



Vol. 32 Issue 01

Veteran's News that needs to be Read

SPRING 2022



IN MEMORIAM



MAY THEY REST IN PEACE

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Please forward your deceased members with photo, obituary, cause of death to:

Secretary@nyvietnamvets.org

membership@vva.org

Lin4456@man.xom

Rev. Phil Salois at National

Wishing all our our VVA members a Blessed Easter Holiday and also a Blessed Joy Filled Pass-over gathering.

Pray for our fallen soldiers on Memorial Day

VVA #20

Christopher Bubnis
Michael J. Schwartz
George Schneider
James J. Palermo

VVA #49

John Johnson, Jr.
Andrew S. McGowan, Sr.
Fredric D. Hillmann
Stephen McClean
Charles R. Schiavo, Jr.

VVA #72

Thomas Brooks

VVA #79

Mac A. McCarthy

VVA #82

Frank T. Logan III
William W. Lomnicki
Pasquale A. Montilli

VVA #140

Melvin B. Lane

VVA #193

Paul W. Sullivan

VVA #421

Louis B. Recco

VVA #704

Raymond J. Riley

VVA #803

Frank R. Composto
John F. Eckel

**VVA-NYSC Meeting Dates 2022**

January 21, 22,

April 08. 09

June 17, 18,

Sept. 23, 24

On-Line INTERCHANGE is the Bimonthly publication of the VVA-NYSC. Comments and contributions are encouraged and can be sent to: **VVAINTERCHANGE@AOL.COM**
8 Queen Diana Ln Queensbury, NY
12804

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views and opinions of this organization. Individuals with different viewpoints and opinions are invited to submit them to the VVA-NYSC by the **deadline**. Editor reserves the right to edit for length, grammar and reject any libelous or obscene material.

NEWSPAPER STAFF**Publisher:** Ned D. Foote**Editor:** Francisco Muñiz III**E-MAIL:** VVAINTERCHANGE@AOL.COM

VVA-NYSC ON-LINE INTERCHANGE EMAIL ADDRESS: VVAINTERCHANGE@AOL.COM Phone: 516.712.4914

OFFICERS	NAME	TELEPHONE NUMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS
President	Ned D. Foote	518.338.8147	Nedvva@roadrunner.com
1st Vice President	Grant T. Coates	607.434.9884	gcoates@stny.rr.com
Secretary	Francisco Muñiz III	516.712.4914	secretary@nyvietnamvets.org
Treasurer	Nicholas DeLeo	570.507.2412	ndeleo52@yahoo.com

DISTRICT DIRECTORS	NAME	EMAIL ADDRESS
CENTRAL DISTRICT DIRECTOR	Nicholas Valenti	nickvalenti46@yahoo.com
EASTERN DISTRICT DIRECTOR	Sam Hall	Sammyjh49@yahoo.com
SOUTHERN DISTRICT DIRECTOR	Joe Ingino	biggie77@verizon.net
WESTERN DISTRICT DIRECTOR	Bill Paton	bllpaton36@gmail.com

Liaisons	NAME	E-MAIL
Region II Director	Ted Wilkinson 585-322-6722	twilkinson@vva.org
Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America (AVVA)	Kathleen Penfield	Kathysitka@yahoo.com
VA Volunteer Services (VAVS)	Danny Friedman	danny.ola@optimum.net

Legislative Director	Bing Markee	bingnys@aol.com
Sergeant of Arms	Jay Book	jaybook1947@gmail.com

SERVICE OFFICER PROGRAM	TELEPHONE NUMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS
Dolores Garcia—Chief SO	716.857.3344	Dolores.Garcia1@va.gov
Norbert "Butch" Steinwandel	716-857-3404	Norbert.steinwandel@va.gov

President's Report

Ned D. Foote

Ok, it is spring, and weather is getting beautiful. Chapters should all be up and operating as COVID protocols have lifted. But be prepared we could go back to square one and should always be cautious.

I would normally have stuff to report to you all, but I have never seen VVA so quiet, or I am no longer on anyone's email list including National even though I am on the BOD now. No one else seems to be either so I can assume not much is happening or at least nothing the BOD needs to know.

I do know VVA was the Host this year for Vietnam Day and did a wonderful job. Many of our members attended ceremony. I know many of you had different events so Welcome Home!

