

A salute to VFW Post 358 Ladies' Auxiliary President Terri Bryant

By Ann Hauprich

BALLSTON SPA -- As the first anniversary of her Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 358 Ladies' Auxiliary presidency nears, Terri M. Bryant's patriotic heart remains fueled by a burning desire to serve humanitarian causes at home and abroad.

Wounded Warriors and those battling breast cancer are but two of the inspirations that motivate the vivacious grandmother to continue marching forward supported by the 60-plus VFW Ladies' Auxiliary members she encourages to work together "in unity and harmony as sisters are meant to do."

Bryant, who had demonstrated leadership abilities in academic and civic circles prior assuming the role of Ladies' Auxiliary President when her predecessor resigned in November 2013, was officially elected to the position in April 2014.

A Schenectady native who moved to Ballston Spa in 1973, Bryant's professional accomplishments include solid employment records with the Saratoga County Treasurer's Department and the State Farm Insurance Company.

While raising two sons with husband Dave, a veteran who served in Thailand during the Vietnam War, Bryant donned the additional hat of adult student, graduating from Adirondack Community College Magna Cum Laude and being named to Who's Who in American Students in Junior Colleges. She subsequently transferred to Siena College where as an accounting major she was inducted into Siena's Alpha Kappa Alpha Honor Society before graduating Cum Laude with a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration.

A CTM (competent toastmaster) with Toastmasters International, Bryant also served on the Board of Directors for the New York State Brain Injury Association and was recognized by the Governor's Committee on Traffic Safety for her efforts in getting the bicycle helmet law passed.

"The VFW has been a big part of my life since Dave joined and became an active member many years ago," said Bryant, noting her husband now serves on the Board of Directors led by Commander Dennis LaQue and Past Commander Earl "Doc" Manning.

Her Ladies' Auxiliary journey began with her induction as a member in 2011 followed by her election the next year to the position of a trustee whose responsibilities included auditing the treasurer's books each quarter. Bryant became the Ladies' Auxiliary Senior Vice-President under Liza Argay. When the latter resigned last November, Bryant was automatically elevated her to the position of President.

"Now that Dave and I are both retired, we feel we can dedicate more time to the VFW and its causes." said Bryant. "That's why I officially sought election to the position when the time came earlier this year."

Bryant added that “having been active in the Ladies’ Auxiliary in one way or another since joining in 2011 taught me how the organization runs and introduced me to the basic rules and procedures.”

This experience has proven to be an asset as Bryant now presides over monthly meetings, ensuring rules and rituals are faithfully followed. Other presidential duties include appointing non-elected officers and co-signing checks with the treasurer.

She is also proud to represent VFW Post 358 Ladies Auxiliary marching in parades, collecting donations for poppies and assisting in the organization of special events such as the Maurice “Christopher” Morley Salute to Literacy benefit in February 2014. A Heart Fund benefit was also held in February.

“Our biggest fundraiser is for breast cancer awareness that we do in the summer. Baked goods are made and donated by auxiliary members. In addition we have a relief fund -- which is used to help any sister in need. The council, district and national auxiliaries also have fund raisers and provide scholarships and other things at their levels.”

Bryant’s goals for the coming months include planning an event to benefit wounded warriors that would double as an exercise in working together and having fun. We have been discussing possibly a shuffleboard tournament.”

Bryant credits Ladies’ Auxiliary Vice-President Helena Dean, Secretary Lorena Rutkowski, Treasurer Mary Brooks, Chaplain Mary Horton, Guard Sandy Vedder, Conductress/Patriotic Instructor Whitney Orozco and Trustee Karen Shea with making a an often challenging job rewarding.

Post 358’s youngest active Ladies’ Auxiliary member is now 17-year-old high school student Morgan Zegers while its oldest active LA member is 86-year-old Mary Horton, who serves as LA chaplain.

A senior at Ballston Spa High School, Zegers joined in honor of father Arthur, a member of the Army National Guard who served in Iraq, and other veterans – whom she believes “deserve all the support they can get.”

Bryant said the teen “jumped in with both feet on the ground” upon being inducted in September. One of the high school student’s first deeds was to motivate her BSHS soccer team to donate baked goods to an October breast cancer awareness fundraiser sponsored by the VFW Post 358 Ladies’ Auxiliary.

Horton’s membership honors late husband Edward who served in the Navy during World War II before serving for 60 years as East Glensville’s Fire Chief. “I never attend a VFW event without a poppy,” beamed Horton, adding the thing she most loves about being a member of the Ladies’ Auxiliary is the sense of purpose that comes from uniting with other patriotic women in order to help others.

In addition to daughters, widows and wives of veterans, membership in the VFW Ladies’ Auxiliary is open to mothers, foster and stepmothers (who have performed parental duties), grandmothers, granddaughters, foster and stepdaughters (who attained that status prior to age 16) of persons who were or are eligible for membership in the VFW of the United States. Members must be citizens of the United States or United States Nationals and not less than 16 years old.”

Those interested in learning more should call Terri Bryant at 885-6418 or 885-8580.

CAPTION 1

Youngest VFW Post 358 Ladies Auxiliary member, 17-year-old BSHS senior Morgan Zegers with oldest active VFW Post 358 Ladies Auxiliary member and chaplain, 86-year-old Mary Horton in October 2014. PHOTO BY JOHN KNIFFEN.

CAPTION 2

Oldest active VFW Post 358 Ladies Auxiliary member and chaplain Mary Horton, 86, stands beside youngest LA member Morgan Zegers, 17, as LA President Terri Bryant, Vice-President Helena Dean and Treasurer Mary Brooks look on. PHOTO BY JOHN KNIFFEN.

CAPTION 3

VFW Post 358 Ladies' Auxiliary President Terri Bryant flanked by patriotic sisters Teresa Campese, Sandy Vedder and Mary Brooks. PHOTO BY ANN HAUPRICH.

CAPTION 4

VFW Post 358 Ladies' Auxiliary President Terri Bryant with Past Commander Earl "Doc" Manning and Men's Auxiliary President Lloyd Helman at a 2014 Post fundraiser. PHOTO BY ANTONIO BUCCA.