



The Patriot Reader Newsletter

P.O. Box 2117

St. Augustine, FL 32085

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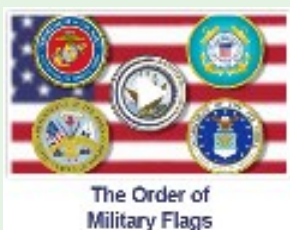
Volume 12, Issue 8

From Veterans Council Chairman Bill Dudley

August 2023

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Fellow Veterans,
Our Council was recently informed that a Florida State grant has been approved that will enable our council to begin the long sought after transitional housing for our homeless veterans. The Veterans Council has teamed with Home Again St. Johns to pursue this housing endeavor. I was elected to the Board of Directors of Home Again earlier this year to represent the veterans element of their mission. The entire project will be under project management of the BOD building committee of Home Again St. Johns.

Land has been acquired and a sign has been placed on the site on SR16 where the construction of the new facility will be built. Gulfstream Design

Group has been selected as the Design and Construction contractor. There are three additional properties adjoining the recent acquired property that is being negotiated for purchase. If all goes well, we should be housing veterans in the new facility by



mid-year 2024. Renderings of the new units are included in this month's newsletter.

In addition to the above developments, St. Johns Housing Partnership and Morning Star Capital on Tuesday of this week had their grand opening for Patriot Place on Master



Dr. This complex will house 6 veteran families and should be ready for



occupancy by mid-August.

The development of these properties will be of major importance in our County in helping to provide housing for our homeless veterans. The Veterans Council will continue to work with the County, State, and land developers to assist in providing housing for our veterans in need.

Bill Dudley
Chairman
Veterans Council of St. Johns County, Inc.

The Veterans Council of St. Johns County meets on the last Thursday of the month, all are invited to attend. We meet at the County Health & Human Services Building, 200 San Sebastian View, at 7 pm in the Muscovy room.



Upcoming Speakers

July 27

**Roseann Vernon, Atlantic Coast Young Marines and
Erich Saks, Operation Lifeline**

August 31

Lynn Geiser, Hope 4 Veterans

September 28

**Maj. Zach Malamud, "Marine For Life Network" and
Mike O'Brien, Director of Development, 5 Star Veterans Center**

October 26

Carl Cricco, CEO K9s For Warriors



2023 Annual Report

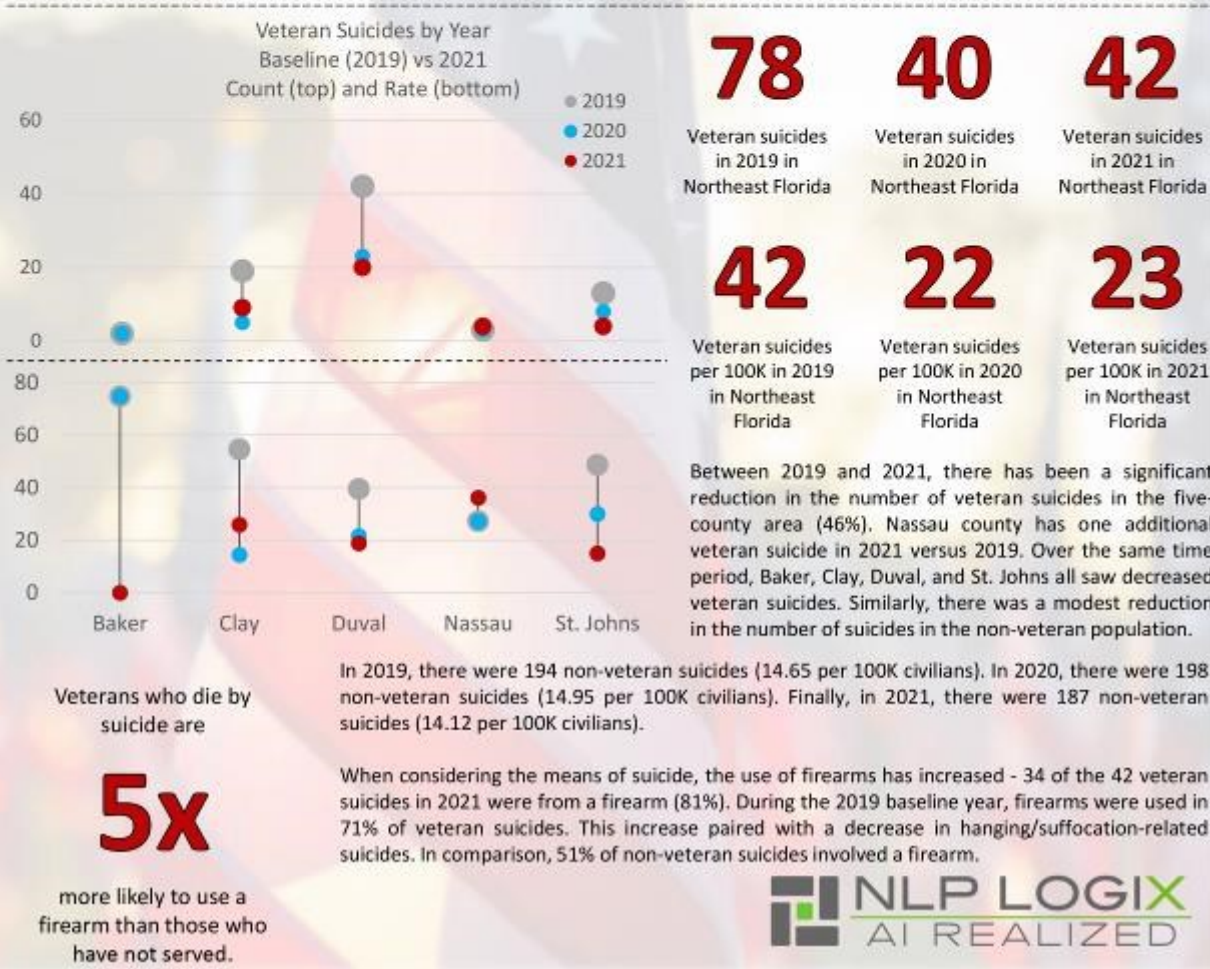
Veteran Suicide in Northeast Florida

Overall Summary

As a part of its mission to end veteran suicide, The Fire Watch created the Watch Stander program, equipping community members with the skills they need to identify veterans in crisis and point them toward resources. The Fire Watch is also working hard to ensure that data is tracked, by gathering data from the American Community Survey and the Florida Department of Health and performing independent analyses, including this report on the original five county region of Northeast Florida (Baker, Clay, Duval, Nassau, and St. Johns Counties), with data partner NLP Logix. Tracking data is beneficial to The Fire Watch in two ways:

- Identifying emerging trends within veteran suicide data to create tailored approaches to pre-emptively combat areas of concern.
- Ensuring that the efforts put forward by The Fire Watch are a part of “turning the curve” and decreasing veteran suicides.

Data provided is based on the most recent release of Department of Health death counts for veterans whose census tract is known. The rate of suicide is calculated based on the total population and the percent of veterans published by the US Census Bureau. The rate of suicide among veterans has decreased significantly in the five-county area from the baseline year of 2019. Results were generally consistent across counties, with raw counts of veteran suicide in 4 of the 5 counties either remaining the same or decreasing. Trends that should be monitored were seen in suicides among minority veterans.





2023 Annual Report

Veteran Suicide in Northeast Florida

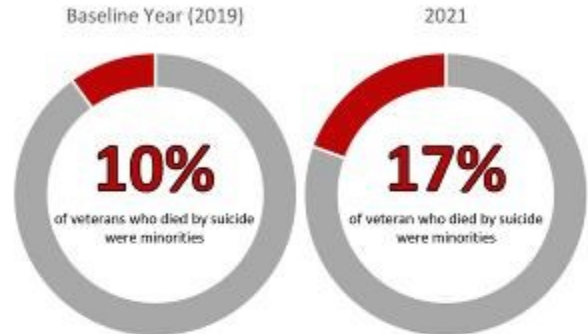
Veteran Suicide Demographics

When considering the demographics of veterans who die by suicide, there are variations in the 2021 data. The proportion of minority suicides in the veteran community has ranged around 10% for the last ten years. This year, this proportion increased to 17%. This increase shifts the balance for 2021 to a disproportionate ratio of minority deaths. This is a trend that should be monitored to see if this continues in future years.

The rate of suicide by gender has remained constant.

The rate of suicide by age group fluctuated from the baseline year, but these fluctuations are not beyond what is expected based on prior years.

Veteran Suicides for Non-minorities and Minorities



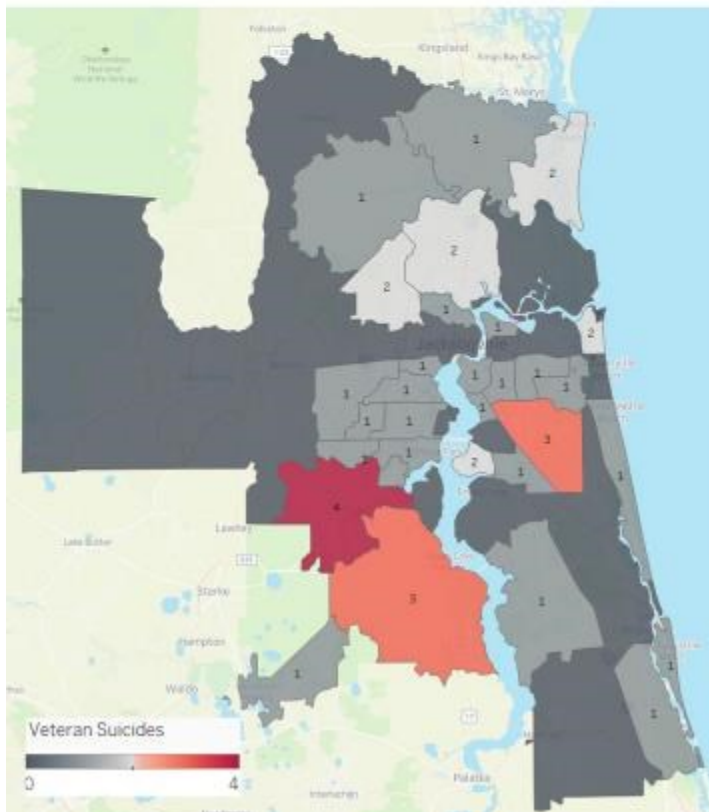
Geographic Breakdown

Over the last 10 years, at least one veteran suicide has occurred in each of the ZIP codes in the five-county area. However, in 2021 there were no veteran suicides in 27 of the 59 ZIP codes in the five-county area. The ZIP Codes with the most veteran suicides in 2021 were 32068, 32043, and 32256.

