

# New Alton VFW commander bringing updates to the post this summer

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer  
April 13 2017 1:00 PM



**ALTON** - Tom Wilson will take command of Alton VFW Post #1308 on June 18, 2017, but he is working ahead of schedule so he can implement what he believes to be much needed changes to the post.

"I saw a female vet post on Facebook," he said. "She said every VFW post in the entire country was the same. She said if you walk into the door, you see the same thing. You can either shoot pool or throw darts. We need new areas for the younger vets. We need a lounge space and a computer area, so younger vets have a place to relax. This upcoming generation doesn't like drinking as much as the older vets did, so we're looking into getting a computer room."

Besides the complaints of limited things to do, Wilson said the social media post continued to state the VFWs around the country are either smoke-filled or show evidence of being previously filled with smoke. He said that appearance makes the posts look dingy or run-down. Wilson agreed with the poster's assessment.

"She hit the nail right on the head, unfortunately," Wilson said. "Besides a few of them having shuffleboard, most VFWs just have darts or pool. We need our younger people to take it over and get it going again."

Wilson said he would love to see the post used by young veterans to do homework or relax. He said he wanted to ensure the future of the VFW through young veterans and more publicity brought to the VFW's events.

One such event is coming May 20, 2017, at the post, located at 4445 N. Alby St. During that event, as many as 25 vendors are invited to sell their wares alongside desserts and lunches provided by the VFW and its Auxillary Unit. Wilson said he would be in the bar area of the post during that event, accepting membership applications and answering questions potential members have. Following that event, the Pat Hope Tribute singers will perform from 7-9 p.m.

That fundraiser may bring as much as \$600 to the post. Wilson said he would utilize that money to start purchasing computers.

More vendors are needed for that event as well. Cost of a table is \$20, and more information can be attained from volunteer Pat Brown at (618) 216-3620.

Another event hosted at the VFW is the CID Program, which invites children with chronic illnesses or disabilities to have a chance to partake in the VFW's official meeting process. During its May 15, 2017, 7 p.m. meeting, Wilson said children with chronic conditions are invited to the post to participate.

"We want to let them know they are not alone, and a lot of people care about them," Wilson said.

Children suffering from cancer or diagnosed with autism or other chronic conditions are welcomed and will receive a certificate, medallion and honorary membership to the VFW. During the meeting, which parents and children are welcome to attend, each child will be paired with an officer and then allowed to conduct the meeting themselves.

The VFW also sells poppies at intersections. Sales from those poppies are required by law to be given to disabled veterans and their families - a requirement with which the VFW is more than happy to comply.

Poppy sales will occur on April 21 at Alby and Humbert, May 19 on College and Washington and May 27 at Broadway and State.

Other projects Wilson is undertaking are the revitalization and constant use of a parchment of land the post owns in Brighton with an enclosed bar and pond, stocked with various sorts of local sporting fish, and the revival of the VFW's golf tournament.

On Sept. 2, 2017, the VFW will bring its golf tournament back to life at Club Relief in Fosterburg. Wilson said individual golfers will pay between \$30-35 per person. No team play is allowed, but golfers may share carts.

"I don't know why we stopped doing it," Wilson said. "It was a money maker for us then, and I'd bet it would be a money maker for us now."