I can say our January meeting was well attended and we did honor our fallen members. The sad part is our list is bigger and bigger. I hear more of us that are passing or extremely sick with strange maladies. Our Joe Ingino is still battling and now my good friend and former district director Joe Kristek is hospitalized and trying to figure what is wrong. We have many more and I keep you all in my thoughts.

We still have issues to deal with. Burn Pits issue and toxic issues seem to be getting addressed and that is good. I do not hear too much about Agent Orange though. On more local there is talk of closing Manhattan and Bronx VA's. Are you Sh*&^%#g me? The Southern District Chapters are getting together to fight this and certainly the SC lends support. John Rowan is taking lead as he knows most players involved. With this whole thing is upstate VA's are going to receive much funding to renovate like Albany, Buffalo, and Bath. Divide and concur maybe. The old wars of upstate/downstate. Anyways we will keep an eye on this.

VVA is still trying to address how to move forward on heading to the light switch. As we know we are fading away and need to do something with our Service Officer program. With 77,000 VVA claims we need to have a way to move them to an organization. This will again be addressed next National meeting and hope we come to some direction, but it will be a debate as some of our members do not want to move forward and do not understand the issue or what the claim process is.

Any way, without rambling on, until the next time. Stay Safe. Another booster is available and I suggest you all get it.

Remember we are having VVA-NYSC Elections for all positions, President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary and Chapters from each District will have a chance to vote for their District Directors. Send in your Letter of Intent to run for a position, via E-mail, for what position to Election Chair Tom Harris at **bkrdad@aol.com**, ASAP. Review our VVA-NYSC By-Laws for qualifications.

VVA Board Member Kerwin Stone, reelected to his 4th term as At Large Director in Greensboro, has, at the direction of his medical team, submitted his resignation. Health issues arising post-convention have caused his doctors pause, and Kerwin has been advised not to travel.

At the January VVA Board of Directors meeting, the Board of Directors held a special order procedure to fill the vacancy created by Kerwin's resignation.

VVA-NYSC President Ned Foote won the position as At-Large Board of Directors at the National VVA level. Now New York State has two representatives at the National level. Congratulations and Best of Luck!



New York Vietnam Veterans Foundation

We provide grants to Vietnam Veterans of America-New York State Council, (VVA-NYSC) a veteran's service organization that advocates for legislation at the State and Federal level of government to provide housing, education, health and mental care services to veterans and their families.

We provide funding for VVA-NYSC Veteran's Service Officer program that assist veterans with their military disability compensation and pension claims from the Veterans

Administration.

We advocate for better Federal and State veteran's benefits and veteran preferences in government employment. VVA Chapters within New York State, assist widows, widowers, and orphans of our veterans. The organization organizes programs that enrich the lives of Vietnam veterans, as well as veterans from past, current wars, and their families.

We have an active Agent Orange committee that helps Vietnam veterans receive up to date information on prostate cancer, diabetes, and other chemically-related diseases.

We have an updated database of agencies that provide:

- Listings of Veteran Job Fairs offered by county or veteran service organizations;
- Counseling for veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD);
- Outreach programs that support returning veterans' reentry into civilian life;

For disabled veterans, this can be even more difficult than a tour of duty.

We do this all year long, but without your gift and the gifts of other supporters, nothing can be done to help those that are so deserving of it. However, we have much more to accomplish.

We, the New York Vietnam Veterans Foundation, have a mission to keep advocating for and helping these veterans. We ask you to join us in our mission to provide assistance, guidance, training, and education to all veterans of past, present, and future military conflicts.

So let us continue to work together to ensure our national heroes receive everything that they are entitled to receive for their sacrifice and service to our nation.

President Francisco Muñiz III

Vice President Ned D. Foote

Treasurer Grant T. Coates

Secretary Nick Valenti

Directors Sam Hall

Stan May

You can send your tax deductible donation, to the extent allowed by law, directly to the Foundation at NY Vietnam Veterans Foundation, 48 March Lane, Westbury, NY 11590-6302.

NOTE: The Foundation has lost its fundraising contract and is in need of funds to support our Service Officer's Program. Please send donation to the above address.

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Secretary's Report

Francisco Muñiz III

Sorry, that I missed the January VVA-NYSC meeting. My wife was buried that date at the Long Island National Veterans Cemetery.