32068 (4 suicides in 2021) is a largely populated ZIP code with a higher-than-average veteran population percent (16%). This zip code had one more suicide than it did in the baseline year.

32043 (3 suicides in 2021) is a largely populated ZIP Code in Clay County centered around Green Cove Springs that also has a higher-than-average veteran percentage (16%)

32256 is a heavily populated ZIP code with a lower population of veterans on Jacksonville's Southside.



Community Volunteers Come Together on Patriot Place Landscaping Project

ST. AUGUSTINE - Volunteers are landscaping Patriot Place, a project of Flagler Health+ and St. Johns Housing Partnership (SJHP) that will benefit homeless veterans in our community.



Volunteers and donors from St. Augustine Boy Scout Troop #234, the UF/IFAS Extension St. Johns County Master Gardener Program, the Northeast Florida Association of Realtors (NEFAR) Charitable Foundation, and Care Connect+ gathered on 79 Masters Dr. in St. Augustine the past two Saturdays.

Troop #234's Michael Korfhage took on the landscaping as an Eagle Scout project.

The Florida Master Gardener Volunteer Program is a citizen-driven program that benefits UF/IFAS Extension and the residents of Florida. The program relies on dedicated volunteers who have an interest in gardening and in giving back to their communities.



“The Master Gardener program spearheaded and supervised the planting. Their expertise in design and knowledge has been invaluable to creating a Florida Friendly landscape,” noted SJHP Executive Director Bill

Lazar.

The NEFAR Charitable Foundation donated funds to buy plants and shrubbery as well as interior paint. The foundation is a 501C3 corporation which was established to raise funds and assets to assist members of the public and member Realtors® in times of need.



Parents from Troop #234 also pitched in to help. As did volunteers from Care Connect+, established by Flagler Health+ to link area residents in need with available services and address social determinants of health in a coordinated way throughout Northeast Florida. By aligning community resources into a single access point, Care Connect+ increases coordination and access of available resources.

When it opens this summer, Patriot Place will be a six-unit complex for at-risk veterans who already live in St. Johns County. Each of the one-bedroom apartments will be 630-square feet.

Patriot Place will be certified “Florida Green” by the Florida Green Building Coalition (FGBC). Founded in 2000, FGBC is the state’s leading certifier of green projects.

There is still work to be done. You can help make Patriot Place special for at-risk and homeless Veterans. Contact the St. Johns Housing Partnership at info@sjhp.org or donate below.



Children of Fallen Patriots Foundation provides college scholarships and educational counseling to military children, from all branches, who lost a parent in the line of duty.

We cover all college-related costs and there is a big need for our services as the VA does not cover the full cost of college. There is a \$25,000 average gap to cover one student for four years and we need your help.



Scan here to support the children of those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

To mail a contribution, please send checks to:

Children of Fallen Patriots Foundation
ATTN: Courtney Nyren
1818 Library Street, Suite 500
Reston, VA 20190

FALLENPATRIOTS.ORG

Thank you for your support of our mission. CFC #69859



CFP is among top <1% of charities to receive a 100% rating in 2022

**VETERANS COUNCIL OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY
MINUTES OF GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

JUNE 29, 2023



CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Dudley

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS: Chairman Dudley

PLEDGE: Chairman Dudley

INVOCATION: Ray Quinn

INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKERS/GUESTS: Chairman Dudley

There was a large attendance and the new attendees introduced themselves.

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING: Minutes of last meeting conducted May 25, 2023, were presented by Chairman Dudley. Copies of the Minutes and Agenda are available on the sign-in table and were sent to members electronically by the Secretary. The minutes were approved by voice vote with no changes.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Treasurer John Mountcastle provided a detailed report that as of May 24, 2023, there was a balance of \$159,981.10 and as of date of meeting, the total liquid balance is down to \$156,374.44. This includes the Fidelity Money Market of \$146,778.55, yielding around 4.7%. Treasurer Mountcastle went over the amounts spent this past month on various actions to assist our Veterans and other funds and how they were acquired. The total available cash at this time is \$162,374.33, with an amount of \$28,869.54 restricted to specific programs as provided in the Treasurer's Report. The Treasurer's Report was approved by voice vote with no changes.

SPEAKERS:

MICHAEL DIONIAN, USS ORLECK, THE JACKSONVILLE NAVAL MUSEUM

Michael Dionian introduced himself to the group, he is a Navy Officer (Ret.) and spoke of the USS Orleck, the Jacksonville historic Navy ship that is open for tours. Mr. Dionian gave the location at the Navy Pier in downtown Jacksonville. He spoke of how the Orleck was towed from Texas to its arrival in Jacksonville in March 2022.

Mr. Dionian spoke of the history of the Orleck and how it was named after Lieutenant Joseph Orleck, who was killed off of Salerno, Italy, during the invasion of Italy in 1943. The

Orleck was commissioned in September 1945, right at the end of WWII but not see action in WWII. The USS Orleck served in the Korean War and was awarded 4 Battle Stars during that conflict. The Orleck served in the Vietnam War in the 7th Fleet and spent a lot of time in homeport in Japan and fired over 11,000 rounds in support of troops on the beach and was given a designation as Top Gun Destroyer off of the coast of Vietnam.

The Orleck was decommissioned in 1982 and was transferred to the Turkish Navy and re-named and served in the Turkish Navy until 1998, where she decommissioned after combined serve to both countries for over 53 years. She was one of the longest serving destroyers in history.

The Orleck returned to Port Orange, Texas, where she was initially built in 2000 and she was a museum ship there for 10 years and then was transferred Lake Charles, Louisiana, where she was a ship museum for another 10 years. After she broke away from her moorings during a hurricane and Lake Charles was not interested in having a ship here anymore. Jacksonville was looking for a ship museum and she was transferred to Jacksonville to become a ship museum. Tours were opened to the ship in October 2022, and she was just moved to her home port in Jacksonville in March 2023, and opened for tours. There have been many visitors and tours since the USS Orleck was opened to the public in Jacksonville.

The floor was opened by Mr. Dionian for questions and answers about the USS Orleck.

RICK McALLISTER, "THE LAST PATROL"

Rick McAllister is a Vietnam Veteran and has lived here in St. Augustine since 2001. Mr. McAllister shared the background of The Last Patrol and how it was started. The Last Patrol is a project to take Vietnam Veterans on a 500-mile pilgrimage walk across Northern Spain. It will take 44 days and Mr. McAllister has completed the pilgrimage 3 times before. The fourth time, he will, for the first time, be taking 5 other Vietnam Veterans with him. The Last Patrol this year will begin on September 19th.

The Last Patrol was started by Mr. McAllister after he recuperated from triple bypass open heart surgery from the effects of being exposed to Agent Orange while serving in Vietnam. As part of the physical therapy of coming off that surgery a friend, knowing that he liked to walk a lot for physical activity, asked him if he had ever heard of the Camino de Santiago in Northern Spain. The friend suggested he watch the movie "The Way." The movie moved him, and he prepared himself to make that first walk of the Camino de Santiago. The journey ends at a major cathedral and inside the cathedral are the bones of the Apostles St. James. He went over all the regions that the walk encompasses in Spain.

The long-term objective is to video the entire journey and produce a professional documentary that can then be shared with other veterans and veteran organizations promoting the idea of a healing pilgrimage. There is a GoFundMe account where donations can be made to help accomplish this mission. Mr. McAllister stated that if anyone had a friend or family member who served in Vietnam and who is no longer with us (KIA or subsequent passing) you can let him know the name and service branch and it will be placed on a scroll to take with them on this pilgrimage.

The floor was opened to questions and answers about The Last Patrol.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE UPDATE, JOSEPH MCDERMOTT

Mr. McDermott discussed the Veterans Service Office and what is going on with claims filed through that office. Mr. McDermott discussed how the appeals claims process prior to February 2019, are filed and the process in which the veteran goes through with that filed claim. The process included having to go through a Decision Review Officer (DRO) who would look at the claim itself and reverse the denial and grant or continue to deny the claim. Then the claim would go the Board of Veteran's Appeals (BVA), the law judge. It could take the DRO up to a year to review the appeal, if you didn't with at that level it would go to the BVA which at times could take up to several years before a decision was rendered. In February 2019, the appeals process what changed to the Appeals Modernization Act which gave 3 different lanes to travel for an appeal – a supplemental appeal, higher level review or straight to the Board of Veteran Appeals. Mr. McDermott explained those 3 levels and the length of time for the appeals through this Act. The Legacy Appeals are now being pushed forward to get them completed quicker.

Mr. McDermott also discussed claims and the PAC ACT is still educating about the ACT. There is a lot to the ACT and it's very complicated. It is taking about 4 to 6 months from the time the claim is submitted until there is a response. The Veterans Service Office is trying to educate the Veterans of the time it takes to file these claims.

VETERANS TREATMENT COURT, JOHN LESLIE

Mr. Leslie introduced himself, Mentor Coordinator for the St. Johns and Putnam County Veterans Treatment Court. Although the Treatment Court is actually taking Veterans from 8 other counties throughout the NE Florida area.

The Treatment Court is in the middle of its 7th year and brought in 130 veterans into the

program and has graduated 76 participants. Two other graduates will join that number at the next Treatment Court session. All were invited to attend to observe how the Treatment Court operates. There are 33 veterans currently inflow.

