



The Patriot Reader Newsletter

P.O. Box 2117

St. Augustine, FL 32085

Bill Dudley, Publisher

Michael Rothfeld, Editor

Volume 10, Issue 6

Message from the Chairman

20th Anniversary June 2021 Special Issue

Fellow Veterans,

June 26, 2021 marks a milestone in the 20 year history of the Veterans Council of St. Johns County, FL. The Veterans Council will be celebrating its 20th Anniversary.

In 2001, Colonel Ed Taylor petitioned the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners to create the Veterans Council of St. Johns County by Proclamation. Colonel Taylor was ably assisted by Tom Waskovich, Ben Meggitt and Ray Quinn, all of whom went on to lead the Veterans Council in the years that followed.

On June 26, 2001, by County Proclamation, the Veterans Council of St. Johns County was stood up and established to represent all veterans in the County.

The Council's Mission Statement: "The objective of the Veterans Council of St. Johns County, FL is to be of assistance to all Veterans who have served in any of the military branches of service of the United States of America".

Our purpose is "to incorporate all 28 veterans' organizations into the Council and represent all of them in matters that help all veterans in their needs".

Over the years the Council has worked to get the necessary services for County Veterans. It headed the effort in securing and locating the Clyde Lassen State Veterans Nursing Home and the Leo C. Chase Community Based Outpatient VA Clinic in St. Augustine to help all veterans, it was instrumental in helping secure the Jacksonville National Cemetery in NE FL. and supported the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) purchase a van to take veterans to the VA Health facilities in Gainesville.

The Council also supports the youth of St. Johns County. We have supported and worked with the St. Augustine Sea Cadet Battalion, the Nease High School Navy JROTC, the St. Augustine High School Army JROTC, and the Bartram Trail Air Force JROTC and included them in our Veterans and Memorial Day events as well as in Wreaths Across America in December each year.

The Council strongly believes in preserving the stories

of county residents and for the past 20 years has produced six documentaries featuring the stories of local veterans serving in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. Its other two docu-



mentaries tell the powerful stories of four local ex POWs who served heroically in three wars and lastly the stories of K9s For Warriors in Ponte Vedra Beach and Veterans suffering from PTSD and TBI who are helped by trained rescued K9s. All documentaries have been broadcast on WJCT TV, the PBS affiliate in Jacksonville. The documentaries are donated to schools, museums (The Library of Congress, the WW II Museum in NOLA and in Andersonville, among the many) and veterans' organizations. You can read more about all of the above in this special 20th anniversary edition of the Patriot Reader.

The Council annually hosts County wide events such as the Veterans Day Parade, the Veterans Day Ceremony at Anastasia Baptist Church, Memorial Day, Wreaths Across America, and the Homeless Veterans Stand Down. In addition, it supports the very successful Veterans Treatment Court and the veterans in the program with food and gas cards as well as financial support for motel rooms, vehicle repairs, roof replacements, and replacement of HVAC systems.

The Veterans Council takes part in and supports many veterans forums, at the Council on Aging, at UNF, at county High Schools, at the Corazon theater, at Lassen State Veterans Nursing Home, Flagler College and the Art Institute of Jacksonville and we have articles and pictures of all of them in the Special 20th Anniversary June Patriot Reader.

AND THE MISSION CONTINUES...

Bill Dudley, Chairman

Veterans Council of St. Johns County, FL, Inc.

Veterans Council of St. Johns County, Inc.



Mission statement: *The objective of the Veterans Council of St. Johns County, Florida is to be of assistance to all veterans who have served in any of the military branches of service of the United States of America. The Council is proud of our past successes and we look forward to many more in the months and years to come.*

June 26, 2001, Presentation of a Proclamation by the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners that states the Veterans Council of St. Johns County, Inc. would be beneficial to public awareness, participation, and general knowledge of Patriotic Events. Commissioner James Bryant read the Proclamation which acknowledges the creation of the Veterans Council of St. Johns County, Inc., a not for profit corporation, to independently serve veterans and their organizations, The Proclamation was accepted by Col. Ed Taylor, on behalf of the Veterans Council.

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 at the St. Johns County Administration Building, 500 San Sebastian View Auditorium, 1st floor

We are inviting all veterans to visit the Veteran Council's website

<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: www.Facebook.com/Groups/VCSJC

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.

The Veterans Council of St Johns County Officers and Board Members

Officers

Chairman Bill Dudley, LTC USAF (Ret)

Vice Chairman Ray Quinn, Sgt. Maj. FLNG (Ret)

Treasurer John Mountcastle. CDR USCG (Ret)

Secretary Michael Rothfeld, BA, MA Ed

Board Members

Jerry Dedge, CW5 USA (Ret)

David Shoar, Maj. USA (Ret)

Advisor

Joseph McDermott, CMD Sgt. Maj., USA (Ret)

MARCO RUBIO
FLORIDA

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
FOREIGN RELATIONS
SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE
SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

June 20, 2021

Dear Friends,

It is with great pleasure that I join you in celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Veterans Council of St. Johns County.

As we come together today to celebrate this anniversary, let us pay tribute and reflect upon the unique challenges our servicemen and women have overcome on our behalf. The sacrifices made by our nation's veterans are the reason generations of Americans continue to live in a world with unprecedented liberty and freedom.

I would also like to recognize today your good work to assist our veterans and their families. These families have made countless sacrifices in support of their service at home and abroad. It is important that we support all who have borne the burden and worked tirelessly to ensure our veterans receive the care and recognition they earned with their service to our country.

My wife Jeanette and I proudly recognize these brave men and women and we are grateful for your continued dedication to serving their needs. We extend our best wishes today and look forward to hearing of your continued dedication to our veterans in the years to come.

May God bless you, our men and women in uniform, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
United States Senator

United States Senate

May 31, 2021

Dear Friends:

I am honored to join the Veterans Council of St. Johns County during your Memorial Day Program - a special time to honor the brave men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice to defend our great nation and protect the freedoms we cherish. Thank you for your dedication to honoring the legacy of these brave heroes.

As a Navy veteran and the son of a World War II veteran, I know firsthand the sacrifices our men and women in uniform and their families make to defend our freedom. Members of our Armed Forces truly represent the best of what it means to be an American and a Floridian - none of the opportunities and freedoms we have as Americans would be possible without their dedicated service.

Throughout my time as Governor of Florida, I made it my mission to turn our state into the most military and veteran-friendly state in the nation by championing important legislation and funding to support Florida's military families. Fighting for our heroes continues to be my top priority as a U.S. Senator and a member of the Armed Services Committee. I will always do everything I can to support our military members, veterans and their families so they can succeed and pursue their dreams.

Again, thank you for your dedication to honoring our nation's fallen heroes. We are eternally grateful for their service and sacrifice and must continue to honor them today, and every day. I wish you the best for a great event and continued success.

Sincerely,



Rick Scott
United States Senator

The Veterans Council was formed in 2001 and for the last 20 years the Council has been very fortunate to have as its Chairman men of extraordinary leadership skills who have been able lead the Council on its Mission of Helping All Veterans.

Through the years the Chairmen have worked diligently to obtain a DAV Van, a State Veterans Nursing Home, and a new CBOC.

From the beginning the great leaders were Ed Taylor, Tom Waskovich, Bob Beskind, Ben Meggitt, Ray Quinn and Bill Dudley. All strong leaders with different strengths, leadership skills and military Backgrounds.

Col. Ed Taylor, distinguished war veteran: 1930-2015



Col. Ed Taylor earned three Silver Star medals, the Legion of Merit medal, three Distinguished Flying Cross medals, the Soldier's Medal (for non-combat valor), four Bronze Star medals with "v" for valor, the Meritorious Service Medal, nine Air Medals with "v" for valor, three Army Commendation Medals with "v" for valor, the Purple Heart for wounds sustained in combat and a variety of other service ribbons and medals.

