



# The Patriot Reader Newsletter

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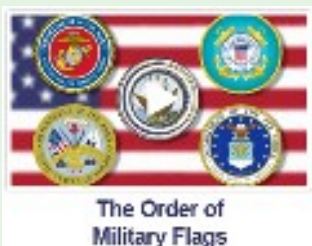
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Message from the Chairman

Newsletter Date: December, 2017

## Inside this Edition

- Clyde Lassen State VA Nursing Home
- Jax National Cemetery Support Comm.
- Arena Flag Presentation
- Vets 4 Vets
- Veterans Council Parade Social Media
- V&V 1084 visits local schools
- Local Green Berets Meet to Reminisce
- Duval County Veterans Council
- Veterans Council 5 County Presidents
- Mike DelPizzo Still Serving
- Rod Phillips Inducted into FL Vets HOF
- Cecil Field POW/MIA Dedication
- Cliff Shields' Many Faces
- Lt Gen. Ronald Bailey, USMC Retires
- Veterans Memorial Arena Flag Dedication
- Local Filipino Veteran Earns Praise
- Veterans Treatment Court
- FL Honor Flight, April 11, 2018
- From the Jax Semper Fidelis Newsletter
- Veterans Council of SJC Oct. Minutes
- Bob Dinkins, USAF, 1969
- Cecil Field POW/MIA Plans
- Green Beret Friend of Tom Waskovich
- Camp LeJeune Water Presumptives
- MACVSOG Explained
- V4V Quarterly Meeting Notes
- FMC/AUSA Golf Tournament
- FMC/AUSA Sponsor Forms
- VA Flu Shots at Walgreens
- 10 Veterans Benefits



## Fellow Veterans:

Nov 11, 2017 was a great day in St. Johns County as the community reached out to honor our veterans. The day started with the Veterans Day Parade at 11 AM downtown with a flyover from the Dreamland Squadron of 8 aircraft and the arrival of helicopters from the National Guard and US Coast Guard landing next to the Castillo de San Marcos for static display. The firing of the cannons from the fort and ringing of the bells from downtown churches was the official start of the parade. This year's parade featured many JROTC marching units as well as bands from several area high schools. The parade has grown each year as more veteran's organizations have joined to show their colors. We were also honored with more WW II jeeps this year allowing for our aging veterans to be able to ride in the parade.

At 12 noon the American Legion Post 37 held their official reopening with a ribbon cutting ceremony

with Mayor Nancy Shaver and Post Commander Mick Barnes doing the honors. The Hamblen House which houses the downtown American Legion has been beautifully restored and will serve our veterans and local community for many years as a restaurant, meeting facility, and for special events.

At 3 PM that afternoon, the City of St. Augustine Beach held its annual salute to our veterans with a ceremony at Veterans Memorial Park. Retired Sgt. Major Ray Quinn was the Master of Ceremonies. The event featured speakers Brig.Gen. Mike Canzoneri, Deputy Adj. Gen. for Florida National Guard, Army, retired Army Col. Ann Johnson, and retired USAF Lt. Col Bill Dudley. After the ceremony, a wonderful buffet was provided by Sunset Grill.

In the evening, my wife Nancy and I attended the Veterans Ball at the Clyde E. Lassen State Veterans Nursing Home. It was a magnificent event with many of the veterans dressing in formal wear for the occasion. Music was provided by a local DJ who



played many of the dance tunes of the 40's-50's. The outside courtyard was decorated for this special occasion with lighting in the trees and throughout the area. A big shout out to the staff at Lassen for putting together this awesome event and honoring our veterans and their families in such an incredible way. We can't thank them enough for the service they provide for our veterans.

Don't forget our Wreaths Across America program on 16 December at the St. Augustine National Cemetery. The program begins at 12 noon. If you haven't purchased your wreath for one of the headstones, please contact Sgt. Major Ray Quinn today at 904-540-1630 or [renegade1@bellsouth.net](mailto:renegade1@bellsouth.net).

Bill Dudley, Chairman

Veterans Council of St. Johns County

# Clyde E. Lassen State Veterans Nursing Home



Clyde E. Lassen State Veterans' Nursing Home celebrates Veterans' Day by holding an annual Veterans' Ball. Several hundred residents, family members, staff members and other guests dance to the tunes of the DJ, indulge in fabulous food and enjoy their evening.



**The Jacksonville National Cemetery  
Greetings from the Support  
Committee at the Jacksonville  
National Cemetery!**



The Support Committee invites everyone to attend its **next scheduled meeting, on Tuesday, December 12, 2017**. The meeting will be at **7:00pm**. The meeting will take place at Community Hospice, **4266 Sunbeam Rd., Jacksonville, FL 32257 in Conference Room A**.

**+++++2016/2017 Officers of the SCJNC+++++**

Chairman: Steve Spickelmier

Vice Chairman: Bill Dudley, Treasurer: John Mountcastle

Assistant Treasurer: Michael Rothfeld, Secretary: Kathy Church

Chaplain: Michael Halyard, Master-At-Arms: Joe McDermott

Historian: Kathy Cayton

Veteran's Day Grand Parade 2017 in downtown St. Augustine. The parade began when the church bells rang and a cannon salute from the fort to honor the military history of St. Augustine and all those who serve and continue to serve our country. It was about an hour and included historic military vehicles, military units, military marching bands, local high school bands, vintage and military aircraft flyovers, military aircraft on display beside the fort.



The Parade began on Orange Street at 11:00am, the parade continued east on Orange Street, south on S. Castillo Dr./Avenida Menendez, west on Cathedral Pl., north on Cordova Street, returning to Orange Street near Francis Field. The parade was presented by the Veterans Council of St. Johns County and the Ancient City Chapter of the Military Officers Association in America. Our Veterans Day Parade this year was focused on our local heroes who have served our nation.

Below is the link to the Third Annual Veterans Day Parade in St. Augustine, furnished by videographer Jorge Rivera.

<http://www.firstcoast.tv/veterans-day-parade-2017>



**POLICY of Veterans Council of St. Johns County**  
**Written and approved by the EXCOMM of VC of SJC**

**ALL: Please read. We are instituting these guidelines because we have been allowing posts that are not veterans related, political in nature and for profit postings. I will remove postings that do not comply with the above, if it happens a second time I will be forced to prohibit you from using this site.**

**The Veterans Council of St. Johns County, Inc., is an IRC§501(c)(3) exempt organization, FEIN 27-1971825, registered (# CH31930) with the Florida Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Contributions are deductible from taxable federal income as charitable donations under IRC§170 and/or IRC§6115. The Council does not use professional solicitors. 100% of funds received benefit the missions of the Council: supporting, advising, advocating, recommending and assisting the various commissions, organizations and citizens of St. Johns County.**

**Please visit our website: [http:// StJohnsVetsCouncil.org](http://StJohnsVetsCouncil.org) for more information.**

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**It is the policy of the Veterans Council of St. Johns County, Inc. not to endorse or advertise any product(s) or service(s) that would promote personal gain for any individual or group, or otherwise violate the provisions of §501(c) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. The Veterans Council reserves the right to remove any advertising or promotional postings or links thereto, which are not in compliance with the aims and ideals of our organization, or, directly or indirectly, are political in nature, at the sole discretion of the website administrator (with or without notice to those making the deleted posting). We appreciate your support and appreciate your compliance.**

Veterans organizations from NE Florida presented the Jacksonville Veterans Memorial Arena flags representing all service branches as well as the POW Flag which was created by Mary Hoff of Jacksonville after her husband went missing in WW II.

Veterans Council of St. Johns County, Chairman Bill Dudley, Vice Chairman Ray Quinn, Board Member Joseph McDermott and Council member Steve Spickelmier were on hand to make the presentation to a representative of the Jacksonville Veterans Memorial Arena where all flags will be on permanent display.

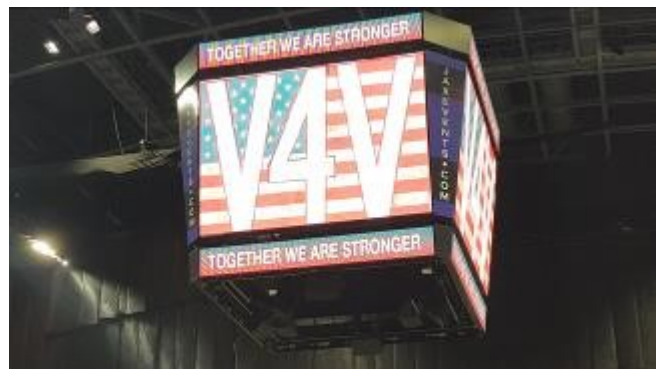
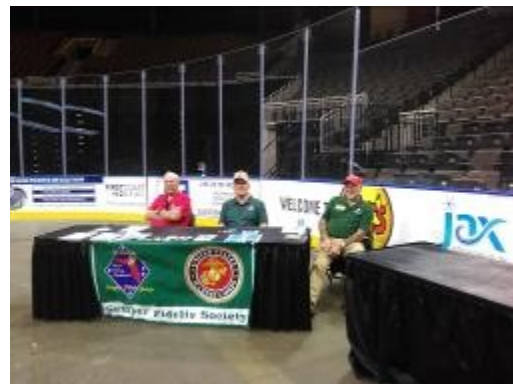


The next meeting for the Duval Council Veterans Council (formerly the Northeast Florida Veterans Council) will be on Tuesday, January 16, 2018 @ 7pm. We will also be meeting at a new location which will be:

40&8 Building  
American Legion Post 137  
5443 San Juan Avenue  
Jacksonville, FL 32210



# The November 4th V4V Quarterly Veterans Meeting at the Jacksonville Veterans Memorial Arena





## St. Augustine Veterans Day Parade Preparation

The Third Annual Veterans Day Parade in St. Augustine was a huge success. The Veterans Day Parade Committee met several times a month for the past 6 months organizing and advertising the Parade. Parade Committee members were Bill Dudley, Chairman Veterans Council of St. Johns County; Ron Birchall, President Military Officers Association of America– St. Augustine Chapter; Ray Quinn, Director of Parade Operations; Joe Naftzinger and Ted Pappas Print Advertising; Jerry Hanchett, ROTC and JROTC recruiter; John Mountcastle, Treasurer; Michael Rothfeld, Social Media advertising.

Here are some pictures of our TV appearance on First Coast Living, NBC channel 12



From left: Michael Rothfeld, Bill Dudley, FCL Hostess Casey DeSantis, Ron Birchall

We also appeared on the Award Winning Melissa Ross Public Broadcasting Radio Show



First Coast Connect with Melissa Ross

From left: Bill Dudley, Michael Boylan President & CEO WJCT TV, Ron Birchall, Michael Rothfeld

A special Thank You to Videographer Jorge Rivera for recording Bill and Ron's Veterans Day Parade information for Social Media advertising and Alison Simpson for allowing us



Alison Simpson FL FG Museum Historian

Jorge Rivera Videographer

to film in the Historic FL National Guard Museum



**The Third Annual St Augustine Veterans Day Parade,  
hosted by The Veterans Council of St Johns County and  
the Military Officers Association of America,  
St Augustine Chapter.**





**These pictures are from Rick Rees, Veterans Service Officer, St. Johns County**

Bob Dinkins visit to SAHS was one of 5 VVA members in 4 St John's County High Schools this day. All-in-all, approximately 500 students were engaged in discussions relating to Veterans Day, its differences with Memorial Day and Armed Forces Day. It included discussions on how to thank a Veteran, what activities are available on Veterans Day, and some personal experiences while on active duty.



## Local Green Berets Gather to Reminisce on Veterans Day From the St. Augustine Record by Colleen Michele Jones

Once all three men were seated around their usual outside table at Zaharias Restaurant, pints of beer in hand, Tom Waskovich started things rolling: “So, Speedy is getting out of the hospital Friday.”

Joined at the table by Bill Barclay and Chuck Willoughby, Waskovich was referring to George “Speedy” Gaspard, who

— if not for breaking a hip recently — is usually the fourth member at the get-togethers the men enjoy every week or two. At 91 and with seven tours in Vietnam behind him, Gaspard is the eldest — and perhaps most revered — member of the crew, all of who served as Green Berets with the U.S. Army.

A collection of photos belonging to Barclay and Waskovich are spread out over a table at Zaharias Restaurant in St. Augustine Beach. The men gather every week or so to exchange battle stories.

But their bond goes beyond the Army, the Green Berets or their ties to St. Augustine. During the Vietnam War, all four were members of a special operations unit known as Military Assistance Command Vietnam, Studies and Observations Group.

