



# The Patriot Reader Newsletter

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From Veterans Council Chairman Bill Dudley

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Fellow Veterans,  
The Veterans Council would like to take this opportunity to wish every veteran the best of the Holiday Season. 2023 has been a very challenging year. Shaping world events have been troubling. Locally, our Council was hit with devastating news of the passing of our former Vice Chairman, Sgt. Major Ray Quinn on Thanksgiving Day. His passing, though not unexpected is a great loss to the community, his friends and family and to veterans throughout the state. His life touched so many and has left a huge void in our community. A tribute to the Sgt. Major appears in this months edition of our newsletter. On a more enlightened note, the Veterans Council hosted another successful annual Wreaths Across America program on Saturday 16 December with over 400 attending the ceremony and laying a

wreath at each of the headstones at St. Augustine National Cemetery. The Veterans Council appreciates the community's involvement as we honor those who have served this nation and paid the supreme price for their service. The wreaths will remain in place until 13 January 2024 when volunteers will collect the wreaths for disposal. On December 8, the Veterans Council was honored to be a part of the World Changers Concert at the St. Augustine Amphitheater. This was an awesome event produced and hosted by Jackie and Danny Garcia and had all the elements of a world class event. There were many notables in attendance that made the event a huge success including the US Marine Band from Camp Lejeune, N.C. that performed on stage that evening and in the downtown Plaza the following evening in St. Augustine. Big kudos to Danny and Jackie for bringing this



world class event to our town.

I am pleased to announce that with this edition, we are beginning our 14th year of uninterrupted monthly publication of our Patriot Reader newsletter. A big Bravo Zulu to our Patriot Reader newsletter editor Michael Rothfeld who has done an awesome job of producing this monthly newsletter for the past 13 years. It has been our pleasure to bring you this newsletter monthly. The Veterans Council wishes you a very Happy New Year and gives thanks to all our veterans for their service

Bill Dudley  
Chairman  
Veterans Council of St. Johns County

## ATRIBUTE TO SGT. MAJOR RAY QUINN

On Nov. 23, Thanksgiving Day, our community lost a very special person. Sgt. Major Ray Quinn passed away after several years of fighting the debilitating effects of Pulmonary Fibrosis. Ray had suffered with this disease for a long time that robbed him of his ability to properly breathe thus limiting his ability to be as active as he had always been. I watched him as he continued to attempt to perform all the activities that had been so important to him. Until the very last days of his illness, Ray continued to serve in his role as a veteran advocate. Attending American Legion and Veteran Council meetings, breakfast or coffee with his fellow soldiers was all very important to him and he struggled to make it happen.



Ray was a man of principle, a man of immense integrity. His leadership skills were second to none and he was called upon by many local organizations to provide that leadership as they sought his guidance. Ray was the quintessential leader with the leadership qualities developed by his many years of military service. They continued after he took off his uniform as he was recognized by senior military officers to provide training and development for junior officers and NCO's . He was called upon for state functions by the National Guard senior command for his protocol knowledge at military events.

Ray's vision for veterans was evident as he worked with other former military leaders in the community to petition the St. Johns Board of County Commissioners to organize and stand up a Veterans Council. This was accomplished and came to fruition on July 4, 2001 when the Veterans Council of St. Johns County was commissioned by proclamation by the County Commission Board. Ray later was elected as the Chairman of the Council. He served on many other important groups to help with bringing services for veterans to our area such as the Clyde Lassen State Veterans Nursing Home, Jacksonville National Cemetery, and a strong supporter for the VA Leo C, Chase Jr. Community Base Outpatient Clinic. Ray was always an advocate for any opportunities to improve help for our veterans.

Ray's military and civilian awards are too numerous to mention here. They are delineated in his Obituary that is included in this newsletter but I'm sure I speak for everyone who knew Ray, who served with him as a soldier or a civilian, the community has lost a great veteran servant leader and I personally have lost a great friend.

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

**Sergeant Major Ray A Quinn, 77, went to be with the lord on 11/23/2023 peacefully at UF Flagler Hospital with family around him.**



He is survived by his wife Claudia Addrenne of 57 years, His mother Myrtle Quinn and proceeded in death by his father Vernon A Quinn and brother Stephen Quinn. Daughters Cindy Buzard (Dan), Susan Boyer (Craig), his grandchildren Brad Buzard (Taylor), Aubrey Lucas (Cameron), Quinn and Connor Crinigan, Haven and Cole Boyer. Great grandchildren Blayze and Asher Buzard, Reese Johnson, AJ and Luke Lucas.



SGM Quinn began his military career by enlisting in Company C, 2nd Battalion, 124th Infantry, Eustis, Florida on 13 June 1965.

SGM Quinn progressed through Infantry assignments and rank serving as an Automatic Rifleman, Fire Team Leader, Scout Section Sergeant, Anti-armor Platoon Sergeant and First Sergeant.

SGM Quinn began full-time employment with the Florida National Guard in December 1973 and began his Active Guard and Reserve (AGR) service in 1981. He served full time with the Florida Army National Guard from 1973 to 1995.

He served as First Sergeant of Combat Support Company, 2nd Battalion, 124th Infantry from January 1977 to May 1985. In May 1985 he was

transferred to Headquarters, Florida National Guard with assignment as Operations and Training Noncommissioned Officer. In July 1989 he was selected as Chief Administrative Noncommissioned Officer for the Support Personnel Office where he served until his retirement.



SGM Quinn was a graduate of the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy. In addition to his full-time assignments, he served as an instructor at the Florida National Guard Military Academy instructing Basic, Advance, Senior and First Sergeant courses.

After his retirement from the Florida National Guard on 30 November 1995 he began employment with the Florida Department of Military Affairs. He served the department until his retirement on 29 February 2008 retiring as the Director of Executive Services. In that capacity he was Chief of Protocol for both the Department and the Florida National Guard.

In 1999 SGM Quinn was selected to serve on the Ft. Stewart Retiree Council and served as the Chairperson of the Enlisted Council until 2008. In February of 2002 he was selected by the Chief of Staff, U. S. Army to serve a four-year term on the CSA Retiree Council and was asked to remain a fifth year. He served as the Chairman and Vice Chair of the St. Johns County Veterans Council.

SGM Quinn was President and former board member of the Kiwanis



Club of Historic St. Augustine. He was a charter member of the First Militia Chapter Association of the United States Army and serves as the Vice President for Veterans and Retiree Affairs. He served as a member of the board of directors of the Jacksonville National Cemetery Support Committee. He enjoyed membership in the National Infantry Association and holds an honorary membership in the Officers' Club of St. Augustine as well as the Ancient City Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America. He remains a life member of the Enlisted National Guard Association of the United States and the Enlisted National Guard Association of Florida. He was a member of American Legion Post 37 of St. Augustine serving as the Post Chaplain. He served as Chairman of the Florida Veterans Hall of Fame Council for four years.

In January of 2010 he was appointed interim county commissioner for District 3 St. Johns County Florida. In 2011 he was appointed to the St. Johns County Planning and Zoning Agency. In 2021 he was inducted into the Florida Veterans Hall of Fame.

Among his awards and decorations are the, Legion of Merit, Army Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Humanitarian Service Medal, Good Conduct Medal, Florida Cross, Florida Distinguished Service Medal, and the Florida Commendation Medal.



The family request in place of flowers that contributions be made to charities that he was passionate about in his honor: National Army Museum 1775 Liberty Dr Belborn, VA 22060 and American Bible Society 101 North Independence Mall East FL 8 Philadelphia, PA 19106.



**The Veterans Council of St. Johns  
County meets on the last Thursday of  
the month, all are invited to attend.**



**We meet at the County Health &  
Human Services Building, 200 San Sebastian View, at  
7 pm in the Muscovy room.**

**Upcoming Speakers**

**December 28**

**Joseph Pearce, Wish for Our Heroes**

**January 25, 2024**

**Dennis Graves, CJ3 Foundation  
William Zorich, Irreverent Warriors**

**February 29**

**Ramona Rood, Soldiers Angels  
Carey Picklesimer, CorpsStrength**

**March 28**

**Capt. Ed Turner, USN, Ret., Exec Dir.  
POW/MIA Memorial & Museum**

**May 30**

**Wendy Layton, Chapter Dir., Blue Star Families**

## Jackie Charsagua Garcia

@wreathsacross America, #staugustinefl. My first. Some 3 million volunteers across the nation placed wreaths (or flags) on hedge stones at national cemeteries. With city, county officials; volunteers young and old; heartwarming gathering of the community.

Sheriff Hardwick gave a great speech about the forgotten graves. Skies held the rain for most of the ceremony.

Had the honor of placing the USAF wreath, then was joined by USAF vets. Each service was represented, including a wreath for POW/MIA's.

I placed two more, saluted their memory, and said a prayer.

I am grateful knowing that a volunteer at Fort Bliss, TX, National Cemetery placed a wreath today at the hedgestone of my father, Jose A. Charsagua, SMSgt, US Army

Another well orchestrated event. Great job Chairman @BillDudley Veterans Council of St. Johns County, FL and the participants, including my pastor and friends from Anastasia Senior Adult Ministry.





# Additional photos of Wreaths Across America at the St Augustine National Cemetery

*Submitted by Bill Gradwell*



The Riverwood Mens Club held its Golf Tournament at the WGV Slammer & Squire on November 13th and donated \$ 28,500 to the Veterans Council of St Johns County, Inc.

Pictured below is the check presentation with Club members and Veterans Council Treasurer John Mountcastle.