The first Alumni Reunion was held at Vail Point Park and will schedule another reunion for next year at a cooler time of year.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS:

Chairman Dudley discussed the Veteran's Day Program Committee and they have met a couple of times for this year's program to be held on November 11th. This year's program will take last year's cancelled (due to hurricane) program and move it forward to this year. The theme of the program is to honor all Veterans that served during the Global War on Terrorism – October 2001 to August 2021. A great program is lined up.

Chairman Dudley also spoke about effort that the Veterans Council is putting forward to one day have a facility here in St. Johns County to house homeless veterans. Several months ago, we applied for a grant through the State of Florida for assistance with that cause and Chairman Dudley received a call from Representative Stephens that the grant was approved in the amount of 3 million dollars. St. Johns County also appropriated a grant for that endeavor in the amount of 2 million dollars – for a total of 5 million dollars in seed money. The site selected for this facility is on SR 16 and we are looking to purchase that particular property. Chairman Dudley will continue to report on this as it progresses.

The MOAA Board made a short presentation and presented the Veterans Council with the profits of their annual convention and presented the Council with a check for \$10,000 to help with our homeless veterans' crisis.

The floor was opened to all who wished to bring anything before the Council.

Next Veterans Council meeting will be held on Thursday, July 27th beginning at 7:00pm.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted, William Dudley, Chairman

Some New Items Qualify for Florida Sales Tax Exemption

| Published on: Jul 1, 2023 | |

Attention Floridians: Some New Items Qualify for Florida Sales Tax Exemption



Effective July 1, 2023, and continuing, the following items are exempt from Florida sales and use tax:

Firearms safety devices, such as items used to store and lock firearms. [Click for qualifying items.](#)

Oral hygiene products, such as toothbrushes, paste, floss irrigators, and mouthwash. [Click here for qualifying items.](#)

Baby and children products, such as diapers, clothing through age 5, shoes, cribs, playpens, swings, monitors, strollers, seats, wipes, breast pumps, bottles, sterilizers, changing tables, cabinet locks, socket covers, and more. [Click here for products.](#)

Effective July 1, 2023 and ending June 30, 2024:

Certain ENERGY STAR appliances, such as clothes dryers, refrigerators, washing machines, and water heaters. [Click here for qualifying products.](#)

Gas ranges and cooktops. [Click here for qualifying products.](#)

From July 24 2023 to Aug 6, 2023, and again from Jan 1, 2024 to Jan 14, 2024:

Back to school tax holidays. Certain clothing, footwear, accessories, supplies, learning aids, computers and accessories, books, and more. [Click here for qualifying items and sales price limitations.](#)

From Aug 26, 2023 to Sep 8, 2023:

Disaster preparedness tax holiday. Portable generators, Batteries, power banks, flashlights, lanterns, candles, fuel containers, fire extinguishers, smoke detectors/alarms, carbon monoxide detectors, portable radios, coolers, ice chests, bungee cords, anchor systems, ratchet straps, tarps, drop cloths, waterproof sheeting, and more. [Click here for qualifying items and price limitations.](#)

Please share this link information with other Floridians.

We Can Be Heroes Foundation Team

The Five-Star Generals Who Reached The Pinnacle Of US Military Hierarchy

The rank of Five-Star General still remains the highest honor in the history of the US military. Throughout its existence, only nine individuals have been appointed to this prestigious rank, each leaving a lasting impression on US military prowess and strategy.

These legendary leaders embody the pinnacle of military excellence and strategic acumen.

George C. Marshall (Appointed on December 16, 1944)

Douglas MacArthur (Appointed on December 18, 1944)

Dwight D. Eisenhower Was A Commander Before President, The 34th President Of The United States

Henry H. Arnold Of The US Air Force (Appointed on December 21, 1944)

William D. Leahy Earned His Honors In The Army And The Navy

Ernest J. King (Appointed on December 17, 1944)

William Halsey Jr. (Appointed December 11, 1945)

Chester W. Nimitz (Appointed December 19, 1944)

Omar Bradley (Appointed September 22, 1950)

Read more about the 5 Star Generals here:

[https://www.factable.com/history/the-five-star-generals-who-reached-the-pinnacle-of-us-military-hierarchy/?](https://www.factable.com/history/the-five-star-generals-who-reached-the-pinnacle-of-us-military-hierarchy/?fbclid=IwAR1S8nCsC5ybYxe045pt1dqjItIn9FoWwEzUiFWMb4tnMjJ1dlfKs2r24o)

[fbclid=IwAR1S8nCsC5ybYxe045pt1dqjItIn9FoWwEzUiFWMb4tnMjJ1dlfKs2r24o](https://www.factable.com/history/the-five-star-generals-who-reached-the-pinnacle-of-us-military-hierarchy/?fbclid=IwAR1S8nCsC5ybYxe045pt1dqjItIn9FoWwEzUiFWMb4tnMjJ1dlfKs2r24o)





You've made our country
A BETTER PLACE.

Enjoy your well-earned retirement at Silver Creek.

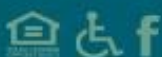
Thank you veterans for your service and sacrifice! At Silver Creek, you can live life as you choose with greater freedom, comfort and independence through the unique living options at our community - including independent concierge living, assisted living, enhanced assisted living and memory care.

Discover first-class amenities, holistic wellness programming, gourmet all-day dining and vibrant activities while enjoying camaraderie and friendship at our close-knit community.

Call **800-821-8170** to schedule a tour and learn more.



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Independent Concierge Living – Assisted Living
Memory Care – Short-Term Stays

Assisted Living Facility #12928

Explore VA benefits and health care, <https://www.va.gov>

Health care

Apply for VA health care, find out how to access services, and manage your health and benefits online.



Disability

File a claim for disability compensation for conditions related to your military service, and manage your benefits over time.

Education and training

Apply for and manage your GI Bill and other education benefits to help pay for college and training programs.

Careers and employment

Apply for vocational rehabilitation services, get support for your Veteran-owned small business, and access other career resources.

Pension

Apply for monthly payments for wartime Veterans and survivors with limited or no income who meet certain age and disability requirements.

Housing assistance

Find out if you're eligible for a VA-backed home loan. If you have a service-connected disability, see if you qualify for a housing grant to help you live more independently.

Life insurance

Explore VA life insurance options for Veterans, service members, and families. Manage your policy online, file claims for benefits, and access helpful resources.

Burials and memorials

Get help planning a burial in a VA national cemetery, order a headstone or other memorial item to honor a Veteran's service, and apply for survivor and dependent benefits.

Records

Apply for a printed Veteran ID card, get your VA benefit letters and medical records, and learn how to apply for a discharge upgrade.

Service member benefits

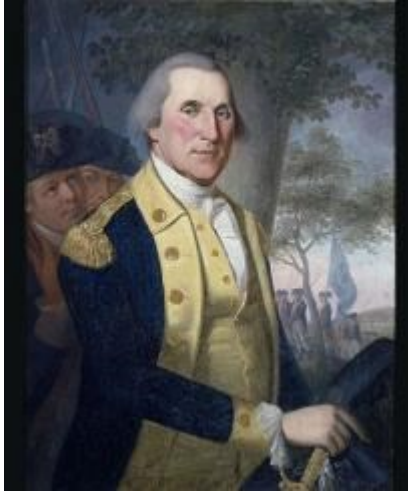
Find out what benefits you may be eligible for during service and which time-sensitive benefits to consider when separating or retiring.

Family member benefits

Learn about the benefits you may qualify for as a spouse, dependent, or survivor. And find out what you're eligible for as a family member caring for a Veteran with disabilities.

VA department information

Learn more about the VA departments that manage our benefit and health care



Why George Washington Is History's Only Six-Star General

Story by Stacy Conradt

The rank of five-star general is an honor bestowed upon very few. In fact, you can name them on one hand: George C. Marshall, Douglas MacArthur, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Henry “Hap” Arnold, and Omar Bradley. Hap Arnold was actually general of both the Army and the Air Force, making him the only man to ever hold both titles. But that doesn’t make him the highest-ranking military official. That honor belongs to a man who has been dead for more than 200 years.

On July 4, 1976, the nation’s bicentennial, George Washington was posthumously promoted to General of the Armies of the United States. When Washington actually served in the army, he was a merely a major general—two stars. After his presidency, John Adams promoted him to lieutenant general—three stars. It stayed that way for centuries, with every four- and five-star general who came afterward outranking him.

After his World War I successes, General John J. Pershing was actually the first to be deemed General of the Armies of the United States. Because the five-star rank had yet to be created, however, Pershing remained a four-star general (his four-star insignia was gold rather than the traditional silver, though). The five-star designation was created in 1944, but the War Department specified that Pershing was still to be considered the highest-ranking official in the military.

Until 1976, that is. The exact phrasing of the law passed to promote Washington reads [PDF], “Whereas it is considered fitting and proper that no officer of the United States Army should outrank Lieutenant General George Washington on the Army list: Now, therefore, be it Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That . . . The President is authorized and requested to appoint George Washington posthumously to the grade of General of the Armies of the United States, such appointment to take effect on July 4, 1976.”

Technically, the law decreeing that no military official could outrank Washington didn’t specifically grant a six-star general designation. But some argue Washington’s ascension to such a rank means exactly that, and newspapers even reported it as such back in 1976.

Either way, of course, the law’s intent is purely symbolic (unless that whole zombie apocalypse thing really happens). But one thing’s for sure: Without Washington, the Fourth of July might just be the fourth of July, and no other military official will ever be able to top that.

Vietnam War pilot returns home

Published June 30, 2023

Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs

ARLINGTON, Va. (AFNS) --

After 54 years, the remains of U.S. Air Force pilot Col. Ernest Leo De Soto, who went missing during the Vietnam War, have finally come home.

