



The Patriot Reader Newsletter

P.O. Box 2117

St. Augustine, FL 32085

Bill Dudley, Publisher

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From Veterans Council Chairman Bill Dudley

March 2023

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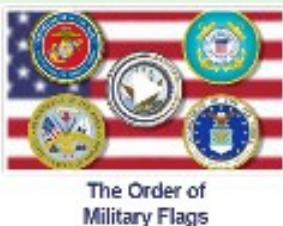
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Fellow Veterans,
The Veterans Council in collaboration with the MOAA-ACC will host this year Memorial Day ceremony on May 29th at 10 AM at the St. Augustine National Cemetery. This year's speaker will be Brig. Gen. Sean Boyette, FLANG Director of the Joint Staff. We encourage citizens in our community to come and join us as we honor those who have paid the supreme price for defending our country. We especially encourage our youth groups to attend and to volunteer their time to assist with this service.

At the April 4th BCC meeting, the County Commissioners will celebrate and honor Mr. John L. Patton on his 100th birthday. Mr. Patton was born on Mar.23, 1923 and joined the USN on May 21, 1941. Mr. Patton fought in nearly all the major sea battles in the

Pacific during WW II serving onboard the USS Saratoga and the USS Enterprise.

Mr. Patton retired from the USN on July 7, 1961 as a Chief Petty Officer. He then began a second career in U.S. Civil Service at NAS/JAX as an O&R planner and estimator at the NAS Overhaul Depot. On Apr.30, 1978, Mr. Patton retired from US Civil Service after 36 years, 8 months of total Federal service.

I encourage all our veterans to attend this County Commission meeting at 9 AM on 4 April to honor Mr. Patton on the celebration of his 100th birthday. The County Commission meets at the County Administration Building, 500 San Sebastian View, St. Augustine.

This year marks the 50th year since the ending of the war in Vietnam. There will be many events on 29 March in our area celebrating the ending of this unforgettable conflict. Thousands



of brave men and women served their country during this unpopular war but stepped up as their country called them to do. Please plan to attend a ceremony near you on that day to honor those who served and for the many who never returned.

Recently, I was appointed by the Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives, Mr. Paul Renner to serve as a member of the Florida Veterans Hall of Fame Council. The appointment is for two years. I was honored to accept this appointment to participate in selecting our chosen veterans who will be selected to the Florida Veterans Hall of Fame. Thank you for your service...

Bill Dudley, Chairman
Veterans Council of St. Johns County

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

March 30

Gini Solano, Jr. Service League of St. Augustine
Jeanette McMahon, Children of Fallen Patriots Foundation (ZOOM)

April 27

Robert Covert, Veterans Oral History Project
St Augustine Historical Society
Zach Peyton, President West Point Society of N FL

May 25

DeAndrea Fuller, Outreach Director
Steven A Cohen Military Family Clinic at Centerstone
Ryan Bauman, First Coast Honor Flight Board member

June 29

Michael Dionian, Volunteering at the Jax Naval Museum, USS Orleck

July 27

Roseann Vernon, Atlantic Coast Young Marines

From Veterans Council Chairman Bill Dudley
I am honored to have been appointed to the council
for the Florida Veterans Hall of Fame.



The Florida House of Representatives
Office of the Speaker

Paul Renner
Speaker

February 17, 2023

LtCol., William Dudley, USAF, Ret.
P.O. Box 2117
St. Augustine, FL 32085

Dear Colonel Dudley:

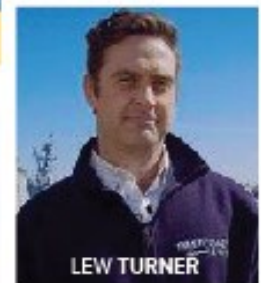
It is my pleasure to appoint you to serve as a member of the Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame Council. Your appointment is effective immediately and will expire on February 17, 2025.

By copy of this letter, I am advising Jeff Obos with the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs of your appointment.

Respectfully,

Paul Renner

cc: The Honorable Ron DeSantis, Governor
The Honorable Kathleen Passidomo, Senate President
Jeff Obos, Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs



VIETNAM VETERANS COME LET US HONOR YOU

MEET ON THE USS ORLECK SATURDAY, MARCH 25TH AT 3PM
FIRST COAST NEWS ON YOUR SIDE IS GATHERING VIETNAM VETERANS TO STAND TOGETHER ON THE DECK WITH ANCHORS JEANNIE BLAYLOCK AND LEW TURNER FOR A GROUP PICTURE FOR OUR DOCUMENTARY.

FREE BBQ DINNER

TOURS OF THE USS ORLECK DD-886

DO YOU PLAN TO COME? EMAIL NUMBER OF PEOPLE TO:
EVENTS@JAXNAVALMUSEUM.ORG

JEANNIE AND LEW WILL PAY TRIBUTE TO OUR LOCAL VIETNAM VETERANS AND THEIR STORIES AT **6PM EVERY NIGHT** ON FIRST COAST NEWS ON YOUR SIDE FOR TWO WEEKS FROM **MARCH 29 - APRIL 13TH.**

THEN ON **THURSDAY, APRIL 13TH** ON **WJXX - ABC 25** FROM 7-8PM WATCH THE DOCUMENTARY **"VOICES OF BRAVERY - HONORING THE VETERANS OF VIETNAM."**

COME TO THE USS ORLECK. LET'S HAVE A STRONG SHOWING!



Starting Jan. 17, Veterans in suicidal crisis can go to any VA or non-VA health care facility for free emergency health care



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

WASHINGTON – Starting Jan. 17, Veterans in acute suicidal crisis will be able to go to any VA or non-VA health care facility for emergency health care at no cost – including inpatient or

crisis residential care for up to 30 days and outpatient care for up to 90 days. Veterans do not need to be enrolled in the VA system to use this benefit.

This expansion of care will help prevent Veteran suicide by guaranteeing no cost, world-class care to Veterans in times of crisis. It will also increase access to acute suicide care for up to 9 million Veterans who are not currently enrolled in VA.

Preventing Veteran suicide is VA’s top clinical priority and a top priority of the Biden-Harris Administration. This effort is a key part of VA’s 10-year National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide and the Biden-Harris administration’s plan for Reducing Military and Veteran Suicide. In September, VA released the 2022 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report, which showed that Veteran suicides decreased in 2020 for the second year in a row, and that fewer Veterans died by suicide in 2020 than in any year since 2006.

“Veterans in suicidal crisis can now receive the free, world-class emergency health care they deserve – no matter where they need it, when they need it, or whether they’re enrolled in VA care,” said VA Secretary for Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough. “This expansion of care will save Veterans’ lives, and there’s nothing more important than that.”

VA has submitted an interim final rule to the federal register to establish this authority under section 201 of the Veterans Comprehensive Prevention, Access to Care, and Treatment (COMPACT) Act of 2020. The final policy, which takes effect on Jan. 17, will allow VA to:

Provide, pay for, or reimburse for treatment of eligible individuals’ emergency suicide care, transportation costs, and follow-up care at a VA or non-VA facility for up to 30 days of inpatient care and 90 days of outpatient care.

Make appropriate referrals for care following the period of emergency suicide care.

Determine eligibility for other VA services and benefits.

Refer eligible individuals for appropriate VA programs and benefits following the period of emergency suicide care.

Eligible individuals, regardless of VA enrollment status, are:

Veterans who were discharged or released from active duty after more than 24 months of active service under conditions other than dishonorable.

Former members of the armed forces, including reserve service members, who served more than 100 days under a combat exclusion or in support of a contingency operation either directly or by operating an unmanned aerial vehicle from another location who were discharged under conditions other than dishonorable.

Former members of the armed forces who were the victim of a physical assault of a sexual nature, a battery of a sexual nature, or sexual harassment while serving in the armed forces.

Over the past year, VA has announced or continued several additional efforts to end Veteran suicide, including establishing 988 (then press 1) as a way for Veterans to quickly connect with caring, qualified crisis support 24/7; proposing a new rule that would reduce or eliminate copayments for Veterans at risk of suicide; conducting an ongoing public outreach effort on firearm suicide prevention and lethal means safety; and leveraging a national Veteran suicide prevention awareness campaign, “Don’t Wait. Reach Out.”

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If you’re a Veteran in crisis or concerned about one, contact the Veterans Crisis Line to receive 24/7 confidential support. You don't have to be enrolled in VA benefits or health care to connect. To reach responders, Dial 988 then Press 1, chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat, or text 838255.

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

January 26, 2023



CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Dudley

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS: Chairman Dudley

PLEDGE: Chairman Dudley

INVOCATION: Vice Chairman Quinn

INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKERS/GUESTS: Chairman Dudley

There were several new attendees at this month's meeting that introduced themselves.