## From Council member Ray Pascuzzi

I had the honor along with American Legion Post 37 - St. Augustine FL Legion Riders members Dave Glabb and newcomer Manny Perez escorting TWO MEN AND A TRUCK who delivered the wreaths for the Wreaths Across America ceremony at the St. Augustine National Cemetery.

We joined Friends of VEMA St. Johns County and St Johns County Sheriff's Office on the escort.

The rain held off until after the ceremony.

It was great to see the young sea cadets and youth groups like the Boys Scouts honoring those veterans who are no longer with us.



## **Florida Power & Light surprises St. Augustine resident with a Christmas lighting display**

*Lucia Viti, St. Augustine Record*

**On Tuesday evening, Florida Power & Light (FPL) volunteers gathered to surprise St. Augustine resident Victoria Le by decorating her home with an outdoor Christmas lighting display. The U.S. Navy Medical Corps Registered Nurse arrived to find the family home adorned with thousands of LED and solar lights along a front yard filled with Christmas décor.**



**The annual FPL tradition, now in its 16th year, surprises U.S. military veterans – “deserving heroes” – by decorating their homes in appreciation of the military’s commitment and sacrifice to America. FPL partnered with Hope4Veterans, a nonprofit organization that works to prevent isolation, homelessness and suicide through services that include transitional housing, sister advocacy and financial assistance.**

**Lynn Geiser, CEO/President of Hope4Veterans, recommended Le for this year’s lighting surprise. Le’s husband, Khanh, coordinated with FPL and Hope4Veterans to surprise the mother of three as she arrived home.**

**“I was so confused and speechless when I saw a big white truck in front of my house and lights that I didn’t put up,” she said.**

**Le said it took several seconds to realize what was happening.**

**“I was shocked,” she said. “It’s all so beautiful, so amazing. I’m so grateful that FPL and Hope4Veterans did this for my family. This will be a very special Christmas; one that we’ll definitely remember.”**



## From Vets4Vets of Northeast Florida

Incarcerated Vietnam Veterans Chapter 1080 at Raiford Prison gives Blind Veterans American Braille Project \$2500. They also gave St Jude Children's Hospital \$2500 and are donating \$1000 to Jacksonville Community Health Outreach...The Chapter Veterans raise money through an annual walk-a-thon and donate thousands raised annually to community organizations. Vietnam Veterans are now uniting other incarcerated veterans to work with them to raise even more money to be donated to worthy causes. Veterans still making a difference.



# Celebrating Women Veterans



Lynn served for 11 years in the Army National Guard and on Active Duty as a Transportation Driver (88M). Her duties involved ensuring the safe and timely transport of personnel and equipment, which was crucial to supporting various military operations and training exercises. She is most proud of is her service from 2000 to 2004 at Fort Benning, where she was assigned to the 1/29th Infantry Unit. During this time, her unit played a vital role in supporting schools such as the ranger battalion, and professional development schools for enlisted and officers.

Lynn is retired from the military and now devotes most of her time to running a nonprofit organization called Hope4Veterans. As the founder of Hope4Veterans, her main responsibilities include overseeing the organization's operations and programs, which are dedicated to providing support and assistance to veterans, particularly military women, as they transition into civilian life.

Lynn has a wonderful family that includes three kids, three dogs, and a supportive spouse.

***She wants the public to know that women veterans are not alone. Each woman's journey and passion is unique, and it's important to recognize and respect the diversity of experiences and contributions that women have made and continue to make in the military.***



Her advice to fellow women transitioning to civilian life is to remember that when women work together, we empower each other. If you ever feel isolated or down during your transition, reach out to a military sister. They understand your experiences and can provide the support and camaraderie you need to navigate this new chapter in your life.

Celebrating Women Veterans

## Veterans honored with Virtual Honor Flight

By VERONICA WERNICKE, *Daily Sun Senior Writer*

U.S. Marine Corps veteran Robert Babb shed a lot of happy tears throughout Villages Honor Flight's 60th mission on Saturday.



Babb, of the Village of Pinellas, said he could feel how much people appreciated his service as he and 28 other veterans participated in the flightless mission.

The flightless Villages Honor Flights allow veterans who can't physically make the trip to Washington, D.C., to virtually experience an honor flight for free by watching videos from previous in-person missions.

"I was there when the Korean War Memorial was dedicated, so it was really exciting to see it again, and the Marine Corps monument," said Babb who served from 1953 to 1956. Villages Honor Flight ended its 2023 season with Saturday's event — its 17th flightless mission ever. Veterans watched videos of memorials such as the U.S. Air Force Memorial, the Korean War Veterans Memorial, the World War II Memorial and many others at Eisenhower Recreation.

The group also enjoyed a lunch, took a group photo, and received gifts from Villages Honor Flight and the community as tokens of appreciation for their service.

As with all Villages Honor Flight missions, the veterans received packages of mail filled with letters and notes from their family, friends and others in the community. It is commonly known as mail call, a moment many cherished during their time in the service, said Liza Walters, mission 60 flight director. Veterans took a few moments to read them before boarding a bus back to American Legion Post 347.

Paul Bourgault, a 102-year-old World War II and U.S. Coast Guard veteran from Leesburg, also received a special medal from Villages Honor Flight and a standing ovation from his fellow veterans and the crowd at Eisenhower.

"It's rare that we get a World War II veteran who is over 100 years of age who served this nation so courageously," said U.S. Air Force veteran Gary Kadow, of Villages Honor Flight and Village of Lynnhaven resident.

A common expression among Villages Honor Flight volunteers, coined by its founder Mark Erdrich, who died several years ago, was "it's all about the vets." For Walters, that was more than apparent given the fun they had and the people who welcomed them at Eisenhower and at Post 347, where they received the same kind of welcome home as other honor flights.

“It was a very good flight,” Walters said.

The Lady Lake Police Department, Fruitland Park Police Department, Wildwood Police Department, Sumter County Sheriff’s Office, Village Vettes Corvette Club and The Village Nomads all escorted the veterans to Post 347 in Lady Lake for the homecoming celebration.

As the buses pulled in, The Villages Public Safety Department sprayed a water hose overhead while entertainers like The Villages Cheerleaders, Prime Time Twirlers, The Villages Twirlers and Drum Corps, Ralph DiNome and more entertained the crowd.

Among the crowd welcoming home the veterans was Robert Babb’s son Daniel Babb, of the Village of Fernandina.

“I teared up,” Daniel said. “It was a proud moment, not just because my father was there, but to see all of these veterans.”

Daniel said all the veterans and his almost 90-year-old father deserve all the attention and appreciation that Villages Honor Flight and Post 347 give them.

This flightless mission also took World War II and U.S. Marine Corps veteran Bob Beale through a wave of emotions.

For Beale, it is always nice to get together with other veterans, especially the three other World War II veterans who were on this mission, he said.

“I enjoyed the memorials,” said Beale, of the Village of Hadley. “I love them all, but I love the Iwo Jima Memorial the best.”

Pulling up to Post 347 after the mission was a thrill for him as well.

Getting to experience a Villages Honor Flight, especially as an older person, gives him confidence in the U.S. and the freedom this country has, he said.

Following this mission, Villages Honor Flight has taken 346 veterans on these virtual missions, said Walters, of the Village of Duval.

This was also the final mission of 2023. The next Honor Flight season kicks off on April 17.

Any U.S. veteran who served at least one day in active duty is eligible to go on an Honor Flight mission. Villages Honor Flight serves veterans in Lake, Sumter, Marion, Citrus and Hernando Counties.

Villages Honor Flight recently lowered its age requirement for veterans who can apply for a VHF mission from age 78 to 75.

Since 2012, Villages Honor Flight also has taken more than 2,000 local veterans on in-person missions.



## Stories of Service: Recognizing Jacksonville soldiers serving forward deployment

In this week's Stories of Service, we focus on two members of the military who are from Jacksonville and are currently serving our country far from home.

*Author: Rich Donnelly*

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — First Coast News is proud to share the Stories of Service of the brave men and women who protect our freedom every day. In this week's Stories of Service, we'd like to take a look at some members of the military from Jacksonville who are serving forward deployment.

Reese Chandler is an Aviation Ordnanceman 3rd class in the Navy who is inspecting an M61A2 aircraft gun in the hangar bay of the USS Ronald Reagan in the Philippine Sea. The USS Ronald Reagan is the flagship of Carrier Strike Group 5 and provides a combat-ready force to protect the United States and military allies in the Indo-Pacific.

Sergeant Kiama Tims is also from Jacksonville and is an air traffic controller with the Marines. She works with the 4th Marine Aircraft Wing and communicates with UH60 Blackhawks at forward arming and refueling points in the United Arab Emirates.

We're proud of all of the brave men and women who wear the uniforms of our armed forces and protect us every day; especially those who are thousands of miles away from their families so we can enjoy freedom with ours here at home.

If you have a Story of Service that you would like us to share, send us an email to [storiesof-service@firstcoastnews.com](mailto:storiesof-service@firstcoastnews.com)





## National League of POW/MIA Families

Hello everyone!

The League is always seeking out photos of POW/MIA flags, monuments, Missing Man Honors Tables, POW/MIA empty chairs, etc. from your community to feature on our social media pages and website.

Sharing with us is easy, just message your photos to our email -

[nationalleague@pow-miafamilies.org](mailto:nationalleague@pow-miafamilies.org)

With your full name as well as a brief description of when & where the photo was taken.

All proper credits will be given.



# Join Our Team of Volunteers

We're currently looking for individuals who would be committed to restoring, maintaining, and being a docent on the USS Orleck.