I would like to thank President Ned Foote, for his call and sympathy card, and for the donation that the State Council made to St. Jude in Memory of my wife, Iluminada ‘Lumie’ Muñiz. That was her favorite organization because of the children with brain tumors like she had. She did not want them to suffer like she was experiencing.

I, also, would like to thank all the State Council Chapters from all over New York State, across the USA, including Puerto Rico for their condolences and support. It's has been very difficult during this time but without the support of my VVA & AVVA brothers and sisters, I do not know how I would have survived this tragic death. My family and I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Just give a chance to get myself together with all your help! Gracias, a todos.

Note: When you have a Chapter member that passes away, please send name, next of kin, address and Obituary to State Council, National membership and Rev. Lewis, State Council Chaplain. Go to this site to download the form: [VVA-AVVA-Deceased-Member-Information.pdf](#) Or go to VVA.ORG and link to INFORM FOR MEMBERS then go to Membership Information, Guides and Forms find [Deceased Member Notification](#) & Print. When sending your Chapter Report please place on Subject line what District your Chapter is in. Thanks



Update on COVID-19 booster shots

In case you missed it: If you or a loved one are 50 or older, or are moderately or severely immunocompromised, you can get an additional Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 booster shot at no cost to you.

The CDC recommends an additional booster shot for certain individuals to increase protection from severe disease from COVID-19. People over the age of 50, or who are [moderately or severely immunocompromised](#), can get an additional booster of Pfizer or Moderna 4 months after their last dose. This is especially important for those 65 and older who are at higher risk from severe disease and most likely to benefit from getting an additional booster.

Remember: Medicare covers the COVID-19 vaccine, including booster shots, at no cost to you. Find a [COVID-19 vaccine location](#) near you. This virus keeps mutating because the people are not getting the vaccination. This is going to be a yearly thing just like the Flu shot. Take care of yourself and your family.

Thank you to Mr. Gary Sinise and the Gary Sinise Foundation for this special 3-minute video tribute [1] highlighting 29 March, National Vietnam War Veterans Day [2]. We encourage you to share this inspirational video with your family, friends, neighbors and all Vietnam veterans and their families in your local community. Remember to tag us, Gary and his foundation.

Links:

- [1] <https://trk.cp20.com/click/a7h1-2ipmc5-xhe6la-145gix7/>
- [2] <https://trk.cp20.com/click/a7h1-2ipmc5-xhe6lb-145gix8/>
- [3] <https://trk.cp20.com/click/a7h1-2ipmc5-xhe6lc-145gix9/>
- [4] <https://trk.cp20.com/click/a7h1-2ipmc5-xhe6ld-145gix0/>
- [5] <https://trk.cp20.com/click/a7h1-2ipmc5-xhe6lg-145gix3/>
- [6] <https://trk.cp20.com/click/a7h1-2ipmc5-xhe6lj-145gix6/>

Last week, I joined proud veterans; caring nonveterans; representatives of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and families of the fallen, including the children and grandchildren of Vietnam veterans who died in Vietnam. Together we commemorated the Vietnam Veterans Day and the 40th Anniversary of *The Vietnam Veterans Memorial*.

"The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation."

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In case you haven't heard, last September at the VVA national convention a new VVA National President was elected, Jack McManus. There were many constitutional propositions discussed and changes were voted on by the 750 plus delegates present.

Chapter 77 sent Tom Thompson, Bill Paton, Joe Rajnisz, Ed Bodine, Tim Hughes and Norm Murray as our delegates. Each delegate discussed a different topic from their convention interests at our November chapter meeting. With the passing of Mike Walker this left a vacancy for the VVA New York Western Regional Director. Bill Paton our current Vice President was elected to that position at the January 22, 2022 VVA-NYSC meeting.

We had a successful Christmas party held at the Sikora Legion Post December 9, 2021.

There will be an April Fools Day dance event with a Chinese auction, door prize, 50/50 and music by Hank Nevins. See the posters for more info. This will be on Facebook and an email. Tickets are on sale at the Chapter.

We are having another Chivetta's BBQ fund raiser again at the Tonawanda Veterans Park parking lot on May 22, 2022. We will be looking for volunteers to help. Further information is on posters, Email and, Facebook. Tickets are on sale at chapter.

We also need help with our Fill the Helmet event held jointly with Legion Post 264, June 25, 2022. Paul can provide information about the September Car Show.