De Soto's remains arrived at the San Francisco International Airport June 29 from Pearl Harbor, where his family was escorted by military personnel to the tarmac in a solemn procession. A memorial service was held June 30 at Our Lady of Angels Church in Burlingame, California, followed by full military honors at the Golden Gate National Cemetery.



When asked about how it feels for Ernest to finally be home, his wife Joyce said it was a miracle.

He is one of more than 1,060 service members who have been identified through Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency efforts to recover the remains of service members lost in the Vietnam War.

De Soto was born Dec. 30, 1931, and was raised in San Francisco, California. In the 1950s, while his friends were being drafted for the Korean War, De Soto enlisted in the U.S. Air Force.

During his career he became an officer and later, a fighter pilot.

On April 12, 1969, De Soto was piloting an F-4D Phantom II assigned to the 390th Tactical Fighter Squadron, 336th Tactical Fighter Wing, alongside his navigator, Capt. Frederick M. Hall and another aircraft on a combat mission. As they returned from a cancelled strike mission near Quang Nam Province, Vietnam, both aircraft ascended into heavy cloud cover. The lead aircraft noticed De Soto and Hall's plane wasn't in sight and immediately began an aerial search.

A search and rescue airborne mission located De Soto's crash site, with no sign of the crew. Unfortunately, the amount of hostile activity in the area prevented a ground investigation.

In March 2021, remains were recovered at the crash site by Defense POW/MIA-trained Vietnamese Recovery Teams. On March 23, 2023, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency identified the remains as belonging to De Soto and Hall.

De Soto was posthumously promoted to the rank of colonel. His wife Joyce De Soto and family were then notified.

"We're grateful Joyce and the De Soto family are reunited with Ernest after all these years," said U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. CQ Brown, Jr. "Ernest served valiantly defending our country and the American way of life. We honor his and the De Soto family's sacrifice to protect peace at home and abroad. The Air Force thanks all those involved at the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency who made this possible."

De Soto's family said they appreciated all the hard work that went into this reunion 54 years in the making.

"He was a great guy and he believed in what he was doing," said Joyce. "He loved to fly, and he loved being an American,



that was his life.”

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What Makes the Green Berets Special?

A Former Special Forces Officer Explains

Story by Steve Balestrieri • Saturday

The U.S. Army's Special Forces are known to most as the Green Berets. These legendary soldiers have been honored in books, films, and songs.

At any given time, Army Special Forces can be found in 80 to 90 countries around the world, conducting missions essential to U.S. and allied nations' security.

They are the shadow warriors, the "quiet professionals." The training pipeline is long. Candidates must pass through several phases before they can earn the right to wear the Green Beret and bear the title.

What makes these troops so unique? While the paragraphs below will spell out several key reasons, the short answer is: everything.

History of Special Forces



The Army's Special Forces were officially founded on June 11, 1952, at Smoke Bomb Hill at Ft. Bragg, North Carolina, during the height of the Cold War. Col. Aaron Bank was the first commander and has been considered the "Father of Special Forces" since he formed the 10th Special Forces Group. The Army chose that designation – 10th SFG – to confuse the Soviet Union into believing that more special forces groups would meet them if they chose to invade Western Europe.

Many of the original plank holders, Bank included, hailed from the World War II Office of Strategic Services, the first U.S. military/civilian intelligence agency and the forerunner of both the Special Forces and the CIA.

In 1953, the 10th SFG was split, with Bank taking the 10th to Bad Tolz, Germany, while the troops that remained in Ft. Bragg formed the 77th Special Forces Group cadre. In 1960, that group was redesignated the 7th SFG.

Special Forces went through a large expansion during the war in Vietnam. Special Forces A-camps were dotted throughout South Vietnam, where troops trained ethnic Vietnamese and Montagnard tribes in the Civilian Irregular Defense Group program. They also conducted special operations under the MACV-SOG (Studies and Observation Group). More than 20 Medals of Honor were awarded to special forces troops for actions during the Vietnam War.

After a drawdown in the 1970s, SF was re-energized in the 1980s, and Special Forces became its own branch on April 9, 1987. The Special Operations Command, or SOCOM, was formed to place all SOF units under one umbrella organization.

SOCOM has grown exponentially since the onset of the Global War on Terror, and Green Berets have served in the hot spots of both Iraq and Afghanistan. Special Forces and CIA paramilitary operators were the first on the ground in Afghanistan, just weeks after the 9/11 attacks.

Long, Arduous Training

The training for Green Berets begins with the SF Assessment and Selection



Course. Once a candidate is selected for training, they begin the SF Qualification Course. The training can last anywhere between 55 and 95 weeks, depending on the occupational specialty. Green Berets are typically a bit older and more mature than their conventional counterparts.

Special Forces medics are highly trained. In some cases, when operating in the Third World, they are better trained than some nations' doctors. Medics are arguably the biggest rapport-builders when deployed. Their training pipeline

is the longest of all the specialties.

Special forces troops are trained in several different missions, but their bread and butter is unconventional warfare, an area where they have no peers in the U.S. military. Primary special forces missions include but are not limited to:

- **DIRECT ACTION** - Direct Action missions are short-duration strikes used to seize, capture, recover or destroy enemy material, or recover personnel.
- **SPECIAL RECONNAISSANCE** - Actions conducted in sensitive environments to collect or verify information of strategic or operational significance.
- **COUNTERINSURGENCY** - Special Forces troops respond to terrorist activities and train other nations' militaries in the basics of fighting insurgents.
- **UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE** - The primary Special Forces operation, unconventional warfare comprises activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerrilla force in a denied area.
- **FOREIGN INTERNAL DEFENSE** - This is the act of training and equipping foreign allied military forces to defend against insurgency, subversion, terrorism, and other security threats.
- **SECURITY FORCE ASSISTANCE** - Special Forces soldiers train and develop the defense capabilities of friendly and developing nations.

Special Forces troops serve in 12-man A-Teams, frequently in small, isolated bases away from conventional support. They must be able to adapt to and overcome obstacles on their own. The typical 12-man A-Team is comprised of:

18A – Special Forces Officer

180A – Special Forces Warrant Officer

18B – Special Forces Weapons Sergeant

18C – Special Forces Engineer Sergeant

18D – Special Forces Medical Sergeant

18E – Special Forces Communications Sergeant

18F – Special Forces Intelligence Sergeant

18Z – Special Forces Operations Sergeant

Special forces groups are area-oriented toward a language and culture so that Green Berets can teach and train alongside partner-nation troops and speak to them in their own language.

A-Teams are specialized, and each company will have designated Mountain, SCUBA (Combat Diver), Military Free Fall (HALO) teams, and other specialties.

A Green Beret Is a Fighter and a Teacher

Several years ago, I wrote an article about how teaching is an art for Green Berets. While the training of our allied partners isn't as sexy as the door-kicking Direct Action missions, it is an essential task.

Being able to reach and teach a foreigner in his own language is a tremendous boost to building rapport, earning trust, and creating a successful team with foreign allies. That's where cultural awareness and language training become so important.

There are many special operations forces in the U.S. military. But only one is designated Special Forces: The Army's Green Berets.

Steve Balestrieri is a 1945 National Security Columnist. He served as a US Army Special Forces NCO, and Warrant Officer before injuries forced his early separation.

Andersonville National Historic Site

Andersonville National Historic Site began as a stockade built about 18 months before the end of the U.S. Civil War to hold Union Army prisoners captured by Confederate soldiers. Located deep behind Confederate lines, the 26.5-acre Camp Sumter (named for the south Georgia county it occupied) was designed for a maximum of 10,000 prisoners. At its most crowded, it held more than 32,000 men, many of them wounded and starving, in horrific conditions with rampant disease, contaminated water, and only minimal shelter from the blazing sun and the chilling winter rain. In the prison's 14 months of existence, some 45,000 Union prisoners arrived here; of those, 12,920 died and were buried in a cemetery created just outside the prison walls.

The cemetery site serving Camp Sumter was established as Andersonville National Cemetery on July 26, 1865. By 1868, the cemetery held the remains of more than 13,800 Union soldiers whose bodies had been retrieved after their deaths in hospitals, battles, or prison camps throughout the region. Andersonville National Cemetery has been used continuously since its founding and currently averages over 150 burials a year. The cemetery and associated prison site became a unit of the National Park System in 1970.

Today, Andersonville National Historic Site comprises three distinct components: the former site of Camp Sumter military prison, the Andersonville National Cemetery, and the National Prisoner of War Museum, which opened in 1998 to honor all U.S. prisoners of war in all wars.

<https://www.nps.gov/ande/learn/index.htm>





Stories of Service

St. Johns County Veterans Oral History Project

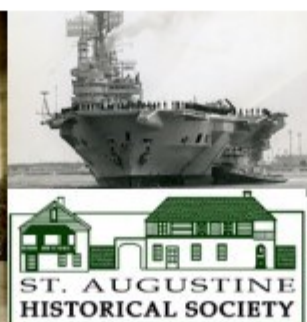


Stories of Service is an oral history project that aims to collect, document, and preserve the stories of local veterans for future generations by conducting audio interviews with them.



If you'd like to learn more about this project, contact Robert Covert:

904-825-2333 ext 203
 robert@sahs1883.com





Looking for a summer vacation spot? Try a lifetime National Park pass

By Zamone Perez, Military Times

Lifetime pass holders will not have to pay entrance fees for all passengers in the vehicle entering the land. (AP Photo/Rick Bowmer, File)

For folks looking for vacation destinations this summer, this is the first year service members, veterans and their families can access National Parks and other government land free of charge — without having to renew the pass each year.

The Interagency Military Pass covers entrance fees at a variety of government lands, including the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. Instead of renewing the pass each year, families can receive a lifetime pass.

“We have a sacred obligation to America’s veterans,” Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland said in a statement announcing the plan in November.

“I’m proud the Department of the Interior can provide veterans and Gold Star Families opportunities for recreation, education and enjoyment from our country’s treasured lands,” she added.

