

'WE ARE ALL ABOUT CAMARADERIE'

A visit to Cocoa Beach is a refreshing mix of laid back beach vibes, but with plenty to see and do — if you are inclined. The oceanfront destination is known as the surfing capital of the East Coast and is home to the East Coast Surfing Hall of Fame.

The world-famous Westgate Cocoa Beach Pier extends 800 feet over the Atlantic Ocean and is the perfect place to relax while taking in ocean views.

Amid it all and just a stone's throw from the Atlantic Ocean is VFW Post 10148. While the Post is not open to the public, except for certain town events, it is a popular location for VFW members in town on vacation or those considered "snowbirds" during the winter months.

The Post has an outdoor covered deck on the side. In front of the Post facing the street is a veterans memorial. A bench dedicated to Marine Gunnery Sgt. Elia P. Fontecchio, is the focal point of the memorial. His father, Dennis, is a trustee at Post 10148.

Fontecchio was killed on Aug. 4, 2004, in Anbar province, Iraq, while serving with the 3rd Bn., 7th Marine Regt., 1st Marine Div., I Marine Expeditionary Force. He is buried at Florida Memorial Gardens in Rockledge.

Aside from the Post's ideal location, it is a hub of activity, especially on weekends. Friday nights are steak nights, and Saturdays are set aside for the karaoke enthusiasts.

On Jan. 10, the Post was scheduled to host its fourth annual golf tournament. Proceeds from this year's scramble benefit Space Coast Honor Flights.

The Space Coast Little League and JROTC are two other groups benefiting from the Post's generosity.

One of the little league baseball teams, whose season ended on Dec. 1, was sponsored by Post 10148.

Cocoa Beach High School JROTC works closely with the Post. For the 2025 VFW Day of Service, Post members partnered with the students for a beach clean-up, followed by a hot dog roast.

In May, the Post presented the JROTC Award to Cadet Shelby Kennerly at the Cocoa Beach High School Performing Arts Center.

Post Chaplain Greg Hemphill said high schoolers know they can come to the Post and earn service hours toward graduation.



Members of VFW Post 10148 gathered outside the Post in downtown Cocoa Beach, Fla., in November. Standing, from left, are David Duncan, Post Chaplain Greg Hemphill, Post Senior Vice Commander Troy Ensminger, Tim Sweeney, Gary Granger and Greg Harmuth. Seated is Post Commander Dean Novotny and Post Quartermaster Michael Forson. While members say they enjoy the great location in downtown Cocoa Beach, it is the service to community they most appreciate.

"We may have them in the kitchen or clearing tables," Hemphill said. "Whatever they are needing, we will find something for them to do to get those hours."

As much as the Post does in the Cocoa Beach community, members were still shocked to learn they had been chosen to receive the 2025 Outstanding National Community Service Award for the Southern Conference.

Post Commander Dean Novotny accepted the award on behalf of his Post at the 126th VFW National Convention in Columbus, Ohio, in August.

"We did not expect this award," Novotny said. "Our Post is really just a fun place to hang out. We are all about camaraderie. If someone needs to talk, we will listen. If someone needs help, we are here."