Members of MAC-SOG carried out some of the most top-secret — and dangerous — missions in the field. SOG teams were comprised of several American Green Berets were aided by indigenous mercenary troops to conduct reconnaissance missions, capture of enemy prisoners, rescue of downed pilots and clandestine operations.

When asked to rate the risk level of their activities in North Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos during the 1960s and 1970s, Waskovich, 69, doesn’t mince words: “I’d say on a scale of 1 to 10, it was like a 21.”





But around the happy hour table all these years later, it's all about jokes, good-natured ribbing, and catching up on how other SOG veterans — some of whom also have made their home in St. Johns County — are doing.

The men don't celebrate Memorial Day or Veterans Day by taking part in traditional ceremonies or parades. Instead, Waskovich, Gaspard, Barclay and Willoughby prefer to get together in their usual laid-back fashion and break bread, twist off bottle caps and "shoot the (breeze)" like always. Their reluctance to march alongside fellow vets has less to do with condescension than the fact that they feel like they're a different breed with battle experiences others might not understand.

At one point during the gathering on Thursday evening, Waskovich asks his fellow comrades to raise a glass and take a moment of silence to honor three Green Berets killed in Afghanistan last month, which they do, bowing their heads in reflection.

How the four found each other in the St. Augustine area is its own story.

Several years ago, Waskovich and Barclay were both attending a national organizational meeting of special military forces in Las Vegas. They met in the airport when they realized they both had returning flights to St. Augustine.

Waskovich and Willoughby also linked up as if by chance. In traffic around town, Willoughby happened to notice a MAC-SOG decal on the back of Waskovich's car. He rolled down his window to talk to Willoughby at a red light.

"You said, 'I heard there were a few more of us around here in town,'" Willoughby, 74, recalls.

Though none of the four served together on missions, Barclay, 70, and Willoughby were in the same unit, just at different times. Gaspard and Waskovich met through a friend of Waskovich's who was doing research for a book about the SOG teams.

Invariably, amidst all the laughter that transpires at their outpost at Zaharias, talk turns to battle stories; about having to wear plainclothes uniforms with no identifiable American affiliation or U.S. tags. Or like the time Waskovich was part of a covert mission that shut down



the Ho Chi Minh Trail for a week. Or when all Barclay could hear was the “ping, ping” of shots being directly fired into his helicopter — “and you were glad you brought your (bulletproof) vest because you could sit on it,” he said.

“I was scared sh\*\*less every time I went out, but you had to overcome it,” said Waskovich. “I guess you guys were, too,”

“Yep,” nodded Willoughby.

“You were really on your own,” added Barclay.

Barclay remembers a woman administrator who had to sign off on all SOG assignments as his “guardian angel.” Coming off his first tour of duty and considering reenlisting, she asked if he had siblings. When he said no, he was an only child, she suggested he sit out the next SOG mission. Barclay went on to serve more than another 20 years in the military, retiring as a master sergeant.



Tom Waskovich

Only now can any of them talk about this. The unit’s activities and identities were government classified until recently, with members signing non-disclosure agreements as conditions to their service.

SOG had a little more than 1,000 men cross border operations during the Vietnam campaign and 13 of them have been awarded the Medal of Honor. Just last month, Gary Rose, who served in the same type of mission Waskovich ran, is the most recent recipient of the national honor. Rose, an SOG medic, ran through a hail of gunfire in Laos in 1970 to treat more than 50 of the wounded.

The bravery they displayed as young men, some still teenagers, has continued to be a bond that survives well more than 40 years later.

“We would have died for each other back then,” said Waskovich.

Barclay added, “Just as we would now.”

**VETERANS COUNCIL of DUVAL COUNTY  
(FORMERLY NEFLVC)**



We have started a new era in Duval County with the renaming of the NEFLVC to VCDC. The change was voted on and a majority approved the renaming on October 17, 2017 meeting. The COJ also gave us approval on November 7, 2017 for name change and relocation.

The meeting location has changed also and was voted on and again a majority approved the relocation, it become effective on October 17, 2017 meeting.

**We will hold our 1st meeting at the following time and location:**

**Tuesday, January 16, 2018 at 7pm.**

**American Legion Post 137 in the 40/8 building at:**

**5443 San Juan Ave.**

Jacksonville, FL. 32210

Elected Officers 2017- 2018

Steven Spickelmier – Chairman

David Trotti – 1st Vice Chairman

Eugenia Reed – 2nd Vice Chairman

Kathy Church – Secretary

Esther Byrd – Treasurer

**ORGANIZATIONS MEMBERSHIP STANDS AT 30**



**COUNTY COUNCILS VETERANS PRESIDENTS**

**BAKER, CLAY, DUVAL, NASSAU, ST. JOHNS**

**ON 11/04/2017 THE PRESIDENTS OF THE VETERANS COUNCILS  
CAME TOGETHER TO FORM A GROUP THAT COVERS ALL 5  
COUNTIES FOR “STRENGTH IN UNITY” OR CCVP.**

**WE WILL MEET PRIOR TO THE V4V’S MEETINGS AT THE VETERANS  
MEMEORIAL ARENA. A SLATE OF OFFICERS WAS CHOSEN BY THE  
PRESIDENTS AMONG THEMSELVES AS FOLLOWS for 2018:**

**Steven Spickelmier – President - Duval**

**Doc Monaghan – 1st Vice President - Nassau**

**Larry Porterfield – Secretary – Baker**

**Robert Brewster – Treasurer – Clay**

**Bill Dudley – Advisor – St. Johns**

**David Trotti – Appointed JAG**

**The First Action Together was the Flag Presentation Ceremony at the  
Veterans Memorial Arena on 11/07/2017.**

## Mike DelPizzo, Still serving By Dianna Troyer

Mike DelPizzo knows he will shed a few tears when he volunteers as a pallbearer for a once-forgotten veteran at Jacksonville National Cemetery on November 7.

“You can’t help but get emotional,” he says of the ceremony organized by the Missing in America Project. “This will be my third time as a pallbearer.”

The 59-year-old Orange Park resident—who served 22 years in the Air Force—says he will always remember the first time he was a pallbearer for MIAP.



It was in March. Wearing his dress blues uniform with white gloves, Mike cradled a wooden urn he made that contained the cremains of a private who had served in the Army in World War II.

“His name was Marine Preston Thomas,” says Mike. “It was a surreal feeling. I felt proud to be a veteran and honored to be there for him.”

Mike says he considered Thomas to be like a brother because they both served in the armed forces.

“Friendships you make in the military last a lifetime,” says Mike. “I still get together yearly with five guys I met decades ago. We came from Hispanic, German, Jewish and Italian backgrounds, but it didn’t matter. We’re still as close as blood brothers.”

Mike started his Air Force career as an airplane mechanic. After finishing basic training, the Long Island native was deployed to Korea.

“I was 20, had never traveled outside the U.S., and didn’t know a soul over there,” he recalls. “I worked throughout the Pacific, Europe and England, and the guys I met became like family.”

Mike ended his Air Force career as one of the top 10 Air Force recruiters in the U.S. He is in the Air Force Recruiting Hall of Fame at Randolph Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas.

After retiring from the Air Force, Mike and his family settled near Jacksonville.

Two years ago, he says he was shocked to read a newspaper article about some veterans' remains being interred in cardboard boxes.

"I told my wife, Win, 'That's a heck of a way to treat a veteran,'" Mike says. "I had to do something."

A skilled woodworker, Mike decided to build urns in his garage workshop and donate them to Jacksonville National Cemetery.

"Win contacted the cemetery staff and got the ball rolling," recalls Mike. "She also contacted a local sign company, which donated printed logos of the service branches so they can be placed on the urns. Making these urns is a ministry, the least we can do to pay it forward. I'm thankful to my God for giving me the ability to provide this service."

Since 2012, Mike has made more than 165 urns, most for veterans identified through MIAP.

"At one service, all 20 vets were in urns I had made," says Mike. "Seeing them lined up in front of the American flags, I couldn't even begin to describe my emotions."

Mike talked about his urn project with his co-workers at AT&T in Jacksonville, where he is based as a quality control manager. They felt compelled to contribute.

"They bought wood and had it delivered to my doorstep," says Mike, who has used cypress, oak, black cherry, mahogany and pine.

With about \$100 worth of wood, Mike estimates he can build 15 urns. It takes about 10 hours for him to assemble and varnish each 10-inch by 7.25-inch by 7.25-inch urn.

"I'm blessed to do this," he says. "It makes me happy."

While most of his urns go to MIAP, others are given to veterans' families who cannot afford one.

"I'll keep making the urns as long as there's a need," Mike says. "One day, I'll be in that cemetery, reunited with my extended military family."



## Local Veteran Pays It Forward in Big Ways

Orange Park, Florida (Nov. 7, 2014)—Even though it's been almost 15 years since Mike DelPizzo retired from the U.S. Air Force as master sergeant with 22 years of service, he still feels it's his duty to continue serving by finding ways to honor his fellow veterans.



“Being a veteran is part of my life and why I have decided to pay it forward by continuing to serve in my civilian life,” said DelPizzo, a skilled woodworker who builds urns in his garage workshop. He then donates the urns to the Missing in America Project and the Jacksonville National Cemetery so that the cremated remains of veterans who have been unclaimed can be properly laid to rest during a military ceremony. To date, he has made 171 urns and serves as a pallbearer during the ceremonies.

In addition to this work, DelPizzo recently became a Haven Hospice veteran volunteer. The not-for-profit, community hospice provider believes it's important to remember that veterans also deserve recognition and compassionate care at the end of life's journey. Through the We Honor Veterans program, DelPizzo is able to help recognize Haven veteran patients by facilitating veteran-to-veteran certificate presentations and pinning ceremonies. “One of my favorite parts of the ceremony is when I get to put my hat on, stand at attention and salute that veteran one last time,” said DelPizzo who is in full dress blues during the veteran-to-veteran ceremonies. “My fondest memory was when one of the veterans I saluted attempted to salute me back. It was a touching moment for me and the family.”

He has also created iron garden signs that represent each branch of the U.S. Armed Forces which are placed with an American flag around the garden at the Haven Hospice Orange Park Custead Care Center. “I think they are an interesting way to remind us of those in our armed forces and say thank you to the veterans,” said DelPizzo. “We have a big military presence in this area and it's just one more way to honor them and keep them in mind.”

“The work load is busy and there is no end in sight, but I am honored and privileged to provide these services,” said DelPizzo who works at AT&T when he is not woodworking or volunteering. “I will continue as long as there is a need, and there will always be a need.”

## **ROD PHILLIPS SELECTED BY GOVERNOR SCOTT AND CABINET TO BE INDUCTED INTO THE FLORIDA VETERANS HALL OF FAME**

SSG Rodney Phillips, has been nominated and selected for induction into the Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame Class of 2017.



The Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame recognizes and honors those military veterans who, through their works and lives during or after military service, have made a significant contribution to the state of Florida through civic, business, public service or other pursuits. It is not a traditional military hall of fame, as it focuses on post-military contributions to the State of Florida.

Congratulations again, and thank you for your service and dedication to the State of Florida.

Sincerely, Deborah Voyer, FVHOF Liaison  
Florida Department of Veterans Affairs

The Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame recognizes and honors those military veterans who, through their works and lives during or after military service, have made a significant contribution to the state of Florida through civic, business, public service or other pursuits. It is not a traditional military hall of fame, as it focuses on post-military contributions to the State of Florida.

Congratulations again, and thank you for your service and dedication to the State of Florida.

Sincerely, Deborah Voyer, FVHOF Liaison, Florida Department of Veterans Affairs

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Here is Rod's very impressive biography.

Rodney L. Phillips, Staff Sergeant U.S. Army Airborne

Staff Sergeant Rod Phillips is a proud Combat Wounded Vietnam Veteran who joined the United States Army in July of 1967, following the traditions of his Father and Grandfathers, attending infantry training at Fort Benning Georgia, then onto Advanced Infantry training at Fort Gordon Georgia returning to Fort Benning for Airborne Jump School. In December 1967, after Parachute Training Rod was assigned to the 101st "Screaming Eagles" Airborne Division in Vietnam, another generation of the "Band of Brothers". Rod's introduction to Vi-

etnam was during the infamous “Tet Offensive” of January 1968.

While in Vietnam Rod walked point, the tip of the spear, in the Northern I Corps area of the Ashau Valley, Hue-Phu Bai near Laos, and the DMZ, conducting search and destroy missions in 101st Airborne operations Somerset Plain, Nevada Eagle, and many others. Rod was promoted to the rank of Staff Sergeant and awarded the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart, the Air Medal, and more medals including Presidential Unit Citations.