Our Chapter 77 headquarters, museum and next door food pantry is open every Wednesday and Saturday. All veterans are welcome to come for camaraderie, coffee, donuts, VA benefits advice, assistance or direction and much laughter 8:30 am. until 1:00 pm. Any needy veteran with an honorable discharge may come from 9:00 am. until 12:30 pm. to receive food once a week and a \$25.00 local supermarket gift card once a month.

VVA Chapter #77 Calendar of Events 2022

April 2 April Fools dance at Sikora Post DJ Hank Nevins, Basket Raffle, 50/50

May 22 Chivetta's Chicken BBQ Niagara St between Tops and Tonawanda Police Station Noon 0 4 PM
Advanced tickets at Chapter office

May 29 Memorial Day Service on Renaissance Bridge at Noon

May 30 VVA Chapter #77 Memorial Day Service at Buffalo Naval Park 1:00 PM

June 11 Street Dance, Gateway Park, North side featuring Crash Cadillac 5:00 PM, Chapter selling hotdogs and sausage, Post selling beer

June 25 Fill the Helmet, Major Fund Raiser for VVA Chapter #77 & Post 264

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July 17-24 Canal Fest

July 30 Woodstock Revival, Gateway Park 5:00 PM Chapter selling hotdogs & sausage, Post 264 selling beer

August 20 KIA Road March Chestnut Ridge Par, VVA #77 will pick up food collected from the March

September 8 Car Show Niawanda Park Sponsored by VVA #77 & Post 264 8-4 PM

More to come, Golf outing and more events to be scheduled.

VVA Chapter 865, Jamestown

R. Jay Book – Vice President

On 18 Dec 21 we will be having a children's Christmas Party, and as in the past I will be the Grinch stealing the presents (in fun). This will be followed by are Adults Ugly Sweater party.

We have been experiencing vary sparse turnouts for our meeting due to ill health, we have 3 members that I know of that have COVID.

At the convention I attended the Constitutional outbreak session, the Homeless Veterans outbreak session (recruited on to that National committee), and I cannot recall the other outbreak that I went to. I do agree with Ned, that the buffet style serving of the food. We are getting to old for that type of crap.

Eastern District Report

Sam Hall

VVA Chapters #8, #49, #79, #140, #333, #541, #869

Congratulations goes to Sam Hall for being re-elected Chairman of the Washington County Board of Supervisors. He has done an outstanding job the past two years which as you can imagine with this pandemic creating havoc.

VVA Chapter #8 Report

Ray Sestak—President

VVA Chapter #8 continues to support the veterans housed at the SFC Peter Guenette Apartments in Troy, NY by providing monthly gift cards that are used to purchase food and personal items at local grocery store chains.

VVA Chapter #8 members will participate in the American flag placement on May 28 at Saratoga National Cemetery in recognition of Memorial Day.

In years past, VVA Chapter #8 hosted an annual car show on the grounds of the VA Hospital in Albany. At it's peak, proceeds from the show totaled \$12,000 for the one day, 4 hour event. The

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legal team at the VA eventually called a halt to the show citing gambling (50/50 ticket sales) on federal property.

Although disappointing to the car show community, the Chapter took the lead in explaining the situation to a point where everyone understood. This year, the Chapter is placing its support behind another car show at the end of August being held off sight.

The show has been in existence for several years and, like the VVA Chapter #8 show, has donated 100% of proceeds to the VA Voluntary Service Office at the Stratton VAMC.

VVA Chapter #140 Report

Jim Sweikata

At this writing our thoughts and prayers go out to the people of Ukraine.

The Chapter is looking forward to the spring thaw and with that some fundraising efforts.

April will bring the elections, warmer weather and an opportunity to return to 'normal'. See you at the next Chapter meeting!

VVA Chapter #333 Report

Roy Tschudy

The January general membership meeting was attended by many members in spite of the frigid temperatures, thank you to all who made time to attend.

Said meeting was a little more special as we took time to HONOR two of our valued members, Dom Ferrara along with Bruce McClintock. As all of are aware, the County Marine Corps. league recently named Dom their Veteran of the year presenting him with a beautiful medallion at their ceremony. Dom was chosen in part because of his continued dedication of volunteering for many venues, two of which is the Marine Honor Guard and the Toys for Tots program.