Lifetime pass holders will not have to pay entrance fees for all passengers in the vehicle entering the land, according to the statement. Veterans can present a DoD identification card, Veteran Health identification card, Veteran identification card or a driver’s license with a veteran’s designation to get a lifetime pass.

The new lifetime pass is part of the Alexander Lofgren Veterans in Parks Act, which passed in December 2021, according to the statement. The legislation authorized free lifetime access to federal lands for veterans. This pass is an alternative to the annual Military Pass.

The Military Pass has been available to active-duty service members since 2012. In 2022, the National Park Service recorded nearly 312 million visits to its 424 NPS sites.

WELCOME TO THE MILITARY MEMORIAL MUSEUM

The Military Memorial Museum is a non-profit corporation located in Cheyenne, Wyoming. The collection began with the goal of acquiring uniforms, saddles, firearms and sabers depicting all of the enlisted and officers of the U.S. Cavalry from the Civil War to 1943 when the horse Cavalry was disbanded.



The Museum has met the goal and expanded the collection far beyond the Cavalry. The collection is now inclusive of other branches of service in the Army including artillery, infantry, medical and Army Air Corps. Special collections of 1902 and 1938 Dress uniforms are also included.

The collection of uniforms used by the Air Service, Air Corps and Air Force is broad and very complete. Beginning with the air service uniforms of 1912 the collection shows all types of Air Force uniforms used to the present day.

Uniforms owned by Army and Air Force General Officers featured in our collection also includes all uniform types authorized to be worn by General Officers in the United States Air Force and the United States Army since 1942.

Recently acquired have been numerous uniforms worn by the Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and numerous uniforms worn by the Chiefs of Staff of the U.S. Army.

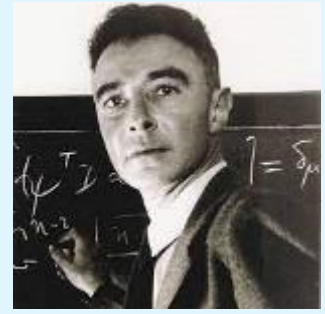
One of our goals of the Museum is to provide to serious collectors and interested parties a collection made available to them that will help them meet their research goals.

We hope you enjoy this website

<https://www.militarymemorialmuseum.com/>

Oppenheimer: What Happened To The Boeing B-29 That Dropped The Little Boy Bomb?

Story by Matthew Austin Ryan



The Enola Gay, known for dropping the first atomic bomb, was involved in nuclear weapons tests before being preserved for historical purposes.

Lack of hangar space and exposure to the elements damaged the aircraft, prompting its dismantling and restoration in the 1980s.

Controversy surrounding the exhibit focused on the balance between Japanese casualties and the bomb's role in ending the war, sparking ongoing discussions about how to appropriately display and remember the Enola Gay.

The Enola Gay, a B-29 Superfortress bomber, is famed for dropping the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan, in August 1945. After its mission, it was involved in nuclear weapons tests before being preserved for historical purposes.

Later operations

After completing its August 1945 mission, the Enola Gay returned to the United States and arrived at Roswell Army Air Field, New Mexico, in November 1945. In April 1946, it participated in the Operation Crossroads nuclear weapons tests in the Pacific. Although it was not chosen to drop a test bomb, it was ultimately preserved for historical purposes.

In July 1946, the aircraft was flown to Davis–Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson, Arizona, for storage. The title was transferred from the military to the Smithsonian Institution in August 1946, and the Enola Gay was removed from the USAAF inventory. From 1946 to 1961, the aircraft underwent temporary storage at various locations.

Preservation and restoration

The Enola Gay's preservation faced challenges due to a lack of hangar space. It was left outdoors on a remote part of Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland, exposed to the elements where souvenir hunters damaged the aircraft, and nature took its toll. Concerned about its condition, Paul E. Garber of the Smithsonian began dismantling it in August 1960, and its components were transported to a storage facility at Suitland, Maryland, in July 1961.

In the early 1980s, veterans of the 509th, Don Rehl, and Frank B. Stewart, lobbied for the

Enola Gay's historical restoration and display. They enlisted Paul Tibbets, the mission's pilot, and Senator Barry Goldwater in their campaign. In 1983, Walter J. Boyne, a former B-52 pilot, became director of the National Air and Space Museum and prioritized the restoration of the Enola Gay.

The bomber's full restoration began in 1984 at the Paul E. Garber Preservation, Restoration, and Storage Facility in Suitland-Silver Hill, Maryland. Propellers used on the bombing mission were later sent to Texas A&M University for restoration and refitting. Some parts and instruments were missing, so a number of replacements were found or fabricated.

Display and controversy

The Enola Gay became the center of controversy when the Smithsonian planned to exhibit its fuselage in 1995, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing. Critics, including the American Legion and the Air Force Association, claimed the exhibit focused too much on Japanese casualties rather than the motives behind the bombing or the bomb's role in ending the war, while other critics said it did not focus enough on casualties and represented a callous attitude towards the bomb's victims.

After attempts to revise the exhibit, it was canceled in January 1995, although the forward fuselage was displayed again later that year until 1998. Restoration work continued, and in 2003, the aircraft was reassembled at the National Air and Space Museum's Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center in Virginia.

The display of the Enola Gay again sparked further controversy, with some arguing for a more nuanced presentation of its history. Nevertheless, the aircraft remains an important artifact representing World War II and the development of nuclear weapons. Efforts to balance its historical significance and address moral questions surrounding its role will undoubtedly continue to be a subject of interest and discussion for years to come.





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\$300

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The St. Augustine Lighthouse & Maritime Museum is proud to announce the opening of the Military Honor Plaza featuring commemorative bricks to honor members of the nation's armed forces. During World War II, the St. Augustine Light Station served as a United States Coast Guard station. Housed in the former Coast Guard Barracks built in 1941, "the Guardians of the First Coast: Building Readiness for World War II" exhibit highlights the history of northeast Florida in the early years of World War II.



The B-29 Superfortress Bomber Changed Everything

Story by Kris Osborn •

The famous WWII-era B-29 Superfortress bomber is the only aircraft to ever deploy nuclear weapons in combat, as it was the aircraft that dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The aircraft was also used to firebomb Tokyo and conduct extensive bombing raids throughout WWII.

For its time, the B-29 was extremely advanced technologically, as it was built with a pressurized cabin, dual-wheeled tricycle landing gear, and a central computer that regulated the fire control system. These technologies enabled an onboard attack system where one gunner and a fire control officer could operate four remote machine gun turrets.

Boeing wound up building 3,970 B-29 bombers within a short three-year period in the 1940s. Aircraft production stopped in 1946 and was eventually retired in 1960. This means the B-29 flew missions in World War II, when it was very new, and then also flew in the Korean War.

The Formidable B-29 Bomber

For its time, the B-29 was both ground-breaking and extremely effective, as it could fly low enough to attack with machine guns and also operate at altitudes sufficient to cover wide areas and attack from beyond the range of enemy fire. With its machine gun turrets, the B-29 could engage in limited air-to-air combat and attack enemy planes with gunfire.

For its time, the B-29 was extremely cutting edge, according to a Pacific War paper on the airplane that explains that the bomber's fuselage was kept narrow by design, in part by the construction of two bomb bays. The aircraft had a crew of 10-to-14 airmen, and all of its gun turrets could be controlled remotely

Cutting Edge Technology

“The gun turrets were designed for minimum drag, and all of the gun turrets (except for the rear guns) could be controlled remotely from any of the gunner stations, which were delib-

erately located some distance from the turrets to isolate the gunners from the noise and vibration of the guns,” the Pacific War paper explained.

The B-29 was also built with a new generation of wiring, designed to operate in extreme temperatures by virtue of being built with mechanical and chemical resistance properties. Additional heat resistance would prove extremely significant in the event that the aircraft encountered incoming enemy fire, as the special wiring helped prevent the electronics from overheating or malfunctioning when damaged by attacks.

The aircraft design featured two bomb bays to keep the fuselage narrow.

The B-29 was flown by the U.S. Air Force, UK Royal Air Force, and Australian Air Force. The technology of the B-29 was apparently stolen by the Soviet Union. During WWII, three B-29s were forced to make emergency landings in the Soviet Union, and they were never returned. It is believed, according to numerous reports, that the U.S. B-29s were reverse-engineered by the Soviets to build the Tupolev Tu-4 bomber.

It also seems reasonable to examine ways the B-29 may have influenced the design of the Boeing B-52, a famous Vietnam-era aircraft that continues to fly today under many variants. The B-52 fuselage does seem to resemble a B-29 in certain respects as it is narrow and supported by large wings with multiple engines mounted on them.



Supporters of new Medal of Honor monument ask Congress for permission to build on National Mall



By ROSE L. THAYER, STARS AND STRIPES • July 13, 2023

Retired Navy Master Chief Britt Slabinski — a Medal of Honor recipient — testifies Thursday, July 13, 2023, before the House Committee on Natural Resources about legislation establishing a National Medal of Honor Memorial. (National Medal of Honor Museum/Facebook)

Supporters of a monument in Washington, D.C., to honor the Medal of Honor asked members of Congress on Thursday to grant an exemption to federal law and allow it to be built on the National Mall near the Lincoln Memorial.

The National Medal of Honor Museum Foundation, which is the driving force behind the monument, has asked for the location because President Abraham Lincoln established the medal in 1861 and presented the first awards in 1863. To do so, Congress would need to provide an exception to a 20-year-old law prohibiting any new commemorative works in what's known as "the reserve," a no-build zone that encompasses most of the National Mall.

"This monument is a way for Lincoln's voice of reason to continue gently whispering into the future, admonishing us to focus on the things which unite us and on our shared values," retired Navy SEAL Britt Slabinski, a Medal of Honor recipient and foundation board member, said to the House Committee on Natural Resources subpanel on federal lands.

By placing the monument near Lincoln's memorial, the former master chief petty officer said, "It will stand humbly and respectfully as a guard over his legacy and the ideals that held our country together."