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING: Minutes of last meeting conducted December 22, 2022, were presented by Chairman Dudley. Copies of Minutes and Agenda are available on the sign-in table and were sent to members electronically by the Secretary. The minutes were approved by voice vote with no changes.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Treasurer John Mountcastle was not in attendance and Chairman Dudley provided a detailed report that as of December 21, 2022, there was a balance of \$122,788.28 and as of date of meeting there is balance of \$118,844.72. The income for the month \$3,829.91. The outflow for the month was \$3,924.86. A copy of the Treasurer's Report with all expenses was provided. The Treasurer's Report was approved by voice vote with no changes.

SPEAKERS:

DR. JAN GAY, VA MENTAL HEALTH & RECOVERY, N.FL/S.GA

Dr. Gay is a local Recovery Coordinator, each VA hospital has two. Her job is to help with the recovery of veterans that are suffering from mental illness. Dr. Gay works closely with outside doctors that are also providing care to our veterans. SMI Re-

Engage is a project where they are looking for veterans with severe mental illness and have not been seen by the VA in over 2 years. Dr. Gay presented a very informative slideshow that presented all the information and services that can be provided to the veterans that are suffering from mental illness. She talked about suicide prevention and the new 988 number for the veteran's crisis line.

Dr. Gay also talked about our local St. Augustine CBOC and the services that are provided to our local veterans. The local team provides both face-to-face and virtual counseling.

Dr. Gay also spoke of all the resources that are available to the veterans online.

The floor was opened to questions and answers to Dr. Gay.

KIM KENDALL, EDUCATION TASK FORCE FOR FL

Ms. Kendall introduced herself and her focus is mainly on class size restrictions for core classes (math, science, and English) and the issues with it and how to correct it. The class size issue has been on the ballot two different times (2002 and 2010) and the Legislature is looking to put it on the ballot again next year for consideration. Ms. Kendall is working in conjunction with the State Speaker of the House, Paul Renner, and the Education Commissioner, Manny Diaz. Ms. Kendall provided a questionnaire for feedback from the Veterans Council that can be filled out and turned in anonymously. Ms. Kendall is putting together feedback from many to present to determine if class size restrictions are going to be on the ballot again. They are trying to rebrand and call it the S.A.F.E. amendment for Security, Activities and Funding in Education.

Ms. Kendall spoke of the problems with the current class size restrictions and the fines that the schools were hit with for the following the restrictions. There was over 43 million dollars in fines and the money was put into a pot and distributed to schools that did not break the class size restrictions rules. The state has spent 3 billion dollars each year, with a total 53 billion dollars, to implement class sizes in the State of Florida. Ms. Kendall explained the problems and issues with the current class size restrictions. Ms. Kendall opened the floor for questions and answers.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE UPDATE, JOSEPH MCDERMOTT

Mr. McDermott expressed that the suicide prevention program that Dr. Gay spoke of will help. Mr. McDermott spoke of services that require no co-payment through the VA system. There are numerous that are now listed. He also spoke of the PACT Act that was signed in August. Since that time the veterans have filed over 904,000 claims. Since August 10, 2022, 206,000 claims have been filed. 240,000 are currently pending and 85,333 have been decided since August. They were not going to start processing the claims until January of this year, but they started early.

VETERANS TREATMENT COURT, JOHN LESLIE

Mr. Leslie introduced himself, he is the mentor coordinator for the Veterans Treatment Court here in St. Johns and Putnam County. The next Treatment Court will be held February 3, 2023, at 10:00am and everyone is invited to attend. The VTC has just finished up their 6th year here in SJC and currently have 32 on the docket, and the total number of graduates is now 69. There have been 2 cases of recidivism, about 3%. Every veteran that comes through court is required to give 50 hours of community service so if anyone knows a need or an organization with needs to let Mr. Leslie know so that these community service hours can be spread evenly throughout the county.

Mr. Leslie stated that he had spent the first half of the day in Union County with two other mentors from our court and observed an intervention that the Duval Veterans Treatment Court was having with inmates in the Union Correctional Institute. The group inside the prison is an incarcerated American Chapter of the Vietnam Veterans 10-80. They are down to about 59 members now. Today they had 15 participants in the VTC and they were witness to what can happen if they don't stay straight.

Floor was then opened for questions and comments regarding the Veterans Treatment Court.

NEW BUSINESS:

Vice Chairman Quinn spoke of the Wreaths Across America and the success of putting a wreath on each grave in St. Augustine National Cemetery. Accolades were given to our Chairman and Jerry Hanchett and the great job that was performed. We received a letter from Wreaths Across America and the price is going up for next year, they will now be \$17 each and \$34 for 3 wreaths. All the help was greatly ap-

preciated.

Chairman shared that there was a committee meeting held to start preparing for the Memorial Day Program. Expecting another great program this year. The guest speaker will be from the National Guard. The National Guard provides great assistance with the Memorial Day Program.

Chairman also gave an update of the Homeless Shelter that the Veterans Council has been diligently working on. Chairman Dudley has been working with the Outreach Officer Fisher from the St. Augustine Police Department in terms of trying to locate a suitable location for transitory housing for homeless veterans here in SJC. Chairman Dudley spoke an extensive conversation with the FL Speaker of the House, Paul Renner, about the homeless veterans and the cost of insurance rates that is affecting our veterans here in St. Johns County. Chairman has a received a 3-page form to fill out and return to the State for some assistance to both these matters. Spoke to several other organizations in the last few weeks about the need for assistance in the need for this homeless shelter for our veterans.

Chairman Dudley spoke how we have been able to house and place some of our homeless veterans in the San Marco Heights apartments and other complexes that are helping. The Council has been collecting furniture to make available to those veterans that we are assisting in housing. The furniture supply is getting low and in need of other furniture contributions. Chairman Dudley also spoke of the assistance that has been provided by Two Men and A Truck at no charge. Unfortunately, the owner of the company is very sick with cancer. Asked to keep the owner and his family in our prayers.

Floor was opened to questions and answers or any new information that they may wish to share.

Meeting adjourned at 8:32 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

William Dudley, Chairman

Ray A. Quinn, Vice Chairman

6 February 2023

Dear Loyal Supporters,

After almost 15 years of service to the veterans of St. Johns County, we have closed business and merged with the Veterans Council. The Veterans Council is the first stop for a veteran in need. As the primary point of contact, their ability to provide more services will be enhanced by our merger. Our board members unanimously agreed that we did not need to compete to provide assistance. It is the consensus that together we should be able to assist even more of our veterans.

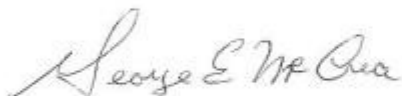
George will continue to loan out durable medical equipment- walkers, roll-a-lators, manual & power wheelchairs, potty chairs, shower chairs, etc. In this way, we continue to support our veterans and the Vets Council. Any financial help you would like to make, please make checks to:

St. Johns Veterans Council
PO Box 2117
St. Augustine, FL 32085-2117

For questions:
Call Vets Service Office
(904) 209-6160

The needs of our veterans increase daily! The Vets 4 Vets board would like to thank you for all your support over the years. We encourage you to continue your support of our veterans through the Vets Council. I, we, thank you for all the years of your generosity and trust. Together we put a smile on many of the faces of our veterans. Our appreciation of you is without enough words. God bless you!

Sincerely,



George E. McCrea, President
Cheryl Williams, Secretary/Treasurer



WE WANT YOU!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!!

**WE ARE GETTING SO EXCITED FOR
OUR UPCOMING FLIGHT IN APRIL!**



Help needed for Saturday, April 1, 9a-1p.
5755 Ramona Blvd. Jacksonville

Other Volunteer opportunities coming for flight
day April 22 and reunion May 13.

Please email millerfchf@gmail.com to volunteer.



Stories of Service

St. Johns County Veterans Oral History Project



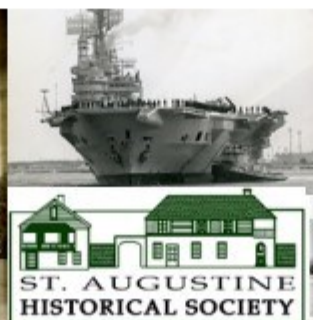
Stories of Service is an oral history project that aims to collect, document, and preserve the stories of local veterans for future generations by conducting audio interviews with them.



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



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





Military News

Vietnam-Era Army Officer to Receive Medal Of Honor Associated Press | By Darlene Superville

WASHINGTON — One of the first Black officers to lead a Special Forces team in combat will receive the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest award for bravery on the battlefield, nearly 60 years after he distinguished himself during the Vietnam War.

President Joe Biden telephoned ret. U.S. Army Col. Paris Davis on Monday “to inform him that he will receive the Medal of Honor for his remarkable heroism during the Vietnam War.”

The White House also said Biden told Davis that he looks forward to hosting him at the White House. A date for the medal ceremony was not immediately announced.

Davis was recommended for the Medal of Honor after he distinguished himself on June 18, 1965, during a pre-dawn raid on a North Vietnamese army camp in Bong Son. A major enemy counterattack followed and wounded every American there.



Davis, who retired as a colonel in 1985, repeatedly sprinted into an open rice paddy to rescue each member of his team, using his pinkie finger to fire his rifle after an enemy grenade shattered his hand, according to the Army Times. His entire team survived the battle.