Upon returning from Vietnam, Rod was assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg North Carolina. He is a graduate of the 82nd Airborne Raider/Recondo (Long Range and Reconnaissance Patrol, LRRP) training, preparing for a second tour in Vietnam which never came. Rod also served on the 82nd Airborne Division’s Honor Guard, traveling across the country performing military funerals of his fallen comrades who paid the ultimate price of the Vietnam War and who are truly America's Hero’s. While at Fort Bragg Rod was also assigned to the Military Police Provost Marshal's Office performing Law Enforcement and Security duties and responsibilities.

After an Honorable Discharge from Army active duty in July of 1970, Rod remained in the Army Reserves, serving with the 11th Special Forces Group located on the campus of Miami University in Miami Florida. Rod began his Law Enforcement career of 38 years, serving with Metro Dade in Miami, Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office Road Patrol, Field Training Officer, Crime Property Detective, Robbery Homicide Detective, Internal Affairs Detective, Risk Management Investigator, and with the State of Florida, including Instructor at the State Law Enforcement Academy in Tallahassee, he retired in 2010 as a Lieutenant.

Rod is also retired from Halifax Health- Hospice as a Security Officer and Veterans Community Relations Liaison. At Halifax-Health he served as the Chairperson for the Veterans Committee at Halifax Health- Hospice and volunteers in their national “Honor Our Veterans” pinning program and many other veteran projects.

Rod is currently in his third term as the elected President of the Vietnam Veterans of America Daytona Beach Chapter 1048, with 200 plus members, during his leadership VVA Chapter 1048 has received both State and National awards. Rod is the VVA Mentor Coordinator for the “Judge David B. Beck Veterans Court” in Volusia County. He is in his second term as 2nd Vice President of the Vietnam Veterans of America Florida State Council, with over



4400 members and 32 chapters, where he serves as chairman of the Agent Orange and PTSD committees.

In 2016, Rod coordinated five Agent Orange Town Halls across the state, primarily one in Daytona Beach which had over 300 people in attendance, Rod and VVA Chapter 1048 were recognized by National VVA (over 600 chapters) as joining only nine other VVA Chapter's in the country to have had over 300 people attending an Agent Orange Town Hall. Also in 2016 Rod received the VVA National Achievement Medal for his outstanding community service, advocacy and dedication to our veterans and veteran issues.

He is the President of the VVA Florida Vietnam Veterans Assistance Foundation, and past editor of the VVA Florida State Council's bi-weekly newsletter, the "E-Recon", receiving the VVA National award for "E Newsletter" of the year in 2016. Rod also has served three terms as a Vice Commander of the Veterans Council of Volusia County and serves on the Homeless Veterans steering committee with the Council, coordinating five yearly "Stand Down's", for Homeless Vets.

Rod is a Life Member of Vietnam Veterans of America, Life Member and past Commander of the Military Order of the Purple Heart Chapter 316 Volusia County, Life Member, and Director on the Board of the 82nd Airborne "Greater Daytona" Chapter, Life Member and current Adjutant of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 3282, Life Member of the Disable American Veterans Daytona Chapter # 84, the 82nd and 101st Airborne Division Association's.

In October 2017, Florida Governor Rick Scott, and his Cabinet Selected Rod to be inducted into the Florida Veterans Hall of Fame which was established in 2013 to recognize and honor those military veterans who, through their works and lives during or after military service, have made a significant contribution to the State of Florida.

Rod and his wife Linda, a Registered Nurse of 45 years, also retired from Halifax Health Hospice, lives in New Smyrna Beach, they have 3 children, Rodney II, Rachel, Clayton and three Grand Children

**A great event, here are some pictures in case you missed it.**

The Cecil Field POW\*MIA Memorial dedication of the newly renamed Chapel of the High Speed Pass. This is the beginning of a journey to bring a National POW/MIA Memorial to Jacksonville. There were 18 Vietnam Veterans honored and presented with the Vietnam War Lapel Pin. For more information on the Cecil Field POW\*MIA Memorial mission visit their website @ [powmiamemorial.org](http://powmiamemorial.org)



## **Cemetery Director, Vietnam veteran, Henry Flagler and friend, from Historic Coast Culture**

**Cliff Shields** is a historical tour guide and reenactor with Tour St. Augustine, who portrays Henry Flagler, a railroad magnate of the Gilded Age. A St. Augustine resident since 2014, Cliff fell in love with the city and devoted his time to learning about its history and that of the people who have influenced it over hundreds of years.



Cliff is the former Director of the Jacksonville National Cemetery and a Vietnam veteran.

### **What is your favorite thing about St. Augustine and St. Johns County?**

I enjoy the history the city has to offer being the oldest city in America. The city is not overcrowded with full-time residences, but I love the fact the tourism is so plentiful. Saint Augustine is a picture-perfect storybook location to visit and live.

### **What led you to become a St. Augustine history buff, and an expert on Gilded Age Mogul Henry Flagler?**

I retired from 31 years in the hotel/resort industry and 15 years from the National Cemetery Administration, an agency within the Veterans Administration. After a couple of years of retirement and just “relaxing on my time” I decided I wanted to do something fun and part-time to fill a void in my life. I saw the tourism in St. Augustine and wanted to be a part of the “action.” I simply just walked into the office of Tour Saint Augustine on Granada Street and introduced myself and asked what I needed to do in becoming a tour guide. I was given an opportunity, after interviewing and being hired as a tour guide for field trip students. I was then asked if I wanted to do adult bus tours as a character in history. Having an extensive background in the hotel/resort industry I felt Henry Flagler was an excellent character to portray ... and as Paul Harvey used to say, “and now you know the rest of the story.”

### **How has reenacting historical figures and events affected your life?**

Stepping onto a tour bus with adults as Henry Flagler turns a lot of heads. I love staying in first person as I do and watch the faces of people and the comments they make all while

giving a 452-year history lesson on St. Augustine. It gives me great satisfaction at the end of the tour to get a round of applause, handshakes, and many photo opportunities. I may never see them again but I know I have made many friends, memories and a good impression. I look forward to being called upon as Henry Flagler in the community. The bottom line: it has filled my retirement years with fun and excitement.



### **What is your favorite aspect of reenacting?**

My favorite parts are the looks and stares you get when entering a building, area or tour bus. People who know Henry Flagler call out my name and generally want to take a picture, shake my hand or just ask me questions.

### **How have you seen St. Augustine change/grow for the better?**

I was in St. Augustine in 1958 as a 9-year-old. I returned in 2013 for the first time with the National Cemetery as the Director of the Jacksonville and St. Augustine National Cemeteries. I chose to retire December 31, 2014. I have now seen St. Augustine in a whole different perspective. Growth in the tourism industry from 1958 to 2017 is extraordinary. I guess I can say it is the “Tale of Two Cities” in growth and excitement. The Old Town Historical District is like going back in time but mixed with the modern lifestyle in the suburbs. It is the best of both worlds.

### **What is your favorite place in St. Johns County? Why?**

Why, of course, that would be St. Augustine. It is the history, mystery, mayhem, ghosts and magic that make St. Augustine my favorite place and I get to work and live here and share all of that with the tourists.

### **What is your favorite Henry Flagler story and why?**

My favorite Henry Flagler stories are his rise from rags to riches and launching himself into the Gilded Age with Standard Oil, John D. Rockefeller, and the Ponce de Leon and Alacazar Hotels. I always start out with that story just in case there is someone in the crowd that has no idea who Henry Flagler was, and there is always one. Everyone can identify with Standard Oil and the Rockefeller family. It is always a hoot to talk about his three wives, especially Ida Alice.



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**Ronald L. Bailey (USMC) , Lieutenant General Bailey is a Marine,  
not a soldier.**



## **United States Marine Corps**

Years of service 1977– 2017

Rank Lieutenant General

## **Commands held**

2nd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion

3rd Marine Expeditionary Brigade

1st Marine Division

Marine Corps Recruiting Command

## **Awards**

Defense Superior Service Medal

Lieutenant General Ronald L. Bailey was the first African American to take command of the 1st Marine Division of the United States Marine Corps on Thursday, June 30, 2011.

## **Education**

Graduated from St. Augustine High School in the 1970s

He graduated from Austin Peay State University in Tennessee in 1977 and was commissioned a Marine second lieutenant that same year. He is a Life Member of Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity. He served as an infantry officer.

When appointed to the Marine Corps Recruiting Command, Bailey said "...leadership is about influence and relationships – relationships with the American people. Our nation's citizens expect us to be America's expeditionary force in readiness committed to their protection at home and abroad; we will honor that expectation with the professional and empathetic execution of our mission within their communities nationwide."

## **Career**

His military appointments were published by Camp Pendleton Patch and by the Los Angeles Times on July 1, 2011. Bailey was appointed in January to head the Marine Corps Recruiting Command, where he will command more than 22,000 troops. He also served as commanding general of the San Diego Western Recruiting Region and Marine Corps Recruit Depot, according to a Marine Corps Base press release at the time.

In June 2013, Lieutenant General Bailey was promoted to his current rank and assigned to Headquarters Marine Corps as the Deputy Commandant for Plans, Policies, and Operations.

## VETERANS MEMORIAL ARENA ARMED FORCES FLAG DEDICATION

Florida Air Force Sergeants Association Chapter 559 was well represented at the Jacksonville Florida Veterans Memorial Arena. The Chapter donated an Air Force Flag for permanent display in the arena where it will be proudly displayed to all that enter the arena. AFSA 559's flag donation will join OLD GLORY, the Florida State Flag and the flags of our Armed Forces by permission of the City of Jacksonville and SMG Jacksonville.

L/R: MSG Mike DelPizzo, MSG Steven Spickelmier, CMS Pat Archuleta, CMS Daryl Evans, AFJROTC C/Maj Sheryl Evans, SMS Sherry Evans and CMS Stephen James.  
(Photo credit CMS George Carroll)



The sign outside American Legion Post 194 invited all veterans to join the Post in a free Thanksgiving Dinner.

Reporter Michael Isam was there and said "I offer my sincerest "Thanks" to American Legion Post 194 for 11 years of delivering Thanksgiving meals to Disabled, home bound Veterans and Surviving Spouses!"

In all the years of participation, I am still hit hard when a person breaks into tears because they realize they are not forgotten.

It sometimes takes a while to deliver all the meals because the folks need to talk and share their stories. They are amazing!



On October 29, 201, the Filipino-American Veterans Society (FAVS) hosted the awarding of the US Congressional Gold Medal (CGM), the highest civilian honor the United States can bestow. The ceremony was to honor Filipino Veterans of WW II. At this event, the presenters of the award were US Congressman John Rutherford and Adm. Bette Bolivar, Commander, Navy Southeast Region. Other dignitaries included US Congressman Ted Yoho and City Council President Anna Lopez Brosche, the first Filipino-American elected to the Jacksonville City Council, and several leaders of the Filipino community.

During the ceremony, one CGM was awarded posthumously to Sgt. Romeo Ybanez, Sr. which was received by her daughter Yvonne Gandionco. The other CGM was awarded to Capt. Patricio Ganio, Sr. He is one of the 260,000 Filipino who fought the Japanese alongside US Armed Forces Far East under Gen. Douglas McArthur from July 1941 to December 1946.

The ceremony was emceed by FAVS President Gee Mercado and gave the opening remarks. FAVS Honor Guards performed the Parade of Colors during the singing of the American and Philippine Anthems. They also stood as sideboys during the awarding ceremony.



Picture: Congressional Gold Medal awardee Capt. Pat Ganio, Sr. (in wheelchair). with FAVS Honor guards and US Congressmen John Rutherford (left) and Ted Yoho.



## St. Johns County Veterans Treatment Court

On November 11, our nation honored our veterans with parades and dedications at monuments. These are important. But we can show our gratitude in no better way than helping those who return from military service live productive and happy lives. The Veterans Treatment Court is dedicated to this goal.

More than 20,000 veterans live in St. Johns County. These men and women sometimes return to the community with life-changing impairments, including post-traumatic stress disorder, brain injury and depression. Sadly, some turn to substance abuse and other destructive behaviors. Crimes such as DUI, domestic violence, and theft can be the result.

Twelve generations of veterans have returned home since our nation's founding. Until this century, those charged with crimes found themselves in an adversarial relationship with the state they had faithfully served. Destructive cycles of incarceration, homelessness and suicide often followed. As Judge Howard O. McGillin, Jr., who heads the St. Johns County Veterans Treatment Court, notes, these veterans have "not made it all the way home."



