

2026 Board President Report

Susan Schnall

Good Morning!

This is an extraordinary time in the United States, in the world-when we witness genocide committed against a people by a people who suffered a holocaust 80 years ago and cried never again—never again for them? For humanity? For all living things? When will we ever learn? And we find ourselves, those of us from the Viet Nam era, demonstrating once again in the streets against corporate power, against the elites that are destroying the world, against a president that seeks to destroy, to eliminate those who disagree with him, this bone spurs man who called us suckers and losers. So, let me begin by saying how fortunate it is to be in your company, you who recognize the evils in this country and work to makes this a better world for all of us.

This is my sixth year on the VFP Board of Directors, and my fifth year as President of the Board. We have come through tumultuous times together— in this country and on the national board. Thank you all for trusting me, the executive committee, and the board to bring us through a time that we began with decreasing finances and dwindling membership that was exacerbated by personal and political divisions and a toxic political climate.

We have thirteen members on the VFP Board of Directors. Each and every one of them is active in their local community, with other peace and justice organizations in addition to national board responsibilities. And, every one of them is here for the national convention and attended an emergency meeting last Saturday to hear, discuss and come to consensus on a very difficult matter. They all are involved in local work; some have full time jobs, children at home, major family responsibilities—all are volunteers dedicated to Veterans For Peace.

EACH BOARD MEMBER TO INTRODUCE THEMSELVES

Let me take you on a quick review of these past several years: In 2022 we began with close to no funds—having depleted the national savings account of \$100,000 in one year, were forced to cut staff hours in half we had open disputes and anger among members of the national board, yelling and interruptions at board meetings that were held quarterly by zoom on a webinar format. Over the next couple of years we rotated from an executive director to no executive director to an interim director who helped bring back some fiscal solvency and good relations among members, and resigned and moved to position as Director of Special Projects. The Executive Committee began meeting every couple of weeks keeping the national organization functional.

In 2021 I ran for the national board with two others: Paul Cox and Ken Mayers—both of whom have made incredible contributions to Veterans For Peace. Ken, in

his always diplomatic, lovely , knowledgeable manner helped us analyze past budgetary issues and always, in every possible moment reminded us of the need to leave a legacy donation to VFP—a bequest so that we could remain viable. These past couple of years we have increased our income by hundreds of thousands of dollars through those bequests and a very dedicated treasurer- Mike Tork whose report you will hear this morning. Thank you, Ken.

In 2022 the VFP Board through the By Laws Committee wrote a proposed change to the By Laws to honor and respect the partnership veteran members have with associate members by establishing an associate member seat on the National Board of Directors and expanding full voting rights to include bylaws, board elections, and resolutions.

Paul's dedication to leading annual VFP delegations to Vietnam have raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the victims of Agent orange/dioxin and unexploded ordnance. He and I are members of the Vietnam Agent Orange Relief and Responsibility Campaign started by David Cline and Merle Ratner. Over the years we have written and rewritten legislation introduced to the House of Representatives that would care for the victims of Agent Orange/dioxin—in Vietnam and in the United States. This past year the campaign was left money by a veteran: Jim enlisted in the Army in 1962, stationed in Vietnam. Proudly serving for almost 5 years, he transitioned out of the Army and decided to stay in Vietnam for awhile. Living and working there as civilian, he saw first hand the devastation the war and Agent Orange caused. Jim took a trip to Vietnam in 2022, visiting Saigon and the surrounding area. He was very impressed with how the city had developed into a modern, progressive, beautiful city from the last time he was

there. He mentioned at the time that most of the people in Vietnam are young enough now to have no remembrance of the horrible past. Jim was very happy to see all the achievements the city had accomplished, letting the past stay buried. While there, Jim visited the War Remnants Museum, which shows the horrible results of war through photos, video and artifacts.

And, Paul takes amazing minutes that help us detail how we have come through those most difficult years.

The result of the US use of Agent Orange in southeast Asia has left generations to deal with the effects. Not only in Vietnam, but here in the US as well. Because of this, Jim felt compelled to donate to The Vietnam Agent Orange Relief & Responsibility Campaign to help those who still suffer.

Today we are delighted to welcome a delegation from the Vietnam Association for the Victims of Agent Orange/dioxin to our national convention.

Did you know that we have an Agent Orange Science group that has presented at national and international conferences studies on the damaging health impacts of this chemical on humans and the environment—and a new study from this science group "Dioxin from Agent Orange in Vietnam: Exposure patterns and associations with birth outcomes" is in the publishing phase.

We've struggled to maintain the Golden Rule as a national project when only a couple of years ago board members attempted to remove it. It continues to represent VFP in the anti nuclear community and is a very visible symbol for our

stance on anti nuclear proliferation and support for the TPNW. Thank you to Helen, Michelle and Gerry for keeping this project so viable and visible.

What began in 1958 as a direct act of anti-nuclear resistance now sails again as a living, moving embodiment of VFP's values.

Josh Shurley and I have worked together the longest on the Executive Committee. You will hear about some of his work in VFP this morning as chair of the following committees: Membership, Resolutions, By Laws, Awards. Josh also works on Communications and Mobilization—plus he is very active in his local community, works full time and is an amazing father.

Michael McPhearson as the VFP executive director is the calm, reasonable voice, intersecting with local chapters, projects, national coalitions. He will also give a report this afternoon.

The ExComm meets weekly to review finances, progress on hiring for identified staff positions, follow-up on national and local issues, Zinn Fund requests, VFP statements-usually drafted by Gerry Condon, requests from members, makes recommendations on national priorities.