Col. Taylor served as an Army officer for 30 years with the will to always fight for the nation's freedom.

Major Tom Waskovich, 1969 Vietnam, MACV SOG

Major Tom Waskovich was in the MACV SOG, A "Green Beret". Military Assistance Command, Vietnam – Studies and Observations Group (MACV-SOG) was a highly classified, multi-service United States special operations unit which conducted covert unconventional warfare operations prior to and during the Vietnam War.

Established on 24 January 1964, the unit conducted strategic reconnaissance missions in the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam), the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam), Laos, and Cambodia; carried out the capture of enemy prisoners, rescued downed pilots, conducted rescue operations to retrieve prisoners of war throughout



Southeast Asia, and conducted clandestine agent team activities and psychological operations.

The unit participated in most of the significant campaigns of the Vietnam War, including the Gulf of Tonkin incident which precipitated increased American involvement, Operation Steel Tiger, Operation Tiger Hound, the Tet Offensive, Operation Commando Hunt, the Cambodian Campaign, Operation Lam Son 719, and the Easter Offensive. The unit was downsized and renamed Strategic Technical Directorate Assistance Team 158 on 1 May 1972, to support the transfer of its work to the Strategic Technical Directorate of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam – part of the Vietnamization effort.

Tom brought a DAV Van to our county and it is still in operation today.

Captain Bob Beskin, US Navy (Ret)

Capt. Robert L. "Bob" Beskind, USN (Ret.), 77, St. Augustine, died April 13, 2008, at Flagler Hospital. He was born in Miami, and had resided in St. Augustine since 1991, moving here from Arlington, Va. Bob retired from the U.S. Navy in 1980 after 29 years of service. During his military career he served as commander at seven different U.S. Naval Bases. Bob was a founding member of Temple Bet Yam, was a member of the St. Augustine Chapter of MOAA, and was a member of the St. Augustine Navy League.

MSgt Reuben Meggitt



Ben was an Army veteran serving from Dec. 22, 1947, to Dec. 3, 1953, and Sept. 16, 1954, to April 30, 1971, retiring at the rank of MSgt.

He served 20 years in the Department of Veteran Affairs as a field examiner serving elderly veterans until he retired.

Ben was one of the driving force that was able to bring a State Veterans Nursing Home to St. Augustine.

SGM Ray A Quinn, a "Soldiers Soldier"

May 24, 2017, Governor Awards Sgt. Maj. Ray Quinn with Medal of Merit

Gov. Rick Scott recognized retired Sgt. Maj. Ray A. Quinn



with the Governor's Medal of Merit during a meeting of the Florida Cabinet, May 23. Sergeant Major Quinn served in the U.S. Army and Florida National Guard for 30 years.

Sergeant Major Quinn served more than thirty years in the Florida Army National Guard. His experience includes twenty years as an infantry soldier, First Sergeant, Operations Sergeant and Personnel Noncommissioned Officer. After retiring he served on the staff of the Adjutant General of Florida as the Director of Executive Services. In that capacity he was responsible for military protocol for the Department of Military Affairs and the Florida National Guard. His duties in that capacity included planning and execution of deployment and welcome home ceremonies for units mobilized for Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. He also coordinated military honors for soldiers that gave their lives in service to their state and nation. Appointed by the Governor of Florida he served a year as interim County Commissioner for Saint Johns County. He currently serves as Chairman of the Florida Veterans Hall of Fame Council, Vice Chair St. Johns County Veterans Council and is Vice President for Veterans Affairs, First Militia Chapter Association of the U. S. Army.

“Sergeant Major Quinn has dedicated his life to serving his community, state and nation during his time in the U.S. Army and Florida Army National Guard,” said Glenn Sutphin, executive director of the Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs. “He continues today to serve his community and veterans across the state with honor and integrity. Sergeant Major Quinn represents what it means to be a member of the Florida National Guard and a leader in our community.”

LTC William Dudley, USAF (Ret)

From the St. Augustine Record

Bill Dudley, ADVOCATING FOR VETERANS WITH WILLIAM DUDLEY OF THE VETERANS COUNCIL OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY



After a lifetime of service, Bill Dudley had more to give; he stepped up and turned the St. Johns Veterans Council into the envy of the state.

The accolades of Lieutenant Colonel Bill Dudley are too many to list. He served ten years in the Air Force active duty flying and then moved on to the Active Reserve Force. He later pursued an Aerospace career in executive management positions both in the US and abroad. Even though Dudley has now retired, he has never

slowed down. He served in various levels of the Navy League of the United States until six years ago when he became the Chairman of the Veterans Council of St. Johns County. "My responsibilities," says Dudley about his position at the Council, "are to provide leadership and direction for the Council in support of our veterans and inform the public about our veteran's service." Under his guidance, the Council has grown and become the model for other chapters across the state to emulate.

One noteworthy accomplishment of the Council with the Lieutenant Colonel at the helm is the relationship with the Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC). A man of action, Dudley says, "The Veterans Council was very instrumental in convincing the VA to share the plans for the future of the CBOC to provide healthcare for our St. Augustine veterans. We did this by hosting two town hall meetings, writing letters to the Secretary of the VA, members of Congress, the President, and others. We meet quarterly with the VA Chief Medical Officer and County Veteran Service Officer to discuss the continuing service of the clinic for our veterans."

Dudley also assists in encouraging youth programs throughout the county. "Most of our youth programs that support veteran's activities," he says, "are organized through our high school programs such as JROTC. The exceptions are the Sea Cadets and the Young Marines." These programs are essential as one of Dudley's most significant challenges is getting younger veterans to volunteer in leadership roles in our veterans organizations.

An integral function of the Veterans Council is organizing events across the city like Wreaths Across America, Veterans Homeless Stand Down, and the Memorial Day Ceremony. "Our next event here in St. Augustine," says Dudley, "is the annual Veterans Day Program to honor all veterans. For the past four years, we have celebrated with a Veterans Day Parade. This year we plan to recognize our veterans at a program at Anastasia Baptist Church, which will feature our local St. Augustine HS Chorus singing patriotic songs, the traveling Vietnam Wall, the Quilt of Tears, and many other exhibits as well as a featured speaker to speak about the Centennial of Veterans Day since WW I."

Dudley believes that knowledge is power and says, "The rewards of this position are assisting veterans in meeting the challenges of getting the care they are entitled to, educating youth groups in the community about veteran's service, and creating an awareness in our community about those who have served our country."

"St. Johns County is a veteran-friendly county, and the city and county commissioners are extremely supportive," says Dudley. "Locals contribute to many of the veteran's programs in a very benevolent way. I am honored to give back to all those who have served our country and worn the cloth of our nation."

The Veterans Council has grown and developed into one of the premier Veterans Council's in the country and this is largely because of the leadership, devotion, compassion, and vision of its current Chaman, Bill Dudley.

*General George S. Patton's quote on leadership describes Bill's approach to leadership:
"Do everything you ask of those you command"*

A new veterans publication in NE FL is Liberty Life Media. Here is their recent write up about Veterans Council of St. Johns County Chairman

William "Bill" Dudley

VETERAN SPOTLIGHT: William "Bill" Dudley: St. Johns County Veterans Community Commanding Officer

By Reuben Keith Green, Liberty Life Media

If The Liberty Coast had an official Veterans community commanding officer, it would likely be Bill Dudley.



The small town where he was born—Williamston, North Carolina—is less than four square miles nestled along the Roanoke River. Dudley had his sights set on bigger venues for adventure, however. He joined the Air Force in 1955 and was accepted to attend Officer Candidate School after completing basic training. Dudley spent ten years on active duty flying mostly heavy cargo aircraft, performing maintenance officer duties and deploying due to world crisis situations.

Upon retirement from military service as a Lieutenant Colonel, Dudley worked in mid-level and executive positions in the aerospace industry, both in the U.S. and abroad. With decades of accomplishment, travel, cultural exploration, and career success under his belt, Dudley began to focus on his real passion: volunteer service to Veterans.