In attendance to present Dom with a Proclamation of his efforts was Rockland County Assemblyman Mike Lawler a staunch supporter of veterans rights.

Attached, you will find a photo of the evening event of Dom receiving his richly deserved award, as always is the case with Dom, he is quiet and humble.

Dom offered up a few simple words of thanks to all and attempted to deflect the light shone upon him, but all of us who know Dom also understand this award and Honor bestowed is well deserved.

Not to be outdone, Chapter 333 Board & membership also chose to Honor our past Chapter

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Secretary, V.P. and past president Bruce McClintock with an unprecedented 2021 VETERAN OF THE YEAR plaque. This special item was beautifully designed and inscription noting the Chapters appreciation for all that Bruce has accomplished over the years. Again, in attendance as a guest speaker, Assemblyman Mike Lawler also presented Bruce with a special Proclamation for all the volunteering Bruce has done not only for 2021 but also for his lifelong contributions to veterans and the community at large.

As same with few words whose than anything he his surprise, the ly of Bruce for this long overdue again to both men Vietnam veterans



Dom, Bruce is a man of actions speak far louder could or would say. To Chapter invited the family occasion to share in this award. Congratulations who are true examples of who "Give Back!"

Disabled Veterans,

Read the below information for your benefit!

New York DMV | mv1g.pdf

dmv.ny.gov/files/mv1gpdf

Download mv1g.pdf (36.33 KB) File name: mv1g.pdf. **Form ID:** MV-1G. Purpose: Completed by a disabled US veteran renewing the **registration** on a vehicle obtained under Title 38 Chapter 39 of the US Code. **Form title:** Statement to Renew **Registration** Under Article 38.

E-ZPass for Disabled Veterans | New York State Division of ...

veterans.ny.gov/content/e-zpass-disabled-veterans

E-ZPass for Disabled Veterans The New York State Thruway Authority offers free, unlimited travel anywhere on the Thruway to certain, qualifying **disabled Veterans**. The Thruway Authority's only qualifying criteria for the **Disabled Veterans E-ZPass Non-Revenue program** is a fee-exempt vehicle registration from Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV).

TA-W5175: E-ZPass Application for Disabled Veteran Non ...

www.thruway.ny.gov/ezpass/ta-w5175.pdf

E-ZPASS APPLICATION FOR DISABLED VETERAN NON-REVENUE PLAN. **New York State** Thruway Authority Office of **E-ZPass** Operations P.O. Box 189 Albany, NY 12201-0189. **INSTRUCTIONS:** • Submit completed **Application** to the address above. A photocopy of your **New York State** Department of Motor Vehicles (NYS DMV)

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VVA Chapter #333 members teaching program MEMORIES STORIES LEFT AT THE WALL visiting Suffern HS this week of March 2022. Over an eighteen year period Chapter 333 has educated over 85,000 students at various schools throughout the Rockland County area.

We are living history, both educating along with providing personal interactions as proven to be invaluable to any who have taken part in our program, both students/faculty as well as the member himself.

VVA Chapter 333 is currently present at Suffern HS. teaching a curriculum named "MEMORIES STORIES LEFT AT THE WALL." Our Chapter has been engaged in this program for eighteen years

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now interacting with students along with the staff as well.

There is nothing left to the imagination of students as we speak on an assortment of issues both good and some not so much. Each Chapter member in attendance provides insight into their particular branch of service and their MOS, we include a little levity when the chance to occurs to show them we are transitioned "somewhat" in normalcy.

One thing we make clear to all on questions asked by the students is we will not answer anything about killing the enemy, There is no glory in taking a life, even in war. What was done, was done, period. We do speak on Agent Orange and the devastating effects upon us, our children and even grandchildren. We make sure to include the Vietnamese people with the illness still present in their land and children. Of course P.T.S.D. is covered as well and how we have learned to live and adjust moving forward in our lives.

Another part of each class is when we present a small clear glassine envelope containing the name with a picture of a soldier who is on THE WALL OF FACES.

Three or four students who volunteer or are "volunTOLD" to stand in front of the class with each presented with one of the names. The students are told by us that they now have "adopted" the spirit of that particular soldier and to keep that envelope with name in their wallet at all times.

Whenever that wallet is opened and the student simply glances at the name of that soul, the student

now kept his memory alive. We encourage the students to Google THE WALL OF FACES and then leave a REMEMBRANCE for their soldier.