The Veterans Treatment Court is designed to break this cycle, and ensure that justice is accessible and responsive to our veterans in a collaborative, treatment based program. Currently, there are twenty-one participants, with several veterans typically joining at each court hearing, which is held twice a month. Most participants have substance abuse problems. Many have received trauma-related diagnoses. Some were homeless prior to entering Veterans Treatment Court.

Veterans entering the Court experience a team approach, familiar from their military service. The Judge has the role of commanding officer: asking each participant about his or her progress, offering encouragement, and commendation for their achievements. The Judge is also there to address difficulties the participants may have in meeting their goals, and to set them on the right path.

Participants consult with the Veterans Justice Outreach specialist and therapist, and set

up their first therapy appointments. As non-commissioned officers are to the military, these Veterans Administration representatives are the backbone of the program, ensuring that all participants receive the treatment they need. Among the other team members present are the director of St. Johns County Legal Aid, who assists participants with civil legal issues, and the Office of the Public Defender's attorney assigned to the Court.

Participants are never alone in facing their challenges. Each is assigned a mentor, who is also a veteran, to be their "battle buddy." Mentors stand by their participant in Court, and are never more than a phone call away.

Life skills and goals, such as education, employment, and finding stable housing, are fostered by all members of the team.

The Veterans Treatment Court is no easy out. Misdemeanor participants meet weekly with the coordinator, while participants with felony cases are supervised by the Department of Corrections officer assigned to the Court. All participants are subject to frequent drug/alcohol screenings. They do community service, and may pay fines and costs. Participants who violate program requirements, such as testing positive on a drug screening, face sanctions, including jail time for serious or repeated infractions.

This is obviously a very different approach from a traditional court. Its benefits to the veteran are evident. However, it also benefits the community at large. Graduates of veterans' courts are proving to have far lower recidivism rates than defendants processed through traditional courts. The St. Johns County Veterans Treatment Court is approaching its first anniversary. We look forward to continuing to build this valuable service in which our community offers our veterans in the criminal justice system the dignified and effective solution they deserve. At our first graduation, scheduled for January 2018, the Judge will present the graduates with our challenge coin, provided to the program by the St. Johns County Veterans Council. It is engraved "Welcome Home".

*"If you have further questions, please contact Cynthia C. Thompson, St. Johns County Veterans Treatment Court Coordinator at 4010 Lewis Speedway, Suite 275, St. Augustine, Florida 32084, (904) 827-5626", [ccthompson@circuit7.org](mailto:ccthompson@circuit7.org)*

## Yellow Ribbon Flight to Honor Mission

The Yellow Ribbon mission taking Veterans from Lakeland Linder Airport to Washington DC will take place on 11 April 2018.

The mission will be a one day event departing early in the morning and returning that day.

The mission will take place during the Sun 'n Fun Fly-in. All Veterans who have not participated in a previous Honor Flight or Flight to Honor are eligible.

At the request of numerous veterans of the Vietnam and later eras, we have created options that a veteran may select to participate on the mission.

**Option 1.** Veteran accompanied by a Guardian. This is primarily for a Veteran requiring physical assistance and/or a Guardian specifically requesting to accompany a particular Veteran. The Guardian donates \$450 for the opportunity. No cost to the Veteran.

**Option 2.** Veteran unaccompanied by a Guardian but sponsored by a family member, employer, organization or friend. The sponsor contributes \$250 for a seat on the mission for the Veteran.

**Option 3.** Veteran unaccompanied by a Guardian sponsors himself or herself and donates \$250 for a seat on the mission.

For Option 2 & 3 the Veteran must be physically capable of completing the mission without assistance such as a walker, wheelchair or other mobility device. This does not preclude another veteran accompanying a veteran needing assistance.

Veterans wishing to participate are urged to submit an application as soon as possible. Go to [PolkVeteransCouncil.com](http://PolkVeteransCouncil.com) to download an application.



## From the Semper Fidelis Society 4th Quarter Newsletter

Did You Know... The U.S. Marine Corps has concluded that a previously unknown Marine is in the iconic flag raising image taken atop Mt. Suribachi during the battle of Iwo Jima in 1945. Researchers working on a Smithsonian Channel documentary about AP photographer Joe Rosenthal's iconic image approached the Marine Corps months ago to consider their theory that the identities of the flag raisers are incorrect.



The Marine Corps' commandant, Gen. Robert Neller, formed a review panel to consider all available images, film, statements and previous investigations. That panel and the commandant came to the same conclusion: that one of the six men in the Rosenthal photograph was misidentified. The Marine Corps now believes Navy Pharmacist's Mate 2nd Class John Bradley was not in the Rosenthal image, but was involved in the initial flag raising hours before the famous photo was taken.

Based upon the evidence reviewed, another Marine, Private First Class Harold Schultz, from Detroit, Mich. was the sixth man caught in the frame of what is considered the most famous war photograph. "Our history is important to us, and we have a responsibility to ensure it's right," said Neller. "Although the Rosenthal image is iconic and significant, to Marines it's not about the individuals and never has been," according to Neller. "Simply stated, our fighting spirit is captured in that frame, and it remains a symbol of the tremendous accomplishments of our Corps -- what they did together and what they represent remains most important. That doesn't change."

The Marine Corps' review panel was led by a retired general officer, Jan Huly, and consisted of both active duty and retired Marines, as well as two military historians. They reviewed the material beginning in late April and recently presented their findings and recommendations to Neller for his decision. Now the Marine Corps' history will reflect the identities of the six flag raisers as: Corporal Harlon Block, Private First Class Rene Gagnon, Private First Class Ira Hayes, Private First Class Harold Schultz, Private First Class Franklin Sousley, and Sergeant Michael Strank.



## Veterans Council of St. Johns County, Inc. Minutes of October 26, 2017

**Officers present:** Chairman Bill Dudley; Secretary Michael Rothfeld, John Mountcastle, Treas.

Vice Chairman Ray Quinn

Chairman Dudley called the meeting to order at 1900 hours

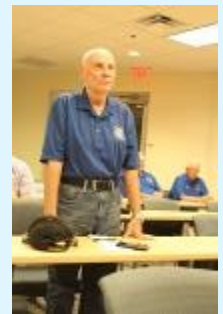
Chairman Dudley led the Pledge to the Flag, Vice Chairman Ray Quinn gave the Invocation

Last month's Minutes were approved as presented

The Treasurer's Report was approved as presented

### Introduction of Guests:

Bill Filipsic WWP; Cliff Heniker St Johns Cares; Dave Treffinger VVA 1059, Jennifer Price Steadfast Asset Management



### Speaker:

**Scott Grant**, spoke about the German U Boat attack on American oil tankers on the east coast in 1942. The U Boat U-123 sunk 12 ships including the Gulfamerica off the coast of Jacksonville Beach on April 10, 1942. The Commander of the U Boat Reinhard Hardegen is the last surviving German U-boat commander. He sank 22 ships, amounting to 115,656 gross register tons sunk, making him the 24th-most-successful commander in World War II.



### Committee Reports:

**Mac:** No cost Veterans photo ID cards will be free and available soon, need a DD 214 to get ID card. On Nov. 9 all veterans invited to Valley Ridge in Nocatee, 8:45 am and to Liberty Pines Academy Nov. 9, 9am to join the students in celebrating Veterans Day. The Marine Corps Toys for Tots boxes are placed around town, please contribute.

**Ray Quinn:** funds are needed for Wreaths Across America to cover ALL headstones at St Augustine National Cemetery. It is \$ 15 a wreath. Donation forms distributed and all asked

to circulate.

Veterans interested in marching/riding/volunteering for the Nov. 11 Veterans Day Parade please meet SGM Ray Quinn at 8:45 am on Orange St.

**John Leslie:** VVA 1084 President, donated \$ 1000 to American Legion Post 94 for their Safe Kids Zone van and \$ 250 donated to St Johns Housing Partnership to help veterans. Veterans Treatment Court will now meet twice a month to handle growing number of clients. VTC now has 18 in the program with 6 veteran mentors.

**Chairman Dudley:** Chairman Dudley spoke about the issues regarding the new CBOC placement, no site has been selected yet, and the Veterans Day Parade Nov. 11. If you or your organization want to march/ride contact Ray Quinn. The parade will have High School Bands, 2 helicopters, a fly over, ROTC and JROTC marching. Several military vehicles will take part.

The St Augustine Beach Veterans Day event will begin at 3 pm, featured speaker BG Mike Canzoneri.

**New Business:** Fred Johnstone, President of the Vilano Beach VFW presented Ray Quinn with a check for \$ 150. For Wreaths Across America.



**Good of the Order:** John McGinty attended a VVA meeting in Wash. DC and reported to us that VVA Nation- will allocate more money locally to fight PTSD and suicides.

Meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm.

The next meeting of the Veterans Council will be on Thursday, November 30, 7 pm in the Health & Human Services Building, 200 San Sebastian View.

**Future speakers:**

**November 30,** Cynthia Thompson, Veterans treatment Court Coordinator  
Eric Heineman, Executive Director K9s United

**December 28,** Lynn Brannon, FL NG State Coordinator, Family Programs  
SSG Ben Watford, “The Warriors Peer Group”

**January 25, 2018-** Mike Mitchell, Jacksonville University Veteran Students  
Coordinator

*The Veterans Council of St. Johns County thanks Bob Dinkins for sharing his story with us all, and we ask that you submit your stories to us also. We all would enjoy reading your service stories.*

## Bob Dinkins-U.S. Air Force-1969



*"It's my Baby! I talked to Her. How you doin' today? Let's go flyin' today."*

It's no surprise that Bob Dinkins became a crack mechanic who was dedicated to the perfection of C-130 aircraft for the U.S. Air Force in Vietnam. When you speak with Bob today, at 64 years old, you're pretty certain that he could still deliver a 100% safe, ready-to-fly aircraft.

It all started when he was a young boy. *"I was always around aircraft as a kid. It amazed me what airplanes could do. How they got flight and everything. So that curiosity led me to the Air Force...about what makes an airplane work and why does it fly."* It wasn't only airplanes that interested Bob. He loved to watch the old black and white television movies; John Wayne, "Victory at Sea" and "The Big Picture". His dad spent four years in the Army after Pearl Harbor was bombed. His two uncles were in North Africa and the Invasion of Normandy during World War II. *"A lot of this influenced me about patriotism. I always wanted to go into the military."*

Bob was born in the mining town of Welch, West Virginia in September, 1949. At the age of four, his dad moved the family to Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. In 1968, after graduating from high school in Fort Lauderdale, Bob spent a year at Broward County Community College. The thoughts of aircraft and military were never far away. *"I was working in an electronics factory as an expeditor, and there was an Air Force representative officer there... I saw him in the lunch room one day, and I'm sittin' there, lookin' at him, talkin' to him...uniform, and I said 'That's it!' and I went and enlisted."*

In January, 1969, Bob was living his longtime dream. When he enlisted in the Air Force, he was in the right place. *"I took an aptitude test when I enlisted. I wanted to go mechanical because I scored highest in electronics and mechanical. I got Aircraft Maintenance. Everything fell in place for me."*

The story of Bob Dinkins is his extreme dedication to his job and the pride he has for making a contribution in Vietnam. Bob was thrilled to be a part of **Welcome Home/A Monument of Honor**. Prior to our interview, we spoke together on the telephone. He is clear that he and his Air Force brothers made a significant contribution to the American efforts in Vietnam. *"I'm a Vietnam veteran, United States Air Force. It was my honor to serve. I'm a proud American and patriot. And always will be. We made a contribution. Every piece that goes together makes the puzzle. Everybody contributes to that piece. When that puzzle is whole, you get a completed process."*





Bob Dinkins-U.S. Air Force-1969

The steps to being an aircraft mechanic began with the basic Air Force basic training at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio for six weeks in January, 1969. Next it was a 400-mile bus trip north, near the Oklahoma border, to Sheppard Air Force base in Wichita Falls, Texas for thirteen weeks of Aircraft Maintenance school in small classes of twelve. *"I was training for Turbo Prop Aircraft. At that time the Air Force only had three turbo-prop aircraft; the C-130's, C-133s, which they were getting ready to phase out. They had the OV-10s which was a small, two-engine aircraft used for observations and surveillance. The C-130 was the cargo transport, heavy lift."*

The complexity of the Vietnam war was enormous. There were the Army and Marine fighting forces on the ground. The Navy operations on the rivers. The military air support of both the Air Force and the Navy. There were medical units. Chaplains and nurses and doctors. Engineers. Signal and communications. Maintenance. Intelligence. And an endless, vast cadre of support for the overall missions of fighting the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese Army. Bob Dinkins was on his way to Travis Air Force Base in August, 1969 to be a part of that support. He was on his way to Naha, Okinawa.