The paperwork recommending Davis, who is now in his early 80s, for the Medal of Honor disappeared at least twice, the paper reported. He eventually was awarded a Silver Star Medal, the third-highest military combat medal, but members of Davis' team have long argued that race was a factor in how his recommendation was handled.

In early 2021, Christopher Miller, then the acting defense secretary, ordered an expedited review of the case. He argued in an opinion column in June 2021 that awarding Davis the Medal of Honor would address an injustice.

“Some issues in our nation rise above partisanship,” Miller wrote. “The Davis case meets that standard.”

From Jerry Domask

The Passing of an American Hero

Greetings All,

It is with a heavy heart and great grief that I forward you this email. Ted is an American Warrior & Hero that served his Country and our Nation with unconditional love and sacrifice, and asked for nothing in return. While serving in the Pentagon, I was asked to help Ted acclimate back into the Army after being held a POW for 5+ years, 4.5 of these years he was held in solitary confinement in a foot print of 8' X 5'.

God bless you and may you find peace and tranquility that has eluded you most of your life! Ted will always be remembered in my heart and soul as "Mother Theresa Incarnated"! Love you Brother and will always have your back covered!

Your Foxhole Buddy for half a century,

Jerome (Jerry) Domask

Vietnam Veteran, Army (RET)



The dissolution of the National League of POW/MIA Families non profit organization

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

To the deep dismay of so many, on Tuesday, January 31, the Board of Directors of the National League of POW/MIA Families voted 4-3 to dissolve the organization -- with Chairman/CEO Ann Mills Griffiths casting the deciding vote. This vote was held after discussion in a closed session despite multiple requests for an in-person, open and transparent board meeting.

In accordance with the dissolution of the organization and League social media policy encouraging "honest, transparent and knowledgeable dialogue regarding the mission and other relevant matters on the Internet and through social media", this message is being delivered on behalf of the current "minority" members and several past members of the Board of Directors.

What the dissolution of the League means:

- The 52nd Annual Meeting, planned for July 2023, has been canceled. (Note: There WILL be government briefings and families will be able to travel to Washington, DC for updates on their case. See the DPAA website).
- Legally, the League can no longer conduct business or raise funds. In order to comply with laws governing the dissolution of a non-profit, please do not make donations, pay dues or do any business for the League.
- As of February 1, 2023, the League and its leadership no longer officially represents the missing men or their families.
- Should you have questions regarding your case, please contact your Service Casualty Officer or consult DPAA.

Over the past 18 months, many questions have arisen regarding League management. Some examples are the following:

- The League website contains inflated claims of actual League membership numbers.
- Donations that were made to the League to benefit the accounting mission were instead used to fund a multi-year, archival digitization project in which the Chairman/CEO has a conflict of interest.
- Despite repeated requests by board members, the Chairman/CEO refused to allow a review of the organization's 2022 financial records in direct violation of the League bylaws.
- The leadership transition to a new CEO was undermined and thwarted by the Chairman/CEO, despite his being twice confirmed for that position by the board of directors.
- Many long-involved League leaders* have stepped down from their roles on the Board, as well as from State and Regional Coordinator positions and Committee positions -- each due in part to dissatisfaction with League management.

Last week's dissolution of the League was unnecessary and unfounded. The message that was forwarded from the Chairman/CEO via email did not reach all League leadership, family members, and supporters. We have fielded calls from multiple concerned family members and supporters with questions as to the fate of the League. The dissolution resolution statement contains inaccuracies, is embarrassing, and offensive to our nation's wounded warriors. Our active-duty military, veterans and Gold Star and POW/MIA community care deeply about an honorable resolution to the POW/MIA issue for all wars. Our national Veterans Service Organizations and Military Service Organizations and other non-profit groups stand ready to help.

The League's website continues to be updated. However, no mention has been made regarding the cancellation of the Annual Meeting in DC which occurred back on January 3rd, nor has there been any mention made of the dissolution of the League. This left us, the Board members who voted to keep the League open, no other option to fulfill our fiduciary duties, but to resort to this social media release in order to reach as many family members as possible.

It is truly sad to lose the League's voice as an advocate for the POW/MIA mission and families, but rest assured, efforts are underway to establish a path forward for the POW/MIA accounting mission and families. The mission for which the League was founded has not yet been accomplished – there is still work to do to account for our loved ones.

* Resignations received within the past 18 months include board members Karoni Forrester, Pam Cain and Mark Stephensen; CEO RADM Jon Kreitz, USN (Ret); SE Regional Coordinator and incoming CEO Dave Huffman and former board members Colleen Shine and Cindy Stonebraker, each of whom held leadership roles. Former Board Member Joseph Stuart turned down a vacated Board position.



National League of
POW/MIA Families

Florida Baptist Mobile Dental Unit, First Baptist Church of Middleburg, and Veterans Council Clay County Florida, Inc would like to announce the 1st Free Mobile Dental Event for Veterans and Families in need on 4 - 8 April!

The event will be located on the **First Baptist Church property, just off Parsonage Street and Blanding Blvd - across from Publix**. The event is for extractions and fillings only. The bus will be positioned to be visible from the street. Parking on the grass as indicated by signage during the event.

Registration is open between February 15 to March 15 at <http://vcccf.org/dental/>. Participants must register through the website. Those without computer access may contact a coordinator at **(904) 406-1258** (leave a message or text if no answer) or email veterans.council.clay.county@gmail.com.

Step 1: Register at www.vcccf.org/dental (Between Feb 15 and Mar 15)

Step 2: Receive contact from coordinators with information about the next step

Step 3: Attend MANDATORY screening(s) as directed by the dental coordinator

Step 4: Receive appointment date and time for care during 4 - 8 April

Step 5: Attend an appointment for care

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

-Patients must be 18 years or older to be seen

-Bring a list of all your medications with you to screening(s)

-No cleanings, oral surgeries, or denture work

-Screenings are MANDATORY to get an appointment with the dental unit

-Some restrictions apply:

o No dental insurance

o No Medicaid dental

o Make income 200% below the poverty line in the last four weeks: (income does not include capital gains or losses, noncash benefits (ex) food stamps and housing subsidies) or tax credits

>For a family of 2 = \$3,052 or less

>For a family of 3 = \$3,838 or less

>For a family of 4 = \$4,625 or less

-Some medical conditions may need primary care doctor authorization prior to treatment

Event Location: First Baptist Church of Middleburg, 2646 Blanding Blvd Middleburg, FL 32068

Contact information: Dental Coordinator (904) 460-1258 (leave message or text if no answer) or email veterans.council.clay.county@gmail.com

Please let your dentist know about the event as there are still time slots that need a dentist to fill them!

<http://vcccf.org/dental/>, <https://firstmiddleburg.org/>, <https://flbaptist.org/mdu/>

We invite you to join us for a "Women Veterans Recognition Week" celebration. Attached is a tentative schedule of events and the sponsorship letter. As we draw closer, we will send an updated flyer for the week of events. I hope you will participate!



2023 Women Veterans Week of Recognition
"Continuing the Legacy"
Schedule of Events:

Sunday, June 4, 2023
Honoring Women on the Wall
Candlelight Vigil
Veteran's Memorial Wall
Time: 7:30pm
Also view them at:
[\(68\) 2021 Week of Recognition - Women on the Jacksonville Veterans Memorial Wall - YouTube](#)

Monday, June 5, 2023
Opening Ceremony/Proclamation
City Hall, 117 West Duval Street
TBD

Paint N Sip N Fun
TBD

Tuesday, June 6, 2023
Lunch & Learn "Breaking the Ceilings"
Hosted by Women in Defense
3130 Hartley Road
Time: 11:00am - 1:00pm
Cost: \$25.00
<https://bit.ly/3hA9i1W>

Wednesday, June 7, 2023
Women, Wealth & Wine
TBD

Thursday, June 8, 2023
Mental Health Conference
TBD

Friday, June 9, 2023
HerVOICE
TBD

Saturday, June 10, 2023
Women Veterans Recognition Gala
"Continuing the Legacy:"
Guest Speaker: TBD
Time" 6:00 PM, Cost: \$100.00
(Tickets \$120.00 at the door)
Southbank Hotel at Jacksonville Riverwalk
1515 Prudential Dr
Purchase tickets at:
Also, visit the Women Veterans Documentary Display in City Hall, 7-11 June 2021

www.forwomenvets.org



Johnny Cash's 'Ragged Old Flag' Has Even More Meaning Today



Johnny Cash was a stark defender of American values, and what better symbol of those values than our flag?

Johnny Cash always stood in support of our American flag.

The country legend was a proud American who loved our country very much.

Even though he died in 2003, his words still are important today during these rather toxic political times. And one loves our “Ragged Old Flag” like Johnny Cash.

Liberal activists who hate our country will sometimes burn the flag in protest of whatever perceived injustice they’ve chosen to be outraged about.

Johnny knew even though this is legal, it is an awful thing to do. So many members of our military died protecting our freedoms. They fought for what that flag stands for.

