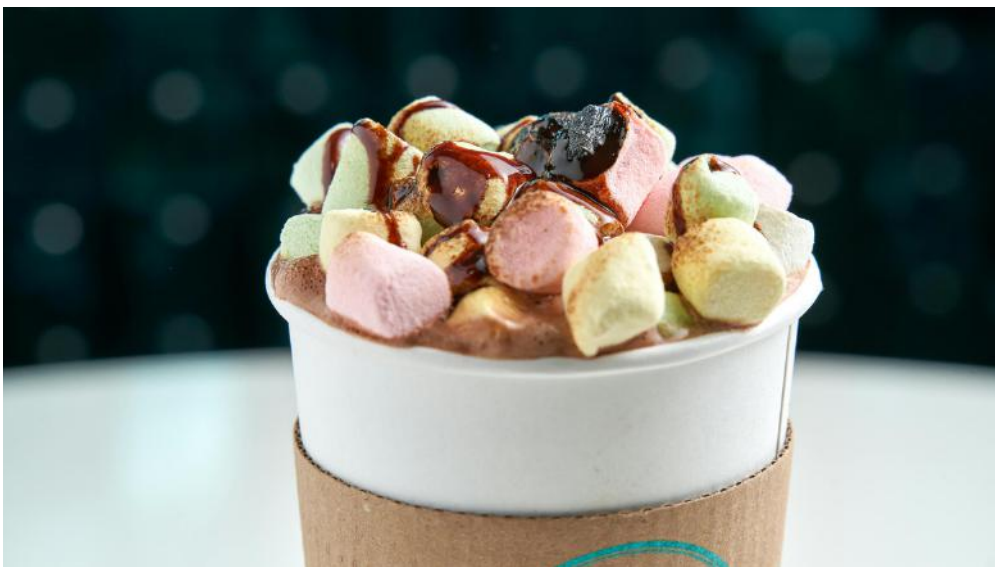
Wearebuildinglives.org



FLAG FUND

It's the U.S. Army flag flying AGAIN for December!

GO ARMY.....





**DECEMBER
MEETING
MINUTES>>>**



Subject: Smith – Rogers – Reeves at Stones RiverVFW Post 4575 November 2025 Monthly Meeting Minutes

To: Carlos Rawls, Post Commander
From: Elizabeth Sharp, Post Adjutant

15 December 2025

The regular meeting of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) of the United States Smith – Rogers – Reeves at Stones River VFW Post 4575 was held 15 December 2025 at 1830 hours, at Heroes Den located at 1257 Broad St. Murfreesboro, TN 37129

Roll Call of Officers

Position	Name	Contact Number	Email Address	Roll Call
Commander	Carlos Rawls			Present
Sr. Vice Commander	Keith R. Prather	(240)702-4317	Kprather52@gmail.com	Present
Jr. Vice Commander	Tharrell B. Kast	N/A	Tbkast2@gmail.com	Present
Quartermaster	Jerry Stewart	(615)617-9055	adj@vfw4575.org	Present
Chaplain	James Long	(615)809-4846	bigmrchimp@gmail.com	Present
1-Year Trustee	Brain Morris			Present
2-Year Trustee	Bruce Rogan	(615)406-4832	brucerrogan@gmail.com	Present
3-Year trustee	Ross List	(615)626-5055	Andre103@yahoo.com	Present
Adjutant	Beth Sharp	(865)414-3495	Beth.sharp66@gmail.com	Present
Benefits Advisor	JoJo Johnson			Present
JAG	Jim Mann	(571)474-9111)	Jmann71596@aol.com	Present
Surgeon	Ritchie Adcox	(479)243-5594		Excused

VFW Post 4575 Smith – Rogers – Reeves at Stones River
439 Rice St. Murfreesboro, TN 37130

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- New Members/Transfers
 - No new members this month

- Special Guest
 - No special Guest Speaker this month SPECIAL CONGRSSIONAL RECOGNITION was
 - presented to JoJo Johnson for Outstanding Service to the Community from Congressman Scott DesJarlais. 1-Year Trustee Brain Morris presented the certificate. WELL DESERVED JOJO!! Congratulations!!