Okinawa is a small island in the western Pacific approximately equidistant from Tokyo and Saigon. Naha is 1,700 miles from Vietnam. Bob still demonstrated his long memory and expertise: *"Plenty of fuel. 6 hours flying time to Vietnam. Burns up to 4,000 pounds and hour."*

Bob was part of the C-130 aircraft maintenance team in Naha. *"The base in Okinawa was a depot-level maintenance where we did all of the heavy maintenance on the aircraft. Aircraft would fly so many hours, let's say, 300 hours and you had to do certain maintenance practices on it. That was what Okinawa was for. We had 70 aircraft that belonged to the Wing. Four Squadrons. We had that many aircraft to maintain. You're doing OJT. When you're certified, you're evaluated and you're promoted to the Journeyman level. You're able to do tasks by yourself. Once you learn that and you're certified, then you're on your own."* Bob made it up to Journeyman level in three months.

There was more. The maintenance crews were in direct support of the pilots who flew the aircraft. *"There had to be a trust there."* The crews knew every inch of the aircraft. It became personal. *"It's my Baby! I talked to Her. How you doin' today? Let's go flyin' today."*

The C-130s were a vital part of the complexity of the war. They were, in a sense, the "lifelines" for combat support. *"We did mainly combat support in South Vietnam. We had all the cargo that went to all bases down there. We'd pick up major cargo loads at Tan Son Nhut and Cam Rahn and deliver it to smaller forward-operating bases in country. Most of our cargo point in Vietnam was usually personnel, additional pilots, additional crews and extra aircraft maintenance equipment, or supplies to help maintenance people in Vietnam. Our aircraft would be able to go into smaller forward operating bases...your dirt runways and jungle terrain."*

The missions of the 130s would have them travel throughout the country: Da Nang, Qui Nhon, Song Be, Tay Ninh, Nha Trang. Most of the time was spent in central to northern highlands. They were supplying special forces camps with food, ammunition, medical supplies and fuel. *"We would haul a lot of South Vietnamese families. When their husband's troops were reassigned, the families would go with them."*





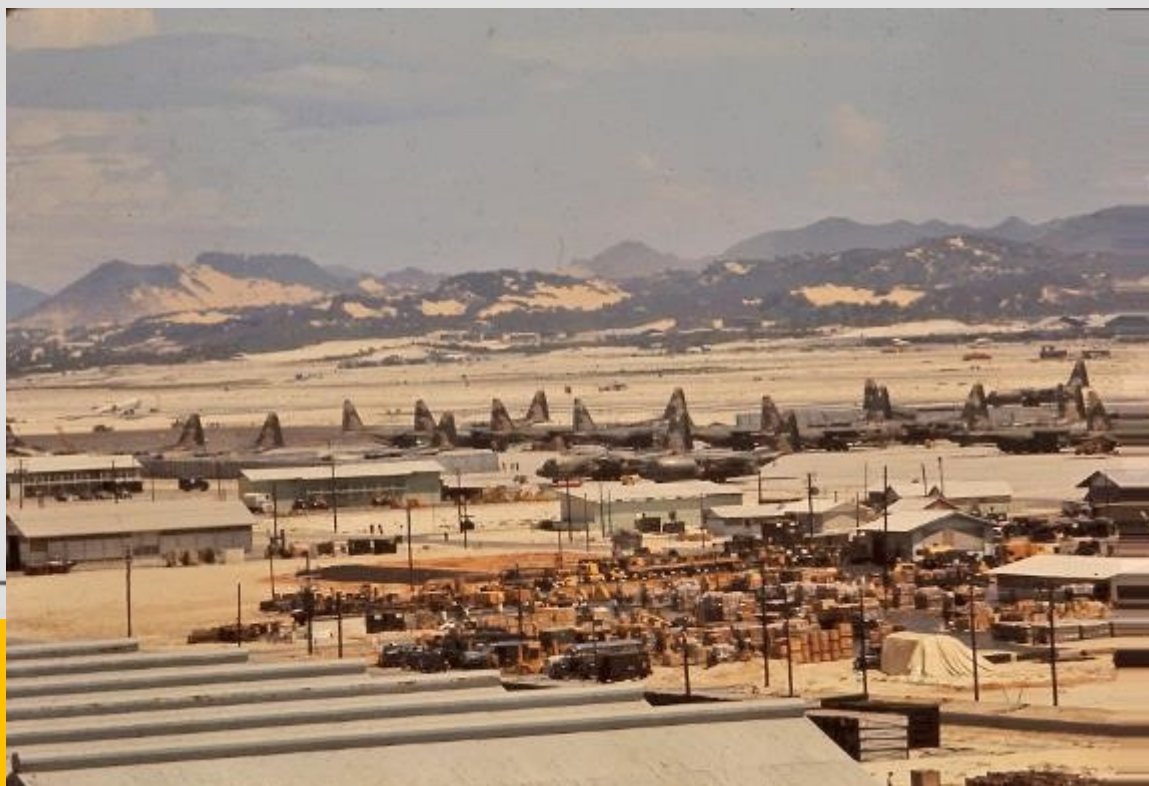
Bob Dinkins-U.S. Air Force-1969

Bob Dinkins served two tours with his missions in Vietnam. Bob reminded me of another Air Force man whom I had interviewed two years ago: Owen Kelly, who worked on C-119s in Vietnam fifteen years earlier, in 1954. What was most pronounced about Bob's dedication was the personal and professional care he gave to every minute of his job. Always, his aircraft had to be impeccable.

*"Primarily, if you go to Vietnam on an assigned mission with an aircraft, you are on that aircraft. You gotta be good because that airplane is important! I talked to Her! Many times, I would not leave that aircraft unless it was right. There were many times when the guys were done with their jobs...go on back to the hootch or whatever...I said, 'Nah. I gotta finish this up. It ain't right! It ain't done yet! Not to my perfection.*

*"She's important to me. The assignment. It was a direct reflection of my character and personality. If she was not a good airplane, then I was not a good person. So, if I was a good person, my airplane was a good airplane.*

*"That's just the way it is."*



## **An elevation drawing of the proposed MIA Plaza at the Cecil Field POW/MIA Memorial.**

The Cecil Field POW/MIA Memorial will begin taking shape in the coming months with the restoration and dedication of the chapel, a static display of aircraft and a museum. That's just Phase 1 of the project that Executive Director Mike Cassata hopes will become the national memorial and museum that will tell the story of the more than 83,000 military personnel who



are still unaccounted for, going back to World War II. The organization reached an agreement with the city in August to lease the 26 acres at the former Cecil Field Naval Air Station, which was decommissioned in 1999. The base chapel was gutted and turned into storage. The building wasn't maintained and needs to be completely renovated, said Sam Houston, who was base commander from 1992 to 1994.

Renovation work, which is expected to cost between \$400,000 and \$500,000, will begin after the first of year. The building will be rededicated and renamed Chapel of the High-Speed Pass during an open house at 11 a.m. Nov. 3. The work should be completed by next summer. An area will be cleared and readied for a static display of aircraft. The base, established in 1941, was home to the first Atlantic Fleet Squadrons to fly the A-7 Corsair II, the F/A-18 Hornet, the S-3A and S-3B Viking, and the ES-3A Shadow. Cecil Field squadrons were aboard every Atlantic Fleet carrier deployed to Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. Thirteen pilots from Vietnam and three others from more recent conflicts were listed as POW or MIA and are remembered with a Hero's Walk and Freedom Trees behind the chapel.

Phase 2 is more ambitious. It is expected to cost between \$10 million and \$15 million and take five years to complete. The names of the 83,000 missing and unaccounted for will be on display in a tunnel. "The ones who are still missing will be projected on the wall. You won't be able to touch and feel them," Cassata said. "But when they are identified they will be etched on the wall. When you can touch them, you know they are home." Above the tunnel will be an observation deck overlooking the site that will include a reflection pond with a deck in the shape of the bow of the USS Saratoga. A small museum will be in the old base theater. Nearby will be a field with 83,000 disks. "From 20 feet, when you look down on the field, you'll see the volume. It's an amazing number of people," Cassata said. "It's about the same number of seats there are at the Florida-Georgia game when they open up all the seats at EverBank Field."

The number of missing changes on a weekly basis as more remains are returned to their families. Advances in forensic pathology and the use of DNA are enabling the identification of remains from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm and the recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. One of the names that will be etched on the wall is Frederick W. Wright III, commander of Carrier Air Wing 3, who was shot down Nov. 10, 1972 over Vietnam. It was 18 years before his remains were returned to his family. He is buried in Arlington National

Cemetery. His daughter, Cynde Covington, was 10 years when her father was shot down. She remembers his memorial service at the base chapel. The family lived at the base from 1970 to 1973. Covington said she and her brother did almost everything on the base — shop, go to the movies, hang out at the teen center. Covington said her mother was active in the wives group that included Mary Hoff, who inspired the creation of the black-and-white POW/MIA flag. Her husband, Lt. Cmdr. Michael Hoff, was shot down in 1970. “We would spend hours sorting flags and [POW/MIA] bracelets that the wives were doing to raise awareness for the men. I remember when I was 10, 11, 12, sitting on the floor sorting them in boxes,” Covington said. “Having grown up at Cecil Field, I was pretty frustrated when they closed it. It was my last military home,” she said. “We didn’t know what was going to become of the memorial trees that were dedicated for my father and all those other men. I was really stunned to see what happened to the chapel.” Covington describes herself as the “emotional family adviser” to the organization as plans for the site have developed.

“I am very, very pleased with the design,” she said. “The first time I saw it, I was moved to tears. So all this that is happening now, that we will have a place of honor for all the military branches who have unaccounted, is huge for me.”

Houston said he thinks the memorial will become a national destination. “There’s lots of walls and memorials and exhibits but there’s not a single memorial that lists all 83,000 MIAs,” he said. “We would be the only one of its kind. We’d like for it become a national park.” The group also is trying to rename New World Avenue along the site to POW/MIA Memorial Parkway. To publicize their efforts, the group is dedicating a POW/MIA chair at EverBank Field on Dec. 3. A similar one was dedicated in September at the Baseball Grounds. “It’s a reminder that they will never be forgotten,” Cassata said.

For more information, go to [www.powmiamemorial.org](http://www.powmiamemorial.org).



Mayor Lenny Curry signs bill, flanked by Cecil Field POW/MIA Memorial, Inc. Communications Director John Sutherland, a retired U.S. Navy commander; Ed Callao, retired U.S. Navy commander; Padraic Mulvihill of the Rotary Club of North Jacksonville; Dale Moe, retired National Guard chief petty officer; Doug Register of North Jacksonville Rotary Club; Captain Sam Houston, former U.S. Navy commanding officer at Cecil Field; Mike Cassata, Cecil Field POW/MIA Memorial, Inc. executive director; District 2 Councilman Al Ferraro; District 12 Councilman Doyle Carter; Chaplain Pat Archuleta, retired U.S. Air Force chief master sergeant, and District 3 Councilman Aaron Bowman, a retired U.S. Navy captain

## Ewing's Medal of Honor recipient Fred Zabitosky receives posthumous memorial

*Local Green Beret Tom Waskovich served with Fred Zabitosky*

By Sulaiman Abdur-Rahman, The Trentonian

EWING >> One of the greatest Americans to serve in the U.S. armed forces was late Ewing resident Fred W. Zabitosky, who received the Medal of Honor for his “extraordinary heroism” in Laos during the Vietnam War conflict.



Sharon Zabitosky Wilcox of Texas flew from the Lone Star State to the Garden State to attend a special Ewing Township ceremony on Saturday that honored her big brother posthumously. “I think they did an amazing job,” Wilcox said of the township’s newly unveiled dedication to Fred Zabitosky at the Ewing Municipal Building. “On behalf of the Zabitosky family, I appreciate being here.”

President Richard Nixon presented Zabitosky with the Medal of Honor at the White House on March 7, 1969. The citation at the time said Zabitosky “distinguished himself in the Republic of Vietnam on Feb. 19, 1968,” but the actual combat heroics took place in Laos during a secret U.S. mission.

Wilcox wiped away tears Saturday afternoon as she watched the approximately three-minute-long video of Nixon presenting her brother with the nation’s highest military decoration. “It’s hard for me to watch,” she said, “but I’m happy that it’s there.”

With dozens of people in attendance, including military veterans and active duty U.S. Special Forces, Ewing Mayor Bert Steinmann thanked everyone for showing up to the ceremony. “It gives me great pleasure to be here for this great occasion,” he said, describing Zabitosky as a “heroic gentleman who was actually born here in Ewing Township, went to school here in Ewing Township.”