## Requirements

- Veteran, Active Duty, Retired
- Minimum of 18 Years Old
- Healthy physically and mentally
- Youth groups with advisors
- Willing to volunteer where and when needed

## Registration On

[www.jaxnavalmuseum.org/volunteer](http://www.jaxnavalmuseum.org/volunteer)

## Skills Needed

- Welders & Electricians
- Docents & Office
- Painting, Cleaning, Events

## For More Info

[volunteer@jaxnavalmuseum.org](mailto:volunteer@jaxnavalmuseum.org)

## USS Orleck's Address

610 East Bay Street  
Jacksonville, FL 32202

## **Joe Orleck: The Namesake of the USS ORLECK**

**Taken From: USS Orleck (DD886): The History of the Ship, Her Namesake, and the Men who Proudly Served in Her  
by Robert L. Orleck**

**Very little is known about the early life of Joe Orleck. Joe was the son of a Russian immigrant junk collector, Maximilian Orleck, and his wife Rebecca. They fled Russia around 1904 to seek a better life in the United States.**

**Two years after their arrival, on 22 June 1906, their first son Joseph was born to them at Columbus, Ohio. Then came three brothers, Philip, Louis, and Benjamin, and a sister, Ethel.**

**The year 1924 marked a major turning point in Joe's life. His father died and Joe enlisted in the Navy. Joe had fourteen years of continuous enlisted service having re-enlisted at each appropriate time, one of those times being in the Naval Reserve. From 14 December 1933 as Boatswain, Ensign on 15 June 1942, to Lieutenant (Junior Grade) on 1 May 1943 then to Lieutenant on 7 June 1943, Joe rose through the ranks to become Commanding officer of the USS NAUSET.**

**Most of what we know about Joe Orleck comes from historical accounts in the United States Naval records starting with his 1924 initial enlistment. When appointed Boatswain he was ordered to the USS LOUISVILLE and shortly thereafter to the USS QUINCY where he spent approximately three years. When commissioned Ensign he was ordered to the USS RAVEN and it was during this time that he earned the Navy and Marine Corps Medal from the President of the United**





States for what is described in the following citation:

**“For extremely heroic and courageous conduct in effecting the rescue of personnel of the S.S. LANCASTER, aground off El Hank at Casablanca, French Morocco, December 31, 1942. In spite of mountainous seas and exceptionally adverse weather, Ensign Orleck took charge of a motor whaleboat and crew of the U.S.S. WAINWRIGHT and successfully completed one trip to the stranded LANCASTER, bringing approximately twelve men to safety. Although his boat capsized during the second trip, he swam to another motor boat and continued directing rescue operations. As a result of his gallant action, twenty persons were saved.”**

**On 2 April 1944 he was ordered to Service Force, Atlantic Fleet for temporary service. Then, Joe Orleck took command of the recently commissioned USS NAUSET on 28 May 1943 at Mers-el-Kebir, Algeria. Less than four months later he was engaged in a battle for his life and the life of his ship. Both went down on that fateful day, 9 September 1944. For his ultimate sacrifice he was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross.**

**For extraordinary heroism in action as Commanding Officer of the USS NAUSET during the amphibious invasion of Italy on September 9, 1943. When his ship, approaching the assault area in the Gulf of Salerno, was struck by aerial bombs which caused numerous casualties and consuming fires over the entire boat deck, Lieutenant Orleck calmly and expertly directed the fire-fighting activities, the control of serious flooding and the transfer of all survivors to the rescue ships. Valiant and determined in the face of imminent peril, he remained aboard the stricken NAUSET in an attempt to beach her and**

prevent total loss, working desperately until she struck an enemy mine and sank. Lieutenant Orleck's indomitable fighting spirit and selfless devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

Lieutenant Joseph Orleck was officially reported missing in action 9 September 1943 and according to law was presumed to have died on 10 September 1944. He was awarded the American Defense Service Medal, the European-African-Middle Eastern Area Campaign Medal, and the Purple Heart.

On 8 January 1945, it was recommended that the name ORLECK be given in honor of the late Lt. Joseph Orleck, USN. Ralph A. Bard, Acting Secretary of the Navy, approved the request on 11 January 1945. USS ORLECK (DD886) was launched 12 May 1945. Thus began the 37 year history of a mighty war ship named after an unlikely hero. Where else but in America could someone from such humble and foreign beginnings have the honor of a mighty destroyer being named for him. The ship and the name she carried brought a feeling of pride. The officers and crew spoke as if Lieutenant Orleck was an active member of the ORLECK wardroom and involved himself in the daily operations of the ship. Joe Orleck's example and their feeling about him and their ship inspired the men of the ORLECK to serve their country proudly. USS ORLECK (DD886) became a symbol of excellence in her performance as all who came in contact with her would testify.



## Gary Sinise Foundation news

### A look back at the Snowball Express "Disney in December"

December 6th, 2023

The holiday season is a time of wonder and remembrance. This past week, the Gary Sinise Foundation was honored to host more than 1,800 children and spouses/guardians



of our fallen military heroes at our Snowball Express "Disney in December" Event. Over the course of 5 days, these deserving families were given the opportunity to make new memories, experience the magic of Disney World, and connect with the only people who truly understand the healing journey they are on...each other.

The magic began from the moment they arrived at the airport. Our presenting sponsor, American Airlines, welcomed families with fully decorated terminals and planes and American Airlines personnel who volunteered to ensure these families had a wonderful experience as they traveled to Orlando, FL. After arriving in Florida, families were greeted by none other than Mickey and Minnie!



Thousands of people come together to make this the experience of a lifetime. Our wonderful volunteers hosted numerous activities in our lounges, allowing families to form new bonds with each other and create connections that will last a lifetime. We are forever grateful to our volunteers for donating their time and energy to create such a joyful environment for these special families.

This annual event is about honoring those lost while supporting the families left behind. In the Remembrance Garden, families have a quiet place to sit and spend

time with their hero. The road to healing is long and should never be traveled alone. It is our solemn promise to our fallen heroes that we will support and uplift their families this day and every day.



The Walk of Gratitude at Disney's Magic Kingdom began down Main Street, USA, where cast members lined the street, greeting them with a hero's welcome as families made their way toward Cinderella's Castle. There, with the help of Disney magic, families sent messages of love and remembrance to their fallen hero.

No Snowball Express Disney in December would be complete without a rocking performance by Gary Sinise & the Lt. Dan Band! As they entered the concert venue in EPCOT, families were given a red carpet welcome by members of the Patriot Guard Riders. And when Gary and the LTDB took the stage, there was endless dancing, hugs, and smiles as far as the eye could see!

On behalf of Gary and all of us at the Gary Sinise Foundation, we would like to send our warm thanks to the following sponsors of our Snowball Express Disney in December Event. Thanks to our presenting sponsor, American Airlines, and our corporate partners at Amazon, American Tire Distributors, Aston Carter, E. & J. Gallo, KPMG, Owens Corning, Patriot Guard Riders, Regal Cinemas, Sunbelt Rentals, Veterans United, WoodmenLife. And a special thanks to our sponsor and host, Disney.





## **St. Johns County's Parks & Recreation receives \$54,000+ for disabled veterans' adaptive sports programs**



Funds awarded by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs will offer three, monthly veteran-exclusive, kayaking, fishing and art programs.

According to Ryan Kane, the county's Parks & Recreation director, monies will fund programs uniquely designed for disabled military veterans.

"These men and women will compete in activities in parks that display the American flag," he said. "And they'll know that the county cares about their physical, mental, and spiritual health."

"This phenomenal program enriches the quality of life for military veterans injured in their service in protecting our freedoms," continued Joseph McDermott, the county's veterans service director.

County commissioners authorized the Parks & Recreation Department to apply for the grant last April.

"Our slogan in Parks & Recreation is 'Play Your Way.'" Kane concluded.

"That's what we're offering – opportunities for these brave men and women of our military forces to play their way."

The Veterans Programs include archery, pickleball, art, fishing, and kayaking.



# VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

## Military Museum of North Florida

Wednesday-Saturday

**10am-3pm**

1 Bunker Ave  
Green Cove Springs FL,  
32043

Call or email the Military  
Museum @  
(904) 863-3527  
[militarymuseumnf@ol.com](mailto:militarymuseumnf@ol.com)



Made with PosterMyWall.com



## **K9s For Warriors graduates 12 service dogs for veterans, 2023 most pairings in program history**

*By ActionNewsJax.com News Staff*

ST. JOHNS COUNTY, Fla. — Twelve more graduates, 12 more veterans that now have a life-changing K9.

On Thursday, K9s For Warriors graduated 12 new service dogs and it came just in time for the holidays.

The organization announced that with this graduating class, 162 veterans have now been paired with life-changing service dogs in 2023, the most ever in program history.