- November Meeting Minutes – Adjutant Beth Sharp (beth.sharp66@gmail.com / (865)414-349 5)
3-Year Trustee Ross List made a motion to accept the minutes subject to pen and ink changes. Benefits Advisor JoJo Johnson seconded the motion. Motion passed

- November Quartermaster Report – Quartermaster Jerry Stewart (adj@vfw4575.org / (615)617-9055)
3-Year Trustee Ross List made a motion that the Financial Report be approved subject to audit. Benefits Advisor JoJo Johnson Seconded the motion. Motion passed

- Membership
 - Quartermaster Jerry Stewart reported we have 133 Life members (69%), 7 new members and 237 members to get to meet last year’s numbers. We had three Legacy Members present (Quartermaster Jerry Stewart, Benefits Advisor JoJo Johnson, and 3-Year Trustee Ross List). Commander Carlos Rawls challenged us to get 3 new Legacy Members. To reach legacy status, the cost is \$400.

- Committees -
 - Buddy Poppy – we need two events to meet our All-American requirements. If you have any ideas, please reach out to Commander Rawls or Quartermaster Jerry Stewart.
 - Teacher of the Year – Quartermaster Jerry Stewart ordered certificates for our nominee for 2025-2026.

- Old/Unfinished Business
 - JAG James Mann motioned that we accept the Bylaw changes presented at the November meeting. 3-Year Trustee Ross List seconded the motion. Motion passed.
 - THANK YOU, Jim, for all your work in getting the Bylaws updated.

- Nextsteps:
 1. Draft By-Laws updated and reviewed
 2. Draft By-Laws signed by commander and adjutant
 3. Draft By-Laws sent to State Commander for review
 4. State sends Draft By-Laws to National VFW for review and approval
 5. Once Draft By-Laws are approved, our new By-Laws will replace our old ones and they will be archived

- New Business
 - Our next District meeting will be on January 8, 2026 at Heroes Den. We will be hosting the event.
 - Chaplain James Long will get a Red Dot for raffle at employee cost. 1-Year Trustee Brian Morris volunteered to cover the cost of the raffle items (THANK YOU Brian). Cost of raffle was approved for \$150 during Budget Meeting.
 1. Historical information includes last year Demos' was provided and the year before sandwiches were provided for the January District meeting.
 - Benefits Advisor JoJo Johnson has volunteered wine baskets for us for door prizes/raffle at our District meeting. (THANK YOU JoJo). Chaplain James Long
 - and Benefits Advisor JoJo Johnson will contact local restaurants (Mission BBQ, Taco Truck, Demos') for quotes. Elizabeth Long will contact a Veteran chef friend
 - to see what he can provide for about 40 people at \$10 per plate. Cost for food/dinner for our District meeting \$500 was approved our Budget Meeting. All will report back to Commander Rawls as soon as possible so a decision can be
 - made.

- Benefits Advisor Report – JoJo Johnson – (joann7490@yahoo.com / (615)593-4533)
 - Be on the lookout for an increase in our disability payments.
 - If you have not already, and you are at 100% disability P&T, please go apply for your property tax relief
 - For those at 100% Disability P&T, and have not started getting your dental benefits, please give them a call to get on their schedule. They are short-staffed but are hiring new technicians
 - Ifyou are at 100% P&T, it could mean benefits for your spouse anddependents.
 - Ifyou have questions about any of these announcements, pleasereach out to JoJo.