Twenty years later, and because he chose to settle locally, Dudley's leadership and innate compulsion for actionable service have left The Liberty Coast much enriched, particularly in our Veteran community. With the approaching 20th anniversary of the Veterans Council of St. Johns County, of which Dudley has been president for ten years, he reflected on council accomplishments and the impact of each. Three of these achievements include: funding a van for the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), securing handicapped Veterans parking at county buildings and regular support to area youth through Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps,

Sea Cadets and the Young Marines.

An additional highlight is the long-anticipated fulfillment of a 10-year effort to establish a permanent community-based outpatient clinic in St. Johns County—The Leo C. Chase Jr., Department of Veterans Affairs Clinic—projected to open on June 22, 2021. The new clinic, named in honor of the county’s first soldier to die in the Vietnam War, will be large enough to serve the needs of the Veteran population.



The Veterans Council of St. Johns County works closely with county officials and other organizations and is widely regarded as the model for Veterans councils across the state.

Furthermore, the Council has produced many Veteran awareness and celebration events, educational documentaries and panel presentations. They also provide cash and other assistance to Veterans in need, such as car repair payments, home repairs (including roof replacements), utilities and other necessities.

One of Dudley’s many proud accomplishments is his instrumental work in helping to establish a Veterans Treatment Court for St. Johns County. The court was activated in January 2017, with Judge Howard McGillin presiding from the bench. Veterans participating in this program likely don’t know that it took four years of dedication and tireless effort for Dudley and Judge McGillin to bring to fruition, and that it is largely underwritten by the Veterans Council of St. Johns County.

“I haven’t missed one court session since the court was stood up in 2017,” said Dudley.

That simple fact sums up his commitment to the Veteran community. He understands that many Veterans return with not only physical wounds, but those such as emotional or moral injury that, while not as visible, lead to problems that occasionally result in involvement with law enforcement. It is a victory anytime a Veteran can be helped back onto a sustainable path with mentorship, treatment and financial assistance through this innovative and compassionate endeavor.

“You’re not always going to be twenty years old. You will not always stay young and healthy,” said Dudley when asked to advise young Veterans. “You need to think about aging, and we all need help and medical assistance as we get older.”



Dudley recommends that both young Veterans and retirees register with the Veterans Administration (VA) and learn about the benefits and services available to them.

I shared with him my own reluctance to engage with the VA upon my retirement, and he told me that was a very common story. Then he shared with me something that I didn't know: funding for the local VA facility is based upon the number of enrolled Veterans in the area. That means that for every Veteran or retiree that enrolls, the potential for funding increases.

He says that Veterans should keep that in mind. When I asked him for any further advice, Dudley said "Continue serving; don't stop serving and help your battle buddy."

As you can see, Dudley has lived a life of service and walks what he talks.

Dudley has been married to his wife Nancy for 59 years. Their son Troy and his wife Jan live nearby with their sons, Ethan and Avery.

Bill Dudley has likely helped more Veterans than all the people that lived in the river town of Williamston when he left and raised his right hand to take his first oath of enlistment. I'd say he has kept that oath, and many more, for a lifetime.

You can learn a great deal about the mission and programs of the Veterans Council of St. Johns County at VeteransCouncilSJC.org

Publisher's note: Bill Dudley's advocacy also impacts many outside St. Johns County. That list, as well as the number of national, state and community leaders that regularly seek his experience and service are simply too numerous to list in this one story.





U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

CONGRESSMAN JOHN H. RUTHERFORD

4TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

June 26, 2021

Veterans Council of St. Johns County,

Congratulations on twenty years of outstanding service to St. Johns County's Veterans. On this important occasion, your members should be proud of the valuable services the Veterans Council has provided.

The Veterans Council of St. Johns County has been steadfast in its goal of aiding all those who have served in the United States Military. In St. Johns County, which so many Veterans and their families call home after their military service, organizations that support Veterans and their families are vital to their wellbeing. The services your organization has provided over the past twenty years have helped our Veterans and positively affected the entire community.

Through the Veterans Council's work, multiple documentaries have been produced which highlight the courage, sacrifice, and duty of the men and women who serve our country in the armed forces. The support you provide to local organizations and events, such as Homeless Veterans Stand Down, Veterans Treatment Court, and Clyde E. Lassen State Veterans Nursing Home, enables Veterans to receive much needed help.

As a community member, the Council supports local JROTC programs and worked to ensure county buildings have specific parking for disabled Veterans. As a partner with state and federal leaders your organization worked to bring a permanent VA Community-Based Outpatient Clinic, named after the first person from St. Johns County killed in the Vietnam War, Leo C. Chase Jr., to St. Augustine. The Veteran's Council is a critical component of Veteran care and support in St. Johns County and all Northeast Florida.

I join Veterans, local leaders, and the entire St. Johns County community in congratulating the Veterans Council of St. Johns County on twenty years of service and I look forward to the Council's next twenty years serving Northeast Florida's Veterans.

Sincerely,

JOHN H. RUTHERFORD
Member of Congress

MICHAEL WALTZ
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

U.S. HOUSE ARMED SERVICES
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE AND SPECIAL
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U.S. HOUSE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE,
SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY,
RANKING MEMBER

May 11, 2021

Dear Chairman Dudley,

I would like to personally recognize the significance of the Veterans Council of St. Johns County's (VCSJC) milestone as they celebrate their 20th anniversary on 26 June 2021. The VCSJC has been directly responsible for helping thousands of veterans, families, veteran organizations, and museums, as well as in coordinating countless historical documentaries. I know of no other Veterans Council that can proudly boast such accomplishments.

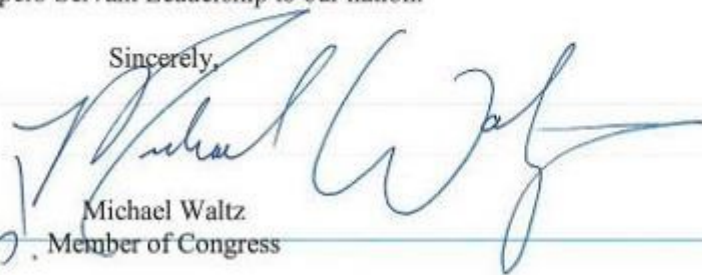
Of significant importance, the Council's direct involvement in establishing a St. Johns County Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) has had a major impact on the lives of many of our veterans, giving them a second chance to succeed in their careers, and become standout American citizens. The VTC has been a model for other counties to emulate as well as to underscore its value to our society.

The Council's support in organizing celebrations for Veterans Day, Memorial Day, honoring our heroes at National Cemeteries, and countless others, are impressive and characterized as models for energizing American patriotism.

Your council has been blessed by superb leadership beginning with your founding leader, COL Ed Taylor. It is always a good day when I work with your council and I proudly support your organization.

Congratulations on 20 years of superb Servant Leadership to our nation.

Sincerely,



Michael Waltz
Member of Congress

*Bill -
Thank you
for your
servant-leadership!*

Palm Coast Office
31 Luge Court, Suite 130
Palm Coast, FL 32137
(386) 302-0442

Port Orange Office
1000 City Center Circle
Port Orange, FL 32129
(386) 238-9711

Deland Office
120 South Florida Ave., Suite 324
Deland, FL 32720
(386) 279-0787

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The Veterans Council of St. Johns County, FL, has continually grown its membership and its Community Programs over its first 20 years.