If I was to tell you just how many times this has been completed I can only say over the years it is in the hundreds if not more.

One particular name I personally have requested students to visit at THE WALL OF FACES is my High School friend and teammate JAMES PERRONE. Many have done so, James brother Glenn always takes time to write that student to say THANK YOU for remembering James. I could actually give you many more names of our lost heroes on the wall where students and others have responded in the same manner.

So, in short Jan, Thank You once again for providing a vehicle where those who made the ultimate sacrifice can always be remembered and appreciated!

Open letter to the men of VVA-333 who dedicate their time to help educate students & teachers about the Vietnam War during the 1960's & 70's. Vietnam Memories, Stories Left at the Wall was created by Gary Patnosh and with technical assistance from Gregg Malora.

VVA. Chapter 333 started teaching this program in 2000 to schools in Rockland County and Northern New Jersey with educating over 100,000 parents, students and teachers in the last 22 years.

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We have just finished up an amazing two week “tour” at Suffern High school. At our assembly we had 768 students and staff attend. During our museum presentation, 702 students attended.

I would like to personally thank the following people who have put in the effort to help educate our children with either the assembly or the museum portion> Irv Able, Marcus Arroyo, Brian Barnet, Dan D’Angelo, Roger Dupont, Jay Fink, Ed Frank, Cliff Fromm, Ray Furlong, John Leighton, Bruce McClintock, Paul Mattern, John Mastandrea, Lee Pelton, Don Piller, Rich Rossi, Roy Tschudy.

During the last two weeks the students and staff got to see living history from each and every one of you. They got to see us peel back the onion and expose ourselves to the memories and experiences of our war along with some of the scars it left. As you just witnessed, we like to infuse different subjects each period to keep the kids (and staff) engaged.

During these two weeks they got to see and hear what a tunnel rat’s job was with Don Piller crawling around on the floor doing a demo. They got to hear Cadence barked out, they learned what a “Dear John” letter is and JODY ran off with his girl; they heard music from our era by our singing doo-wop Piller & Dagistino.

We covered the entire era and explained our program was about loss & healing. Not just faces, but humans who gave it their all every single day in the name of freedom. We showed them what brotherhood is and what different jobs each and every one of us had. We even heard from Brain who was with MI, Military Intelligence and what it was and what an oxymoron that was to explain.

The students listened about the cause and effects of Agent Orange and gave us feedback. Most importantly they learned about the sacrifices made by our men and women in uniform and the cost of freedom. I would also like to thank Wayne Jacaruso (who works at Suffern High) for talking about losing his brother Frank on the Perfume River and how families cope with the aftermath.

Gentlemen, I am honored to serve with you.

Howard Goldin Past President VVA-333

VVA 333 coordinator for Vietnam Memories, Stories Left at the Wall

Burial of Indigent Vietnam Veteran



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Despite Rain mixed with snow, despite wind conditions, despite freezing temperatures, a large turnout of Chapter members along with members of the Marine Corp league provided a solemn and respectful farewell funeral for Vietnam veteran Richard Frankovits.

In that many gave up their personal time to brave unfriendly conditions for the funeral, proves a testimony
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of "BROTHERHOOD", No one left behind was the motto on battlefields and proved same today.

To stand among my friends today and pay tribute to another veteran, to provide a most respectful and sincere last farewell, makes me filled with pride to have you all as friends. All of us did a wonderful job today, for that I say THANK YOU!

After a two year hiatus due to Covid, the Pearl River St. Patrick's Day Parade was back in full force. Our Chapter was well represented today with Color Guard/Honor Guard led by commander Ray Furlong who always performs an exemplary job!

Although the weather was a bit on the cool side, nonetheless our intrepid group of members stood tall and that includes Donnie! 😊 Kudos to Roger DuPont who marched in the frigid conditions in a short sleeve shirt! You can send your "Get well" cards to Roger at Nyack Hospital!

Chapter 333 Banner was carried by 2nd V.P. Donnie Pillar along with student volunteer Alex Vernace, they were followed by Lee Pelton Rifle in tote, Ray Furlong bearing the colors and Al D'Agostino with his Rifle just same as back in Vietnam!

Behind these gents were a contingent of members who marched to cadence (well, sort of) with broad smiles accepting well wishes from the throngs of those nice people lining the streets. As one member stated to me since this was his first parade in over fifty years, "what a nice welcoming, big difference from the one we received when we came home."