- JudgeAdvocate–JamesMann(jmann71596@aol.com / (571)474-9111)
 - Nothing additional to report this month



- Surgeon–RichieAdcox (479)243-5594
 - Nothing to report at this month

- Chaplain–James Long (bigmrchimp@gmail.com)/(615)809-4846
 - It can be tough for members this holiday season, so please reach out to your battle buddies and make sure they are ok. If you are struggling, please reach out.
 -

- Veterans inDistress
 - Ritchie Adcox – recovering

- Community Service
 - Community/Volunteer Service Hours Log
 - go to vfwtn.org
 - Members only
 - Log in
 - Program Reporting
 - Add community Service Hours
 - You are welcome to get your information to Jerry Stewart for assistance in inputting your time.

- Upcoming Events
 - Check out our website for more information on the Post and events.
 - Coffee with a Veteran every Sunday at 0800 at Joanie’s on the Square
 - Every Friday at 0800 the American Legion meets for breakfast at Metro Diner
 - District Meeting January 2026 – January 8 at the Tri-Star Veteran’s Center in Murfreesboro – Hosts: Post 4575
 - District Meeting April 9, 2026 – Manchester Post 10904

- Good of the Order – Visit VFW 4575.org for the most current updated information
 - Commander Carlos Rawls thanked Elizabeth Long for the monthly November Digital Magazine and asked anyone who has information to add to the newsletter to get it to her as quickly as possible. THANK YOU, Elizabeth!!
 - 3-Year Trustee Ross List reported that the US Army won for December and the flag will fly along with the American Flag in January. If you would like to contribute to the Flag Fund, please reach out to Ross or go to our webpage where you can scan the QR code.

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Post 4575

- 3-Year Trustee Ross List also reported that our member Matt Bertron has officially moved to Montana and has written a book called Echoes from the Front: Battle After the War now available on Amazon.
- Sr. Vice Commander Keith Prather requested a flag be replaced at the Boys and Girls Club. 3-Year Trustee Ross List acknowledged. 1-Year Trustee Brain Morris shared about another Passport Fair in March of 2026. Date to be published later. If your passport is within 6 months of expiring when you are coming home from another country, you will not be allowed to travel. If you have a passport that is close to 9-1/2 years old for adults or 4-1/2 years old for children, make plans to get yours updated. It cuts out about 6 weeks of processing time.
- Adjourn
 - JAG James Mann motioned that we adjourn. 1-Year Trustee Brain Morris seconded the motion. Motion passed. Meeting was adjourned at 1921.
 - Our next meeting will be on Monday, 19 January 2026 at Hero's Den located at 1257 Broad Street, Murfreesboro, TN 37129 at 1830.

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RESOURCES



Veterans Often Overlook These VA Disability Claims: Secondary Conditions Explained

Military.com | By [Brandon Wile](#)

Published December 29, 2025 at 11:03am ET

A Marine Corps veteran rated 70% for post-traumatic stress disorder didn't know his sleep apnea counted as a separate disability. An Army veteran with a service-connected back injury never filed for the knee problems that developed from limping for years. A Navy veteran rated for tinnitus had no idea his depression qualified as a secondary condition.

These veterans left money on the table. More importantly, they missed recognition for disabilities that directly resulted from their service-connected conditions.



CONTINUED...

What Counts as a Secondary Condition

The basic rule is simple: If a service-connected disability causes or aggravates another condition, that second condition can be rated as secondary.

Sleep apnea from PTSD is the most common example. PTSD causes hypervigilance, nightmares and disrupted sleep patterns. These contribute to obstructive sleep apnea. File with medical evidence linking the two, and the VA can rate the sleep apnea secondary to PTSD.

Knee or hip problems from a back injury follow the same logic. A service-connected lumbar spine condition forces you to walk differently to avoid pain. That altered gait puts stress on your knees and hips. Over time, you develop osteoarthritis or other joint damage. Those joint problems are secondary to the back condition.

Mental health conditions secondary to chronic pain work the same way. Constant pain from a service-connected injury leads to depression, anxiety or worsening PTSD. The mental health condition becomes secondary to the physical injury.

The secondary condition doesn't have to be related to military service directly. It just has to be caused by something that is.