Peace & Planet News is a powerful anti-war, anti-genocide, anti-fascist and pro-peace publication produced in a way that everyday people can understand and

appreciate. Some of the best independent journalists as well as many veteran writers present the case for peace, justice and the planet in down to earth language. This is a Veterans For Peace publication and the articles and stories in it are by some of the best journalists in the world. To our VFP members, I encourage you to get a copy, go through the pages, read it, and I believe you will understand why this is such an important newspaper to keep with you and hand out wherever you go. Please help distribute widely.

The Rising Together Theater Company uses the transformative power of theater as a catalyst for education, civil discourse, and civic engagement. They link the issues of supremacy, equity, militarism, and sustainability across generations and identities and focus on underserved communities. They are a unique talkback theater company engaging diverse audiences in conversations about war and violence, community and communication, and human rights and ecosocial justice. Through free performances of thought-provoking short plays and moderated talkbacks, they engage diverse audiences in meaningful conversations centered on social justice, environmental awareness, and community building.

Veterans For Peace Billboard Campaign on illegal, unlawful orders has been one of our most successful projects. Billboards have been put up:

The [Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center \(MCAGCC\) Twentynine Palms](#), located in the Mojave Desert of San Bernardino County, California, is the largest U.S. Marine Corps base, covering over 1,100 square miles. It acts as the Marine Corps' premier training facility, specializing in large-scale, live-fire, combined-arms training for Marine Air Ground Task Forces.

Fort Campbell is a major United States Army installation located on the Kentucky–Tennessee border between Hopkinsville, KY and Clarksville, TN. It is home to the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, and the 5th Special Forces Group. Spanning 106,700 acres, it acts as a premier power projection platform.

Wright-Patterson Air Force Base (WPAFB) is a premier, 8,000+ acre USAF installation located near Dayton, Ohio, serving as a critical hub for research, logistics, and acquisition. Operated by the 88th Air Base Wing under [Air Force Materiel Command](#), it employs over 38,000 personnel and houses the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force, making it a key player in air power technology and history.

[Fort Drum](#) is a U.S. Army installation in northern New York State located in the northeastern corner of Jefferson County and the northwestern corner of Lewis County; St. Lawrence County borders Fort Drum to the north. [Fort Drum](#) is approximately 30 miles from Canada, 6 miles east of Interstate 81, and 10 miles northeast of the City of Watertown which is the largest U.S. city within a 50 mile radius.

Eglin Air Force Base, located in the Florida Panhandle near Valparaiso, is one of the largest U.S. Air Force installations in the world, covering over 724 square miles. As the home of the [96th Test Wing](#), Eglin leads in testing and evaluating air-delivered weapons, navigation systems, and Special Operations Command

Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City is primarily known as a major hub for aircraft maintenance, repair, and overhaul (depot maintenance) for the U.S. Air Force, Navy, and allies. As the home of the [Oklahoma City Air Logistics Complex](#), it manages crucial weapon systems like the B-52 bomber and E-3 AWACS.

Vance Air Force Base, located in Enid, Oklahoma, is primarily known as a premier Specialized Undergraduate Pilot Training (SUPT) installation for the U.S. Air Force. Home to the 71st Flying Training Wing, it trains over 300 U.S. Air Force and international student pilots annually using the T-1A Jayhawk, T-6A Texan II, and T-38C Talon aircraft.

Travis Air Force Base is home to more than 7,000 active duty personnel and civilians. Major units stationed at Travis Air Force Base include the 60th Air

Mobility Wing, the 60th Medical Group and the 349th Air Mobility Wing. Other units include the 91st Division and the U.S. Army's 3rd Brigade.

To name just a few locations with VFP billboards

And, despite all of our positive work, we are in this most destructive time, with our country governed by monsters collaborating with monsters committing genocide on a people and country thousands of miles from our shores—those military industrialists who have control through their greed and power. For some people, the easiest path through life is to turn away, simply move through their lives, abrogating responsibility—but not Veterans For Peace. Thank you all for your passion and belief that we can make changes, that we must work to stop this genocide on Gaza, that we must work to stop the kidnappings by ICE in our communities, that we can save veterans health care services and health care for those in need, that we must save our educational institutions.....

It is a pleasure to witness the growth of VFP members in the organization and your extraordinary activism on behalf of peace, justice, democracy. At the national level we continue our work to assist in the formation of national projects and chapters, assist local work as needed, send out communications via enews about local, national, and international activism, respond to local concerns, and assist in resolving issues as they come along. This past year the national board has continued to accept additional responsibilities and moved along board committees including Communications and Mobilization with Gerry Condon as chair and Transformative Justice with Kelly Wadsworth, reforming issues and priorities throughout this past year.

Monthly VFP Board meetings are open, public gatherings by zoom—an opportunity for members to make announcements of upcoming events, talk with and connect with VFP members in different chapters and projects, share ideas, ask questions and share in our post board discussions. You are all invited!

Come and hear about the findings of the Venezuela Delegation in late February, help us organize a tribute to Aaron Bushnell on February 25th, hear about the VFP trip to China in October, and the Peace Speaking Delegation to Japan and Okinawa, and the VFP Climate demonstrations at Military Air Shows. And learn about Transformative Justice work that moves us towards a restorative justice philosophy. the monthly meetings are open and we welcome your attendance, ideas, concerns. The meetings are on zoom-regular meeting format so all participants are seen if they wish. They are the third Saturday of the month at 12:40pm ET. The zoom link is posted on the VFP website and in the Enews. Thank you all for the work you do to save the planet and all living things.

And, if you've gotten inspired by this Business Meeting, please contact Ellen Barfield and run for election to the board! There are four board of director positions open this election cycle. You have until seven days following the close of the annual Business Meeting to submit an application to run for the board.

Yours in peace,

Susan