Veterans Events Produced by the Council

Veterans Day Parade

Celebrating Veterans Day at Anastasia Baptist Church

Memorial Day, Honoring Heroes at the St. Augustine National Cemetery

Premiering our documentaries featuring local Veterans

Flagler College, premiering WW II, Korea, Vietnam documentaries

Anastasia Baptist Church, premiering POW & K9s documentary

Council on Aging, Korean War panel & documentary

Lassen State Veterans Nursing Home, Vietnam panel & documentary

UNF Korean War panel & documentary

Orange County Museum of History, Vietnam panel & documentary

Amelia Island Museum of History, Korean & Vietnam documentaries

MOSH, POW documentary & Bill Ingram featured speaker

Corazon Theatre, Vietnam panel discussion

The Veterans Council Supports

The Veterans Treatment Court

Homeless Veterans Stand Down

Lassen State Veterans Nursing Home

All JROTCs in County High Schools

St. Augustine Battalion US Naval Sea Cadets

St. Johns County, a Purple Heart County

Securing Handicap parking for Veterans at County buildings

Council initiated and supports the new Leo C Chase CBOC

The DAV Van

The Council donates its documentaries to all High Schools in NE FL

Veterans Day in St. Augustine

History of Veterans Day

World War I – known at the time as “The Great War” - officially ended when the Treaty of Versailles was signed on June 28, 1919, in the Palace of Versailles outside the town of Versailles, France. However, fighting ceased seven months earlier when an armistice, or temporary cessation of hostilities, between the Allied nations and Germany went into effect on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. For that reason, November 11, 1918, is generally regarded as the end of “the war to end all wars.”

In November 1919, President Wilson proclaimed November 11 as the first commemoration of Armistice Day with the following words: "To us in America, the reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for the victory, both because of the thing from which it has freed us and because of the opportunity it has given America to show her sympathy with peace and justice in the councils of the nations..."

The original concept for the celebration was for a day observed with parades and public meetings and a brief suspension of business beginning at 11:00 a.m.

The Veterans Council has Celebrated Veterans Day both with a large parade and with an indoor extravaganza at Anastasia Baptist Church.

Both celebrations attracted large crowds, dignitaries, the public, & school children.

What follows are some pictures from these events.

The Veterans Council Honors Veterans on Veterans Day

Veterans Day in St. Augustine, Everyone loves a Parade



Celebrating Veterans Day at Anastasia Baptist Church



Celebrating Veterans Day at Anastasia Baptist Church





Florida House of Representatives
Representative Paul Renner
District 24

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402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300
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Re: Veterans Council of St. Johns County

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to provide this letter of congratulations to the Veterans Council of St. Johns County for two decades of service to the veterans in our community. On June 26, 2021, the Council will celebrate 20 years since its inception, led by Col. Ed Taylor. Since then, many dedicated staff and volunteers have worked tirelessly to make sure that those who have sacrificed to ensure our freedoms are well taken care of.

I am proud of the work you do every day, from providing food and housing assistance, to helping our veterans find healthcare services. Organizations like yours, under the direction of Chairman Bill Dudley, contribute to making Florida the most veteran and military friendly state in the nation. I look forward to working with and for you to further that mission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Paul Renner".

Paul Renner
State Representative, District 24



Florida House of Representatives
Representative Cyndi Stevenson
District 17

District Office

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Tallahassee Office

222 The Capitol
402 South Monroe Street
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(850) 717-5017

St. Johns County Veteran's Council
PO Box 2117
St. Augustine, FL 32085-2117

May 27, 2021

To the Honored Veterans of St Johns County:

Congratulations! It is hard to believe this is only your 20th anniversary! I've been serving the people of St. Johns County for just under 20 years myself, and your members have played a critical role in many ways. To me, you have always been a part of the fabric of our community. Your advocacy for those who have served and returned home-and those who served and paid the ultimate sacrifice has made all of us better citizens.

I have been humbled to participate in your activities over the past 20 years in a small way. Some of your achievements include:

- raising money for a new van to carry veterans to Gainesville for treatment & volunteer drivers
- advocacy that helped St. Johns County become the home of the Lassiter VA nursing home
- ensuring the Veterans Clinic had a permanent home once again
- efforts to secure the establishment of a Veterans Court in St. Johns County
- advocacy and volunteer services for homeless veterans
- advocacy and volunteer services for drug misuse and suicide prevention
- production of films commemorating and honoring St. Johns County Veterans from World War II to Vietnam
- annual honor and recognition for veterans -Wreaths Across America wreath laying ceremonies in December
- participation in Annual Veterans Day and Memorial Day Ceremonies

By keeping the price of freedom close-it has helped assure that I never take it for granted. It is vital that all of us, in whatever walk of life or service to our fellow man, remember how precious liberty and freedom is, and the price that has been paid by so many. I pray our Nation will always be served by such patriots. Patriots who serve not themselves but their fellow man. I will never forget your service over the last 20 years to help mark upon our community a lasting impression of service and sacrifice. An understanding that freedom is rare and precious even in today's world is vital. The price to retain it remains and will always be constant vigilance.

Congratulations again on 20 years!

Thank you for your Service,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cyndi Stevenson".

Cyndi Stevenson
Representative
Florida House District 17

Committees & Subcommittees

State Administration & Technology Appropriations Subcommittee **Chair** - *Government Operations Subcommittee* **Vice Chair**
Agriculture & Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee - *Appropriations Committee*
Joint Legislative Budget Commission - *Public Integrity & Elections Committee* - *State Affairs Committee*

Preserving Our History

In 2008, The Veterans Council of St. Johns County started recording the heroic stories of local NE FL Veterans. The Council started, with 34 WW II veterans and worked with a film crew from WJCT TV, the PBS affiliate in Jacksonville, FL to video and broadcast the veterans stories.

Every year thereafter, for four more years the Council recorded stories of veterans who served in Korea and Vietnam. These videos premiered at the Flagler College Auditorium in St. Augustine. Additionally, the Council recorded the stories of Post 911 veterans who were suffering from PTSD or TBI at K9s For Warriors in Ponte Vedra Beach, FL. and this documentary premiered at Anastasia Baptist Church.

This was followed up by the Council's documentary "Stolen Freedom", the story of 4 American POWs who served in 3 Wars. A link to this, poignant, important story can be found on the FL Statewide PBS website. Here is the PBS posting, "Prisoners of War: Stolen Freedom compares the stories of four American servicemen through their time as prisoners of war in three major 20th century conflicts; World War II, Korea and the Vietnam war. Their stories are supported by archival motion pictures and photographs obtained at the US National Archives as well as through sketches and memorabilia collected by each of the men. Their stories are less about atrocity than they are about the survival of the human spirit and the camaraderie that helped each man survive years of incarceration. Each story is followed by spectacular recounts of their days of release. Produced by Michael Rothfeld & Bill Dudley and the Veterans Council of St. Johns County, directed by Eric Flagg"

"Stolen Freedom" was streamed by the Pentagon Channel to military and defense department employees world-wide.

The Council was proud to produce these documentaries and wants to share the stories of these American Heroes.

The Veterans Council records the stories of NE FL veterans and donates their video interviews to the Library of Congress, Museums around the country, veterans groups and high schools in the 5 county NE FL area.

From the PBS FL Statewide Posting:

Serve and Protect : Stories From WWII

<http://www.floridastoriesofservice.org/serve-and-protect-stories-from-wwii/>

"From a small senior community near St. Augustine, Florida over 30 veterans came together to share their stories. Produced by Flagler College TV Workshop Students and directed by Michael Rothfeld"

Vietnam: Service, Sacrifice, and Courage

<http://www.floridastoriesofservice.org/vietnam-service-sacrifice-and-courage/>

"NE Florida Vietnam veterans 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. This documentary was produced by Michael Rothfeld and Bill Dudley and directed by Josh Wallace and filmed and edited by the students in the Flagler College Communications Department."

