

Florida public servant named DAV Auxiliary member of the year

RENO, Nev.—The DAV (Disabled American Veterans) Auxiliary has selected Mary Lee Kolter, of DAV Auxiliary Unit 101, Nokomis, Florida, as its top member for 2017.

The Past National Commander's Outstanding Member of the Year Award recognizes Kolter's contributions and dedication to ill and injured veterans and their families in her community.

The honor will be bestowed at the 97th DAV and Auxiliary National Convention, July 15, at the Grand Sierra Resort and Casino in Reno, Nevada.

Kolter is a former police officer, chief of police, teacher and elementary school principal, as well as a lifelong volunteer in her community. She has held leadership positions in the DAV Auxiliary including adjutant, senior vice commander and unit commander.

Kolter initiated a veterans Christmas project she calls "Adopt-A-Vet." Each year, a special Christmas tree is placed in the DAV Auxiliary building with names of local veterans in area nursing homes who would likely not receive a gift for Christmas. Community members have overwhelmingly responded to the project. The first year in place, "Adopt-A-Vet" served 18 veterans and this past year the number grew to 325.

She discovered many community veterans were in need of items not covered by government assistance programs. As a result, Kolter designed and implemented the "Veterans Closet." Every month, she leads her unit in distributing personal care and hygiene items to nearly 60 veterans in neighboring communities.

In 2015, Kolter received word that a local 98-year-old veteran from World War II received notice from the VA that he owed \$8,000 for an erroneous overpay. Kolter spearheaded a World War II-era "canteen" style dance that included period authentic music, a food menu typical of the era, reenactors in period authentic attire, memorabilia exhibits from the 1940s, door prizes, raffles and auction items. The veteran was relieved of this financial burden and the community has asked for a repeat of what was intended to be a one-time event.

"I have known Mary Lee Kolter, both personally and professionally, for many years," said Past DAV Auxiliary Unit 101 Commander Lois Anderson. "It is evident she has spent her entire life dedicated to the service of others. I have seen her work tirelessly on a project until it was completed well and correctly. Mary Lee has become a respected and trusted member of the DAV Auxiliary community."

Photos and media may be made available upon request.

About DAV:

DAV empowers veterans to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity. It is dedicated to a single purpose: fulfilling our promises to the men and women who served. DAV does this by ensuring that veterans and their families can access the full range of benefits available to them; fighting for the interests of America's injured heroes on Capitol Hill; providing employment resources to veterans and their families and educating the public about the great sacrifices and needs of veterans transitioning back to civilian life. DAV, a non-profit organization with more than 1 million members, was founded in 1920 and chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1932.