

The Veterans Council's Summary of 2019 Activities

This past year has been an active one for the Veterans Council of St. Johns County, Inc., as it continues its Mission "To Help and Assist All Veterans".



The Council's help and assistance in 2019 has taken many forms.

Honoring and Remembering Veterans



The Council's annual **Memorial Day Ceremony**, a day on which those who died in active military service are remembered, was commemorated at the historic, serene, St. Augustine National Cemetery in a solemn ceremony attended by over 300 spectators.

Prior to the Council's Veterans Day Program, Chairman Bill Dudley and Vice Chairman Ray Quinn were presented with a **Veterans Day Proclamation** from the St. Johns County Board of Commissioners.

Veterans Day in St. Augustine is the Veterans Council's signature event and attended by over 1000 people. The doors of Anastasia Baptist Church were opened at 9:00 am to allow the public to view over 50 display tables showcasing local non-profits and veterans organizations.



Returning was the **Traveling Vietnam Wall** and for the first time the **Wall on Terror**



Wall. The Veterans Day ceremony commemorated the **75th Anniversary of the D Day Invasion** with 3 WW II veterans in attendance and recognized from the podium. The Council recognized, with a formal march in, **JROTC** units from five county High Schools and in its continuing support program had

the **St. Augustine/Palm Coast Sea Cadet Battalion** present the colors. Returning for the 3rd year was the **St. Johns Center for the Arts Chamber Singers** led by Director Jeff Dodd.

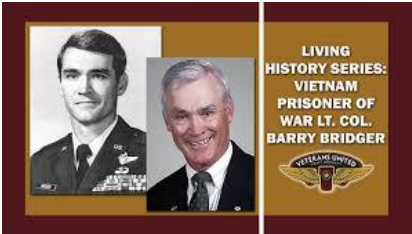


Wreaths Across America, a National Ceremony, was successful again this year as every headstone in the St. Augustine National Cemetery was covered with a holiday wreath.



Helping and Informing Veterans

The Council invites speakers to its monthly meetings that are both educational and informative. In 2019 we had speakers from the **VA, Zaharias Women's Veteran Network, Vets4Vets, Military Museum of N. FL., Community Hospice, Military Order of the Purple Heart, and the St. Johns County Property Appraiser speaking about Veterans Tax Exemptions. Additionally, Capt. Bob Buehn, USN ret. spoke about his years commanding Guantanamo Bay Base in Cuba and LTC Barry Bridger spoke about his time as a POW in Vietnam.**



As part of the Council's continuing Education program, **Council Chairman Dudley & members attended an the Agent Orange Town Hall at the Univ. of N. FL.** The Council continued donating its 5 local veterans history series to Museums and veteran's groups in FL.

Every September, the Council organizes and staffs the **Homeless Veterans Stand Down** at the Elks Lodge 829.

Provided to all homeless are food, haircuts, showers, counseling, dental, clothes, boots and VA assistance.

Now in its third year, the Council continues to support financially and with mentors the very successful **Veterans**

Treatment Court with more and more veterans graduating each year.



DAV 6, with the financial support of the Veterans Council has a new **DAV van** now in service to take veterans daily from St. Augustine to the Gainesville VA at no charge.

Chairman Dudley and Vice Chairman Quinn presented the new **Fire Station 5** with a

MIA/POW flag as well as an

American flag to proudly fly over the new Fire Station.

The SJC Veterans Council is an original member of **Fire Watch**. This is a new program that will soon be set up in

five Northeast Florida counties to combat the rising tide

of military veteran suicides with one-on-one counseling, emphasizing the local touch.



Supporting Special Veterans Events

FL Governor DeSantis, Congressmen Rutherford and Waltz broke ground on new St. Augustine VA Clinic. Existing services will remain to include primary care, mental health, phlebotomy, podiatry, physical therapy and virtual care.



Chairman Dudley, working with the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners assisted in having **reserved parking spots designated “Veterans Only”** at the

county VSO building. More signs and locations are being considered.

The Veterans Council continues its support of the Clyde Lassen State Veterans Nursing Home, the National Cemeteries in St. Augustine and Jacksonville as well as the County JROTCs.

Plans are already under way to continue and expand the Council’s supporting and assisting veterans in 2020 and your help and support is always welcome.

To assist in our many programs please contact Veterans Council Chairman William Dudley: anuday00@aol.com



The Veterans Council’s website is available at:

www.veteranscouncilsjc.org

On **Facebook: LIKE** – *Veterans Council of St. Johns County, Inc.* to find up to date daily veteran’s articles, VA Updates, Upcoming events and Meeting information

To subscribe and receive the highly acclaimed Veterans Council monthly newsletter, **The Patriot Reader**, please contact Editor Michael Rothfeld, rothfeldm@gmail.com now in its 10th year of providing veterans with information they can use.

Past issues of the Patriot Reader can be viewed at:

<http://www.veteranscouncilsjc.org/newsletter.htm>