Prisoners of War: Stolen Freedom

"Prisoners of War: Stolen Freedom compares the stories of four American servicemen through their time as prisoners of war in three major 20th century conflicts; World War II, Korea and the Vietnam war. Their stories are supported by archival motion pictures and photographs obtained at the US National Archives as well as through sketches and memorabilia collected by each of the men. Their stories are less about atrocity than they are about the survival of the human spirit and the camaraderie that helped each man survive years of incarceration. Each story is followed by spectacular recounts of their days of release. Produced by Michael Rothfeld, Bill Dudley and the Veterans Council of St. Johns County, directed by Eric Flagg"

<http://www.floridastoriesofservice.org/prisoners-of-war-stolen-freedom>

Korea : Forgotten War, Remembered Heroes

<http://www.floridastoriesofservice.org/korea-forgotten-war-remembered-heroes/>

"This special documentary created by the students of the Art Institute of Jacksonville spotlights the stories of five First Coast Korean War Veterans. Directed by Dr. Nadia Ramoutar, produced by Michael Rothfeld, Bill Dudley and the Veterans Council of St. Johns County."

Unleashing the Underdogs: The K9s For Warriors Story

<http://www.floridastoriesofservice.org/unleashing-the-underdogs-the-ks-for-warriors-story/>

"Today's generation of warriors have been deployed more than any other before, this documentary highlights a unique program that pairs dogs and veterans in a training program, and ultimately as companions, to show appreciation and assist in healing of PTSD. Directed by Dr. Nadia Ramoutar, produced by Michael Rothfeld, Dr. Nadia Ramoutar, Bill Dudley and the Veterans Council of St. Johns County."

The Veterans Council was proud and honored to be given permission to record the truly heroic stories of these 4 American Heroes.

Bill Ingram, Chief Boatswain Mate, US Navy, ret.



William “Ace” Ingram Jr. spent three years building the Burma Railway as a prisoner of war after he was captured by the Japanese when the USS Houston sank in the Pacific Ocean during World War II.



Mr. Ingram retired from the Navy in 1961 and then moved to Jacksonville.

In his later years, Mr. Ingram made frequent speaking presentations for the veteran and active-duty military communities in Northeast Florida to tell his tale of survival.

Mr. Ingram was 17 when he joined the Navy in 1941 to follow in the footsteps of his older brother. He requested an assignment on the Houston to be with his brother after boot camp but soon learned his brother had been transferred to the Philippines.

Three Japanese torpedoes struck the Houston on March 1, 1942, during the Battle of Sunda Strait, and the ship sank with 1,061 sailors and Marines on board.

Mr. Ingram was one of 368 sailors who abandoned ship, and he jumped in the water with a life ring as his only flotation device.

“The undertow from the ship sinking will bring you down, so I got in the water and swam as fast as I could,” he told the Mayport sailors in 2013.

A Japanese patrol boat picked him up after almost a day in the water, but they tossed him overboard again after a brief interrogation. A fishing vessel came along after another day floating in the Pacific, and Mr. Ingram was taken to a building on

the island of Java for food and medical attention.

Japanese soldiers came in the middle of the night and took Mr. Ingram and his shipmates as prisoners. They were shipped to Burma where they were forced to build the railroad known as the “Death Railway” for three years until the end of the war.

The stretch of rail was built over the River Kwai linking Yangon, the then-capital of Burma, with Bangkok. Thousands of allied soldiers died during the construction. It became the basis for an epic war film in 1957, “The Bridge on the River Kwai,” starring William Holden, Jack Hawkins and Alec Guinness.

Mr. Ingram told the sailors at Mayport that he doesn’t remember much about leaving Burma because he was inflicted with dysentery and malaria.

“I was really out of it. I remember being in the camp, then the next thing I really remember is being in New York City with some of the other guys from the prison camp,” Mr. Ingram told the sailors in 2013.

Mr. Ingram was active in the Northeast Florida veterans community up until his death Saturday. The motorcycle club Rolling Thunder Florida Chapter Four made Mr. Ingram an honorary member two years ago due to his connection to the prisoner-of-war and missing-in-action communities.

“We just became friends, and then eventually I threw it out to the chapter about Bill being one of our members,” said Robert “Mitch” Mitchell, president of the chapter.

One of the things Mr. Ingram was most proud of was his involvement in the documentary “Prisoners of War: Stolen Freedom” that aired on public television.

Joe Daraskevich, FL Times Union





Corporal Richard Bassett, US Army

A first-person account of the day-to-day struggles of an American held captive in North Korea.

October 6, 1951. Richard Bassett remembers the day vividly. That was the day his platoon ran into an ambush near Kumwha. During the firefight many were wounded, four were killed, and Bassett, along with three others, was captured. During a month-long march to the POW camp the Americans frequently came under friendly fire. Surviving the march paled in comparison to what the captured soldiers had to endure at Camp-5-Pyokdong. Frostbite, dysentery, jaundice, and mental breakdowns dwindled their numbers. Starvation and squalid conditions took their toll on Bassett during his 21-month incarceration. Yet he pledged to himself that if anyone were to walk out of this camp alive, it would be him.

When Richard Bassett returned from Korea on convalescent leave in 1953, he set down his experiences in training, combat, and captivity. Then he put the memoir away and tried to forget. More than twenty years later, hospitalized for acute Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, he once again faced his personal demons.

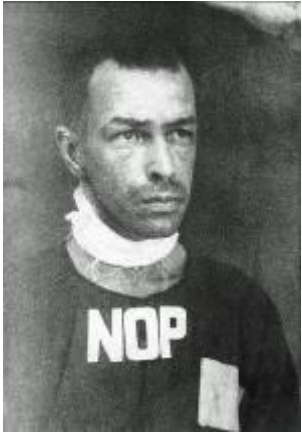
Bassett captures in plain language and vivid detail those days of his captivity. He describes the shock of capture and ensuing long march to Pyokdong, North Korea, Camp 5 on the Yellow River, where many prisoners died of untreated wounds, disease, hunger, paralyzing cold, and brutal mistreatment in the bitter winter of 1950-51. He recounts Chinese attempts to mentally break down prisoners in order to exploit them for propoganda. Bassett takes the reader through typical days in a prisoner's life, discussing food, clothing, shelter, and work; the struggle against unremitting boredom; religious, social, and recreational diversions; and even those moments of terror when all seemed lost.

Bassett's story is important to general audiences and scholars alike because it has not counterpart in the literature of the Korean War. *And the Wind Blew Cold* refutes Cold War-era propaganda that often unfairly characterized POWs as brainwashed victims or even traitors who lacked the grit that Americans expected of their brave sons.

Bassett concludes his memoir with a candid discussion of the war's aftermath, his battle with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and harassment by a government eager to impugn the loyalty of repatriated POWs.

Mr. Bassett's story is available on Amazon, "*And The Wind Blew Cold*".





**Giles Norrington, Capt.,
US Navy, Ret**

**GILES R. NORRINGTON
Lieutenant Commander-
United States Navy**



Shot Down: May 5, 1968

Released: March 14, 1973

An open letter to my fellow Americans:

For almost five years I dreamed of looking at a horizon. I prayed for the day when we would all feel a fresh wind on our faces and feel the indescribable sensation of freedom. I have read a great deal of material written by people who asked, "Why Vietnam?" I would ask in return, "Why Lexington? Why Concord? Why Okinawa?" Since its birth as a nation our United States has realized its international responsibility, and we have demonstrated time and time again that we are a nation of people who care. We care about the filth in which millions live; we care about the lack of medical care from which so many suffer; we care about children whose life expectancy is measured in months rather than years; and we care about spiritual and political freedom ... that's

why Vietnam! All of us who have served in this conflict are grateful for having had the chance to do so. And those of us who were prisoners of war are the fortunate ones. We came home. It remains for us to continue our work.

We must have an accurate accounting of our missing brothers-in-arms. We must not forget Vietnam, or Laos, or Cambodia, or anywhere men fight for the right to govern themselves in Freedom.

My personal experiences in Vietnam are typical. I gained strength through my God and my fellow prisoners of war. They are giants among men, and I am privileged to have served with them. I have seen that beautiful horizon and now look forward to a full, happy life as a citizen of a free and responsible nation.

