

Rallying Point for Relief

VFW Post became beacon of hope following fire

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On the night of Jan. 21, 2025, tragedy struck the Village of Ovid, New York. A devastating fire consumed a significant portion of the town's Main Street, reducing to ashes the only grocery store, a beloved diner, a laundromat, an Italian restaurant, and the Seneca County STEPS office.

Apartments also were destroyed, displacing 16 residents and leaving nearly 50 individuals unemployed.

In the wake of this fire, the small but resilient community of Ovid faced an urgent crisis. At the heart of the relief efforts was the Ovid Veterans of Foreign Wars Arthur G. Depew Memorial Post 6200.

In the immediate aftermath of the fire, VFW Post 6200 quickly transformed into the central hub for relief efforts. Recognizing the urgent needs of those affected, the Post organized a collection of donated goods, including clothing, furniture, household essentials, and toys.

Soon, the VFW was overflowing with donated items. As the need for essentials among the fire victims was met, the Post organized a bag sale, which not only helped redistribute excess donations but also raised more than \$2,500 for the Ovid Fire Relief Fund, a charitable initiative started by the Ovid Federated Church.

Understanding the long-term financial strain on displaced residents and business owners, VFW took fundraising to the next level. Through a well-coordinated benefit event, they raised more than \$20,000 for the Ovid Fire Relief Fund.

Beyond monetary and material aid, the fire created a new challenge for the town: The loss of three essential dining establishments. With nowhere for locals to gather for a meal, the VFW stepped up in an unexpected but crucial way.

The Post opened its own kitchen under the banner of the Depew Chow Hall, offering breakfast and lunch services Monday through Friday. The Depew Chow Hall employed three

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people who were unemployed by the fire. This initiative not only provided affordable meals but also reinstated a sense of normalcy and camaraderie for residents who had lost their familiar gathering places.

As Ovid continues its journey toward rebuilding, the contributions of VFW Post 6200 will be remembered as a testament to the power of community and the unwavering commitment of those who serve—not just in the armed forces, but in the heart of their hometown.

This article was written and submitted by VFW Post 6200 Quartermaster Kenny Fellers. It was edited for length.

This article is featured in the 2025 April issue of Checkpoint. If you're a VFW member and don't currently receive the VFW Checkpoint, please contact VFW magazine at magazine@vfw.org.