## **Burials and Memorials**

**VA honors the service and sacrifice of Veterans and their family members.**

### **How to Apply**

**To find out in advance if a Veteran or family member is eligible for burial in a VA national cemetery, click “Apply for Pre-Need Burial Eligibility” to fill out and submit the application.**

### **Apply for Pre-Need Burial Eligibility**

**If pre-need eligibility has not been determined, upon the death of the Veteran or his or her spouse or dependent (also called the time of need), family members should locate the Veteran’s DD-214 or other discharge papers if readily available and click “Schedule a Burial” to begin the process. Then make arrangements with a funeral home, National Cemetery Scheduling Office, or directly with a VA national cemetery.**

### **VA Memorial Benefits**

**VA takes special care to pay lasting tribute to the memory of Veterans who served and sacrificed and that of their families. VA meticulously maintains 155 VA national cemeteries in 44 states and Puerto Rico and is working to increase access to accommodate Veterans and eligible family members close to home. Currently, more than 94 percent of Veterans have a burial option in an open VA, state or tribal veterans cemetery located within 75 miles of their home.**

**Note that most if not all of these benefits may be provided for Veterans who are interred in a State, Territorial or Tribal Veterans cemetery. Check with the cemetery to ensure coverage. Some benefits are also available for Veterans who choose burial in a private cemetery.**

**Veterans with a qualifying discharge are entitled to VA burial benefits. Spouses and dependent children are eligible too, even if they predecease the Veteran.**



**The following burial benefits may be provided:**

**Burial in a VA national cemetery**

**Opening and closing of the grave for burial of casketed or cremated remains, or placement of cremated remains in an above-ground vault, also called a columbarium**

**A government furnished grave liner**

**Perpetual care of the gravesite**

**A headstone or marker with an inscription**

**A burial flag**

**A Presidential Memorial Certificate**

**A dedicated memorial page on the Veterans Legacy Memorial site where friends and family can upload photos and remembrances**

**Burial in a private cemetery**

**A government headstone, marker, or medallion**

**A burial flag**

**A Presidential Memorial Certificate**

**Some survivors may also be entitled to VA burial allowances as partial reimbursement for the costs of funerals and burials for eligible Veterans**

**Please note that gravesites in a VA national cemetery cannot be reserved in advance. To prepare for a private cemetery burial, VA suggests families review these questions and complete required forms in advance.**

**VA Requirements**

**Discharge papers to establish your eligibility for burial services**

## National League of POW/MIA Families

Big news everyone! A Vietnam War veteran has been accounted for.

"The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced today that U.S. Marine Corps Capt. Ronald W. Forrester, lost during the Vietnam War, was accounted for Dec. 4, 2023.

In the winter of 1972, Forrester was assigned to Marine All-Weather Attack Squadron 533, Marine Attack Group 12, 1st Marine Air Wing. On Dec. 27, Forrester was the navigator of an A-6A Intruder, along with his pilot, during a nighttime combat mission over the northern part of the Democratic Republic of (North) Vietnam. After entering the target area, Forrester's aircraft ceased radio communications and never returned to base. Search and rescue teams could not locate any trace of the aircraft or the crew in the Le Thuy District, Quang Binh Province. In September 1978, the Marine Corps changed Capt. Forrester's initial Missing In Action status to Killed in Action."

Link to the DPAA Press Release is below:

<https://www.dpaa.mil/.../marine-accounted-for-from.../>



VyStar Veterans Memorial Arena  
300 A. Philip Randolph Blvd.  
Jacksonville, FL 32202

Saturday, January 6th, 2024  
10:30 am - 1 pm

**VETS 4 VETS**

**JOIN US!**

**GATHERING OF VETERANS**

**ALL VETERANS & VETERAN SERVICE ORGS WELCOME**  
For Table Reservations or Info, Contact:  
[vets4vetsnjax@gmail.com](mailto:vets4vetsnjax@gmail.com)

Speakers, Camaraderie, Lunch

Logos include: City of Jacksonville, Duval County Veterans Council, VyStar Credit Union, and various military branches (Army, Navy, Air Force, Space Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard).

**Join Us!**  
After 3 years the  
**Return of the Vets 4 Vets**  
**Free Gathering of Veterans and Lunch**  
*Contributions made by Vystar Credit Union*  
in accordance with  
*City Ordinance 2019-95-E*  
Support of a Quarterly Veterans Gathering

**The last V4V Quarterly Gathering 2021**

**VETERANS COUNCIL OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY**

**MINUTES OF GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

**November 30, 2023**

**CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Dudley**

**WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS: Chairman Dudley**

**PLEDGE: Chairman Dudley**

**INVOCATION: Danny Garcia**

**INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKERS/GUESTS: Chairman Dudley**

**Chairman Dudley spoke of the loss of Sgt. Major Ray Quinn and asked for a moment of silence in his memory.**

**New attendees introduced themselves to the group.**

**MINUTES OF LAST MEETING: Minutes of last meeting conducted October 26, 2023, were presented by Chairman Dudley. Copies of the Minutes and Agenda are available on the sign-in table and were sent to members electronically by the Secretary. The minutes were approved by voice vote with no changes.**

**TREASURER'S REPORT: Treasurer Mountcastle was not in attendance as he was accepting a check for the Council from the Men's Golf Group in Nocatee.**

**Chairman Dudley presented the Treasurer's Report to the Council. As of October 25, 2023, the cash balance was \$165,099.97. Currently the cash balance is \$166,336.07. Chairman asked if there were any questions regarding the Treasurer's Report. The Report was approved by voice vote.**

**SPEAKERS:**

**JENNIFER JENKINS, WOUNDED WARRIOR PROJECT**

**Chairman Dudley gave an introduction of Ms. Jenkins and her life accom-**





plishments including her new book, “Friends for Life.”

Ms. Jenkins spoke of her job as caregiver to her younger brother who suffered a TBI during the Iraq War and how the Wounded Warrior Project helped her family through this process. After her brother’s injury caused lifelong disabilities, Ms. Jenkins realized his life would be vastly different. After he became medically retired, he was sent home to live with her and she was challenged by helping him with all of his daily requirements. For seven years she was stressed with the responsibility that she was handed. After several times of Wounded Warrior reaching out to her, she finally agreed to participate with their Facebook group. During a challenging time, she posted her concerns with her life and Wounded Warriors provided the much-needed assistance to help assist with her family’s needs. Their programs provide many things for her, including an Independent Living Program for her brother, which was successful, and he now lives on his own. Wounded Warrior also offered her employment opportunities and Ms. Jenkins is now a full-time employee of The Wounded Warrior Project. The Wounded Warrior Project has become a great asset to our Veterans that have been wounded and need help. Everyone was asked to reach out to those who are in need – let them know you are there for them.

#### **SIGRID NEWBURY, HAVEN’S “WE HONOR VETS” PROGRAM**

Ms. Newbury introduced herself and she is the Volunteer Coordinator with Haven Hospice that covers St. Johns, Volusia, Flagler, and Putnam Counties. She spoke of Haven’s program “We Honor Veterans” and their need for volunteers that are Veterans. The patients of Haven Hospice are identified when they are Veterans and there is a need for a Recognition Ceremony. Haven needs volunteer Veterans to come in and conduct the ceremony for their Veterans. Ms. Newbury spoke of what the Recognition Ceremony covers and the protocol for performance. She provided packets for anyone interested in volunteering. The floor was open for questions and comments.

#### **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE UPDATE, JOSEPH MCDERMOTT**

**Mr. McDermott spoke of the turnover and update of the Veteran Service Officers that have been hired to continue to help with our Veterans. They will be certified and eased into placing claims. The Veterans Service Office is still in the process of looking for someone to answer the phone and perform administrative duties. Claims that have been filed are still running 5-6 months out, or longer. There has also been a large turnover in the Veterans Administration Office and the workload is heavy. Many have been hired in hopes of getting things turned around in the VA. Floor was opened for questions and comments.**

#### **VETERANS TREATMENT COURT, JOHN LESLIE**

**Mr. Leslie introduced himself, Mentor Coordinator for the St. Johns and Putnam County Veterans Treatment Court. The month of December will have two court sessions and at the end of the second session, the Veterans Treatment Court will have completed 7 years of operation. Attending Mentors were given recognition by the Council.**

**The Veterans Treatment Court session for this month will be held on December 1st and there will be 2 or 3 graduates at that session. The second December session will be held on December 22nd and there will be 5 graduates at that session. Everyone was invited to attend those sessions.**

**During the 7 years the VTC has been operating, there have been 140 Veterans who have been inducted into the program. Of that amount, 81 have graduated and the last report on recidivism is 17%. Currently, there are 38 Veterans inflow and 7 or 8 of them will be graduating in December. The floor was open for questions.**

#### **OLD/NEW BUSINESS:**

**Chairman Dudley spoke of the passing of Sgt. Major Quinn and the expected service for him in the future. Chairman Dudley has spoken with his wife and will keep the Council updated on the service once it is planned.**

**Chairman Dudley spoke of the successful groundbreaking on the new facility that will be opened with Home Again St. Johns on SR 16. Hopefully, people will be moving into that facility in the Summer of 2024. There has also been an offer made to a motel on Anastasia Island and the offer was accepted by the owner. Once requirements are met, money will be released to update and renovate the motel to the VA requirements. Questions and answers were discussed on this subject.**

**There was an update on the recent Veterans Day Program and the enormous success that it was – the best yet! A large attendance and an outstanding program. There was great acknowledgement and recognition of Sgt. Major Quinn, who was able to attend.**

**On December 16, 2023, the Wreaths Across America Program will be conducted at the St. Augustine National Cemetery. Volunteers are needed for placing the wreaths on the graves. The ceremony will start at 12:00 (noon) sharp.**

**The floor was opened to all others that had information to share with the Veterans Council.**

**Next Veterans Council meeting will be held on Thursday, December 28th beginning at 7:00pm.**

**The meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**William Dudley, Chairman**

## With passing of veterans who faced Pearl Harbor surprise attack, legacy shifts to the young

By WYATT OLSON, STARS AND STRIPES

PEARL HARBOR NATIONAL MEMORIAL, Hawaii — On the morning of Dec. 7, 1941, 21-year-old Ira Schab was donning dress whites for what would be a typical morning for the sailor: playing tuba during morning colors aboard the USS Dobbin moored in Pearl Harbor.



It would turn out to be a morning like no other.