### **Combat valor**

U.S. Army Sgt. First Class Fred Zabitosky and his comrades encountered enemy combatants during a secret mission in Laos on Feb. 19, 1968. Serving as an assistant team leader of a nine-man Special Forces long-range reconnaissance patrol, Zabitosky “ordered his patrol to move to a landing zone for helicopter extraction while he covered their withdrawal with rifle fire and grenades,” according to his Medal of Honor citation. Throughout the encounter, he demonstrated “conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty.”

When rescue helicopters arrived, Zabitosky boarded one and delivered fire on the enemy as the aircraft took off. But the hail of bullets from the North Vietnamese troops caused the helicopter to crash, knocking Zabitosky unconscious. Upon recovering consciousness, he “ignored his painful injuries and moved to the flaming wreckage” in an attempt to rescue his patrol members.

“Despite his own serious burns and crushed ribs, he carried and dragged the unconscious pilot through a curtain of enemy fire to within 10 feet of a hovering rescue helicopter before collapsing,” reads the citation. “Zabitosky’s extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.”

After the firefight, an investigation revealed that several hundred enemy soldiers were killed that day, including 109 at the first landing zone, according to the findings previously reported by The Trentonian. Sgt. Doug Glover died in the crash and co-pilot John W. Cook died several days later while Zabitosky spent the next six weeks in the hospital recovering from his wounds.



Ewing Patriotic Committee member Chris Biache, a U.S. Navy veteran, designed the newly unveiled display at Ewing town hall that features an authentic Medal of Honor and other decorations consistent with every service award that Zabitosky received. The display also features an interactive touch screen that allows visitors to view the vintage video of Zabitosky receiving the Medal of Honor and gives visitors easy navigational ability to read biographical details about Zabitosky.

“It’s been a labor of love for me,” Biache said of his work in designing the special display case. He said Vietnam War veterans did not receive honorary parades upon returning home and that many of them were in fact shunned for their service. “This is the township’s way to try to reach out to them and make it right,” he said of the township’s Zabitosky memorial.

After completing his military service, Zabitosky worked for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and made several trips to Laos and Cambodia to help find the remains of American fighters missing in action, according to Biache, who said that “even after he retired, he was very much active in supporting his brothers in arms.”

*Retired U.S. Army First Lt. Tom Waskovich, a Vietnam War veteran, described Zabitosky as being an “intelligent, down-to-earth, straight shooter” and said it “was good to be a friend of Fred.”*

Waskovich, former mayor of the Jersey Shore municipality Lacey Township, was one of the guest speakers at Saturday’s event. In his speech, Waskovich talked about how many Americans nowadays consider athletes to be heroes. “They are not heroes,” he said. “Fred Zabitosky was a hero.”

Most people would say that Zabitosky was from Trenton, according to retired U.S. Army Capt. David A. Christian, a highly decorated Vietnam War veteran. But he said “this little sleepy town” of Ewing has “produced one of the finest,” referring to Zabitosky as “one of the few, one of the mighty, one of the respected.” Zabitosky used to live on Oak Lane near Pennington Road and is the only service member from Ewing to be awarded with the Medal of Honor.

Former U.S. Army Green Beret Keith McKim delivered a special presentation at Saturday’s event explaining the backstory of how American patriots stood up to the British during the War of 1812. He detailed how proud Americans had sacrificed their lives to keep the U.S. flag afloat against heavy British bombardment — a display of pure valor that inspired Francis Scott Key to write a poem that later became the nation’s National Anthem, the Star-Spangled Banner. Other dignitaries at the event included Ewing Councilman David Schroth, Councilwoman Jennifer Keyes-Maloney and Mercer County Freeholder Lucy Walter. The ceremony began outdoors with bagpipe performances and speeches and ended indoors with the unveiling of the new Zabitosky memorial and lunch.

Zabitosky was a member of the elite Military Assistance Command-Vietnam-Studies and Observation Group, better known as the MAC-V-SOG. He died in January 1996, succumbing to a brain tumor at the age of 53.

If he was still alive, Zabitosky would have turned 75 on Friday. To ensure that his service, valor and sacrifice will never be forgotten, township officials hosted Saturday’s dedication ceremony. The municipal building off Upper Ferry Road already had a picture display of Zabitosky, but the newly unveiled memorial pays homage to him in a grander, more appropriate fashion befitting of his distinguished service to the country.

“There is no such thing as patriotism in a combat situation,” Zabitosky was quoted as saying in an article originally published in the February 1996 issue of Vietnam Magazine. “You don’t think about medals, promotions or even the flag. You don’t think about why you are there or even your family. You think strictly about the people you are with, and what you can do for each other.”

Attending the dedication with her husband, Sharon Zabitosky Wilcox said, “We were happy to come. We feel grateful for the opportunity. It couldn’t be a more beautiful day.” With all that her brother and many others had to endure, “I hope that someday young children will be asking parents, ‘What’s war?’” Wilcox added. “They don’t know what it is.”

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Can you guess who this  
local VVA 1084 Air Force  
veteran is?



Honor Release Return Member Kat McLaughlin (3rd from right) conducted a POW/MIA Flag Raising Ceremony on behalf of Cecil Field POW/MIA Memorial on Friday 3 November at the Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department Station #56 with the help and support from



Ms. Pam Cain, (2nd from Left) Mr. Joe Hoff, (7th from left), Mr. Sam Mastrogicomo and his Bride, Joan, (2nd & 1st on Right), Sam is a Former POW – 9 April 1944 – 31 Oct. 1945 -Baltic Sea and HRR Member Randy West (8th from left). Mr. Mike Cassata, (left end), Executive Director and Captain Sam Houston, (4th from the left) Chairman of the Board for the newly created Cecil Field POW/MIA Memorial were also on hand supporting the POW/MIA issue.

### After nearly 75 years, son seeks crash site of WWII hero

By Chris Carola | By Chris Carola | AP

ALBANY, N.Y. — Nearly 75 years after Brig. Gen. Kenneth Walker disappeared during a bombing mission over a remote Pacific island, his son is pushing for renewed interest in finding the crash site of the highest-ranking recipient of the Medal of Honor still listed as missing from World War II.



Walker was posthumously awarded the military's highest decoration for repeatedly accompanying his units on dangerous bombing missions, including his last, when he went down with 10 other men in an Army Air Forces B-17 over the island of New Britain in January 1943. Two survived by bailing out and later died in captivity. Walker and the eight others remain listed as missing in action.

Walker's son, Douglas Walker, a retired New York ad man-turned-political consultant, met with Pentagon officials earlier this year to provide information from a team of independent experts that he hopes will prompt U.S. military officials to authorize a new search for the downed bomber.

“The cause is to bring back everybody,” Walker, of New Canaan, Connecticut, told The Associated Press Thursday. “While my father's career helps heighten the profile of this case, he's no more important than anybody else on that plane.”



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

## Fact Sheet

Office of Public Affairs  
Media Relations

Washington, DC 20420  
(202) 461-7600  
[www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

### **VA's Final Rule to Consider Certain Diseases Associated with Exposure to Contaminants in the Water Supply at Camp Lejeune as Presumptive for Service Connection**

As part of the Department of Veterans Affairs' ongoing commitment to provide care to Veterans, the VA published regulations on January 13, 2017, to establish a presumption of service connection for eight conditions associated with exposure to contaminants in the water supply at Camp Lejeune. The rule became effective March 14, 2017.

Based on evidence from several internationally recognized scientific authorities, including the National Academies of Science, VA determined there is sufficient scientific and medical evidence available to establish a presumption of service connection between exposure to contaminants in the water supply at Camp Lejeune and the occurrence of eight health conditions.

**The eight presumptive diseases are:**

**adult leukemia, aplastic anemia and other myelodysplastic syndromes, bladder cancer, kidney cancer, liver cancer, multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, Parkinson's disease**

VA will not limit entitlement to active duty military. Rather, VA will also presume exposure for reserve and National Guard members who served at Camp Lejeune for at least 30 days (cumulative) between August 1, 1953 and December 31, 1987.

In addition, VA will establish a presumption that members of the reserves and the National Guard who served at Camp Lejeune during this period and later develop one of the presumptive diseases became disabled during the relevant period of service for purposes of establishing active military service for benefit purposes.

Presumptive service connection for a disease alleged to have been caused by contaminants in the water supply at Camp Lejeune requires medical evidence of a current disease on the presumptive list and evidence from military records or other official service department records of service at Camp Lejeune during the period of contamination.

Veterans meeting these criteria should file a VA Form 21-526EZ with information showing that they have a current diagnosis and their service information. Veterans Service Organizations can help file for benefits. Veterans can also file a claim electronically through [www.eBenefits.va.gov](http://www.eBenefits.va.gov). Veterans should state on their application that their claim is presumptive due to service at Camp Lejeune.



**A little background on the history behind our Vietnam documentary, written by Tom Waskovich (MACVSOG), Harry Manford, formerly of the USMC and local historian and producer Michael Rothfeld.**



This Vietnam documentary is the product of many different people and groups. Most significantly, NE Florida Vietnam veterans who each contributed their tender, often hurt feelings to shape this project. The Vietnam veterans were not like the WWII or Korean War veterans we had worked with on our previous documentaries. The Vietnam veterans were more actively involved in watching, suggesting and directing us to tell their true stories. What emerged shows the veterans to be just like you and me. They fought in an unpopular war and yet returned home to lead normal and successful lives. They could be and are your neighbors, friends and relatives. Florida Veterans Programs & Projects, Inc. (FVPPI) was formed in 2008 primarily to send Care Packages to our troops in war zones. Since then we have sent out over 1000 packages to our troops In Iraq, Afghanistan and to our hospital in Landstuhl, Germany which treats our wounded warriors.

Our goal has since widened to include producing veterans related educational documentaries, shows, events and presentations to the general public, schools, veterans groups, libraries and museums. FVPPI merged with the Veterans Council of St Johns County and along with its Chairman Bill Dudley went on to produce and distribute the documentaries to schools, colleges, libraries and veterans groups. In 2008 we worked with WJCT TV, PBS in Jacksonville, Florida as advisors on "War Stories from the First Coast", a documentary about local Northeast Florida WWII veterans. In 2009 we produced our own documentary, "Korea: Forgotten War, Remembered Heroes" and now our Vietnam documentary "Vietnam: Service, Sacrifice & Courage - Local Neighbors, National Heroes". By the time you read this the Vietnam documentary will have been broadcast on Northeast Florida PBS affiliate, WJCT Public Television on Veterans Day 2010. FVPPI collaborated with the Art Institute of Jacksonville on its Korean War documentary. Our last documentary tells the story of how rescued K9s help our wounded warriors manage their everyday life, "The K9s For Warriors Story".

Media Arts Director, Dr. Nadia Ramoutar and her film students worked with us filming

and editing. It was a learning experience for the students from the very beginning, The students interacted with the veterans, heard their stories first hand and in the process learned about the war and/the sacrifices each man made. The documentary was first shown to the public on June 25th, 2009, the 59th Anniversary of the start of the Korean War. The premiere was held at the Jacksonville Main Library where Jacksonville Mayor John Peyton read a Proclamation honoring veterans of the "Forgotten War". In 2010 FVPPI worked with the students and staff of the Communications Dept. of Flagler College in St. Augustine, Florida. The documentary was directed by Flagler College instructor Josh Wallace with instructor Mark Huelsbeck serving as Technical Director. FVPPI selected the five interviewees and the Flagler group filmed, edited, added music and titles. Michael Rothfeld was the Producer. Vietnam veteran Michael Isam provided the very professional voiceover and the script. Tom Waskovich, who is in the documentary, also served as script writer and supervised the entire project. Terry Allan was an interviewer. Michael Pullium and Fred Dupont provided their support and advice. Septimus Connor, shared his story and contributed emotionally and financially to the project. All are patriots, all true Americans. This was a labor of love as the veterans wanted to finally tell their side of the war. In many cases the documentary served as a catharsis for them.

Our thanks go to the following: Michael Boylan, CEO and President of Northeast Florida PBS affiliate, WJCT Public Television for his support of our efforts to have our local Vietnam veterans tell their stories on PBS; to the Vietnam veterans in the documentary, Tom Crawford, Paul Heagy. Harry Manford, Coy McDonald and Tom Waskovich who finally told the stories of their service to our country; to Jim Murray and Carol Rothfeld who assisted and contributed to every aspect of our project. Earl Kidwell and Bill Napper served as interviewers as they have for our other documentaries.