Indeed it was! Thank you to the members who came out today, thank you Ray Furlong for always being prepared and performing an A-One job and thank you to Al D'Agostino who squeezed us into his van for the drive back to our vehicles. Keep an eye out for our own Cliff Fromm photo's of the day which should be posted shortly.

Lastly, please visit our chapter website www.vva333.com as our webmaster Debby Frank has added a poignant photo from last weeks funeral of a local Vietnam veteran. Scrolling down on the main page you will see the tribute for this veteran who may have passed along all alone but was not alone on his final journey home. Thanks again,



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Please take a moment and visit this website <https://newyorkvets.org>

Next month Ray Furlong will be sworn in as chapter president, an honest respectful gentleman who is extremely capable of handling the responsibilities as our new leader. Our chapter will be in good hands with Ray and his board.

Thank you all for the courtesy along with support during my tenure! Thank you, Roy

Editor's Note: Oh, No!! Who is going to send in ALL the reports for the Interchange! Thanks for your help.

Chaplain's Corner

Rev. Bob Lewis

Memorial Day will be here again, next month, and I wanted to share with you, this morning, some words from a sermon I am preparing for that most special and honorable occasion.

That day of remembrance is important especially here, in this state because, the first state to officially recognize the holiday was New York in 1873.

Traditional observance of Memorial Day has diminished over the years.

Many Americans today have forgotten the meaning and traditions of this special day. At many cemeteries, the graves of the martyred fallen are

increasingly neglected or ignored. Most people no longer remember the proper flag etiquette for the day.

While there are still towns and cities that hold Memorial Day parades, many have not held a parade in decades. Some people think the day is for honoring any and all dead, not just those fallen in service to our country.

The Newspapers across America today are full of advertisements proudly proclaiming: OPEN MEMORIAL DAY, Or FANTASTIC MEMORIAL DAY SALE

On this special day. As we go to the cemetery and look at the flags decorating that hallowed ground, that embraces the remains of those who paid the ultimate price I would ask,..... just what is on sale today:

Is it the **Liberty** generations of Americans have enjoyed for over 200 years?

No, not on Sale, They have paid the price.

Is it **Freedom**, the freedom to march, to assemble, to celebrate, to memorialize and eulogize our nations' heroes? No, Not on sale, They have paid the price.

Is it the **privilege** we have to stand today as citizens of the strongest nation in the history of the world? No, Not on sale, They have paid the price.

And they paid that price with their lives



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***OPEN MEMORIAL DAY,
FANTASTIC MEMORIAL DAY SALE
JUST WHAT IS ON SALE?***

Is it the **responsibility** to pause and pay homage to those who gave their lives for America? On Sale? If So, What is the sale price?

Is it the **duty** to care for our veterans? Today veterans are returning home to bureaucratic delays and inadequate care and services.

On Sale? If So, What is the sale price?

Is it the **Prayers for Peace** and the safety of our Service members in harms way today, seldom if ever offered from the pulpits of churches, and Synagogues, and Temples, and Mosques America?

On Sale If So, What is the sale price?

Is it the **time** we once spent teaching the next generation? Teaching them respect for self and others, respect for our nation, its flag and its martyrs? On Sale If So, What is the sale price?

Let us pray...

Almighty God, thank You for the veterans, those men and women who answered the call.....carried the burden.....and paid the price to guarantee our freedoms . Eternal rest grant them O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them.

Help us to never forget that which they offered for our Liberty.....and the sacrifice made by their families and loved ones, as they gather on Memorial Day to worship and remember.

We pause now also to remember our comrades, Taken prisoner and missing in action and as yet not accounted for. As long as you give us breath dear God, they will not be forgotten.

We ask your comfort and love for those mentioned who have left our ranks.

Would you be pleased to grant rest to their souls and healing and strength to their families, in your High and Holy name, we ask these blessings only you can grant. Amen.

Government Affairs: PACT Act Legislation (Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2021)

Dear Representatives Garbarino, Katko, Malliotakis and Reed,
John Rowan—Interim Government Affairs Co-Chair

I am sending this e-mail through your staff person responsible for veterans, as I do not have your direct e-mails.