As the musician second class pondered the possibility of meeting that day with his brother Allen, a Navy radioman also stationed on Oahu, Schab heard explosions while below deck on the destroyer tender.

“All hell let loose,” Schab, 103, recalled during an interview in his Waikiki Beach hotel room Wednesday, the day before the 82nd annual commemoration of the Japanese surprise attack.

On Thursday morning, Schab and five other veterans who survived the attack — Ed Carroll, Harry Chandler, Herb Elfring, Ken Stevens and Sterling Cale — sat in a place of honor during the ceremony themed “Legacy of Hope” at the Pearl Harbor National Memorial.

“Today, for those of us in uniform who serve and for those civilian warriors who support our incredible Department of Defense, we stand on the shoulders of these giants in front of us,” Adm. John Aquilino, commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, told the audience.



‘Did what we had to do’

It was keynote speaker Marine Corps Capt. Ray Hower, however, who stood as the exemplar of military legacy. He is a third-generation Marine Corps aviator whose father flew fighter jets and grandfather piloted an A-4 Skyhawk during the Vietnam War, where he lost his life.

Hower, a Harrier pilot, is also the great nephew of Lou Conter, 102, the sole living survivor of the USS Arizona, which sank in Pearl Harbor during the attack. Conter was unable to attend the ceremony for health reasons.

“Whenever my uncle Lou or any other veteran of World War II is recognized or thanked for their service, they humbly answer: ‘We just did what we had to do,’ ” Hower said.

“Fair enough. But the fact that you did it, the sacrifices you made, the courage and heroism you showed, the determination to succeed that you demonstrated, the live sacrifice by the fallen, the legacy that you all





built, remains unmatched and a lesson that keeps on teaching.

“On behalf of a grateful nation, I thank you for the gifts you have given us and the legacy we inherit,” he said.

The 1941 attack killed 2,403 Americans, sunk or damaged 19 ships and ravaged more than 300 aircraft.

From four carriers, the Japanese navy had launched a 353-aircraft strike force that laid waste to the Pacific Fleet’s Battleship Row in Pearl Harbor, along with other military sites across Oahu.

Among the crippled battleships was the USS Oklahoma, which slowly capsized after being hit by torpedo bombers, claiming the lives of 429 crew members.

The sinking of the USS Arizona took the lives of 1,177 sailors and Marines. Its hulk still sits at the bottom of the harbor, the centerpiece of a memorial to that “day that will live in infamy,” as President Franklin Roosevelt labeled the attack as America entered World War II a day later.

‘Too afraid to be afraid’, When Schab heard the explosion that Sunday morning, he raced topside to see what was happening.

“At the time, I was not that afraid because I was not that smart,” he said jokingly on Wednesday. “I didn’t know what was going on, so I wasn’t afraid. And when I realized it, I was too afraid to be afraid. I felt like I was going in circles.”

Schab saw the nearby USS Utah, a former battleship that had been repurposed into a training and target ship, listing at a stunning angle.

“A ship isn’t at 45-degrees at port,” he said, betraying lingering disbelief at what he saw even with the passing of 82 years.

Musicians did not have battle stations to attend in the event of an attack, Schab said. Their job was to man aid stations to care for wounded and injured.

But before he could do so, an officer ordered him down into one of the magazines to help pass ammunition to the gunners, he said.

Schab has made the pilgrimage to Pearl Harbor numerous times, an “obligation” to the memory of the men who died that day, he said.

But at 103 and with a failing memory, he accepts that this could be his final visit.

Still, he’s aware that such a mindset is contrary to one of the lessons he took away from the shock of that surprise attack.

“You make an assumption,” he said, “and there’s a 90-to-99 percent chance it’s going to be wrong.”

## From Kathy Church, Smokey, the First Therapy Dog

Smoky was a 4 lb, 7 inch tall, Yorkshire Terrier who served in World War II. In 1944 Smoky was found in a foxhole in the jungles of New Guinea by an American soldier who brought her back to camp and sold her to



Corporal William A. Wynne for \$6.44. For the next 2 years Smoky lived a soldiers life. Because she was not an official military dog, she did not get dog food or medical care. She shared Wynne's meals and slept beside him in his tent.

The little dog even flew 12 air/sea rescue and photo reconnaissance missions, secured in the soldiers backpack. She survived 150 air raids and saved Wynne by warning him of incoming shells. Like many Yorkies, Smoky also loved to learn tricks and perform. She did so with the Special Services – entertaining soldiers in hospitals. After the war Smoky was flown back to the US hidden in a oxygen mask carrying case.

For the next 10 years she made television and public appearances in Veterans hospitals until her death in 1957. Smoky is considered the first Therapy Dog.

## From the Gary Sinise Foundation

Please enjoy the ulti-mutt military dog story about legendary military service dog, Chips!

A mixed-breed mutt, Chips wasn't always a working dog. He started out as a pet, but his owner gave him to the military as part of the Dogs for Defense program, launched following the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Chips thrived on the battlefield. He served in General Patton's Seventh Army in Germany, Italy, France, and several other locations, and his heroism has been well-documented.

On one occasion, Chips charged a pillbox and captured the enemy soldiers inside to save his companions from machine gun fire. Later that night, Chips heard enemy soldiers closing in and woke his soldiers to warn them of the approaching ambush, saving them twice in one day.

Chips won the most medals of any dog during WWII, including a Silver Star and a Purple Heart. Sadly, his medals were later revoked because the military decided dogs were "equipment" rather than service members.

Thank you, Chips, for your service and sacrifice to our country. Today, we proudly salute you.



## The CJ3 Foundation

A representative of the CJ3 Foundation will be speaking at the Veterans Council meeting on January 25, 2024.

Please make plans to join us then if not sooner.

The CJ3 Foundation provides advocacy services at no cost to the wounded/disabled American Heroes we support.

The CJ3 Foundation advocates on behalf of our Recipients to receive assistance they need/require.

This advocacy centers on providing Recipients with referrals for services or support to other organizations/agencies established to adequately address/help with specific Recipient issues/needs.

The CJ3 Foundation works as an interlocutor for and with other VSO's and non-profits who have like goals in order to assist Veterans in need.

The CJ3 Foundation also works to influence changes in policy and legislation that adversely affects our Wounded/Disabled U.S. Military Service Member/Veteran, Law Enforcement, Firefighter, and Emergency/First Responder brothers and sisters.

The CJ3 Foundation provides a forum to formalize our advocacy efforts for these groups on issues of concern; whether it is a policy change or legislative change required.

The CJ3 Foundation builds upon this by engaging legislators and their staff to advocate for changes in policy and legislation that adversely affects our constituents.

Finally, the CJ3 Foundation also partners with hunting, fishing, and other recreational type groups to provide much needed rest and relaxation activities to our Recipients and their families.





## **World War II Veterans now offered free VA Health Care** **by Lindsay Hersey, Stars & Stripes**

WASHINGTON — Nursing home care and medical services are now free to the Greatest Generation under a new policy by the Department of Veterans Affairs that waives enrollment fees, copays and monthly premiums for the roughly 119,000 World War II veterans still alive.

The no-cost care is effective immediately under the new VA policies announced Friday. Veterans who served between Dec. 7, 1941, and Dec. 31, 1946, are eligible for the free health care. They must be enrolled in VA health care to qualify.

Veterans turned down previously for coverage are encouraged to reapply, as are those denied coverage because of income eligibility restrictions.

The VA is in the process of contacting veterans, their families and their caregivers to inform them of the free services.

Some nursing home officials said Monday that they are waiting to hear from veterans service organizations on how the free care will be applied and implemented.

This included the Southwest Louisiana War Veterans Home, which has 13 residents who are World War II veterans. Staff there said they are aware of the announcement but are awaiting more information. Officials at the Maine Veterans' Homes had a similar response.

A VA spokesman on Monday did not provide details about the program.

The changes are part of the Joseph Maxwell Cleland and Robert Joseph Dole Memorial Veterans Benefits and Health Care Improvement Act of 2022. Known as the Cleland-Dole Act, the legislation enables the veterans to keep their existing private health plans, Medicare, or other coverage. It also expands telehealth coverage and expands services for veteran homelessness, among other provisions.

The Act was named after the late Sen. Robert Dole, R-Kan., who served in World War II, and the late Sen. Joseph Cleland, D-Ga., a Vietnam veteran and former VA administrator.

More than 16 million Americans served in World War II. About 130 of those veterans are estimated to be dying each day, according to the VA.

“These members of the Greatest Generation answered the call to serve when our nation — and the world — needed them most. Now, it’s our job to serve them in every way that we can,” Dr. Shereef Elnahal, the VA undersecretary for health, said in a statement last week.