The Medal of Honor is the highest valor award available to military members,

and Slabinski said the monument is not intended to honor valor or the 3,560 recipients of the medal but rather the “enduring values which motivate the citizen soldier to risk their life for those around them.”

Reps. Blake Moore, R-Utah, and Marc Veasey, D-Texas, introduced the Hershel “Woody” Williams National Medal of Honor Monument Location Act in April, after their joint effort to get the monument built on federal land in the nation’s capital passed into law in December 2021. They named the bill to honor Williams, who died last year as the last living recipient of the Medal of Honor from World War II.

Williams’s family and Army Lt. Col. Will Swenson, a Medal of Honor recipient, were at the hearing Thursday.

“Now more than ever, it is crucial for us to reconnect with our national roots and create a monument in the heart of our democracy that will serve as a powerful symbol for our enduring gratitude and admiration for our nation’s brave and selfless defenders,” Moore said.

The National Mall stretches from the U.S. Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial, and the White House to the Jefferson Memorial. The National Park Service estimates roughly 32 million people visit each year.

The reserve area of the mall houses roughly 40 monuments, including the memorials to Presidents Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson and George Washington, the World War II Memorial and the Constitution Gardens, and was blocked from further projects through the 2003 Commemorative Works Act.

However, Congress in 2021 approved a monument to the Global War on Terrorism for construction in the reserve. Plans have work scheduled to begin in 2025 at a site north of the Lincoln Memorial and west of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Slabinski also said building the Medal of Honor monument at the Lincoln Memorial would help complete the original plans created to honor Lincoln, which extended to the edge of the reflecting pool and had two additional

components.

Only a representative of the National Parks Service, which is responsible for the National Mall, spoke Thursday in opposition of the location. Deputy Director Mike Reynolds also opposed a bill that would grant an exemption for a monument to the women's suffrage movement to be built in the reserve.

Rep. Joe Neguse, D-Colo., who introduced the bill for the suffrage monument, said the National Mall has 699 acres of open green space. Reynolds argued that space is heavily used.

“What space we have, even though it looks blank on a map, is pretty busy,” he said.

Rep. Bruce Westerman, R-Ark., asked Slabinski what he thought of the park service's opposition to the monument's placement.

“What kind of message do you think that sends to you and fellow veterans when the park service takes this stance?” he asked.

“The Park Service is just doing what you asked them to do. So, they're following through on that. If you tell them you want to change that, they will follow through on that,” Slabinski said. “For us, we're just asking you that ‘Hey, let's be on this mission here to try to inspire America a little bit more with the creation in this monument.’”

Outside of Washington, the National Medal of Honor Museum Foundation is constructing a museum in Arlington, Texas, where it will hold a ceremony next week as the museum's final steel beam is put into place. It is expected to open in 2025.

The projected cost of the monument, museum and leadership institute is roughly \$300 million, according to the foundation. About \$235 million has been raised.

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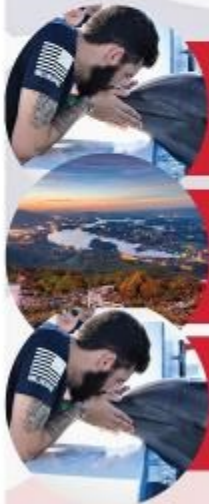
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Helps parents improve relationships with children and gain healthy parenting skills.
- ★ **COMMUNITY ROOM EVENTS**
Regularly scheduled events available to the entire military community.

For a list of upcoming Cohen Clinic at Centerstone groups, workshops & events, please visit:

coheninthecommunity.com

HOW TO GET CONNECTED

The Steven A. Cohen
Military Family Clinic
at Centerstone



VISIT

7011 A. C. Skinner Parkway
Jacksonville, FL 32256



CALL

904-431-3500



LEARN MORE

cohenFL@centerstone.org
centerstone.org/cohen

Contact us to learn more about our care
available in-person or via CVN Telehealth



CENTERSTONE

[facebook.com/CohenCenterstoneFL](https://www.facebook.com/CohenCenterstoneFL)
[@CohenClinicFL](https://www.instagram.com/CohenClinicFL) [@CohenClinicCenterstoneFL](https://www.instagram.com/CohenClinicCenterstoneFL)



Gator Hunts for Heroes



Seeking donors, sponsors, and military or first responder families who have never experienced alligator hunting.

Email Founder@10CANoutdoors.com for more information or visit www.10CAN.us to become a member today.

Phone: 352-219-1138



NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS VETERAN HOMEOWNERS SAINT JOHNS COUNTY

FREE HOME REHAB

We believe everyone deserves to live in a healthy home. At Operation Lifeline Inc., we feel particularly indebted to those who served in the Armed Forces and have committed to helping as many struggling veterans as possible. Our program provides home rehabilitation services at no charge to eligible veterans to address accessibility and HUD's Eight Healthy Homes Principles.

QUALIFICATIONS

Participant Eligibility:

- Verifiable veteran status
- Gross income below 80% of the area's median income
- Occupy the property as a principal residence and have proof of ownership
- Be in compliance with any existing mortgage on the property
- Be current with utility accounts and property taxes

Property Eligibility:

- Must be a single-family residence
- Must be the applicant's homestead
- Applicant must own the property by fee simple title
- Must be free of any encumbrances other than a first mortgage
- Located within the unincorporated portion of Saint Johns County or the City of Saint Augustine Beach

* Please review full eligibility criteria on our website *

CONTACT US TODAY

*Funding is Limited and Restricted
to Saint Johns County Homes*

Please visit our website to fill
out an application

WWW.OPLIFELINE.ORG



**OPERATION
LIFELINE INC.**

* Calling all rental property owners/managers *

SPRING IS HERE, HELP VETS SPRING INTO NEW HOMES

Many Veterans would love a place to call home this season

Our community is working to house Veterans experiencing homelessness in partnership with the US Veterans Administration. Pledge your rental unit to the effort!

We have Veterans connected to rental and move-in assistance, plus supportive services. All they need is a home!

Security deposit assistance and landlord incentives available.

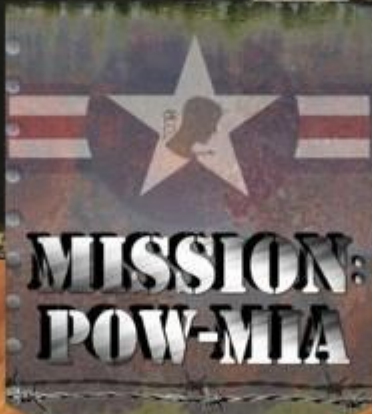


Have a rental?

Email: Charmin.Alston@va.gov

Phone: 904-534-1009

"BRING THEM ALL HOME"



Remember Everyone Deployed

Created by JJ Hoffman

RESERVE COMPONENT TRANSITION ASSISTANCE ADVISORS



Are you a member of a Reserve Component? Have you served 180 or more consecutive days on Title 10? Do you have a service-related injury or health care issue? Perhaps you're about to retire from service and need someone to show you how to get back into the swing of civilian life. Getting to know your Reserve Component Transition Assistance Advisor (RCTAA) means you'll have reliable, professional support when you need it.

I am here to help with the following benefits:

- State and Local Benefits
- VA Assistance for Physical and Mental Health
- Disabled Veterans Program Assistance
- Education and Training Assistance
- Employment Assistance
- Health and Life Insurance
- Financial Assistance
- Legal Assistance
- Relocation Assistance
- Effects of a Career Change

Since 2005, RCTAAs have assisted Reserve Component service members with 180 days or more T-10 AD service obtain their federal benefits and entitlements. You could save an average of:

- Employment Counseling (\$75/hour)
- Health Insurance (\$1430/Service Member)
- Legal Assistance (\$255/hour)
- VHA DAV Benefit Received (\$15,034/Service Member)
- VA Benefit Received (\$5786/Service Member)
- Education Benefits Received (\$15,285/Service Member)

Average benefit per eligible Reserve Component service member across all benefits areas=\$11,970.

If you or someone you know needs assistance with federal benefits and entitlements, don't hesitate to contact me. You can either scan this QR code and fill out the attached form or contact me directly using the information below.



Thank you for serving, now let me serve you.

According to the National Defense Authorization Act 2013, [Reserve Component] transition assistance advisors "serve as points of contact to assist eligible members of the reserve components in accessing benefits and health care furnished under laws administered by the Secretary of Defense and benefits and health care furnished under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs" (Sec. 513).

David "Dave" Kennett

Reserve Component
Transition Assistance Advisor
Federal Contractor
202-987-3864
DKennett@gapsi.com

DIRECTION | BENEFITS | COMPASSION



RESERVE COMPONENT SERVICE MEMBERS AND VETERANS

Do you need direction to your benefits?

RCTAAs provide **DIRECTION** through the maze of programs available to the Reserve Component and connection to earned **BENEFITS** with the **COMPASSION** of someone who knows what it's like to transition.



*Ask your Reserve Component
Transition Assistance Advisor (RCTAA)
to show you the way!*



BENEFITS:

- » State and Local Benefits
- » VA Assistance for Physical and Mental Health
- » Disabled Veterans Program Assistance
- » Education and Training Assistance
- » Employment Assistance
- » Health and Life Insurance
- » Financial Assistance
- » Legal Assistance
- » Relocation Assistance
- » Effects of a Career Change



*This picture might be worth
\$1000 or more in federal
benefits and entitlements!
Enter your contact
information to receive a call
from a RCTAA.*



*Locate your
closest RCTAA
here!*



By law, Transition Assistance Advisors "serve as points of contact to assist eligible members of the Reserve Components in accessing benefits and health care furnished under laws administered by the Secretary of Defense and benefits and health care furnished in the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs" (NDAA, 2013, Sec. 513).