Desecrating our beloved flag is simply disgusting. Legal or not – it’s an abomination.

If You Burned Johnny Cash’s Flag... Popular Singers Who Praise God | Part 1

During one interview, Johnny was asked his opinion on burning the flag.

He told a story about when he and June were in Vietnam and they witnessed the many sacrifices our soldiers made. They believed the flag symbolized not only our freedoms but their sacrifices.

“If you are going to burn the American flag, you ought to take it to Iran. But, I still cherish those freedoms,” Cash said.

“I cherish all of the freedoms that we got, including the freedom, the right, to burn the flag. But I also got the right to bear arms and if you burn mine, I’ll shoot you.”

He meant it, too!

While it might be legal to burn your own flag, you can’t burn one belonging to someone else. The American flag belongs to all of us. Especially those who fought or die for it – past or present!

If you love Johnny Cash, you will enjoy the video below of him defending our flag and then performing, “Ragged Old Flag.”

Respect The “Ragged Old Flag”

While it is against the law to set fires in many of these places where people are burning flags, there is no concern for safety. Let alone respect for this country or its people.

Their anti-American protest is considered more important than the safety of people in the immediate area. Some people have even lit up the flag up in the middle of a crowd.

Before you go – here’s a live version of “Ragged Old Flag” that will give you chills.

It’s time that we all listen to the words of Johnny Cash and respect the flag.

So we raise her up every morning

We take her down every night

We don’t let her touch the ground and we fold her up right

On second thought, I do like to brag

‘Cause I’m mighty proud of that ragged old flag

From the Treasurer

This year, there are many changes to laws, only a few of which are more advantageous to the Veteran than in prior years.

Vote-By-Mail

One of the little-known requirements is that Florida Voters' Vote-By-Mail requests expire at the end of the calendar year in which there is a general election **which was a recent change in the law**. In 2022, there was a general election, voting for Federal and State elected officials (remember those annoying ads?), **so all requests from the 2022 elections have now expired**.

If you prefer to Vote-By-Mail, now would be a good time to request mail ballots be sent to your St. Johns County residence, another address, or, if deployed, request an Overseas or Military Ballot, by going to <https://www.votesjc.gov/vote-by-mail>. Your Vote-By-Mail request will be valid for all local and state elections, and for the federal (general) elections in 2024.

You may choose an "All Elections Request" (valid through 2024) or request a mail ballot for a specific Individual Election (though I believe it makes life easier to submit an "All Elections Request"). **If you have questions, or need assistance, please reach out to the Elections Office at (904) 823-2238.**

Exempt Organization 2023 Filing Deadlines and Reminders

January 31, 2023: Provide 1099-MISC and 1099-NEC to recipients, and file 1099-NEC with the IRS with 1096

February 28, 2023: File IRS copies of 1099-MISC together with 1096

May 1, 2023: File Florida Secretary of State Annual Report

May 15, 2023 (for calendar-year exempt organizations): File Form 990 family (990, 990-EZ or 990-N) electronically (this is the second year that only electronic filings are accepted). For exempt organizations with other fiscal years, due date is the fifteenth of the fifth month after the fiscal year-end.

Various dates (for charities, not Veterans' organizations recognized under §IRS 501(c)(19)), renew registration under the Florida Solicitation of Contributions Act with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Affairs. To check your renewal date, go to [Florida Charity Check](#).

Personal Federal Income Tax Deadline

The IRS's Free File program, **available only at IRS.gov**, allows taxpayers who made \$73,000 or less in 2022 to file their taxes electronically for free using brand-name software provided by commercial tax filing companies. Free File Fillable forms, a part of this effort, is available to any income level and provides free electronic forms that people fill out and file themselves also at no cost.

Tuesday, April 18, 2023, for most taxpayers, instead of April 15, because of the weekend and the District of Columbia's Emancipation Day holiday, which falls on Monday, April 17. The IRS will commence accepting 2022 individual federal income tax returns on January 23.

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

SAVE THE DATE.....

VIETNAM VETERANS DAY

RECOGNITION CEREMONY

SATURDAY, MARCH 25. 10 am

915 Walnut Street, Green Cove Springs



Remembering call sign "Sandy 22"

COL OSCAR MAUTERER MIA 15 FEB 1966 (LAOS)



OSCAR MAUTERER



THE MEN ARE THE MISSION



COL OSCAR
MAUTERER



Never Give Up...
Never Forgotten!

Major Oscar Mauterer, who entered the U.S. Air Force from New Jersey, served with the 602nd Tactical Fighter Squadron. On February 15, 1966, he was the pilot of a single-seat A-1E Skyraider (tail number 52-133885, call sign "Sandy 22") as the wingman in a flight of two, providing cover for two forward air controller (FAC) aircraft over Laos. After making attack runs on a target, Maj Mauterer's aircraft was hit just prior to departing the area. He radioed that his aircraft was on fire and he would bail out. Maj Mauterer successfully descended and reached the ground in the vicinity of (GC) WE 761 257, but the enemy ground fire was seen coming from the area where he landed. Multiple air strikes were conducted at the enemy ground fire, and search and rescue helicopters arrived on the scene roughly thirty minutes later. Rescuers attempted to locate Maj Mauterer but were repulsed by heavy enemy fire, and he remains unaccounted for. While carried in the status of MIA, the Air Force promoted Maj Mauterer to the rank of Colonel (Col). Today, Colonel Mauterer is memorialized on the Courts of the Missing at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific.

COL MAUTERER is one of 1,581 unreturned Vietnam War Veterans still waiting to come home.

Governor DeSantis Appoints Major General John D. Haas as Adjutant General

TALLAHASSEE - Gov. Ron DeSantis has announced the appointment of Maj. Gen. John D. Haas as Adjutant General of Florida. Major General Haas is the Assistant Adjutant General – Army and the Commander of the Florida Army National Guard. Prior to assuming his position, he was the Director of Strategic Plans, Policies, and Programs for the Florida National Guard. General Haas has completed three combat tours and held multiple company-level commands. Haas will become the Adjutant General of Florida upon the retirement later this year of Maj. Gen. James O. Eifert.



St. Augustine Veteran to Lead Other Vets on Pilgrimage

St. Augustine resident and Vietnam veteran Rick McAllister will lead 5 other Vietnam vets on a 500-mile journey across Northern Spain on the ancient pilgrimage route, the Camino de Santiago. The name of their event is The Last Patrol: A Pilgrimage of Brotherhood, and they are scheduled to depart September 19 of this year.

In 2012, McAllister had open heart surgery as a result of a coronary artery issue attributed to exposure to Agent Orange while serving in a Recon Unit with the 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam. As a part of his rehabilitation and exercise program, a friend recommended making this walking journey across Spain. After researching it and some serious training, McAllister made his first journey by himself in 2014, followed by a second in 2016. He then made a third in 2018 with his fiancé, Linda Ann Simpson. The most popular of the numerous Camino routes is the Camino Frances which runs from St. Jean Pied de Port, France across Spain to Santiago de Compostela. It is here where all the Caminos end, at the tomb of the apostle Saint James within the Santiago cathedral. This is the route that McAllister walked.

During his 3 journeys, McAllister experience a special sense of clarity and healing, as it related to PTSD issues. This was most profound in an area known as The Meseta, a very flat and non-descript farm area. Pondering this unexpected gift, he felt that there might be a similar experience for other veterans so after massaging the idea, he came up with “The Last Patrol” project. Promoting it on both veteran and Camino Face Book sites, he was overwhelmed with responses from people who wanted to be a part of the patrol and from those who just wanted to support it and/or follow along. Considering logistics, as well as the limited number of 80-year-olds who could actually make a 500-mile hike, he settled on five plus an additional person to drive a support van that will shadow their journey. Traditionally, this “hike” would take about 33 days, however, considering the age issue here, they have planned for 44.

After almost a year of phone and internet interviews, the “patrol” has been formed and a driver selected. All Vietnam vets, they include a medic, a Huey door gunner, a pilot, an aerial forward observer, and a photographer/correspondent. Their mission is to combine the spirituality and beauty of this Spanish venue with that unique bond of brotherhood experienced by veterans put in harm’s way while serving their country, hopefully returning home with a

soul that has found a little more peace.

For anyone wanting to follow their journey, they have set up a Face Book group site called The Last Patrol: A Pilgrimage of Brotherhood. Once they begin their journey, it is their intention to use this site for daily updates. Funds are being raised through a GoFundMe account also located on this site. They intend to produce a video documentary that can be shared with other veterans and veteran organizations when they return.

McAllister has been a resident of St. Augustine since 2001, was a professional photographer exhibiting in the Georgia Nick Gallery on Aviles Street for several years, and recently published a book, Chasing Hemingway: Five Journeys On My Way To Here. He is a member of the Honor Guard at VFW Post 2391 and has a daughter and 2 granddaughters who live in Sarasota. Over the past several years, he has given presentations on the Camino experience to local church and community organizations.