## New payment amounts in January, after the 3.2% COLA increase.

### Disability Compensation - Basic Rates 2024

3.20%

Dep Status	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
Veteran	\$171.23	\$338.50	\$524.32	\$755.28	\$1,075.16	\$1,361.88	\$1,716.28	\$1,995.01	\$2,241.91	\$3,737.85
V-SP			\$585.20	\$838.87	\$1,178.36	\$1,486.75	\$1,861.79	\$2,161.16	\$2,428.70	\$3,946.25
V-SP-1C	V=Veteran SP=Spouse C=Child		\$631.64	\$898.73	\$1,254.73	\$1,578.60	\$1,968.09	\$2,282.94	\$2,565.95	\$4,098.88
V-SP-2C		\$661.56	\$938.98	\$1,306.33	\$1,639.49	\$2,039.29	\$2,364.47	\$2,658.83	\$4,202.43	
V-SP-3C		\$691.49	\$979.22	\$1,357.93	\$1,700.37	\$2,110.50	\$2,445.99	\$2,751.71	\$4,305.98	
V-SP-4C		\$721.42	\$1,019.47	\$1,409.53	\$1,761.26	\$2,181.71	\$2,527.52	\$2,844.59	\$4,409.53	

Additional Child		\$29.93	\$40.25	\$51.60	\$60.89	\$71.21	\$81.53	\$92.88	\$103.55
18 y/o School Child		\$99.07	\$133.13	\$166.15	\$199.18	\$233.23	\$266.26	\$300.31	\$334.49
A/A Spouse		\$56.76	\$75.34	\$95.98	\$113.52	\$133.13	\$151.70	\$171.31	\$190.92

V-1C		\$565.59	\$811.01	\$1,145.33	\$1,445.47	\$1,821.54	\$2,105.43	\$2,366.78	\$3,877.21
V-2C		\$595.52	\$851.26	\$1,196.93	\$1,506.36	\$1,892.75	\$2,186.96	\$2,459.66	\$3,980.76
V-3C		\$625.44	\$891.50	\$1,248.53	\$1,567.25	\$1,963.96		\$2,552.54	\$4,084.32
V-4C		\$655.37	\$931.75	\$1,300.13	\$1,628.13	\$2,035.17	\$2,350.02	\$2,645.42	\$4,187.87

Auto Allow	\$25,603.02
Clothing Allow	\$968.52
Medal of Honor	\$1,619.34
Burial S/C	\$2,000 At VAMC
Burial Non S/C	\$300 ← 796
Plot Allowance	\$893

Dependent Indemnity Comp (DIC)	Single	Spouse 1 Child	Spouse 2 child	Spouse A & A	Spouse HB	Married 8 yrs
	\$1,612.75	\$2,012.28	\$2,411.81	\$2,012.27	\$1,799.91	Add \$341.76

Special Monthly Comp (SMC)-Added to current comp	ED/FSAD/ETC.	LOU/A&A	Housebound
SMC-K	\$132.74		
SMC-L	\$913.21		
SMC-M	\$1,395.07		
SMC-N	\$2,101.23		
SMC-O	\$2,788.79		
SMC-R1	\$5,588.22		
SMC-R2/T	\$6,959.38		
SMC-S	\$446.00		

Chapter 35	Monthly
Full Time	\$1,488
3/4 Time	\$1,176
1/2 Time	\$862
1/4 Time	\$372

PENSION				
Your income must be less than:	Pension	\$16,476	Income Limits Survivor's Pension	
	Pension Dep	\$16,077		
	HouseBound	\$20,133		
	HouseB Dep	\$25,234		
	A/A No Dep	\$27,482		
	A/A Dep	\$32,581		
* Both	HouseBound	\$28,890	Surviving Sp	\$10,876
* 1 A & A	1 HouseBd	\$36,230	Surviving Dep	\$14,234
* Both	A & A	\$43,593	HouseB	\$13,292
			HouseB Dep	\$16,644
			A/A No Dep	\$17,382
			A/A Dep	\$20,737

Based on 3.2% COLA (Cost of Living Allowance)  
Will be reflected on the Dec 29, 2023 pay

NOTE: You may also multiply your current VA pay by 1.032 to get the new rates.

\* Two Married Veterans



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

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



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

*To mail a contribution, please send checks to:*

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

**FALLENPATRIOTS.ORG**

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



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



## Korea Defense Veterans Association

KDVA membership is over 9,850 – only 150 from 10,000!

KDVA membership is free and open to anyone interested in Korea and Veterans – only takes a few minutes at [www.kdva.vet/members](http://www.kdva.vet/members)

Help Us Reach 10,000 Members By The End Of 2023!

Thanks to the great efforts of our members, donors, and partners, KDVA continues great growth in reaching thousands of people to join our work for the ROK-U.S. Alliance and our Veterans.

KDVA membership is over 9,850 – only 150 from 10,000! So, we ask our members and our supporters to help us reach this significant milestone and be a part of the 1st 10,000 KDVA members!

Please consider sharing this post and encouraging your friends to join KDVA. Together, we will continue our programs, events, and education to raise awareness about the important work KDVA members do for Americans and Koreans in so many areas of our lives.





## Find old service friends fast!

Stars and Stripes has partnered with Togetherweserved.com (TWS), the largest online community of U.S Military Veterans, with over 2.2 million members, and a significant archive of personal military histories, to help you find and reconnect with people you served with in your units, squadrons, ships, or military bases.

Together We Served has just launched a brand new portal page to help you find old service friends more easily! Simply click on the button below to access TWS's "Buddy Finder" where you simply enter a unit you were in, and associated timeframe, to see how many TWS Members served with you, ready for you to make contact.

<https://togetherweserved.com/findpeople>





*You've made our country*  
A BETTER PLACE.

**Enjoy your well-earned retirement at Silver Creek.**

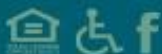
Thank you veterans for your service and sacrifice! At Silver Creek, you can live life as you choose with greater freedom, comfort and independence through the unique living options at our community - including independent concierge living, assisted living, enhanced assisted living and memory care.

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

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



165 Silver Lane | St. Augustine, FL 32084 | [SilverCreekRetirement.com](http://SilverCreekRetirement.com)



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

Assisted Living Facility #12928

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

## **Health care**

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



## **Disability**

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

## **Education and training**

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

## **Careers and employment**

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

## **Pension**

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

## **Housing assistance**

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

## **Life insurance**

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

## **Burials and memorials**

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

## **Records**

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

## **Service member benefits**

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

## **Family member benefits**

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

## **VA department information**

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



# The Military Order of the World Wars (MOWW)

## Northeast Florida MOWW #250

### Massing of Colors – 17 February 2024

### Invitation to Participate and/or Attend



*Massing of Colors Ceremony*

You are Cordially Invited to a Massing of Colors Ceremony  
on February 17, 2024 10 AM at  
Ridgeview High School Cafetorium  
466 Madison Avenue, Orange Park, FL 32065

The Massing of the Colors is a patriotic ceremony to rededicate our faith in the Colors of the United States, to honor those servicemembers who serve our country, and to memorialize those who sacrificed their lives to preserve our country's freedom.

Massing of Colors (MOC) is an inspiring ceremony and parade of the National and Organizational Colors by various color guard units from the Jacksonville area. It combines the colors and color guards of Active and Reserve Component military units, veterans' organizations, civic and patriotic organizations. Additional information is available at <https://moww.org/outreach-programs/>.

The Massing of Colors (MOC) Ceremony is hosted by the **Northeast Florida Chapter #250** of The Military Order of the World Wars (MOWW), a Veterans Service Organization serving ROTC/JROTC Units, Scouting, Public Service and Law & Order, Youth Leadership Conferences and Seminars, National Security and Homeland Security. See [www.neflmo250.com](http://www.neflmo250.com) for more information.

Our guest speaker will be Honorable Thomas Hall, former Asst. Secretary of Defense for Reserve Forces, and a graduate of The United States Naval Academy.



**Color Guards** can be a regular 4-Person Unit w/U.S. Flag and Organizational Flag, a 3-Person Unit w/U.S. Flag, and if necessary just one person representing an organization carrying a U. S. Flag. Contact me for other options. Guests without a Color Guard are encouraged to attend this patriotic event.

**Uniform:** Military Dress Uniform; Organizational Uniform; Coat and Tie or business casual. Call if you have questions.

**Please RSVP NLT 15 December 2023** to Chapter Commander, CWO David McCuiston via email at [davidmcc44@outlook.com](mailto:davidmcc44@outlook.com), or by telephone at 423-402-1643.

## **Patriotic Education – Massing of Colors Ceremony**

Massing of the Colors is a patriotic ceremony held to rededicate our faith in the United States, to present our support to the National Colors, and the Servicemen and Servicewomen those Colors represent. MOWW chapters conduct Massing of the Colors ceremonies throughout the United States and Puerto Rico. These ceremonies usually involve color guard units from: Active Duty, Reserve and National



Guard military units; Senior and Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) units; armed services auxiliary organizations; state militias; veteran and civic groups; police, sheriff and fire departments; and Boy Scout and Girl Scout organizations.

Please find attached announcement of the February 17, 2024 event at Ridgeview High School, Orange Park, Florida, which is hosted by the Ridgeview High School Navy Junior ROTC Unit. This is a great community service and patriotic education event.

Our guest speaker will be Honorable Thomas Hall, former Asst. Secretary of Defense for Reserve Forces, and a graduate of The United States Naval Academy.

Color Guards can be a regular 4-Person Unit w/U.S. Flag and Organizational Flag, a 3-Person Unit w/U. S. Flag, and if necessary just one person representing an organization carrying a U. S. Flag. Contact me for other options. Guests without a Color Guard are encouraged to attend this patriotic event.

Uniform: Military Dress Uniform; Organizational Uniform; Coat and Tie or business casual. Call if you have questions.

Please RSVP NLT 15 December 2023 to Chapter Commander, CWO David McCuiston via email at [davidmcc44@outlook.com](mailto:davidmcc44@outlook.com), or by telephone at 423-402-1643.