God Bless America . . . and preserve us as a Nation.



Col. Hal Kushner, US Army, (Ret)

Vietnam Veteran, Now Ophthalmologist, Recounts Years as POW



By Lee Hogan

F. Harold Kushner was four months into his deployment as an Army flight surgeon in the Vietnam War when a driving rainstorm caused the helicopter he and three other soldiers occupied to crash into the side of a mountain in the middle of enemy territory.

The pilot was killed on impact. The co-pilot was gravely injured, crushed against the chopper's instrument panel with bones protruding from his leg. The crew chief had been thrown from the aircraft and lay unconscious on the ground.

Kushner was unconscious, still strapped into his seat. When he came to, the chopper was ablaze. After freeing himself from the chopper, Kushner worked to free the co-pilot, but was forced to jump from the aircraft when it was engulfed in flames in what Kushner recalled as a "big whoosh." The inferno caused the chopper's attached M60 machine gun to fire off multiple rounds that pierced Kushner's body through the back and left shoulder.

Kushner's pants were burned off his body and he sustained burns to his legs and back. He was missing several teeth, his glasses were gone and he realized his left collarbone and both bones in his left forearm were broken.

By the light of the chopper's fire, he could see the co-pilot and crew chief on the ground, still alive. With no supplies other than two .38 pistols, six rounds in each weapon, the three soldiers, members of the 1st Squadron's 9th Cavalry Regiment, huddled under one of the chopper's doors as the torrential rains continued through the night.

The next morning, the crew chief was sent to find help, but never returned. He was later found killed in a field, ten miles from the crash site. "The rule they teach you in survival school is to stay with your airplane," said Kushner. "We stayed for three days and three nights."

The morning of the third day, Dec. 2, the co-pilot died. Kushner was alone.

“I took the compass from the airplane and moved east by the compass, zero-nine-zero,” said Kushner. “I followed that compass and went down the mountain, my left arm strapped to my body with an army belt.”

The next morning’s light revealed his terrible error. The compass had failed him.

“I had not gone east,” he said. “I had gone west. I had gone the wrong way because the compass was broken and was reading 180 degrees off.”

Kushner watched as Army choppers hovered over the mountain side he’d left the day before. The crash site would be found the next day.

Kushner continued down the mountain and met a man working in a rice field. The man led him a mile further down a path and to a hut where he retrieved a can of condensed milk, a plastic spoon and a can opener.

“That stuff just billowed out of the can,” said Kushner. “It was the greatest stuff I’ve ever eaten.”

His first meal in four days was cut short as a squadron of Viet Cong soldiers approached, commanding him to raise his hands and surrender. Kushner raised his right arm, as his left remained strapped down. One of the soldiers shot him in the shoulder.

“They took all my possessions, I showed them my Geneva Convention card, which identified me as medical personnel,” said Kushner. “He tore it up and said, ‘No POW, no POW. Criminal.’”

Kushner spent the next month tightly bound and marching through the South Vietnam jungle. Traveling at night and sleeping during the day to avoid detection, the group forced Kushner to walk in front of it through rice fields on 18-inch wide levees with no light to guide his steps.

“I would fall off the dike and into the water, I didn’t have shoes or boots, my feet were lacerated,” said Kushner. “They pulled me up out of the water by my bondage. It was rough.”

Eventually, he reached what he said “was to be his home” for the next couple of years, alt-



hough the camp itself would move often, a day's or two days' hike through the jungle each time. It was a muddy clearing in the jungle located next to a stream with a few huts and "four of the saddest looking American creatures I had ever seen in my life."

Twenty-seven American POWs passed through the camp and "ten of them died in my arms," said Kushner. The prisoners went without shoes, clothes, mosquito nets and medicine. They survived on rice that had been had been stored for 15 years and contained rat feces, rocks and weevils.

"Which we ate," said Kushner.

Each man constantly suffered from multiple conditions, including malaria, dysentery and malnutrition. Despite subhuman living conditions and what Kushner called "intense indoctrination," he said they found ways to survive.

"We were Americans and we stayed together," said Kushner

On American holidays, the group would quietly sing patriotic songs as to not alert their captors. "We nursed each other, we cleaned each other and we took care of one another," he said.

In 1971, the dozen prisoners were moved to North Vietnam as their captors feared the group would die without better rations, said Kushner. The prisoners were divided into two groups of six, a fast group and a slow group, with Kushner in the former.

The groups walked 560 miles, over 57 days for the fast group and 180 days for the slow group, to a train station before traveling to the infamous Hanoi Hilton in North Vietnam.

Kushner and five other prisoners were put in a 10-foot by 14-foot cell with six wooden pallets, a cement floor, no windows, no electricity, no water and only a slit in the door. They received pumpkin soup, hog water and a piece of bread, twice a day. Kushner said he later calculated the daily rations at about 600 calories.

"It was a cruel jail," said Kushner, adding that propaganda was piped through loudspeakers. "It was terribly hot in the summer, and dank and damp and cold in the winter. But no one died."

In December of 1972, B-52 bombers began battering Hanoi in Operation Linebacker II. Kushner said he and his fellow captives cheered as the payloads were dropped. A day after

the bombing started, the camp's commander gave the prisoners a shovel and pick to build a shelter if they chose.

"It was hard with a cement floor," said Kushner. "But we shared the work and dug a pit and covered it with our pallets."

The bombings would continue for 12 days.

"When the bombings resumed, we jumped in the hole, covered it and cheered them," Kushner said.

Peace was reached Jan. 27, 1973 in Paris Peace Accords. Kushner was headed home; however, it would be another two months before he would reach America.

On March 16, 1973, Kushner walked out of a shed at Gia Lim Airport in Hanoi to a C-141 Starlifter with an American flag emblazoned on the tail. It was the first time in five and a half years he'd seen the flag.

"I was overwhelmed," he said. "I almost fainted. I can't describe the deep emotion that I felt when I saw it." After a short stint at a hospital in the Philippines, Kushner returned to American soil in Hawaii. Upon debarking the plane, he sang "America the Beautiful."

"I swore to myself I would sing that if I ever got back to American soil," he said. "There were 1,500 people receiving us at three in the morning, including a bunch of reporters. They all joined in with us in singing."

He met his then-five-year-old son for the first time and greeted again his daughter, then in the fifth grade. Kushner was on convalescent leave for the next few months and used the time to travel the country and visit the families of those POWs who perished while imprisoned with him.

He returned to duty in August 1973 and restarted his medical career. Kushner left active-duty service in 1977 and retired from the Army Reserve in 1986 as a colonel.

He said he feels lucky to have survived his imprisonment "when so many stronger, better-trained men died," and to have avoided post-traumatic stress disorder and flashbacks.

"I've done missions all over the world on every continent except Antarctica and I just feel so lucky that I was born an American," he said. "I love my country so much and I'm just proud



ST. JOHNS COUNTY **SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

ROBERT A. HARDWICK, SHERIFF

4015 LEWIS SPEEDWAY, ST. AUGUSTINE, FL 32084 | 904.824.8304 | www.SJSO.org

June 9, 2021

Dear Chairman Dudley and the St. Johns County Veterans Council,

On behalf of the men and women that serve at the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office, I want to congratulate you on the memorable impact you've had over the last 20 years. I also want to thank you for all you do for our veteran community in St. Johns County. Over the last 20 years, you have provided unparalleled assistance to the men and women who choose to serve in our military branches including myself.

As we look ahead, I look forward to our continued partnership and shared goal of being a resource to our veterans. There is truly no higher calling than to be willing to serve your fellow man as a member of the United States military. To know organizations like yours exist to honor the service of our veterans is a comfort to many.

If the last 20 years is any indication, I know the future for the council will continue to be impactful. Please do not hesitate to call upon myself or this agency whenever we may be of service to you. And again, thank you for your dedicated service to those who serve.