THE LAST PATROL

A Pilgrimage of Brotherhood



**Vietnam Veterans
on the
Camino de Santiago**

WWII uncovered: Heroes That We Lost: Alfred C Blozis: New York Giants All-Star Leaves Career to Serve His Country

Alfred C Blozis first tried to enlist with the US Army after his graduation from Georgetown University in 1942. Ultimately, Al was rejected due to his exceeding the size limit regulations of the Army. At 6'6" and 205 pounds, Al was an outstanding athlete- as a USA Track & Field Hall of Fame inductee Blozis held the NCAA and AAU champion titles in shot put in 1940, 1941, and 1942.



According to Georgetown University: "It is difficult to believe, but Blozis preferred football over track. Given his immense bulk and strength, it is not difficult to believe that Blozis was an effective, often terrifying, gridder. The New York Giants drafted the All-American Tackle after he graduated with his Bachelor of Science degree in 1942."

"Blozis played for the better part of two seasons with the Giants before leaving for the war in Europe. During that time he was an outstanding performer, being chosen All-Pro, and given special acclaim for his ability to obliterate would-be kick returners in the open field. For his exploits, Blozis was named to the 1940-1949 "All Decade" team."

"Blozis sought long and earnestly to obtain a dispensation from military height restrictions. He finally received his wish when inducted into the United States Army on December 9, 1943. During infantry training, he again exhibited his outstanding physical ability by throwing a hand grenade 284'-2 1/2" (95 yards) --nearly three times the previous distance of a normal throw and demolishing the previous record throw easily. (Source: The HOYA and its 1981-1982 series "Great Moments In Georgetown Sports", by Bill Ferraro)

On January 31, 1945 during his first patrol with the 28th Infantry Division, 110th Infantry Regiment in France, Second Lieutenant Alfred Blozis was fatally wounded in the Vosges Mountains. Initially thought to be Missing in Action, Lieutenant Blozis was recovered in April. Al was 26 years old at the time of his passing. A recipient of the Bronze Star and Purple Heart Alfred Blozis lies in rest at Lorraine American Cemetery, Saint-Avold, Lorraine, France. Lest We Forget.

Colourisation sourced by Colourised PIECE of JAKE Used with permission of the artist

#ww2uncovered #honorourveterans #ww2 #HonorTheFallen #rememberthefallen #WorldWarII #greatestgeneration #WWII #ww2veteran #worldwar2 #worldwartwo #georgetownuniversity #newyorkgiants #football #ww2vet #lestweforget

WWII uncovered original description and photo sourced by Honor States Database, Ancestry Database and The HOYA and its 1981-1982 series "Great Moments In Georgetown Sports", by Bill Ferraro

Ground breaking planned for re-construction of the colonial fort at Fort Mose



Reenactors do a terrific job of stoking visitors' imaginations about the story of the first free Black settlement in North America. Now an actual fort is planned.

ST. AUGUSTINE, Fla. — This week and last, there is a blues and jazz festival taking place at Fort Mose State Park in St. Augustine, bringing in headliners Gladys Knight and Mavis Staples. The concerts will raise money to build something that a place named Fort Mose should have: a fort!

There hasn't been one on the property for hundreds of years.

The dream of rebuilding the colonial fort has been in the works for years, and this year it's finally going to happen.

At Fort Mose State Park reenactors do a terrific job of stoking visitors' imaginations about the story of the first free black settlement in North America.

In the 1700's, before the underground railroad ran north, it actually ran south. Enslaved people fled the Carolinas and found freedom at on the outskirts of St. Augustine They lived in a settlement called Fort Mose.

Charles Ellis and Dr. Dorothy Israel are part of the Fort Mose Historical Society. They have been telling the little known story for years.

"This is such an important story because it talks about freedom," Israel said.

The community and the fort were just a few miles from the bigger stone fort in St. Augustine. At Fort Mose, free Blacks and Spanish fought alongside each other to protect St. Augustine.

Over the years, volunteers have lead visitors through the woods at Fort Mose State Park and urge visitors to imagine a settlement there. Ellis said that inevitably, the visitors would ask one question: Where's the fort?

Israel laughed and nodded. "It was so funny for me to see kids come and say, 'Where's the fort? I came to see the fort. There's no fort!'"

What happened to it?

Dr. Liz Ibarrola is an archaeologist and an Assistant Professor at the University of Texas. She has studied the Fort Mose site for years and explained that the fort at Mose was not the most durable. "It wasn't constructed out of stone. It was constructed out of dirt, primarily. The fort went back into the ground over time," she said.

After years of grant applications and fundraisers such as the Blues and Jazz Series, featuring the likes of the legendary Count Basie Orchestra, the Fort Mose Historical Society this month announced it plans to break ground to reconstruct an actual fort.

Having a fort will change things here.

"I think our visitation will triple itself in the next five years, maybe quadruple, just simply because of the added aspect in helping us tell the story," Ellis said. Israel added, "We want to make a community of it. We want kids to go in, see pictures, do games that would come alive in terms of what families went through at that time."

Ellis said an actual fort will amplify the experience and the story of men and women seeking freedom. "It's really a beautiful story of struggle, determination, courage and making it here," Israel noted.

Ellis expects to break ground this fall, and for the fort to be completed in early 2024.

MY TIME IN
UNIFORM IS OVER



BUT BEING A
VIETNAM VETERAN

★ ★ NEVER ENDS ★ ★

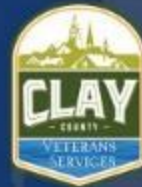


VETERANS APPRECIATION EVENT

March 11
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Thrasher-Horne Center
283 College Drive

Join Clay County Veteran Services and our partners for a day of veteran-focused resources, activities, food, live music, and entertainment.

Interested in becoming a vendor? Email us at tramika.chatfield@claycountygov.com.



Please join us for the 28th annual FMC Golf Tournament
March 24th, 2023

Time: 1200 Registration / 1300 Shotgun Start

Location: St. Johns Golf Club 4900 Cypress Links Blvd, Elkton, FL. 32033

Format: 4 Person Captain's Choice

Field: First 36 Teams



**28th ANNUAL FIRST MILITIA CHAPTER
AUSA GOLF TOURNAMENT
MARCH 24, 2023**

Time: 12:00 p.m. Registration • 1:00 p.m. Shotgun Start
Location: St. Johns Golf Club
4900 Cypress Links Blvd, Elkton, FL. 32033
Format: 4 Person Captain's Choice • **Field:** First 36 Teams

Entry Fee: \$50 per player (includes Green Fees, Cart, & Prizes)
Prizes for: 1st, 2nd, & 3rd Place
Hole Prizes include: Longest Drive, Closest to Pin, and Longest Putt
Chipping & Putting Contests (during the Tournament)

Awards Ceremony will be held on-site after the Tournament

Golf Shoes Must Be Soft Spikes Only

TEAM CAPTAIN: _____ PHONE # _____ EMAIL: _____
PLAYER #2: _____ PHONE # _____ EMAIL: _____
PLAYER #3: _____ PHONE # _____ EMAIL: _____
PLAYER #4: _____ PHONE # _____ EMAIL: _____

Mail Entry Forms (whether paying by check or credit card) to:
Mr. Lee S. Diggs c/o AUSA GOLF TOURNAMENT
P.O. BOX 3883, ST. AUGUSTINE, FL 32085-3883 • PHONE (904) 827-8567
Make checks payable to: First Militia Chapter - AUSA - or
To purchase online visit: <https://squareup.com/market/first-militia-chapter-ausa>

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

Goodwill Good News: The Atlantic Coast Young Marines named “Division 3 Unit of the Year”

Author: First Coast Living

Congratulations to the Atlantic Coast Young Marines! The group earned the award for their community service, program achievement, and dedication to the mission.

The Atlantic Coast Young Marines has received the highest award given in a six-state area in their division. Named by the Young Marines National Headquarters, the Atlantic Coast Young Marines has been named the “Division 3 Unit of the Year” for their outstanding community service activities and leadership opportunities for their youth members.

These outstanding young people have performed thousands of hours of volunteer service in the Jacksonville, Florida area community and are consistently volunteering for veterans’ groups and honoring our veterans. Led by Unit Commander Rosanne Vernon, the group is excited to be chosen for this honor.

The unit will now compete with five other units nationally for the top honor awarded by the Young Marines, the National Young Marine Unit of the Year.



Smoky was a 4 lb, 7 inch tall, York-

shire 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 preform. 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.

Judy, a purebred pointer, was the mascot of several ships in the Pacific, and was captured by the Japanese in 1942 and taken to a prison camp. There she met Aircraftsman Frank Williams, who shared his small portion of rice with her. Judy raised morale in the POW camp, and also barked when poisonous snakes, crocodiles or even tigers approached the prisoners. When the prisoners were shipped back to Singapore, she was smuggled out in a rice sack, never whimpering or betraying her presence to the guards.



The next day, that ship was torpedoed. Williams pushed Judy out of a porthole in an attempt to save her life, even though there was a 15-foot drop to the sea. He made his own escape from the ship, but was then recaptured and sent to a new POW camp.