From American Legion 5th District FL

IMPORTANT VETERAN INFORMATION

Every spouse of a veteran should have in his/her personal file the following:

Veteran's Birth Certificate - 3 copies
Spouse's Birth Certificate - 3 copies
Children's Birth Certificate - 3 copies
Certificate of Marriage - 3 copies
Wills (for veteran & spouse) - 2 copies
Spouse's Social Security number
Veteran's Social Security number
Discharge papers - 2 copies
Separation records - 2 copies
V.A. "C" number
G.I. Insurance Policy Number
All Insurance Policies with addresses and numbers. (Originals needed)
Cemetery plot or vault locations and numbers
Death Certificates and divorce decree of all prior marriages (if applicable)

Copies of the following are needed to file a Claim for Death Benefit:

Certificate of Marriage
Birth Certificate of minor children
Death Certificates or divorce decrees of all prior marriages on either side
Service discharge papers
Service separation papers
V.A. "C" number
Social Security number of both parties
V.A. insurance papers
Proof of Death Certificate (minimum 4 copies)
Bills from Funeral Home

ALL originals should be kept in a safety deposit box or equivalent.

NEVER release an ORIGINAL copy.

APPOINT an administrator for minor children.

FURTHER ASSISTANCE: contact your County Veterans' Service Officer



8th Annual



Rocketman Run

Benefiting

Service Dogs for Patriots



September 30th, 2023

Cost
\$20 Per Rider
\$5 Passenger
\$5 Extra Roll

Registration 9:00-11:00 AM
Last Bike Out 11:00 AM
Last Bike In 4:00 PM
Drawings Begin At 5:00 PM
Sanctioned Event

Food
Music
Auctions
Raffles

Start: American Legion Post 250 - Middleburg
1st Stop: VFW Post 1988 - Green Cove Springs
2nd Stop: Orioles Nest - North St. Augustine

3rd Stop: Cheyenne Saloon - East Palatka
4th Stop: Howlin Wolf - Melrose
Final Stop: American Legion Post 250 - Middleburg

KOREAN WAR VETERANS ASSOCIATION



CALLING ALL KOREAN WAR AND KOREAN DEFENSE VETERANS

We invite you to join the KWVA Brotherhood. There are KWVA Chapters throughout America. Go to our KWVA Facebook Page, our KWVA Website at kwva.us or call the KWVA National Office to join the KWVA at **217-345-4414**

Blue Angels Show Schedule 2023

Jacksonville in October

Blue Angels

► 2023 | SHOW SCHEDULE

MARCH

11 | NAF El Centro, CA | NAF El Centro Annual Air Show
18 · 19 | NAS Point Mugu, CA | Point Mugu Air Show
25 · 26 | Barksdale AFB, LA | Defenders of Liberty Air Show

APRIL

1 · 2 | Lakeland, FL | Sun 'n Fun Aerospace Expo
15 · 16 | NAS Key West, FL | Southernmost Air Spectacular
22 · 23 | MCAS Beaufort, SC | MCAS Beaufort Air Show
29 · 30 | Fort Lauderdale, FL | Fort Lauderdale Air Show

MAY

6 · 7 | Corpus Christi, TX | Wings Over South Texas Air Show
13 · 14 | Scott AFB, IL | Scott AFB Air Show
20 · 21 | Seymour Johnson AFB, NC | Wings Over Wayne Air Show
24 | USNA, Annapolis, MD | U.S. Naval Academy Air Show
26 | USNA, Annapolis, MD | U.S. Naval Academy Fly Over
27 · 28 | Long Pond, PA | The Great Pocono Raceway Air Show

JUNE

10 · 11 | Smyrna, TN | The Great Tennessee Air Show
17 · 18 | Columbus, OH | Columbus Air Show

JULY

1 · 2 | Oklahoma City, OK | Tinker AFB Star Spangled Salute
8 | Pensacola Beach, FL | Pensacola Beach Air Show
15 · 16 | Duluth, MN | Duluth Air and Aviation Expo
22 · 23 | Milwaukee, WI | Milwaukee Air and Water Show

AUGUST

5 · 6 | Seattle, WA | Boeing SeaFair Air Show
12 · 13 | Billings, MT | Yellowstone International Air Show
19 · 20 | New Century, KS | KC Air Show
26 · 27 | Lincoln, NE | Guardians of Freedom Air Show

SEPTEMBER

2 · 4 | Toronto, ON, Canada | Canadian International Air Show
16 · 17 | NAS Oceana, VA | NAS Oceana Air Show
23 · 24 | MCAS Miramar, CA | MCAS Miramar Air Show
30 | McMinnville, OR | Oregon International Air Show

OCTOBER

1 | McMinnville, OR | Oregon International Air Show
7 · 8 | San Francisco, CA | San Francisco Fleet Week
14 · 15 | Grand Junction, CO | Grand Junction Air Show
21 · 22 | Jacksonville Beach, FL | Sea and Sky Air Show
28 · 29 | Greenfield, IN | Crossroads Air Show

NOVEMBER

3 · 4 | NAS Pensacola, FL | NAS Pensacola Homecoming Air Show

The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs

Our App got an upgrade! The free App is a quick and easy way to access benefit information, look for available jobs, and connect to the latest news regarding Veterans' issues. Get it now!

<https://app.floridavets.org/>

#FDVA #FLVets

**GET OUR FREE
UPGRADED
APP.**

It won't take
up space on
your phone.





VA SURVIVOR BENEFITS & THE PACT ACT

ESGR4U

You may be eligible for VA benefits and services after your loved one has passed.



The PACT Act makes it easier for many survivors to receive Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC).

VA will be contacting survivors who were previously denied DIC benefits and may be newly eligible under the PACT Act. You do not need to wait for VA to contact you to submit a claim.

How to Apply for DIC and/or Accrued Benefits

Surviving family members may apply for these benefits using the appropriate VA form on va.gov/family-member-benefits.



Dependency and Indemnity Compensation

Monthly payment for the eligible surviving spouse, dependent children or parent(s) of the Veteran or service member IF Veteran or service member died in the line of duty or due to a service-related injury or illness.



Accrued Benefits

A one-time payment to a surviving spouse, dependent child(ren) or dependent parent(s) of a deceased Veteran based on relationship when the record shows additional benefits (such as VA compensation or pension) due to the Veteran prior to passing.

Additional Survivor Benefits Available:



Burials and Burial Allowance

Burial benefits available include a gravesite in any of our National cemeteries with available space, opening and closing of the grave, perpetual care, a government headstone, marker, or medallion, a burial flag, and a Presidential Memorial Certificate, at no cost. Some survivors may also be eligible for a plot allowance, transportation allowance, and burial allowances based on the service connected disability status of the deceased Veteran.



Final Monthly Payment

If a Veteran who is receiving VA compensation or pension benefits passes away, their last month of benefits can be paid to their surviving spouse.



Home Loan Guaranty

Certificate of Eligibility is available for surviving spouses receiving DIC.



Education and Training

Chapter 35 benefits and Fry Scholarship are the two main GI Bill programs offering educational assistance to survivors and dependents of Veterans who died in the line of duty or as a result of service-related disabilities.



Health Care

Survivors and dependents of Veterans may qualify for health care benefits, such as CHAMPVA.

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Learn more and sign up at [VA.gov/PACT](https://va.gov/PACT)
Download the [VA Health and Benefits App](#)
Call us at 1-800-MyVA411 (1-800-698-2411)
Find a VA at [VA.gov/find-locations/](https://va.gov/find-locations/)



LIVE ASSISTANCE
General information, directory assistance and technical support for VA.gov

VA HEALTH CARE
Eligibility, enrollment, locations and COVID-19

COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE
MISSION Act eligibility, copayments

NATIONAL CEMETERIES
Burial benefits, interment scheduling and headstone/Veteran marker

VETERANS CRISIS LINE
Immediate connection to caring, qualified responders

DEBT MANAGEMENT
Debt details, payment options and debtor rights

FACILITY LOCATOR
Locations of medical centers, benefits offices or cemeteries

BENEFITS ASSISTANCE
Information about a variety of VA benefits

HOMELESS VETERANS LINE
Information and support for homeless and at-risk callers

COVID-19 INFORMATION
Frequently asked questions and live assistance for COVID-related questions

FLORIDA SURVIVOR OUTREACH SERVICES AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY



Are You eligible to file for benefits based on Presumptive Exposure?

Were you exposed to hazardous materials while serving in the military, such as from Agent Orange or burn pits? Did you serve in Vietnam, Thailand or Southwest Asia? If so, you may be eligible to file for service-connected benefits based on presumptive exposure.

Over the course of the last six months, VA has begun processing service-connected disability claims for six new presumptive conditions related to exposure to hazardous materials.

In May 2021, VA started implementing provisions of the William M. Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 (NDAA), adding bladder cancer, hypothyroidism and Parkinsonism to the list of medical conditions presumptively associated with exposure to Agent Orange. A few months later, VA added asthma, rhinitis and sinusitis (to include rhinosinusitis) on a presumptive basis based on particulate matter exposures during military service in Southwest Asia and certain other areas.

Any Veteran who was previously denied service-connection for any of these six conditions but had symptoms manifest within 10 years of military service would need to file another claim. Be sure to use VA Form 20-0995, "Decision Review Request: Supplemental Claim" when filing. The claim form should include the name of the medical condition and also specify that the medical condition is being claimed due to in-service exposure to environmental hazards.

VA is committed to assisting Veterans who may have been exposed to hazardous materials during their military service.

Be sure to stay plugged in to www.va.gov for the most recent developments around environmental hazards; VA is constantly conducting research and surveillance, as well as reviewing scientific literature for conditions that may be related to exposure during military service.

If you feel you have a chronic condition attributed to an in-service exposure, we highly encourage you to file a claim. For more information about VA benefits and eligibility, or how to file a claim, Veterans and survivors can visit VA's website at www.va.gov or call toll-free at 1-800-827-1000.



The **Fire Watch** is Northeast Florida's fight to end veteran suicide. Over 6,000 U.S. military veterans die by suicide each year, including 500 annually here in Florida. But suicide is preventable. And everyone can help. **Join us as a Watch Stander today.** Learn how to identify the risk signs of veterans in crisis and to direct them to the help they need.