Sincerely,


Robert A. Hardwick
Sheriff

Internationally and State Accredited
"First on the First Coast"





St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners

April 27, 2021

Mr. Bill Dudley, Chairman
Veterans Council of St. Johns County
P.O. Box 2117
St. Augustine, FL 32085

Dear Chairman Dudley,

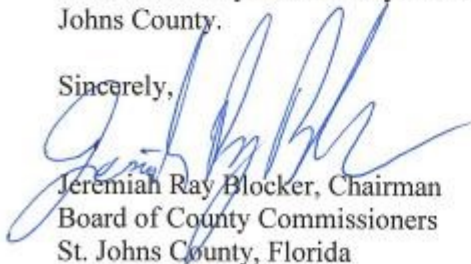
On behalf of the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners, I would like to congratulate the Veterans Council of St. Johns County for celebrating the milestone of providing more than 20 years of invaluable service and support to our veteran community.

For more than two decades, the Council has assisted our veterans in obtaining a variety of services including healthcare, housing, transportation, career assistance, and many more. In addition, the Council shares a partnership with St. Johns County that allows both entities to work together to shed light on the crucial needs of our veterans and develop solutions to meet their needs and help them live more healthy and productive lives.

As a veteran myself, I take great pride in the collective initiatives the organizations within our community facilitate to ensure our veterans have the necessary resources and support. Together, we have been instrumental in the launch of the Veterans' Treatment Court, the construction of a new Veterans Affairs Community Based Outpatient Clinic in St. Johns County, and the introduction of The Fire Watch to St. Johns County.

After more than 20 years of leadership and service, the Veterans Council of St. Johns County continues to fight for our veterans and empower the public with the knowledge and resources to reconcile a debt for their service that can never fully be repaid. Thank you for your steadfast commitment and continued dedication to those who have served our country. We look forward to the next 20 years and beyond of working in partnership with the Veterans Council of St. Johns County.

Sincerely,



Jeremiah Ray Blocker, Chairman
Board of County Commissioners
St. Johns County, Florida



CITY OF
ST AUGUSTINE™
— EST. 1565 —
NATION'S OLDEST CITY

April 21, 2021

Bill Dudley
Chairman
Veterans Council of St. Johns County

Dear Chairman Dudley,

The St Augustine Fire Department is a proud supporter and partner of the Veterans Council of St Johns County. Over the past several years our organizations have collaborated to further raise awareness to the countless programs and issues pertaining to our veteran residents.

As an organization we are proud to support the men and women, who so valiantly and selflessly swore an oath to defend this great Nation. The Veterans Council of St Johns County has faithfully upheld their mission to be of assistance to all veterans who have served in any of the military branches of service of the United States of America.

From all of us at the City of St Augustine Fire Department, we would like to congratulate you on your 20th anniversary and thank you for your service to our Nation, our community and our veterans. It is an honor and privilege to serve a community that honors and cares for its veteran population. We look forward to many more years of collaboration.

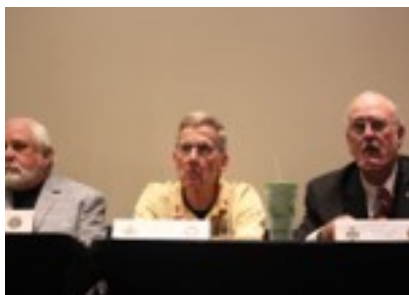
Sincerely,

Carlos Aviles
Fire Chief

The Veterans Council visits local senior centers like the St Augustine Council on Aging and the Clyde Lassen State Veterans Nursing Home and honors its Korean War Veterans



WJCT TV, the PBS affiliate in Jacksonville, & the Veterans Council of St. Johns county hosted the Ken Burns “the Vietnam War” documentary premier. The highlight was the Vietnam veterans panel discussion after the preview.



The Veterans Council Remembers Those Who Served

History of Memorial Day

Memorial Day, originally called Decoration Day, is a day of remembrance for those who have died in military service for the United States.

ST. AUGUSTINE'S MEMORIAL DAY OBSERVANCE

The St. Augustine National Cemetery will be the site of the city's annual Memorial Day observance. All are invited to this annual remembrance of those who have served in the armed forces protecting our county -- from the days of its founding to the current conflicts in the Middle East. The ceremony, featuring the "Fallen Comrade Tribute" and recognition of local veterans who have died in the past year will begin with appropriate music and the march in of massed flags from local veterans organizations.

On the "National Register of Historic Places," the serene National Cemetery in St. Augustine is one of the oldest military cemeteries in the nation. On this, the 100th anniversary of the armistice that ended WWI, its 130 plus graves of veterans from that "war to end all wars," bear iconic testament to the military service and sacrifice of our fellow citizens. Join us as we honor them on this special day.

The cemetery is located adjacent to St. Francis Barracks, headquarters of the Florida National Guard, at 82 Marine Street. This annual remembrance is organized by the Ancient City Chapter, Military Officers Association of America, in conjunction with the Florida National Guard, **Veterans Council of St. Johns County**, and the National Cemetery Administration.

Memorial Day: The Veterans Council Remembers those who gave their lives in service to this country



Veterans Council Veterans Day Events Held at Anastasia Baptist Church

The documentary premier of “Stolen Freedom” attracted over 1200 people, but the premieres of the other documentaries which featured local veterans also had large audiences.

World War II, “Serve and Protect: Stories From World War II”



Korea: Forgotten War, Remembered Heroes



Vietnam: Service, Sacrifice and Courage



Unleashing The Underdogs: The K9s For Warriors Story



The Veterans Council Honors Vietnam veterans on National Vietnam Veterans day with a commemoration ceremony at the St. Augustine National Cemetery



Welcoming Home our Vietnam Heroes at the Corazon Theater



The Council works with the St. Johns County School board to assist with the teaching of the history of the Vietnam War

The Veterans Council hosts Laura Wynn, Curriculum Specialist, Secondary Schools Social Studies, to speak on National Vietnam war Veterans Day to speak to the Council about How The Vietnam War is taught in our High Schools.



The Veterans Council donates its series of documentaries to local schools, pictured the Palatka school board.



Veterans Council's Annual Event: The Homeless Veterans Stand Down

The Homeless Veterans Stand Down, Veterans Helping Veterans. The Homeless Veterans Stand Down is an annual event, now in its 15th year, organized by the St Johns County Veterans Service Office and the Veterans Council of St Johns County under the leadership of Chairman Bill Dudley. The Stand Down is held in September and hosted by St Augustine Elks Lodge 829 who fund the event through a \$ 2000 Beacon Grant. Many local veteran's organizations and the St Augustine Lions International sent volunteers for set up and for the Stand Down. The Stand Down is a huge success in providing St Johns County Homeless Veterans and homeless non- veterans with much needed support and supplies. The homeless veterans and non veteran homeless were greeted, fed, counseled and given supplies to help make their life easier. Many support organizations are on hand providing services, in attendance are the Council on Aging, Humana, Housing Resources, employment counseling, the Red Cross, the VA benefits counsel, Legal Aid, and the Wildflower Dental Clinic. There are rooms full of supplies; shoes, clothes and outdoor supplies. The following services were provided to all- hot showers, haircuts and hot food provided by the Elks.



The Veterans Council Places Wreaths at the St. Augustine National Cemetery Wreaths Across America

Historic City News

Wreaths Across America is dedicated to ensuring that headstones in all America's National Cemeteries are adorned with a live holiday wreath at Christmas. Ceremonial wreaths will be placed by a member from each service branch: US Army, US Navy, US Marine Corps, US Air Force, US Coast Guard, US Merchant Marines and Prisoner of War/Missing In Action. A Bugler will perform taps.

In 2019, approximately 2.2 million veteran wreaths were placed on headstones at participating locations around the country, including St. Augustine National Cemetery, in honor of the service and sacrifices American soldiers have made for our freedoms.