He didn't know if Judy had survived, but soon he began hearing stories about a dog helping drowning men reach pieces of debris after the shipwreck. And when Williams arrived at the new camp, he said: "I couldn't believe my eyes! As I walked through the gate, a scraggly dog hit me square between the shoulders and knocked me over. I'd never been so glad to see the old girl!"

They spent a year together at that camp in Sumatra. "Judy saved my life in so many ways," said Williams. "But the greatest of all was giving me a reason to live. All I had to do was look into those weary, bloodshot eyes and ask myself: 'What would happen to her if I died?' I had to keep going."

Once hostilities ceased, Judy was then smuggled aboard a troopship heading back to Liverpool. In England, she was awarded the Dickin Medal (the "Victoria Cross" for animals) in May 1946. Her citation reads: "For magnificent courage and endurance in Japanese prison camps, which helped to maintain morale among her fellow prisoners, and also for saving many lives through her intelligence and watchfulness".

At the same time, Frank Williams was awarded the PDSA's White Cross of St. Giles for his devotion to Judy. Frank and Judy spent a year after the war visiting the relatives of English POWs who had not survived, and Frank said that Judy "always provided a comforting presence to the families."

When Judy finally died at the age of 13, Frank spent two months building a granite and marble memorial in her memory, which included a plaque describing her life story.



Challenge 22

EVENT & WALK

RECENT SPONSOR
here tomorrow

Join us to help
END VETERAN SUICIDE

REGION SPONSOR
VyStar

Support Veterans
*Live Music * Local Vendors*

Veteran Resources
*Food * Guest Speakers*

SATURDAY
MAR 25

\$22
WALKER
REGISTRATION
+ EVENT MEDAL

\$35
WALKER
REGISTRATION
+ EVENT MEDAL
+ OFFICIAL T-SHIRT

Seawalk Pavilion

75 1ST ST. N, Jax Beach

9AM Registration | **10AM** Walk Begins



Live Music by the Matt Allman Band | 10am-1pm



<https://give.floridalegion.org/ch22jax>



ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES FROM 4-8PM : LEGION POST 129, 1151 4TH ST S, JAX BEACH



Challenge 22

EVENT & WALK

RECEIVED
SPONSOR
here tomorrow

Join us to help
END VETERAN SUICIDE



Support Veterans
*Live Music * Local Vendors*

Veteran Resources
*Food * Guest Speakers*

SATURDAY
MAR 25

\$22
WALKER
REGISTRATION
+ EVENT MEDAL

\$35
WALKER
REGISTRATION
+ EVENT MEDAL
+ OFFICIAL T-SHIRT

Seawalk Pavilion

75 1ST ST. N, Jax Beach

9AM Registration | 10AM Walk Begins



Live Music by the Matt Allman Band | 10am-1pm



<https://give.floridalegion.org/ch22jax>



ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES FROM 4-8PM : LEGION POST 129, 1151 4TH ST S, JAX BEACH

Middleburg VA Clinic:

The Middleburg VA Clinic provides a broad range of general and specialized medicine services: Primary Care, Women's Health, Laboratory & Vaccinations, Mental Health Care (individual, group, couples), Nutrition & Weight Management, Pain Psychology, Social Work, Substance Abuse & Tobacco Cessation, and Telehealth Services for a wide-variety of medical issues. The clinic also provides eligible Veterans with same day access.

Our diverse Veteran patient population requires a complexity of care that ranges from minor health care needs to chronic diseases. Patients who require hospitalization are assessed, stabilized, and transferred to local medical facilities or to the Malcom Randall VA Medical Clinic (VAMC) in Gainesville, FL or Lake City VAMC in Lake City, FL according to urgency of their needs.

The North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System (NF/SGVHS) thanks everyone who contributed to the success of this event!

Special Thanks to Veterans Canteen Service for the refreshments.

Follow NF/SGVHS



Scan QR Code below to view photos and more info on the Middleburg VA Clinic



Middleburg VA Clinic Renaming Ceremony In Honor of Andrew K. Baker



Tuesday, January 17, 2023 | 11:00 a.m.
400 College Drive, Suite 200
Middleburg, FL 32068



Chief Andrew K. Baker

Chief Andy Baker enlisted in the U.S. Navy in October 1980, attending boot camp at Recruit Training Command Orlando. In April of 1981, he reported to his first duty station, USS Dwight D Eisenhower (CVN-69) as a Ship's Serviceman. During his time of service, Chief Baker graduated from Naval Aircrew, Aviation Rescue Swimmer School, and Aviation Warfare Systems Operator - A School and earned his Combat Search and Rescue designation. Chief Baker also completed multiple cruises to include a world cruise aboard the USS Nimitz and a cruise in the North Atlantic while assigned to HELANTISUBRON THREE (HS-3) at NAS Jacksonville and earned the rank of Chief Petty Officer.

Chief Baker served his country honorably for 17 years before tragically perishing while aboard a Trident 615, an HH-60H "Sea Hawk" helicopter, that crashed at sea on March 13, 1997, as a part of the USS Kennedy's Composite Training Unit Exercise. Chief Baker is survived by his wife, Chief Warrant Officer Tina Baker (retired), son, Chief Petty Officer Andrew "Drew" Baker, and two grandchildren Alice and Andrew III. One of his sons, Jacob, passed in 2019.

Bill S. 2159

On Monday, December 5, 2022, President Biden signed into law S. 2159, which states:

"S. 2159, which designates the community-based outpatient clinic of the Department of Veterans Affairs located at 400 College Drive, Middleburg, Florida, as the Andrew K. Baker Department of Veterans Affairs Clinic;

Thank you to Senators Rubio and Rick Scott, Representative Cammack, and the entire Florida delegation for their leadership."

Program

*Program starts at 11:00 a.m.

- Welcome and Pledge—Phillip Pitts, NF/SGVHS Executive Assistant to Director
- Opening Remarks—Wende Dettor, NF/SGVHS Interim Executive Health System Director
- Remarks—Matthew Dews, Office of U.S. Senator Marco Rubio
- Remarks—Gary Hollis, Office of U.S. Senator Rick Scott
- Remarks—Honorable Aaron Bean, U.S. Congress, Florida, District 4
- Remarks and presentation of U.S. flag, insert into Congressional Record, and note for Baker Family—Honorable Kat Cammack, U.S. Congress, Florida, District 3
- Remarks—Chief Petty Officer Andrew "Drew" Baker, Son of Chief Petty Officer Andrew K. Baker
- Close of Program—Phillip Pitts, NF/SGVHS Executive Assistant to Director



Chief Andrew K. Baker

*Please enjoy the provided refreshments after the ceremony.



FREE TAX FILING FOR VETERANS

Monday—Thursday

9:30 am—1:30 pm

117 West Duval Street

Suite 175

PH: (904) 255-5551

Please call to make an
Appointment.

WHAT YOU NEED:

- Social Security/Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) card for each family members and working adult
- 1095-A if you received a tax credit from the healthcare.gov marketplace
- Childcare provider name, address and tax ID, if applicable
- Bank routing and account numbers for checking or savings account (if you qualify for refund via secure direct deposit)
- Last year's tax return, if you have it
- A valid email address
- Income statements (W-2, 1099-INT, 1099-Div, 1099-MISC, etc.)

The City of Jacksonville's Military Affairs and Veterans Department, in Partnership with the IRS and United Way, offers free tax preparation services to Veterans.



RealSense



VFW VETERANS VILLAGE
Fort McCoy, Florida
22nd Annual Picnic 2023

13th Annual Golf Tournament

FRIDAY 24 MARCH 2023

Ocala Municipal Golf Course
3130 E Silver Springs Blvd, Ocala, FL

Cost \$65.00



Shotgun Start: 13:00

Includes: 18 Holes of Golf, Cart and lunch 11:30-12:30 before tournament!

PICNIC

SATURDAY 25TH MARCH 2023

10AM to 5PM (meal served 11:30-2:00)

TICKET DONATION \$12.00



Includes:
BBQ Meal & Entertainment
Cornhole Tournament
Bouncy House for Kids
Raffles and more...
Beverages Available

4-SALE: KENNY'S FAMOUS "BUCKETS" OF CHICKEN~

PLUS~ PORK BUTTS ~ After 2:30pm TO GO!!!

For Information call 352-236-0823 or visit our Website:

www.vfwveteransvillage.org

THE JAX MILITARY LOUNGE

Lounge is Run by Volunteers

This facility is located on the ground floor at the Jacksonville International Airport and features an office space and a well-furnished living room area with a fireplace to welcome active-duty service members and their families. This is so that they can take a moment to relax during their journey, and to connect them to any resources they may need. Inside, you'll find volunteers like Tom Meissgeier, President-Elect of the North Jacksonville Rotary Club. Tom is retired from the US Army, and is a member of the Northeast Florida Green Beret Chapter 88 of The Special Forces Association. He can certainly relate to the feeling of landing in a new town and even a new country. The JAA completely refurbished-updated this lounge while the North Jacksonville Rotary Club, United Way of Northeast Florida's Mission United and the Veterans Council of Duval County helped coordinate volunteers to staff the lounge. Free parking at the airport is included for the Volunteers selected after an interview and background check.