Sincerely, and very respectfully, David McCuiston, Chapter Commander

Northeast Florida MOWW #250, [davidmcc44@outlook.com](mailto:davidmcc44@outlook.com), 423-402-1643





**DELIVER**  
the Dream



# FAMILY RETREAT

For Veterans and their family



**FEBRUARY 9-11, 2024**  
Florida FFA Leadership Training Center  
Haines City, Florida

**Activities**

- Team building
- Interactive games
- Discussion groups
- Creative workshops

**Apply Here**



**More Information**

@deliverthedream  
 888-OUR DREAM  
[www.deliverthedream.org](http://www.deliverthedream.org)  
[contact@deliverthedream.org](mailto:contact@deliverthedream.org)



**From the St. Johns County Parks & Recreation Dept.**

Do you know a Military Veteran with a \*Blank Space\* on their calendar? Check out our upcoming Veteran Programs (SJC Parks and Recreation's Version).

Veteran Fishing: Don't be overwhelmed by fishing regulations, \*Shake It Off\* and learn all about Keeping It Legal in September. Then join us to explore the \*Wonderland\* of Surf Fishing in October!

Veteran Art: Discover your artistic \*Style\* and try out a different art medium every month. Upcoming programs include Print Making and Pumpkin Painting!

Veteran Kayaking: \*I Know Places\* for some great wildlife viewing in and \*Out Of The Woods\* around Hallowes Cove and in Deep Creek this fall.

\*All You Had To Do Was Stay\* until the end of this post and you'd find the link for more information and program registration here: <https://bit.ly/46HMhEt>



# The Jacksonville Naval Museum Needs You!

## SKILLS NEEDED:

Docents  
Cleaning  
Welders  
Metal Workers  
Painters  
Cashiers  
Electricians  
& More

JACKSONVILLE NAVAL MUSEUM

We need

YOU!



*Volunteers are the backbone of every museum!*

*Step up to help out today!*

*Please don't wait for someone else to do it.*

*Email our Volunteer Coordinator at  
[volunteer@jaxnavalmuseum.org](mailto:volunteer@jaxnavalmuseum.org)*



## WHAT TO DO:

**Submit your name & contact information along with your skills using the above email.**



# HOW DISABILITY RATINGS WORK

SERVICE CONNECTED PERCENTAGE	DESCRIPTION
<b>0%</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 point Veteran preference in federal hiring <b>*Compensable &amp; Non-Compensable*</b></li> <li>No cost health care and prescription drugs for service connected disabilities (if income limits are met) <b>*Compensable &amp; Non-Compensable*</b></li> <li>Travel allowance for scheduled appointments for care at a VA medical facility or VA authorized health care facility <b>*Compensable &amp; Non-Compensable*</b></li> <li>Commissary and Exchange Privileges <b>*Compensable &amp; Non-Compensable*</b></li> <li>Use of commissaries, exchanges, and morale, welfare and recreation (MWR) retail facilities, in-person and online. <b>*Compensable &amp; Non-Compensable*</b></li> <li>Waiver of VA funding fee for VA home loan <b>*Compensable*</b></li> <li>Burial and plot allowance <b>*Compensable*</b></li> </ul>
<b>10%</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No cost health care and prescription medications for service connected disabilities</li> <li>Travel allowance for scheduled appointments for care at a VA medical facility or VA authorized health care facility</li> <li>Waiver of VA funding fee for home loan</li> <li>10 point Veteran preference in federal hiring</li> <li>Vocational Rehabilitation &amp; Employment (with a serious employment handicap)</li> <li>Burial and plot allowance</li> <li>Commissary and Exchange Privileges</li> <li>Use of commissaries, exchanges, and morale, welfare and recreation (MWR) retail facilities, in-person and online.</li> </ul>
<b>20%</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No cost health care and prescription medications for service connected disabilities</li> <li>Travel allowance for scheduled appointments for care at a VA medical facility or VA authorized health care facility</li> <li>Waiver of VA funding fee for home loan</li> <li>10 point Veteran preference in federal hiring</li> <li>Vocational Rehabilitation &amp; Employment</li> <li>Burial and plot allowance</li> <li>Commissary and Exchange Privileges</li> <li>Use of commissaries, exchanges, and morale, welfare and recreation (MWR) retail facilities, in-person and online.</li> </ul>
<b>30-40%</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No cost health care and prescription medications for service connected disabilities</li> <li>Travel allowance for scheduled appointments for care at a VA medical facility or VA authorized health care facility</li> <li>Waiver of VA funding fee for home loan</li> <li>10 point Veteran preference in federal hiring - Direct hire authority</li> <li>Vocational Rehabilitation &amp; Employment</li> <li>Additional compensation for eligible dependents (may include aid and attendance for eligible spouse)</li> <li>Burial and plot allowance</li> <li>Commissary and Exchange Privileges</li> <li>Use of commissaries, exchanges, and morale, welfare and recreation (MWR) retail facilities, in-person and online.</li> </ul>
<b>50%</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No cost health care and prescription medications</li> <li>Travel allowance for scheduled appointments for care at a VA medical facility or VA authorized health care facility</li> <li>Waiver of VA funding fee for home loan</li> <li>10 point Veteran preference in federal hiring - Direct hire authority</li> <li>Vocational Rehabilitation &amp; Employment</li> <li>Additional compensation for eligible dependents (may include aid and attendance for eligible spouses)</li> <li>Concurrent receipt of military retired pay</li> <li>Burial and plot allowance</li> <li>Commissary and Exchange Privileges</li> <li>Use of commissaries, exchanges, and morale, welfare and recreation (MWR) retail facilities, in-person and online.</li> </ul>
<b>60-90%</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No cost health care and prescription medications</li> <li>Travel allowance for scheduled appointments for care at a VA medical facility or VA authorized health care facility</li> <li>Waiver of VA funding fee for home loan</li> <li>10 point Veteran preference in federal hiring - Direct hire authority</li> <li>Vocational Rehabilitation &amp; Employment</li> <li>Additional compensation for eligible dependents (may include aid and attendance for eligible spouses)</li> <li>Concurrent receipt of military retired pay</li> <li>Individual Unemployability (must be unemployable due to service connected disabilities) - Dependents Educational Assistance (unemployable condition must be considered permanent) : Special restorative training, CHAMPVA-Civilian Health and Medical Program (unemployable condition must be considered permanent), Dental care (if rated unemployable)</li> <li>Burial and plot allowance</li> <li>Commissary and Exchange Privileges</li> <li>Use of commissaries, exchanges, and morale, welfare and recreation (MWR) retail facilities, in-person and online.</li> </ul>
<b>100%</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No cost health care and prescription medications</li> <li>Travel allowance for scheduled appointments for care at a VA medical facility or VA authorized health care facility</li> <li>No cost dental care</li> <li>Waiver of VA funding fee for home loan</li> <li>10 point Veteran preference in federal hiring - Direct hire authority</li> <li>Vocational Rehabilitation &amp; Employment</li> <li>Additional compensation for eligible dependents (may include aid and attendance for eligible spouses)</li> <li>Concurrent receipt of military retired pay</li> <li>Dependents Education Assistance (must be considered permanent) - Special restorative training</li> <li>CHAMPVA-Civilian Health and Medical Program (must be considered permanent)</li> <li>Burial and plot allowance</li> <li>Uniformed Services ID card</li> </ul>
<b>100%</b> with an additional separate 60%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statutory Housebound</li> <li>Commissary and Exchange Privileges</li> <li>Use of commissaries, exchanges, and morale, welfare and recreation (MWR) retail facilities, in-person and online.</li> </ul>

This matrix is the creation of former and current members of the Veterans Benefits Administration Web Communications Office.  
**VA Derivative Benefits Eligibility Service-Connected Matrix:** [https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/derivative\\_sc.asp](https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/derivative_sc.asp)



The Florida Veterans Foundation extends its heartfelt gratitude to those who have contributed to supporting Florida Veterans by purchasing a Gadsden Flag license plate. Through the sales of these distinctive plates, the foundation raises funds that help provide essential programs, services, and outreach materials. With each purchase, supporters display their solidarity with Veterans and actively participate in improving their well-being and honoring their sacrifices. Get your plate today at:

<https://www.helpflvets.org/gadsden-plate>.







# Stories of Service

St. Johns County Veterans Oral History Project



Stories of Service is an oral history project focused on the veterans of St. Johns County. The goal of this project was to collect, document, and preserve the memories of local veterans for future generations.

Materials collected by the Society for this project have allowed for the creation of two exhibits, one physical at the Oldest House Museum Complex at 14 St. Francis Street on display until January, one digital, accessible below and through our main website under the LEARN tab.

Items on display in both the digital and physical exhibits tell the stories of our local veterans, placing them proudly within the long and storied histories of St. Augustine and St. Johns County.

A sincere thanks to them all.



**View the Digital Exhibit:**

**<https://sahsstoriesofservice.omeka.net/>**



Main: 904-824-2872

Research Library: 904-825-2333

271 Charlotte Street, St. Augustine, FL 32084

Research Library located at 6 Artillery Lane, St. Augustine FL 32084



## Remember

### What Our Medal Represents

**Red:**

The 3 ancient Vietnamese Empires of Tonkin, Annam, and Cochin

**Yellow:**

The Imperial color of Vietnam

**Green:**

Surrounded by expansive jungle

A handwritten signature in gold ink.

Inspired by Tet Media, the Nam



## From the VFW Aux-National Organization

Spread patriotism through song!



Youth are encouraged to enter the VFW Auxiliary's national anthem singing contest, Get Excited for the Red, White and Blue! Contestants may sing "The Star-Spangled Banner" in the arrangement and genre of their choice: rock, pop, reggae, R&B, hip-hop, country, classical and other genres are accepted. But they can't change the words!

The contest consists of two grade divisions: K-8 and 9-12. Entries are due to a local VFW Auxiliary by March 31, 2024.

Visit <https://vfwauxiliary.org/what-we-do/youth-activities/> for contest eligibility, rules, an entry form, to see the 2023 winners' videos and more.