3 minutes to enroll. 30 minutes to train. A lifetime of saving lives.

Visit: www.thefirewatch.org/watch-standers to learn more.

Thanks!

Nick Howland

Executive Director, The Fire Watch

www.thefirewatch.org

904.525.1761



From Veterans Council Chairman Bill Dudley

Subject: VA Transportation Assistance

I received the email below from Dr. McKenzie. If any of our veterans require transportation assistance to any VA medical centers, have them call our CBOC at 904- 829-0814 and ask for the primary social worker for help with transportation.

We recently found that we are able to assist with patients who have significant issues with transportation to VA medical centers. Our primary care social worker can assist with this problem. Patient can call here and ask that she be notified of problem. She will be able to contact them and attempt to provide assistance.

From Michael Isam

The DAV van is now operating 5 days /week!

It will now transport a full capacity of riders.

Schedule your seat on the DAV Chapter 6 van.

It departs from the large parking lot of the clinic at 0600!!!

Contact the VA Clinic at 904-823-2954





Legal Aid for Veterans

The Florida Veterans Legal Helpline is a project of the Major General Ernest A. and Marilyn Bedke Veterans Law Center at Bay Area Legal Services, Inc. The helpline is a free service for eligible Florida veterans and their family members.

When you call, you will speak to a screener who will determine your eligibility and set your appointment with an attorney.

1.866.486.6161

Call Today!

Hours: Monday – Friday
9 AM to 4:30 PM



We Can Help With

- Landlord-Tenant Matters
- Consumer Credit Issues
- Foreclosure
- Divorce + Child Support
- Drivers Licenses/ID cards
- Social Security + Public Benefits
- Discharge Upgrades
- VA Benefits
- And Other Civil Legal Matters
(No Criminal or Traffic Matters)

Supported by the:



Become a Watch Stander with The Fire Watch

Vietnam Veterans of America



If you are a Vietnam Era Veteran and live in one of these counties, please contact the President for information as to how to join

Chapter/President/email/Location

1046	Albert White	
1048	Bob Adkins	adk123robert@outlook.com
1059	Dave Treffinger	dtreffinger433@msn.com
1084	Bill Jefferson	bill_jefferson@comcast.net
1088	Roy (Corky) Rudd	corkstopper50@yahoo.com; Nassau
1092	Forest Hope	foresthope@usa.net; Gainesville
1134	Marvin Lagle	mdlagle@gmail.com; Baker



REMEMBER WHAT OUR MEDAL STANDS FOR:

- RED:** REPRESENTS THE THREE ANCIENT VIETNAMESE EMPIRES OF TONKIN, ANNAM AND COCHIN.
- YELLOW:** THE IMPERIAL COLOR OF VIET NAM.
- GREEN:** SURROUNDED BY EXPANSIVE JUNGLE.
- TED PIECKO, The NAM.

Veterans Council of Clay County:

President: Ansil Lewis

Meeting day is the same, first Wednesday of the month, but the location is changed to Clay County Administration Building, 1st floor conference room, 477 Houston St., Green Cove Springs, FL 32043. Meeting start at 11 a.m.



PROGRAMS DESIGNED TO MEET VETERANS' UNIQUE NEEDS

Advance Care Planning

Community Hospice & Palliative Care offers Honoring Choices® Florida, a program to help you document your health care wishes in advance, so that, in the event you become ill and cannot speak for yourself, your wishes are known and can be followed.

Palliative Care

Our palliative care services can help people with serious illnesses get relief from physical, emotional, and spiritual pain, symptoms, and stress while seeking curative treatment.

Hospice Care

We also provide support during the final phase of advanced illness, with a focus on comfort and quality of life.

- ★ **Team Approach:** Trained clinicians identify and address the psychological, physical, spiritual and emotional needs of veterans and their caregivers.
- ★ **Pinning Ceremony:** We provide a veteran-to-veteran pinning ceremony to honor the service of our nation's bravest.
- ★ **Service Branch Flags:** For veterans who receive care at our inpatient centers, we fly the flag of their service branch outside their room and entrust the flag to the family following death.
- ★ **Veterans History Project:** Members of our Community Hospice Veterans Partnership (CHVP) record veterans' stories and share them online and with the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress.
- ★ **Community Hospice Veterans Partnership:** A select group of veteran leaders serving as brand ambassadors throughout Northeast and North Central Florida bringing awareness to, and providing access for, veterans and their caregivers facing advanced illness and end-of-life care.

Complementary Therapies

In addition to routine home care, respite care, continuous care and inpatient hospice, we also provide the following services to patients and their families:

- ★ **Grief and Loss Support**
- ★ **Certified Music Therapy**
- ★ **Certified Pet Therapy**
- ★ **Pet Promises**

We Need Volunteers

Whether you offer companionship and a listening ear or assist at fundraising events, there's a volunteer role for everyone. Opportunities include pinning ceremonies, Veterans History Project recordings, CHVP membership and other special programs.

WE HONOR VETERANS
Partner

Community Hospice & Palliative Care participates in We Honor Veterans, a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization program that honors veterans for their service and sacrifices.

For more information or to volunteer, call toll free **866.253.6681** or visit **CommunityHospice.com**.

Mission Statement:

The Veterans Council of St. Johns County, Inc. is a 501 C3 Not-For-Profit Florida Corporation.



The Veterans Council of St. Johns County is comprised of representatives from various veterans' organizations that work with city and county governments and organizations to assist with matters concerning veterans and veterans' activities.

What the Council has done:

- The Veterans Treatment Court
 - Wreaths Across America
 - Homeless Veterans Standdown
 - Veterans Day Parade
 - Vets 4 Vets
- And so much more...

SA-0003147064-01

Veterans Crisis Line

1-800-273-8255 **PRESS 1**

Veterans Crisis Line
1-800-273-8255 **PRESS 1**

STAND BY THEM
Confidential help for Veterans and their families

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE
1-800-273-TALK (8256)
suicidepreventionlifeline.org

..... Confidential chat at VeteransCrisisLine.net or text to 838255

Military/Veterans Crisis Line

1-800-273-8255

Veterans Crisis Line
1-800-273-8255 **PRESS 1**

Confidential chat at MilitaryCrisisLine.net or text 838255

Veterans Councils of Northeast Florida



BAKER COUNTY

President: Larry Porterfield

Meetings:

Second Thursday of each month

Location:

MacClenny Primitive Baptist Church
Fellowship Hall on North Boulevard

Time : 1800 (6pm)

CLAY COUNTY

President: Harry Silvers

Meetings:

First Wednesday of each month

Location:

American Legion Post 250
3939 County Rd 218
Middleburg, FL 32068

Time: 1400 (2pm)

DUVAL COUNTY

President

Meetings:

Third Tuesday of each month

Location:

American Legion Post 37
Main Building
San Juan Avenue

Tome: 1900 (7 pm)

NASSAU COUNTY

President: Mike Doran

Meetings:

First Thursday of each month

Location:

American Legion Post 54
626 South 3rd St
Fernandina Beach fit 32034

Time: 1900 (7pm)

St. Johns County

President: Bill Dudley

Meetings:

Last Thursday of each month

Location:

Health & Human Services building
Muscovy room, 1st floor
200 San Sebastian View, St. Augustine

Time: 1900 (7pm)

The Veterans Council of St. Johns County is proud to announce that it has modernized its website and created a Facebook page.



We are inviting all veterans to visit our website at:

NEW <http://www.veteranscouncilsjc.org>

The Veterans Council will post items of interest to all veterans, post pictures, articles, flyers, events, etc. We will post our meetings dates and keep you informed about events at the Jacksonville and St. Augustine National Cemeteries.

Please join our group on Facebook at:

<http://veteranscouncilsjc.org>

Please select **Join the Group** to become a member

Once you have joined the Veterans Council Facebook group you will be able to post your meetings, pictures, articles, fund raisers, etc. It will be your common site to go to and see what's happening.

The website and Facebook page were updated and created so that there would be a central place to list all veterans activities in NE FL.

You may have noticed the Veterans Council's new logo, it was created by Roy Havekost.

He can be contacted at webmaster@veteranscouncilsjc.org

*Veterans Council of St. Johns County,
"Helping All Veterans"*

The Veterans Council of St. Johns County welcomes article submissions from all County Veterans & organizations. Articles should be of interest to all and veterans related. Submissions may be edited &/or shortened and used if space permits.

Send to: rothfeldm@gmail.com



**The Veterans Council of St. Johns County, Inc. is a
Not For Profit Florida Corporation.**

Our formation date was July 4, 2001 in a proclamation issued by the St. Johns County Commissioners. It is composed of representatives of the various veterans' organizations within St. Johns County.

The Veteran's Council will work with city and county governments and other local organizations to achieve the mutual goal to provide a central agency to assist in the coordination and presentation of matters concerning veterans and veterans activities in St. Johns County.

The Veteran's Council will endeavor to precipitate, stimulate and assist various organizations as they perform patriotic events. One of the major purposes is the promotion and education of national patriotic matters.

**The St. Johns County Veterans Council meets the
last Thursday of the month at 7 pm.**

***The Veterans Council will meet at the County
Health & Human Services Building,
200 San Sebastian View
Auditorium, 1st floor***

**Veterans Service Office
200 San Sebastian View, Suite 1400
St. Augustine, FL 32084**

(physical location)

*The VSO Office is located in the St. Johns County Health and
Human Services Building.*

*The office is open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily,
Monday through Friday excluding holidays.*

*Service is by appointment.
Phone: 904-209-6160 Fax: 904-209-6161
Joseph McDermott, VSO
Travis Neidig, Assistant VSO
Angela McKenzie, Assistant VSO
Lori Chapman, Assistant VSO
Anna Marie Scott, Office Specialist*

The views expressed in The Patriot Reader Newsletter articles, submissions and spotlights are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Veterans Council of St. Johns County or the editors of The Patriot Reader. It is the purpose of this periodical to share a variety of information that pertain to local veterans and their organizations.