How the PACT Act is Already Helping Veterans

Veterans are applying for benefits and VA is expediting delivery

The PACT Act is a historic new law that will help VA provide health care and benefits to millions of toxic-exposed Veterans and their survivors. Since President Biden signed the PACT Act into law on August 10, VA has been hard at work implementing this landmark bipartisan legislation—and Veterans have already begun to apply for the benefits they've earned and deserve.

Here's an update on what's happened since August 10th:

Veterans are applying for the PACT Act benefits they deserve

The day after the PACT Act was signed into law (August 11), Veterans set an all-time record for filing online disability compensation claims. Since the PACT Act was signed, Veterans have filed more than 200,000 total claims—an increase of more than 21% over the same period last year. And to date, VA has already received more than 70,000 PACT Act-related claims from Veterans since August 10.

Thousands of Veterans participated in toxic exposure screening pilot

As a part of the PACT Act, VA will begin providing 5-minute toxic exposure screenings to all Veterans enrolled in VA health care. On September 6, VA began a pilot of this program—screening 13,380 Veterans across 12 medical centers over a 2-week period, and finding a 37.4% concern of exposure among those Veterans. These results will help VA make toxic exposure screenings available to all Veterans in early November, and more importantly, make sure that VA provides all toxic-exposed Veterans with the care they need and the benefits they deserve.

VA expedited the timeline to deliver benefits to Veterans as soon as possible

Instead of phasing-in conditions over the coming years (as outlined in the legislation), the Biden Administration decided to make all conditions in the PACT Act presumptive for benefits as of August 10, the day the bill was signed into law. We will begin processing these benefits on the earliest date possible, which is January 1.

VA will expand health care eligibility in October

On October 1, VA will expand and extend eligibility for VA health care for certain Veterans of the Gulf Wars and post-9/11 era. This expansion will increase health care eligibility for hundreds of thousands of toxic-exposed Veterans. Additionally, VA has already expanded health care eligibility for certain Veterans of the Vietnam War. More detailed information about this expansion can be found on [VA.gov/PACT](https://www.va.gov/PACT).

Meeting Veterans where they are

Within minutes of the PACT Act passing the Senate, VA launched [VA.gov/PACT](https://www.va.gov/PACT)—a one-stop-shop website where Veterans and their families can learn about the PACT Act and apply for health care or benefits. This website, which is available in English and Spanish, has garnered nearly 2.5 million views to date.

Apply now. VA encourages Veterans and survivors to apply now for the PACT Act-related benefits and care they deserve. All Veterans and survivors can go to [VA.gov/PACT](https://www.va.gov/PACT) or call us at 1-800-MYVA411 to learn more about what this legislation means for them.



FIRST COAST
Honor Flight

First Coast Honor Flight
PO Box 600785
St Johns, FL 32260
1.888.400.1185
info@firstcoasthonorflight.com

BIRDIES FOR CHARITY



Guess the correct number of birdies made during THE PLAYERS Championship for a chance to win \$10,000!

Visit birdiesforcharity.playerschampionship.com to participate and for more information.

Contest runs **November 14, 2022 - March 8, 2023**



March 7-12, 2023 | TPC Sawgrass | Ponte Vedra Beach, FL

OPEN ONLY TO LEGAL RESIDENTS OF THE 50 UNITED STATES AND DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA (EXCLUDING NEW YORK) WHO ARE 18 YEARS OR OLDER AS OF THE DATE OF ENTRY. NO PURCHASE NECESSARY.

★ ACTIVE DUTY ★ VETERANS ★ NATIONAL GUARD & RESERVE ★

MILITARY SUPPORT RETREATS

RETREATS FOR COMBAT VETERANS AND THEIR PRIMARY SUPPORT PERSON



~~Amelia Island~~
Florida

~~FULL JAN. 12-15~~

Marineland
Florida

★ FEB. 2-5

Sarasota
Florida

★ MAR. 23-26

Hiawassee
Georgia

★ APR. 13-16

From Thursday at 5:00pm – Sunday at 2:00pm



★ RESTORATION ★ RECREATION ★ RELAXATION ★

Strengthen and restore connections, enjoy the natural beauty of each location, be inspired by fun outdoor activities, learn about available support resources, and relax while exploring the stress coping concepts of Post Traumatic Growth.

★ Small, friendly group setting ★

★ All accommodations, food, and activities are provided free of charge ★

★ Facilitated by Vets, Licensed Clinicians, and Community Nonprofit Support Organizations ★

Please note: Must be 18 to attend and no childcare is provided. Participants are responsible for travel.

TO LEARN MORE AND TO APPLY VISIT: [GRATITUDEAMERICA.ORG/RETREATS](https://www.gratitudeamerica.org/retreats)



CHRISTOPHER DUKE
770-298-7654
DUKE@GRATITUDEAMERICA.ORG





Hello First Coast Honor Flight Supporters:

Our mission at First Coast Honor Flight (FCHF) is to provide a unique experience for our local Veterans in Washington D.C. to visit the memorials dedicated to honoring those who have served and sacrificed for our country.

We consider it our honor to give our Veterans the opportunity to remember, celebrate, grieve, and gain closure for the time they sacrificed for our country.

Unfortunately, the current limited commercial airline schedule from our Jacksonville Airport is not sufficient to provide our Veterans the experience they deserve in Washington D.C. Therefore, we have decided to postpone our planned October 2022 flight to April 2023.

We're making great progress towards an April 2023 flight which will allow us to bring more Veterans and allow more time for the true experience that we want to be able to give our Veterans.

Stay tuned for more information.

We would welcome any connections you may have and will be creating some fundraising opportunities for you to help us make our April 2023 flight a reality!

Your First Coast Honor Flight Team

Candace Mabry, Fundraising Director, First Coast Honor Flight

904-708-2445, cmabryfchf@gmail.com, www.firstcoasthonorflight.org

"We can't all be heroes, because somebody has to sit on the curb and applaud as they go by"

-Will Rogers



PROPERTY TAX BENEFITS FOR ACTIVE DUTY MILITARY AND VETERANS

Certain property tax benefits are available to members of the Armed Forces.

Property Tax Oversight

Filing and Keeping Your Homestead Exemption

When a person serving in the Armed Forces owns and uses property as a homestead, the servicemember may rent the homestead property without abandoning the claim to the homestead exemption (see section 196.061, Florida Statutes).

A servicemember's next of kin or any other person who has written authorization may file a homestead exemption claim on behalf of a servicemember who cannot file in person because of a service obligation (see s. 196.071, F.S.).

Property Tax Exemptions and Discounts

Eligibility for property tax exemptions depends on satisfying certain requirements. Information is available from the property appraiser's office in the county where the veteran or surviving spouse owns a homestead or other property.

- An ex-servicemember who was honorably discharged, is a resident of Florida, and who is disabled to a degree of 10% or more because of misfortune or while serving during wartime may be entitled to a \$5,000 reduction in his or her property's assessed value. This exemption is not limited to homestead property. Under certain circumstances, the veteran's surviving spouse may be entitled to carry over the exemption. See Form [DR-501](#). (see s. 196.24, F.S.)
- Veterans who are Florida residents and were honorably discharged with a service-related total and permanent disability may be eligible for a total exemption from ad valorem taxes on property they own and use as their homesteads. A similar exemption is available to disabled veterans confined to wheelchairs. Under certain circumstances, the veteran's surviving spouse may be entitled to carry over the exemption. See Form [DR-501](#). (see ss. 196.081 and 196.091, F.S.)
- If they meet certain requirements, veterans 65 or older who are partially or totally permanently disabled may receive a discount on the assessed value of property that they own and use as homesteads. This discount carries over to the veteran's surviving spouse if the spouse holds the legal or beneficial title to the homestead, permanently resides there and has not remarried. The discount is a percentage equal to the percentage of the veteran's permanent, service-connected disability as determined by the United States Department of Veteran's Affairs. See Form [DR-501](#). (see s. 196.082, F.S.)



Eligible veterans who want to apply for these exemptions may apply before they receive the necessary documentation from the United States government or the United States Department of Veterans Affairs or its predecessor. After the property appraiser receives the documentation, the exemption will be effective as of the date of the original application. Please see the [How to Apply for a Refund](#) brochure for information about refunds.

- A member or former member of any branch of the United States military or military reserves, the United States Coast Guard or its reserves, or the Florida National Guard may receive an exemption if he or she was deployed during the previous calendar year outside the continental United States, Alaska, and Hawaii in support of a designated operation (the Florida Legislature designates operations for this exemption). The percent of the taxable value that is exempt for the current year corresponds to the percent of time during the previous year when the service member was deployed on a designated operation. See Form [DR-501M](#). (see s. 196.173, F.S.)

You should file all required forms and applications for these exemptions with your county property appraiser. If the property appraiser denies your application, you may file a petition with the county's value adjustment board. For more information, see [Petitions to the Value Adjustment Board](#).