### WOMEN SURVIVORS: BREAKING STIGMA RESOURCES AND PREVENTION

Women telling their stories  
about breaking the stigma and  
showing how they survived



# MARINE FOR LIFE NETWORK

## MARINE FOR LIFE NETWORK

Connecting transitioning Marines and their family members to education resources, employment opportunities, and other Veterans services that aid in their career and life goals outside of military service.

ONCE A MARINE,  
**ALWAYS A MARINE!**

Marine for Life Network can guide your search for:



Career & Technical Opportunities



Educational Opportunities



Entrepreneurial Endeavors

### NETWORKING IS KEY

#### Linked in



Our online network utilizes LinkedIn to help Marines network with one another and connect with employers who want to hire Marines.

#### Face to Face Network



We focus on connecting Marine Veterans to local and national resources, as well as encouraging networking through Marine For Life events and meet ups.

[company/marine-for-life-network](https://www.linkedin.com/company/marine-for-life-network)

[marineforlife.org](http://marineforlife.org)

866-645-8762

[/MarineForLifeNetwork](https://www.facebook.com/MarineForLifeNetwork)





# CATHOLIC CHARITIES

www.ccbjax.org

## FOOD DISTRIBUTION

In an effort to assist children and families of Anchor Academy Elementary School and the Mayport Area, We are partnering with Feeding Northeast Florida and Humana Military to provide fresh produce, protein, and pantry staples.

This is a touchless, drive-through food giveaway. Please follow typical school pickup line procedures and remain in your car with windows up. You will pop your trunk for volunteers to place the food inside.

**Every 4th Saturday of the month  
Starts at 9:00 a.m.**

555 Wonderwood Dr.  
Jacksonville, FL, 32233



dcps.duvalschools.org/anchoracademy



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

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

**COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE**  
MISSION Act eligibility, copayments

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

**VETERANS CRISIS LINE**  
Immediate connection to caring, qualified responders



**DEBT MANAGEMENT**  
Debt details, payment options and debtor rights

**FACILITY LOCATOR**  
Locations of medical centers, benefits offices or cemeteries

**BENEFITS ASSISTANCE**  
Information about a variety of VA benefits

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

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

# VETERANS CRISIS LINE 988

As of July 16, 2022 the United States transitioned to using the three digit dialing code of 988 press 1 in addition to the existing Veterans Crisis Line of 1-800-273-8255 press 1

## FACTS ABOUT 988

**ACCESSIBLE** - It serves as a universal entry point so that no matter where you live, you can reach a trained crisis counselor who can help people in suicidal crisis or mental health-related distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the U.S.

**COMPREHENSIVE** - 988 is a direct connection to compassionate care and support for anyone experiencing mental health related distress whether that is thoughts of suicide mental health or substance use crisis or any other kind of emotional distress

**FOR EVERYONE** - People can also dial 988 if they are worried about a loved one or someone who may need crisis support



# 988

Call **988**, press 1 for Free, Confidential, 24/7  
Mental Health Support



VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
North Florida / South Georgia Veterans Health System

71822, 1/99, 3/24



# NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS VETERAN HOMEOWNERS SAINT JOHNS COUNTY

## FREE HOME REHAB

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

## QUALIFICATIONS

### Participant Eligibility:

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

### Property Eligibility:

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

\* Please review full eligibility criteria on our website \*

## CONTACT US TODAY

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

Please visit our website to fill  
out an application

[WWW.OPLIFELINE.ORG](http://WWW.OPLIFELINE.ORG)



**OPERATION  
LIFELINE INC.**

# RESERVE COMPONENT TRANSITION ASSISTANCE ADVISORS



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

I am here to help with the following benefits:

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

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

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

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

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



***Thank you for serving, now let me serve you.***

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

**David "Dave" Kennett**

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

**DIRECTION | BENEFITS | COMPASSION**





# RESERVE COMPONENT SERVICE MEMBERS AND VETERANS

## Do you need direction to your benefits?

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



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



### BENEFITS:

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



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



*Locate your  
closest RCTAA  
here!*



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

# From American Legion 5th District FL

## **IMPORTANT VETERAN INFORMATION**

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

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

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

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

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

NEVER release an ORIGINAL copy.

APPOINT an administrator for minor children.

FURTHER ASSISTANCE: contact your County Veterans' Service Officer



# KOREAN WAR VETERANS ASSOCIATION



## **CALLING ALL KOREAN WAR AND KOREAN DEFENSE VETERANS**

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



# VA SURVIVOR BENEFITS & THE PACT ACT

ESGR4U

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



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

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

### How to Apply for DIC and/or Accrued Benefits

Surviving family members may apply for these benefits using the appropriate VA form on [va.gov/family-member-benefits](https://va.gov/family-member-benefits).



#### Dependency and Indemnity Compensation

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



#### Accrued Benefits

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

### Additional Survivor Benefits Available:



#### Burials and Burial Allowance

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



#### Final Monthly Payment

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



#### Home Loan Guaranty

Certificate of Eligibility is available for surviving spouses receiving DIC.



#### Education and Training

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



#### Health Care

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

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

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



## Surviving Spouse Milestones

*\*Not all milestones apply to every persons situation\**

### One Year Mark:

- Moving out of quarters (if applicable)
- Storage at government expense expires
- Apply for Home of Selection (HOS) extension
- HEART Act (one year from date SGLI/DG received)

### Two Year Mark:

- Loss of Spouse's VA Transitional DIC Benefits (\$250 per family per month)

*\*only applies to spouse with one or more minor children in household\**

- Apply for Home of Selection (HOS) extension

### Three Year Mark:

- TRICARE Healthcare and Dental benefits transitions to retiree rate for spouse
- Home of Selection (HOS) entitlement expires

### Spouse Turns 52:

- If disabled, can remain and retain SSA Survivor Benefits

### Spouse Turns 55:

- Can remarry and not lose SBP eligibility

### Spouse Turns 57:

- Can remarry not lose DIC eligibility

### Spouse Turns 60:

- Can remarry and retain SSA Survivor Benefits

## Surviving Youth Milestones

*\*Not all milestones apply to every persons situation\**

### Child Turns 16:

- Elimination of SSA entitlement for adult receiving Child in Care benefits

### Child Turns 18:

- College - Fry Scholarship \*Line of Duty Cases only\*
- College - Dependence Education Assistance \*VA Service Connected Death\*
- Loss of annuities (SSA, DIC, SBP) unless enrolled in school full time. SSA depends on age when graduating High School
- Loss of annual benefit report
- If DG/SGLI beneficiary - if not already received

### Child Turns 21:

- Loss of DFFRS/TRICARE unless enrolled in school full time
- Enrollment in TRICARE Young Adult

### Child Turns 22:

- Loss of Child-Only SBP regardless of school enrollment

### Child Turns 23:

- Loss of DFFRS/TRICARE transitional Survivor unless incapacitated
- Enrollment in TRICARE Young Adult

### Child Turns 26:

- Loss of TRICARE Young Adult

### Child Turns 33:

- Loss of Fry Scholarship eligibility

## FLORIDA SURVIVOR OUTREACH SERVICES AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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





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

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

Visit: [www.thefirewatch.org/watch-standers](http://www.thefirewatch.org/watch-standers) to learn more.

Thanks!

Nick Howland

Executive Director, The Fire Watch

[www.thefirewatch.org](http://www.thefirewatch.org)

904.525.1761



## Vietnam Veterans of America



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

### Chapter/President/email/Location

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



### REMEMBER WHAT OUR MEDAL STANDS FOR:

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

### Veterans Council of Clay County:

President: Ansil Lewis

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

## Mission Statement:

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



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

## What the Council has done:

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

SA-0003147064-01

# Veterans Crisis Line

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

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

**STAND BY THEM**  
Confidential help for Veterans and their families

**NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE**  
1-800-273-TALK (8256)  
[suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

..... Confidential chat at [VeteransCrisisLine.net](http://VeteransCrisisLine.net) or text to 838255 .....

**Military/Veterans Crisis Line**  
1-800-273-8255

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

Confidential chat at [MilitaryCrisisLine.net](http://MilitaryCrisisLine.net) or text 838255





## Legal Aid for Veterans

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

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

**1.866.486.6161**

**Call Today!**

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



## We Can Help With

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

Supported by the:



**Become a Watch Stander with The Fire Watch**



## Veterans Councils of Northeast Florida



### BAKER COUNTY

President: Larry Porterfield

Meetings:

Second Thursday of each month

Location:

MacClenny Primitive Baptist Church  
Fellowship Hall on North Boulevard

Time : 1800 (6pm)

### CLAY COUNTY

President: Harry Silvers

Meetings:

First Wednesday of each month

Location:

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

Time: 1400 (2pm)

### DUVAL COUNTY

President

Meetings:

Third Tuesday of each month

Location:

American Legion Post 37  
Main Building  
San Juan Avenue

Time: 1900 (7 pm)

### NASSAU COUNTY

President: Mike Doran

Meetings:

First Thursday of each month

Location:

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

Time: 1900 (7pm)

### St. Johns County

President: Bill Dudley

Meetings:

Last Thursday of each month

Location:

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

Time: 1900 (7pm)

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



We are inviting all veterans to visit our website at:

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

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

Please join our group on Facebook at:

<http://veteranscouncilsjc.org>

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

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

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

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

***He can be contacted at [webmaster@veteranscouncilsjc.org](mailto:webmaster@veteranscouncilsjc.org)***

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

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

Send to: rothfeldm@gmail.com



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*(physical location)*

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

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

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

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