Common Secondary Conditions Veterans Miss

Sleep apnea secondary to PTSD appears in claims constantly, but many veterans don't connect the dots until a sleep study shows moderate or severe apnea. The VA can rate sleep apnea at 0%, 30%, 50% or 100% depending on whether you need a CPAP machine and whether you actually use it.

Joint problems secondary to back, hip or knee injuries are extremely common. Compensating for pain in one area shifts weight and stress to other joints. A veteran with a 40% rating for a left knee injury might develop right knee problems from favoring the injured side. That right knee qualifies as secondary.

Radiculopathy secondary to spinal conditions affects thousands of veterans. Nerve damage from a service-connected back or neck injury can cause pain, numbness or weakness in your arms or legs. Each affected nerve can be rated separately as secondary to the spinal condition.

Mental health conditions secondary to physical disabilities show up across the board. Chronic pain, mobility loss and visible scarring all contribute to depression and anxiety. These aren't just "part of" the physical condition. They're separate disabilities that deserve separate ratings.

Migraines secondary to traumatic brain injury or neck injuries are frequently overlooked. The VA can rate migraines based on frequency and severity, from 0% for less frequent episodes to 50% for very frequent completely prostrating headaches.

How to Establish Service Connection for Secondary Conditions

You need three things: a current diagnosis of the secondary condition, medical evidence linking it to your service-connected disability, and a claim filed with the VA.

The current diagnosis comes from a doctor. Go to sick call at the VA or see a private physician. Get the condition documented. Sleep apnea requires a sleep study. Joint problems need X-rays or MRIs showing damage. Mental health conditions need evaluation from a psychiatrist or psychologist.

The medical nexus is the hard part. You need a doctor to write an opinion stating it's "at least as likely as not" that your service-connected condition caused or aggravated the secondary condition. This is called a nexus letter. Some VA doctors will write these opinions during compensation and pension exams. Others won't touch them. If the VA examiner won't establish the connection, get a private medical opinion. Veteran service organizations and disability attorneys can help arrange this.

The claim itself is filed through VA.gov, by mail, or with help from a veteran service organization. You're filing for a new condition secondary to an existing service-connected disability. The form asks you to identify the primary condition and explain the relationship.

Why This Matters for Your Overall Rating

The VA doesn't add disability percentages together in a straight line. A veteran with 70% for PTSD and 50% for sleep apnea doesn't get 120%. The VA uses a combined ratings table that produces a lower total than simple addition.

But secondary conditions still increase your overall rating significantly. A veteran at 70% who adds a 50% secondary condition jumps to 90% overall. That's the difference between \$1,716.28 and \$2,241.91 per month in 2026. Over a lifetime, the gap runs into hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Getting to 100% often requires claiming secondary conditions. A veteran with 70% for one condition and 30% for another might sit at 80% combined. Add three more secondary conditions rated at 10% each, and you could reach 100%. That unlocks full commissary and exchange privileges, ChampVA health coverage for dependents, and property tax exemptions in many states.

The retroactive pay matters, too. If you file five years after developing a secondary condition, the VA can pay retroactively to your effective date depending on when you filed. But you can't get paid for years you never claimed.

What to Do Now

Look at your current service-connected disabilities and ask whether they've caused other problems. Has your back injury led to knee pain? Has your PTSD disrupted your sleep? Has chronic pain from your service-connected condition led to depression?

Get those secondary conditions diagnosed. See a doctor. Get the evaluation done. Document everything. Then file. The VA won't automatically give you credit for conditions you haven't claimed, even if the connection seems obvious. You have to ask.

If you need help, contact a veteran service organization. DAV, VFW, American Legion and other VSOs employ accredited representatives who help with claims for free. They know which secondary conditions to look for and how to establish the medical connection.

The biggest mistake is assuming the VA already knows about your secondary conditions or that they're already included in your rating. They're not. You have to claim them.

Stay on Top of Your Veteran Benefits