

'We Just Keep Getting Better and Better'

San Antonio's VFW Post 76 is a place where members feel like one big family

Nov 18, 2024

Located along the famous San Antonio River Walk is VFW Post 76. The oldest and largest VFW Post in the state of Texas, Post 76 is a welcome haven for visitors exploring the scenic path along the river. That is why it was chosen as this month's Destination Post.

With Corinthian columns, a wraparound porch and a second-floor veranda, the Victorian home was built in 1895. Known as the Petty House, it was designated an historic landmark by the city of San Antonio in 2008, and later by the state of Texas in 2017.

While the Post was chartered in 1917, it has been at its current location at 10 Tenth Street since 1947. An outdoor stage, dance floor, picnic tables and a cigar deck beckon guests exploring the neighborhood and serve as friendly gathering spaces for members and their families.

For all its beauty and history, VFW Post 76 is so much more, according to Post Commander Mike Toreno.

"We are more than just a bar," said Toreno, who also serves as the Post service officer. "Our Post offers a lot of support to the community."

In August, for instance, the Post and its Auxiliary hosted its backpack giveaway for students. In addition to backpacks with school supplies, free haircuts were provided just in time for back to school.

In September, the Post had its inaugural 10th Street Lobstah Palooza Riverwalk Festival. The Caribbean Lobster Guy prepared lobster entrees, a DJ got festivalgoers moving and live music kicked off at 8 p.m. Proceeds from the event support the Post's veterans programs and building rehab projects.

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

406 W. 34th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111
Office 816.756.3390
Fax 816.968.1157

WASHINGTON OFFICE

200 Maryland Ave., N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002
Office 202.543.2239
Fax 202.543.6719

info@vfw.org
www.vfw.org

Post and Auxiliary members also host commemorative events open to the community. One such event was the 71st anniversary of the signing of the Korean War Armistice in July. Earlier in the summer, Flag Day was accordingly commemorated.

In May, San Antonio Mayor Ron Nirenberg served as the guest speaker at the Post's Memorial Day service. To commemorate Memorial Day, Post and Auxiliary members placed flags in section 40 of the Ft. Sam Houston National Cemetery.

Toreno said that the Post and Auxiliary members have a strong relationship and support each other.

"Our Post has the outstanding support of the Auxiliary," he said. "They are always there when we need them."

Auxiliary President Patty Ornelaz added that she really likes the way they help the youth in the community.

"Our backpack giveaway was such a success," she said. "We had pizza, and the kids really had a blast. It made me so happy to see that I helped."

Post 76 Adjutant Marcello Carrillo noted a recent event where the Post was able to help a vet during a dark period. The vet had traveled to San Antonio from out of town for a job interview.

Carrillo said nothing was going right for this veteran and he was experiencing hard times. He and Toreno were able to get him connected with some much-needed help.

"There is a lot of camaraderie here," Carrillo said. "We are a close-knit community, always looking out for each other. And we just keep getting better and better each year."

MAINTAINING HISTORY IS 'EXPENSIVE'

Steve Trevino, building committee chair, said the Post is working with an architectural firm to maintain the historic integrity of the home.



Some of the many projects to be done, according to Trevino, are repairing the masonry around the chimneys, fixing the wood framing rot, roof, upgrades and repairing the columns wood surfaces.

This summer, soffit repair work was completed. Trevino, who works with the San Antonio Preservation Office, said he is especially proud of the soffit work and points it out to visitors.

At one time, the Petty House had 17 rooms, five fireplaces and two kitchens, according to

Trevino. “These are very expensive projects,” Trevino said. “We continue to apply for county and federal grants to help this. It is important for us to keep the historic significance of this home alive.”

The stone basement, which is not open to the public, has an empty in-ground swimming pool. One room leads to what appears to be collapsed tunnels believed to be left from the Prohibition Era.

The basement is an area of the house that is shrouded in mystery, as Post members will admit to being “uneasy” if alone in the area — some have never stepped foot in the basement.

Some believe that Post 76 is haunted by two spirits who keep things interesting. A little girl has been seen running up and down the staircase, while an older man likes to rearrange the furniture, which causes quite a ruckus.

Blanca Reyes, the Post’s bar manager, recalls a time when a documentary film crew was using the Post before it was open for business for the day. More than once, a crew member asked Reyes to keep people quiet as they could hear furniture being drug across the floor.

Reyes said there was no one in the building but her. She checked to be sure, but she was the only one there other than the crew.

“It doesn’t bother me anymore,” Reyes said. “They just like it here.”

Ghost hunters have been to the Post and picked up on what they believe to be spirits in the home.

Whether you believe in ghosts or not, one thing is certain: The American spirit is alive and well at VFW Post 76. Stop in and prepare to be treated like family.

This Destination Post series in honor of the VFW’s 125th Anniversary is featured in the 2024 November/December issue of [VFW magazine](#), and was written by [Janie Dyhouse](#), senior editor for VFW magazine.