The Department of Revenue's website has more information about property tax benefits for active duty military and veterans and contact information for county officials.

<http://floridarevenue.com/property/Pages/Home.aspx>

The Men are the Mission!

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) is charged with accounting as fully as possible for our men. It is essential for DPAA to have additional funds to increase field operations in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Contact both your Senators and ask to increase the DPAA budget from \$131 million to \$175 million for FY2023. There are 1,584 Americans still missing and unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War. No expense was spared to send them into battle...no expense should be spared to prioritize BRINGING THEM HOME!



National League of POW/MIA Families



The Men Are The Mission!

One photo of three airmen who took off on a night reconnaissance mission almost 55 years ago...still unaccounted for.

Three families of the many who still seek answers have come together, with one question: "Why haven't they come home?" The years have faded into decades awaiting their return. These are the faces that connect these three families to the crew of "QUIZSHOW09".

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) is charged with accounting as fully as possible for our men. It is essential for DPAA to have additional funds to increase field operations in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Contact both your Senators and ask to increase the DPAA budget from \$131 million to \$175 million for FY2023. There are 1,584 Americans still missing and unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War. No expense was spared to send them into battle...no expense should be spared to prioritize BRINGING THEM HOME!



KOREAN WAR VETERANS ASSOCIATION



CALLING ALL KOREAN WAR AND KOREAN DEFENSE VETERANS

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

Blue Angels Show Schedule 2023

Jacksonville in October

Blue Angels

► 2023 | SHOW SCHEDULE

MARCH

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

APRIL

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

MAY

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

JUNE

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

JULY

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

AUGUST

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

SEPTEMBER

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

OCTOBER

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

NOVEMBER

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

The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs

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

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

#FDVA #FLVets

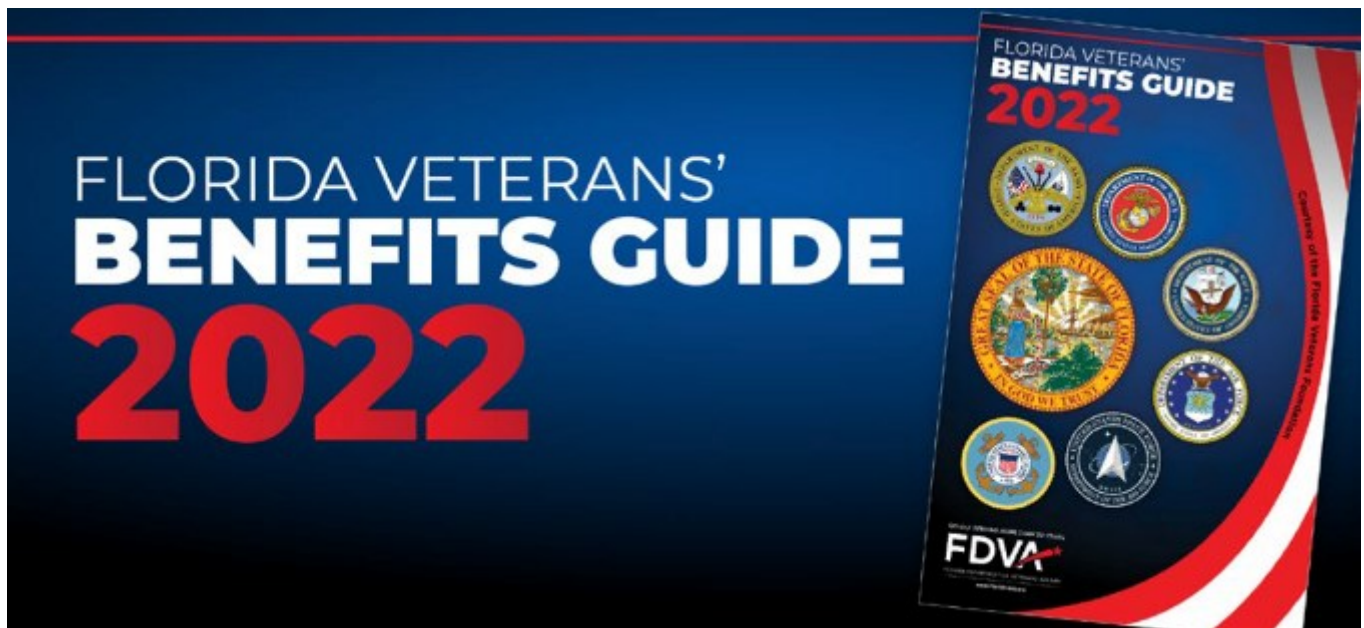
**GET OUR FREE
UPGRADED
APP.**

It won't take
up space on
your phone.



The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs

Have you checked out the new 2022 Florida Veterans' Benefits Guide? It is now available for download. The annual guide helps connect Florida's Veterans and their families with earned federal and state benefits, services and support. It also contains helpful phone numbers and website addresses for additional information. To view online, click here: <https://bit.ly/3BovveB>. To download a copy for your records, click here: <https://bit.ly/3HYgTF0>.





VA SURVIVOR BENEFITS & THE PACT ACT

ESGR4U

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



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

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

How to Apply for DIC and/or Accrued Benefits

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



Dependency and Indemnity Compensation

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



Accrued Benefits

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

Additional Survivor Benefits Available:



Burials and Burial Allowance

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



Final Monthly Payment

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



Home Loan Guaranty

Certificate of Eligibility is available for surviving spouses receiving DIC.



Education and Training

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



Health Care

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

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

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



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

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

COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE
MISSION Act eligibility, copayments

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

VETERANS CRISIS LINE
Immediate connection to caring, qualified responders

DEBT MANAGEMENT
Debt details, payment options and debtor rights

FACILITY LOCATOR
Locations of medical centers, benefits offices or cemeteries

BENEFITS ASSISTANCE
Information about a variety of VA benefits

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

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

FLORIDA SURVIVOR OUTREACH SERVICES AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

Thanks!

Nick Howland

Executive Director, The Fire Watch

www.thefirewatch.org

904.525.1761



From Veterans Council Chairman Bill Dudley

Subject: VA Transportation Assistance

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

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

From Michael Isam

The DAV van is now operating 5 days /week!

It will now transport a full capacity of riders.

Schedule your seat on the DAV Chapter 6 van.

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

Contact the VA Clinic at 904-823-2954





Legal Aid for Veterans

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

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

1.866.486.6161

Call Today!

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



We Can Help With

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

Supported by the: **FDVA**
FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF LEGAL SERVICES
FLORIDA BAR ASSOCIATION

Become a Watch Stander with The Fire Watch



You sacrificed for our country.

**AT SILVER CREEK,
FREEDOM IS YOURS.**

Because of your commitment, you helped us achieve the American Dream. At Silver Creek, we want to return the favor – by providing the freedom, independence and personal attention you deserve. Since 2016, Silver Creek has served the St. Augustine community, offering military retirees and seniors at large a vibrant, community lifestyle complete with everything except the burdens of home maintenance. Impeccably-appointed independent concierge living, assisted living and memory care apartments homes, first-class amenities, holistic wellness programming, gourmet, all-day dining and abounding opportunities for enrichment are just a few of the many options you'll find.

Silver Creek provides residents the perfect balance of elegant, upscale living with the warmth and intimacy of home – inspiring socialization and fellowship within a close-knit community.

Call **800-665-9492** to schedule a tour and learn more.



THE FUTURE OF SENIOR LIVING

165 Silver Lane | St. Augustine, FL 32084 | SilverCreekRetirement.com



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

Assisted Living Facility #12928

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		Duval
1048	Bob Adkins	adk123robert@outlook.com	
1059	David Treffinger	dtreffinger433@msn.com;	Clay
1084	Ron Howard	ronehoward@gmail.com	
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.



PROGRAMS DESIGNED TO MEET VETERANS' UNIQUE NEEDS

Advance Care Planning

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

Palliative Care

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

Hospice Care

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

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

Complementary Therapies

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

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

We Need Volunteers

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

WE HONOR VETERANS
Partner

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

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



Along with traditional reimbursement for hospice services, we offer payment options to veterans with TRICARE. As with all Community Hospice & Palliative Care patients, we provide care and support to all who need it, regardless of their ability to pay.

VET 007 5/20

Mission Statement:

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



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

What the Council has done:

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

SA-0003147064-01

Veterans Crisis Line

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

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

STAND BY THEM
Confidential help for Veterans and their families

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

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

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

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

Confidential chat at MilitaryCrisisLine.net or text 838255

Veterans Councils of Northeast Florida



BAKER COUNTY

President: Larry Porterfield

Meetings:

Second Thursday of each month

Location:

MacClenny Primitive Baptist Church
Fellowship Hall on North Boulevard

Time : 1800 (6pm)

CLAY COUNTY

President: Harry Silvers

Meetings:

First Wednesday of each month

Location:

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

Time: 1400 (2pm)

DUVAL COUNTY

President

Meetings:

Third Tuesday of each month

Location:

American Legion Post 37
Main Building
San Juan Avenue

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

*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.