St. Johns County Florida is very lucky that it has active, experienced veteran leaders. They all worked closely with us on this project, they are Commissioner Ray Quinn, Joe McDermott, Bill Dudley, Ben Meggitt, Heather Andrews, Rick Rees, Tammy Shirley, George April, Dan Blackman, Jim Vanairsdale, George Milroy, George McCrae, Jack Ernissee, and Dan Hughes. A special thank you goes to Col. Ed Taylor who provided constant encouragement, support and historical advice. Col. Taylor is a Korean and Vietnam War veteran who is highly decorated and a true American Patriot. Thank you all, none of this would have been possible without all your help. I apologize to anyone I inadvertently omitted. This

project would not have been possible without the financial support of the Allied Veterans of the World, Inc., and Affiliates, particularly Jerry Bass, National Commander. We and all veterans thank them for their continued support honoring veterans.



Michael Rothfeld    Harry Manford    Tom Waskovich

-----

Green Beret SOG CCN August 23, 1968 Vietnam Documentary dedicated to Leo Chase & Rick Rescorla, partial documentary clip below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H8Cs6Th7Vnc>

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There has been added interest of late in MACV SOG because of the recent awarding of the Medal of Honor to Army Capt. Gary "Mike" Burns of MACV SOG so we are providing links to websites about MACV SOG in words and video.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military\\_Assistance\\_Command,\\_Vietnam\\_%E2%80%93\\_93\\_Studies\\_and\\_Observations\\_Group](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_Assistance_Command,_Vietnam_%E2%80%93_93_Studies_and_Observations_Group)

<http://macvsog.cc/>

<http://www.historynet.com/studies-and-observations-group-vietnam.htm>

[http://www.modernforces.com/macv\\_sog.htm](http://www.modernforces.com/macv_sog.htm)

<http://www.military.com/video/operations-and-strategy/vietnam-war/tribute-tp-macv-sog/1626595877001>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yk57BxEiXbk>

<https://army.togetherweserved.com/army/servlet/tws.webapp.WebApp?cmd=PublicUnitProfile&type=Unit&ID=1031>

<https://www.wuft.org/news/2017/09/15/florida-voices-vietnam-veterans-ray-harris-macv-sog-1969-to-1970/>



## **VETS 4 VETS REPORT**

### **NOVEMBER 4, 2017**

The quarterly gathering of Veterans met at 1100 at the Jacksonville Veterans Arena. Following the Pledge of Allegiance and invocation, Mike Mitchell, Retired Navy Chief, welcomed those in attendance. He remarked that this gathering is a means to improve communication among the various veteran organizations in the area by informing, sharing and organizing.

The gathering is a way to bring attention to those living with PTSD and the goal to have a Veteran Community Center for local veterans.

Announcements were made regarding, 1) the 2017 Week of Valor Calendar of Events which is an annual series of events honoring service and sacrifice. Harrison Conyers spoke of these events which start Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup> through November 14<sup>th</sup> listed in the handout at each table. 2). A raffle for a TV by the Montford Point Marines Memorial Project 3). The new location of the Florida Dept. of Veterans Affairs Service Officer located in Suite 100 at 3901 University Blvd. South Outpatient Clinic. 4) Announced Rod Phillips will be inducted into the Veterans Wall of Fame.

Mike Mitchell took roll call of the counties represented at this gathering which included: Duval, Clay, Nassau, St. John and Baker; Rod Philips from Volusia.

There were 200 attendees.

### **Keynote Speakers**

1. Congressman Ron DeSantis of St. John County, District 6. He explained that veterans are supported by congress. He pushed for the passage of the "Paws Act" bill which is to promote Service Dogs for Vets, recognizing that PTSD is often the result of war time events. Having input from speakers to congress enhanced his bill process. He emphasized for the veterans to let their Representatives in Congress to support this bill. Congressman DeSantis asked the veterans community represented, to let congress know "The Veteran's Needs".
2. Anna Brosche: City Council President Jacksonville, FL. Ms. Brosche began by thanking the veterans for their service. She reported that Jacksonville is the most requested Duty Station. One in four individuals is directly connected to the military. Quality of Life, the low cost of living, and the convenient location of Military Bases for health care and commissary add to a sense of community. She reported that through the City of Jacksonville Military Affairs and Veterans Department is served our local vets through our Veteran Service Officers and social need assistance programs



3. Charlie Cofer is the Public Defender Fourth Judicial Circuit Veterans Treatment Court of Florida. Charlie has had this position since January 2017 which serves Duval, Clay and Nassau Counties. He explained the dynamics of this court that deals with veterans and explained the Basic Eligibility requirements for those interested in this program. The Key Requirements are that the veteran or active duty individual must have physical, mental health problems or substance abuse/alcohol problems that are related to their active duty service. A screening process is requested by the judge that looks at past history before acceptance into the 12 to 14 month program.

Judge Floyd spoke to the gathering providing more information about the program which is to restore the person to a productive life and regain pride in themselves. He explained that it is a team effort to get the vets the care they need from counseling, and VA care. He emphasized that the “heart” of the program is the aspect of Mentors who are veterans themselves, and provide supportive guidance for those in the program. He encouraged others to think about being Mentors.

4. Brig. Gen Retired Mike Fleming from Jacksonville University spoke about activities the university has supported to assist returning veterans in obtaining jobs in the civilian world. He mentioned the job fairs held in our community to hire Vets. There are over 400 companies involved. Another way to connect is at NE Florida College Networks for educational needs.

### **Scheduled Speakers**

1. Marine GySgt Trey Fagen spoke about “Operation Barnabas” which is located on a 20 acre site in our area. As a combat veteran in 2013, he experienced PTSD symptoms after returning home. Because of his experience and the support through counseling, he wanted to help other veterans. He offers equine therapy, a gun range and a retreat for veterans. The first Saturday of the month is a BBQ where vets are allowed to decompress. It is a place of “comradeship”. He is also considering having Week End Retreats.
2. Theresa Viets is the Military Liaison/Account Executive for the local baseball team: “The Jacksonville Shrimp,” [teresa@jaxshrimp.com](mailto:teresa@jaxshrimp.com) . She is an Army Veteran. The “Shrimp” provide family fun at the ball park. Theresa reported that there are many improvements, plus promotions and discounts for the Vets and Military. Each weekend a family is recognized and treated to dinner. This week is the one-year anniversary of the “re-brand name” of the Shrimp. [www.jaxshrimp.com](http://www.jaxshrimp.com).
3. Retired SSG Ben Watford of “The Warriors Peer Group” began this group in 2012 while he was at JU. He was in radio/communications and was introduced to therapy that helped him deal with his PTSD. He took Psychology courses to find out more in order to help others. He is a Minister at Shindler Drive Baptist

Church on 7100 Shindler Drive, Jax, FL 32222. And is a Christian Peer Group Mentor there [Dumbluck02@gmail.com](mailto:Dumbluck02@gmail.com). Phone: 904 716-3881 and [Facebook.com/thewarriorspeergroup](https://www.facebook.com/thewarriorspeergroup).

4. Nick Maissonet represented “Hope Therapy” which is located at 1591 Big Branch Road. Middleburg, FL. Phone: 904 291-6784 [www.hopetherapy.org](http://www.hopetherapy.org). It is located on 12 acres of woods and pastures. This organization provides NE FL patients with the highest quality hippotherapy and therapeutic riding on specially trained horses. This treatment can benefit many types of disabilities including but not limited to: Cerebral Palsy, Down’s Syndrome, MS, Spina Bifida, developmental delay, traumatic brain injury, Autism or language disabilities. Anyone interested in more information or in volunteer work please call.
  
5. Zack Newton, a former Marine from Ft. Bragg, NC, spoke about “Reboot Combat Recovery” which is a 12-week course that meets once a month to help combat veterans with PTSD and their families find healing from the spiritual wounds of war. Reboot Combat Recovery started in 2011. Zack can be reached by: phone 615 997-8396 or [zack@rebootrecovery.com](mailto:zack@rebootrecovery.com). Recently the program has become easier to join because of “Reboot360” makes it easier to partner with individuals, churches and clinicians to bring the program to communities across the nation.

Following the reports, a Presentation of a patriotic “Quilt of Honor” was made to 92-year old, Gold Star Mother, Rena Craft, by representatives of the Army National Guard.

**Gathering adjourned at 1225 for lunch.**

**Future meeting will be announced at a later time.**

**\*\*Council of County Veterans Counsel Presidents met prior to V4V. They continue to organize and work with V4V in an effort to unite Veterans across NE Florida.**

**President-Steve Spickelmeir  
VP- Doc Monaghan  
Secretary-Larry Porterfield  
Treasurer-Robert Brewster**

**\*\*Check out the pictures of this event on Facebook...[www.facebook.com/vets4vetsNjax](https://www.facebook.com/vets4vetsNjax)**

**VETERANS  
MATTER**





**Time:** 7:30 AM Registration 8:30 AM Shotgun Start

**Location:** Marsh Creek Country Club

169 Marshside Drive, St. Augustine, FL 32080

**Format:** 4 Person Captain's Choice

**Field:** First 36 Teams



**Entry Fee:** \$80.00 per player (Includes Green Fees, Cart, Lunch & Prizes)

**Prizes For:** 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Place

Hole Prizes Include: Longest Drive, Closest to Pin and Longest Putt  
Chipping & Putting Contests (During the Tournament)



**Golf Shoes Must Be Soft Spikes Only**

The Luncheon & Awards Ceremony will be held on-site after the Tournament

TEAM CAPTAIN: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE #: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

PLAYER #2: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE #: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

PLAYER #3: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE #: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

PLAYER #4: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE #: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIL ENTRY FORMS (whether paying by check or credit card) TO:**

**Ms. Natasha Huertas, C/O AUSA GOLF TOURNAMENT,**

**P.O BOX 3883, ST. AUGUSTINE, FL 32085-3883. Phone (904) 682-4436.**

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AUSA is an exempt organization under section 501 (c) (3) of the US Internal Revenue Code.



**FIRST MILITIA CHAPTER**  
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St. Augustine, Florida 32085-3883

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1 Nov. 2018

Dear Sir/Madam,

Maybe you've seen a soldier in uniform and had the impulse to say thanks. Maybe you know how it feels to wear that uniform. Either way, soldiers and/or their families need your support.

Please consider partnering with the First Militia Chapter (FMC) of the Association of the United States Army (AUSA). We give the *"Voice for the Army, Support for the Soldier"* in Northeast Florida. Our members, with help from businesses like yours, provide programs that bolster the U.S. Army, soldiers, and their families. Here are a few of the ways:

- Help fund departure and welcome home ceremonies for our units
- Supply emergency financial assistance to families
- Present scholarships to deserving chapter applicants
- Provide senior officer and NCO cadre for Junior ROTC
- Award special recognition for the Florida Army National Guard Soldier and NCO of the Year
- Meet quarterly to hear notable leaders, such as members of the U.S. Congress, and bring our issues before them
- Sustain a young professionals group within our chapter

None of this could happen without help from businesses like yours. But in the past, the only way to become involved was as a sponsor for our annual golf tournament fundraiser.

Now we are opening more opportunities through recognition at our quarterly dinners, where you can describe your business to our members and the dignitaries who speak. Sponsors are also acknowledged in our newsletter, website, and social media. Golf tournament sponsors are also recognized with hole-sponsor signs at the tournament set for April 9th, 2018 at Marsh Creek Country Club.

More information and options to help are included. If you have a specific question, please contact LTC Vernon Dohmann at 904-823-0191 or [vernon.j.dohmann.mil@mail.mil](mailto:vernon.j.dohmann.mil@mail.mil)

I hope you will join us in continuing the good things we do for soldiers, their families, and the mightiest fighting force in the world. Our noble goal, and hopefully yours, is to help keep it that way. Please let us count on your support.