“Due to the restrictions placed by NCA policies having to do with the COVID-19 pandemic, this year we are limited to a non-public ceremony,” MSGT Ray Quinn, Vice Chairman of the Veterans Council of St. Johns County, told local reporters this week. “A very reduced number of volunteers will place the wreaths on the headstones this year to be sure we are properly maintaining personal spacing in accordance with NCA guidelines.”

It is the hope of the Veterans Council that by December of this year COVID restrictions will be lifted and we all can join the Council in laying the Wreaths on every headstone.

Each December, on National Wreaths Across America Day, the mission is to remember, honor and teach is carried out by the coordinating wreath-laying ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery, as well as at more than 2,158 additional locations in all 50 United States, at sea and abroad.



Mr. William Dudley

Chairman of the St. Johns Veterans Service Council

St. Augustine, FL

Congratulations from the St. Augustine VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) to the members of the St. Johns County Veterans Service Council for their 20 years of dedicated and exemplary service to our Veterans. St. Johns County Veterans are fortunate to have this wonderful organization that has worked tirelessly for their benefit since its birth 2 decades ago. As the Chief Medical Officer for the St. Augustine CBOC I have enjoyed a close working relationship with its members to continue to provide top-notch services to our nation's heroes. It is a privilege to have St. Johns County Veterans Service Council as a community partner that shares the mission of providing the best services to Veterans in our local area. Best wishes for another outstanding 20 years.

Thomas McKenzie, DO

Chief Medical Officer

St. Augustine VA CBOC



May 19, 2021

Lieutenant Colonel (ret) Bill Dudley
Chairman, St. Johns County Veterans Council
St. Augustine, Florida

Dear Chairman Dudley:

It is an honor to provide a letter recognizing the significant accomplishments of the St. Johns County Veterans Council. From its inception this Council has been a tireless advocate of military veterans of all generations. From the inspirational leadership of Colonel (ret) Ed Taylor as the founding leader of the Veterans Council to its current leaders this Council has been at the forefront of every major veterans' issue for 20 years. I was personally touched by Colonel Taylor's leadership when I moved to St. Augustine to assume command of a battalion. Although he had just met me, Colonel Taylor offered his guidance and mentorship that helped shape my military career. It is this type of committed leadership that is the foundation of the successful advocacy of the Council.

The St. Johns Veterans Council's accomplishments over the years are too numerous to name. Projects such as the Military Ball; Wreaths Across America; St. Johns County becoming a Purple Heart County; and annual Memorial Day and Veterans Day events are examples of the service provided by this Council. The Council annually hosts a Homeless Veterans Standdown that provides local homeless veterans with clothes, haircuts, food, showers, counseling, and dental check-ups. Members of the Veterans Council work to foster patriotism and honor the sacrifices veterans have made for our freedoms by recording, preserving, and educating the public and youth through documentaries and presentations. Veterans at the Clyde Lassen State Veterans Nursing Home and other senior centers are honored through Council member visits. To provide support to veterans with legal challenges, Judge Howard McGillin, Jr. credited the advocacy of the Veterans Council for starting the St. Johns County Veterans Treatment Court.

This legacy of accomplishment continues today. The St. Johns Veterans Council was the leading voice in the establishment of a new VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic in St. Augustine that will significantly enhance the physical and mental well-being of the veterans it serves. Through the support of the Council, St. Johns County fully supports The Fire Watch that was created to fight against the challenge of veterans' suicides. We are better as a county, state, and nation because we have a Veterans Council that dedicates itself to serving those who have served us.

//s//
Michael P. Fleming
Brigadier General (ret)
Chair, The Fire Watch



ST. AUGUSTINE
LIGHTHOUSE
& MARITIME MUSEUM

May 17, 2021

Veterans Council of St. Johns County
Mr. Bill Dudley, Chairman
P.O. Box 2117
St. Augustine, Florida 32085

Dear Bill and Veterans Council members,

We want to take a moment to thank each of you from the bottom of our hearts for the service, dedication, commitment, and valor that you display while serving our great nation. At the St. Augustine Lighthouse & Maritime Museum, we are honored to tell the stories of veterans who protected the oldest port in the United States. From the Lighthouse Keepers to Coast Guardsmen in World War II and beyond, our city retains a strong military heritage of those who put their own safety aside to ensure that their fellow citizens are out of harm's way.

All of us at the St. Augustine Lighthouse & Maritime Museum want to express heartfelt gratitude and honor on this 20th anniversary year. The work that the Veterans Council of St. Johns County does each day in service to all St. Johns County veterans is outstanding. Again, congratulations and we offer our gratitude, appreciation and utmost respect to each of you.

We are humbled by your service and sacrifice to our veterans.

Cordially,

CAPT Bob Buehn, USN (Ret.)
Chairperson, Board of Trustees

Mrs. Kathy A. Fleming
Executive Director



The Veterans Council of St. Johns County Supports the Veterans Treatment Court

Veterans Court is an initiative in the 7th Judicial Circuit designed to focus on the distinctive needs of veterans in the criminal justice system.

Military veterans are unique in that they undergo vigorous physical training emphasizing survival, endurance, and courage. They are also molded to respect authority, serve selflessly, and abide by the codes of duty, honor, and patriotism. Although these are admirable traits, these characteristics have the potential for extreme emotional and mental strain for those leaving military service and reintegrating to civilian life. The military acknowledges that veterans have distinctive needs and that many veterans require treatment to deal with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), substance abuse issues, mental health issues, and suicidal thoughts. The courts have also recognized these needs and in 2008 the country's first Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) was implemented in Buffalo, New York. Since then more programs have been implemented throughout the country, including several in Florida.

Veterans Courts follow a positive, authoritative model to assist veterans with resolving legal matters while linking veterans to services to which they are entitled. Therefore, these individuals already have benefits for medical, substance abuse, and mental health treatment. Additionally, the Department of Veterans Affairs can assist with daily needs such as housing and sustenance.

The Veterans Council of St. Johns County under the leadership of Chairman Bill Dudley works closely with the court and provides needy veterans in the program with gas and food cards, pays utility bills, rent, mortgage or motel bills as needed to assist veterans to get back on his/her feet. The money is paid back for the most part.



The Veterans Council Hosts a Dinner for Homeless Veterans on Veterans Appreciation Day



□ The Veterans Council of St. Johns County was proud to initiate and support the POW/MIA flag raising ceremony over the St. Johns County Administration building.

□ This was followed by the Board of County Commissioners proclaiming St. Johns County a Purple Heart County. The Commissioners presented county Purple Heart recipients with a pin commemorating their sacrifice for our country.



St. Johns County is now a Purple Heart County

The Mission of the Veterans Council is partly to continually educate today's youth and to include them in all of the Council's many events



At the Council's POW documentary premiere a young boy dresses in a Navy uniform



St Augustine High School Chorale



The St Augustine Sea Cadets



The Atlantic Coast Young Marines assist the Veterans Council in Honoring Vietnam Veterans



Students at the Jacksonville Art Institute work on the Korean War documentary with the Veterans Council



Flagler College students in the Communications Dept work on the Council's World War II documentary

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Flagler College Communication Dept. students meet and work with Vietnam Veterans to preserve their stories



SGM is the MC at a Veterans Program at Liberty Pines Academy



The Korean War documentary is discussed with students at an Orlando High School and at the Orange County Regional History Center



The Orange County Regional History Center discusses the Council's Vietnam documentary



The veterans council donates its documentary series to all NE FL public libraries, high schools, colleges, museums, universities and veterans groups.



The documentaries are in the Pentagon, the World War 2 museum in New Orleans, the Vietnam Museums in TX and NJ, the National POW Museum in Andersonville, the Museum of Science & History, the Orange County Regional History Center and the Library of Congress.

Over 200,000 documentary views on
YouTube

AND THE MISSION CONTINUES...