Sincerely,

Mike Canzoneri  
Brigadier General, US Army  
President, First Militia Chapter





**FIRST MILITIA CHAPTER**

**Association of the United States Army**

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**Sponsorship Form**

**Sponsorship Level (Choose from accompanying list):**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Platinum Sponsor: \$2,000 Donation**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Gold Sponsor: \$1,000 Donation**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Silver Sponsor: \$500 Donation**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Bronze Sponsor: \$250 Donation**

**Sponsor Information:**

**Corporate/Individual Name(s) for Donation Recognition:**

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**Mailing Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Sponsor Point of Contact:** \_\_\_\_\_

**POC Phone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**POC Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please forward this form to: **First Militia Chapter (AUSA) ATTN: Natasha M. Huertas**  
**P.O. Box 3883**  
**St. Augustine, Florida 32085-3883**  
Checks payable to **"First Militia Chapter – AUSA"**  
Register Online at: <http://mkt.com/first-militia-chapter-ausa>

### **Platinum Sponsor: \$2,000 Donation**

1. Free attendance for two representatives at all four quarterly dinner meetings
2. Recognition at each dinner meeting and opportunities to speak about your business
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4. Entry for your golf team (4 players) in the tournament (\$300 value)
5. Your corporate sign at a tournament tee box, at a green & at the banquet hall\*
6. Your ad/coupon in the tournament goodie bag (144 golfers)
7. Complimentary AUSA Annual Corporate Sponsor Membership

### **Gold Sponsor: \$1,000 Donation**

1. Free attendance for two representatives at three of our four quarterly dinner meetings
2. Recognition at each dinner meeting and opportunities to speak about your business
3. Recognition in the AUSA 1st Militia Chapter newsletter (500+ Army supporters and sponsors)
4. Your corporate sign at a tournament tee box, at a green & at the banquet hall\*
5. Your ad/coupon in the tournament goodie bag (144 golfers)
6. Complimentary AUSA Annual Corporate Sponsor Membership

### **Silver Sponsor: \$500 Donation**

1. Free attendance for two representatives at two of our four quarterly dinner meetings
2. Recognition at each dinner meeting and opportunities to speak about your business
3. Recognition in the AUSA 1st Militia Chapter newsletter (500+ Army supporters and sponsors)
4. Your corporate sign at a tournament tee box, at a green & at the banquet hall\*
5. Your ad/coupon in the tournament goodie bag (144 golfers)
6. Complimentary AUSA Annual Corporate Sponsor Membership

### **Bronze Sponsor: \$250 Donation**

1. Free attendance for two representatives at one of our four quarterly dinner meetings
2. Recognition at the dinner meeting and opportunity to speak about your business
3. Recognition in the AUSA 1st Militia Chapter newsletter (500+ Army supporters and sponsors)
4. Your corporate sign at a tournament tee box, at a green & at the banquet hall\*
5. Your ad/coupon in the tournament goodie bag (144 golfers)

\* Sign display on the day of the tournament (Custom signs welcome & must meet golf course limitations)

***Thank you for supporting soldiers, their families, and the United States Army!***

*AUSA is an exempt organization under section 501 (c) (3) of the US Internal Revenue Code.  
Rev. August 10, 2016*



## FIRST MILITIA CHAPTER

Association of the United States Army

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Voice for the Army, Support for the Soldier

### **Background**

Our chapter, established in November 1994, serves northeast Florida with a range of programs that support the Army, soldiers and their families, and our communities. The First Militia Chapter is an integral part of AUSA National, a strong member of the total military coalition and a vibrant voice representing soldiers on Capitol Hill. Here is how we support our goals:

### **How we support Excellence in the Army:**

- Sponsor "First Militia Striders", our Army Ten Miler Team.
- Sponsor the University of North Florida ROTC Army Ten Miler Team.
- Provide AUSA tribute watches for Florida Reserve National Guard (FLARNG) Soldier and NCO of the Year.
- Conduct the Army Birthday celebration – a Community Affair.
- Contribute financially to the Army Institute of Land Warfare.
- Conduct quarterly dinner meetings with relevant speakers and leaders.

### **How we support Soldiers:**

- Help fund departure and welcome home ceremonies for our units.
- Help fund FLARNG Platoon Leader's Course at Camp Blanding.
- Help fund Ft. Stewart Retiree Appreciation Day activities.
- Sponsor holes at other soldier related golf tournaments.

### **How we support Families:**

- Provide emergency financial assistance to families where possible.
- Provide financial and manpower assistance to Family Readiness Programs.

*AUSA is an exempt organization under section 501 (c) (3) of the US Internal Revenue Code.*

## **How we support Excellence in America's Youth:**

- Present \$1,000 scholarships to up to three deserving chapter applicants.
- Present AUSA medals and certificates to outstanding students in each of the fourteen high schools in our chapter footprint.
- Provide senior officer and NCO cadre for JROTC summer camp when requested by Cadet Command.

### ***For Your Information***

Current chapter membership is 527, exceeding our assigned goal of 500.  
Approximately \$15,000 is needed annually to fund our support programs.  
Currently we have 20 corporate sponsors. Our goal is to add 15 new sponsors!

All chapter officers are **volunteers**.

First Militia Chapter has been recognized as a "Chapter of Excellence" for multiple years,  
and "Best Small Chapter" in the Southeast Region!

**For further information about First Militia Chapter, AUSA,  
visit our website at [www.ausa.org/first-militia](http://www.ausa.org/first-militia)**



*AUSA is an exempt organization under section 501 (c) (3) of the US Internal Revenue Code.*

*Rev: August 10, 2016*



## VA Flu Shots Update 05 ► No Cost Shots at Walgreens

Flu Season is here! Veterans protect yourselves and get a NO COST flu shot! The cold and flu season is upon us and the Department of Veterans Affairs has once again teamed up with Walgreens Pharmacies nationwide to allow all veterans who are currently enrolled in the VA healthcare system to be able walk into any of the over 8000 Walgreens nationally (and the Duane Reade pharmacies in the New York metropolitan area) to receive a vaccination at no cost. Vaccinations will be available through March 31, 2018.



Veterans wishing to receive the no cost vaccination simply need to present a Veterans Identification Card and a photo ID, at any participating Walgreens to receive the vaccination. The Group ID is: VAFLU In addition, after the Walgreens pharmacist administers the vaccine Walgreens will transmit that information securely to VA where it becomes part of the patient's electronic medical record. VA is committed to keeping Veteran patients healthy, and during this flu season, vaccination is the best way to prevent the spread of flu. No matter where you live, visit your local VA clinic or Walgreens to get a no cost flu shot.

To find your local VA, visit [www.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp](http://www.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp). To locate a Walgreens store near you, call 800-WALGREENS ([800-925-4733](tel:800-925-4733)), or go to [www.com/findastore](http://www.com/findastore). To learn more about the partnership visit <https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/programs/veterans/immunization.asp> or call [1-877-771-8537](tel:1-877-771-8537). To get more information on flu and flu vaccine, visit [www.publichealth.va.gov/flu](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/flu) or [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu). [Source: eBenefits Online Application | September 26, 2017 ++]

Please check and evaluate items in this article before selecting.



## **From the VA**

### **In this article you will read about 10 Veterans Benefits you could get from the VA Department**

Many veterans know about the basic health care and education benefits available to them through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA): Tricare and the GI Bill. While these benefits alone are substantial, numerous other programs help provide more benefits to veterans and their families. Even within the health care and education programs are little-known benefits to improve the lives of veterans and help ease the financial burden of medical care or other expenses.

Here are 10 veterans benefits you haven't heard about that all veterans should see if they qualify for:

#### **1. Long-term Care**

Long-term care is expensive, but often necessary to provide care for aging relatives. Through the Aid and Attendance program, many veterans are eligible to receive money to cover the cost of nursing homes, assisted living programs and other long-term care options. With the ability for couples to receive up to \$25,020 a year, the Aid & Attendance benefit will help take care of a significant portion of long-term care costs. Surviving spouses of veterans are also eligible to receive up to \$13,560 a year to cover their long-term care costs.

#### **2. Caregiver Support**

Should you choose to take care of an ailing Veteran at home, the Department of Veterans Affairs offers a caregiver support program. While this program does not offer any monetary support to caregivers, they are provided with a free support line and a caregiver support coordinator to help navigate military benefits and the stress of care giving.

#### **3. Death Benefits**

When a veteran dies, families have a few unique benefits available to them. A U.S. flag may be requested to drape over the casket and families may request a Presidential Memorial Certificate to honor the deceased loved ones service. The Department of Veterans Affairs also provides free headstones or grave markers.

#### **4. Certification Programs**

In addition to receiving credits to use toward a college degree, the GI Bill offers up to \$2,000 to

help cover the cost of certification courses or other vocational training programs. This benefit will work well for veterans who wish to change careers or pursue a career path that does not require a college degree.

### **5. Transferring GI Bill Credits**

Unused credits through the GI Bill may be transferred to spouses and dependents of veterans. There are service limits required to transfer the benefits.

### **6. Free Tax Preparation**

Veterans and their family have access to free tax preparation services through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance offices on military bases. The individuals who work in the offices have expertise working with the complicated nature of military-related tax issues.

### **7. Life Insurance**

Many veterans have trouble obtaining traditional life insurance, particularly if they sustained an injury during their time of service. Through the Service members' and Veterans' Group Life Insurance program, veterans may receive up to \$400,000 in life insurance. This program also offers competitive premium rates.

### **8. Mortgage Help**

Veterans having trouble making their mortgage payments are eligible for repayment assistance through the Department of Veterans Affairs. Options for help include special repayment plans, loan forbearance and loan modification programs. Additional benefits are available for veterans with VA loans and for homeless veterans.

### **9. VA Foreclosures**

The VA maintains a list of homes serviced by VA loans that have gone into foreclosures. Veterans have the ability to search the list of VA acquired properties and purchase homes at a discount. You do not have to be a veteran to search the properties, but all properties qualify for VA financing.

### **10. American Corporate Partners**

American Corporate Partners connects veterans with top companies to help them obtain a job after their time of service. Along with being connected to job opportunities, veterans have the opportunity to receive one-on-one mentoring and other career development services.

Calling all Jacksonville Veterans! Recruit Military will host a job fair at EverBank Field on Nov. 30 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. To register to attend, visit <https://events.recruitmilitary.com/events/jacksonville-veterans-job-fair-november-30-2017>

**JOBS FOR VETERANS!**

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**VETERANS JOB FAIR**



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 1 EverBank Field Drive  
 Jacksonville, FL 32202

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**COMMUNITY HOSPICE  
 VETERANS PARTNERSHIP**

**Salute Our Heroes in Their Final Days:  
 Support Flags & Pins for Veterans in Hospice Care**

Honor our local veterans in hospice care with a dignified tradition when you support funding for flags and pins through Community Hospice & Palliative Care.

Since 2008, the Jacksonville-based organization has presented all veterans admitted to its hospice program with a commemorative pin to honor their service, as well as a certificate of appreciation. For veterans who get care at one of our eight inpatient centers, staff and volunteers erect the flag of the service branch in which they served outside their rooms. Flags are then presented to veterans' families following the death.



The need for funding is great as up to 25 percent of patients who receive hospice care at Community Hospice & Palliative Care are veterans. The nonprofit organization, which provides hospice care to nearly 1,300 patients each day, raises funds through individual support and community organizations who believe in serving those who have served our country so honorably.

If you or your organization would like to support our Flags & Pins Initiative and honor our warriors one last time, please contact

Toula Wootan, director of community programs at Community Hospice & Palliative Care, at 904.407.6211 or [twootan@communityhospice.com](mailto:twootan@communityhospice.com).



**The Veterans Council of St. Johns County is proud to announce that it has modernized its website and created a new 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:  
**VeteransCouncilofStJohnsCounty,FL**

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 and his web design company PageAuthors. The VC strongly recommends that you contact Roy, 904-287-6909, if you or your vet group wants to create a website or Facebook page.*

NEW INFO: Ride in comfort to your appointments at the VA Medical Center in Gainesville.



The van is provided by the Disabled Veterans Chapter 6, and leaves no later than 6AM from the new VA Clinic location at 195 Southpark Blvd. The corner of Southpark and Old Moultrie Road.

To schedule your seat please contact the VA Clinic at 904-823-2954 and ask for Veteran Van Scheduling.



**SURVIVOR  
OUTREACH SERVICES**

Survivor Outreach Offers Free Services to  
Surviving Spouses and Family Members of Military Retirees

**Contact Keith Ham**

Survivor Outreach Services Support Coordinator, HRCI Contractor  
310 Charlotte Street, St. Augustine, FL 32084  
Office: 904-823-0157 Cell: 904-472-7689  
Email: keith.e.ham.ctr@mail.mil

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Michael J. Pelkowski • David D. Naples, Jr.

*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: [mrothfeld@anyveteran.org](mailto:mrothfeld@anyveteran.org)

Please send to: [mrothfeld@anyveteran.org](mailto:mrothfeld@anyveteran.org)



**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 St.  
Johns County Health & Human Services  
Building, 200 San Sebastian View  
Muscovy Room, 1st floor***

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

*(physical location)*

*The VSO Office is located in the new 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.  
Closed for lunch daily from 11:30 am 12:30 pm*

*Service is by appointment.  
Phone: 904-209-6160 Fax: 904-209-6161  
Joseph McDermott, CVSO  
Rick Rees, Assistant VSO  
Tammy Shirley, Assistant VSO  
Lashonda Burns, 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.*