I am writing to you on behalf of the NYS Council of Vietnam Veterans of America. We want to thank

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you for your vote on behalf of HR 3967 known as the PACT Act.

This is one of the most important pieces of legislation since the updated GI Bill. It will provide Post 9/11 veterans with the benefits and care not provided to Vietnam veterans in a timely manner. Among other things, it will provide access to VA healthcare, so that these veterans can be monitored for any adverse effects of exposures to toxic substances. It will streamline the review process for establishing toxic exposure presumptions, which Vietnam veterans are still fighting the VA about, such as hypertension and Monoclonal Gammopathy of Undetermined Significance, which would be approved with this legislation. And, it will expand Agent Orange exposure to veterans who served in Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia.

We know that many of your Republican colleagues were concerned about the costs associated with this legislation. We are sure that you would agree that this should never be a consideration when determining whether veterans should receive care and compensation for any adverse impacts resulting from service their country. As an aside, we hope that you will join efforts to remove VA healthcare and compensation from the regular budget process like the Defense Department expenditures.

Given your proven support for HR 3967, we would ask that you join like-minded House colleagues in correspondence to your Republican Senate members urging them to support this legislation when it comes up for a vote within the next few weeks,

We await your reply. If you have any questions or need further information, please feel free to contact me. Thanks, John Rowan

John Rowan, Government Affairs Chair, NYSC VVA

VVA National President & CEO, 2005-21

jrowan6990@hotmail.com

917-968-6710

NOTE:

My report is simply that several items were discussed at the SC meeting, the PACT Act being the most important. Ask the delegates in the communities served by Reps. Garbarino, Katko, Malliotakis, and Reed to thank them similar to my letter. It should also be noted that four Republican Reps. did not vote for the PACT Act, Chris Jacobs ([R-NY 27th District](#)), Elise Stefanik ([R-NY 21st District](#)), Claudia Tenney ([R-NY 22nd District](#)), and Lee Zeldin ([R-NY 1st District](#)). VVA Chapters in their areas should express their displeasure. Thanks, John



REGION 2 | Delaware, New Jersey,
New York, Pennsylvania

Ted Wilkinson –Chair/MEMBERSHIP REPORT

The /Covid 19 pandemic has lasted over 2 years and is now attributing to a decline in our New York Vietnam Veterans of America membership. As of this writing there has been three members who have contracted COVID 19 at a chapter meeting.

Because of the recent decline in membership the committee has one new large size New York Council polo type shirt they will give to the Chapter at the June 2022 with the largest percentage of membership increase in the time frame between the April and June state council meetings.

3/7/2022

VVA Members by Age Group

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Count</u>
59_Under	2
60_64	30
65_69	4,469
70_74	29,958
75_79	39,426
80_84	8,406
85_89	1,993
90 and Above	781
Unknown	4,035
TOTAL	89,100

Minimum Age: 59

Maximum Age: 111

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April 1, 2022 Rosters Statistics

Chapter	Members	Delegates
AT LARGE 0000	973	9
ALBANY 0008	66	2
SUFFOLK 0011	524	10
ROCHESTER 0020	616	13
QUEENS 0032	239	5
WESTCHESTER 0049	352	7
BROOKLYN 0072	186	4
BUFFALO 0077	694	14
GLEN FALLS 0079	69	2
NASSAU 0082	333	7
ONEONTA 0085	41	1
SYRACUSE 0103	198	4
MANHATTAN 0126	111	3
ORANGE COUNTY 0140	121	3
WARSAW 0193	159	4
NIAGARA COUNTY 0268	115	3
ROCKLAND 0333	208	5
FINGER LAKES 0377	95	2
STATEN ISLAND 0421	263	6
DUNKIRK 0459	40	1
OWEGO 0480	81	2
PUTNUM/DUTCHESS 0541	36	1
AUBURN 0704	47	1
ELMIRA 0803	240	5
HERKIMER 0827	23	0
JAMESTOWN 0865	153	4
DUTCHESS/COLUMBIA 0869	32	1
ENDICOTT 0896	43	1
UTICA 0944	158	4
FREWSBURG 0978	38	1
TOTAL	6254	121



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		January 22, 2022	April 9, 2022
AT LARGE	0000		
ALBANY	0008	X	X
SUFFOLK	0011		X
ROCHESTER	0020	X	X
QUEENS	0032	X	X
WESTCHESTER	0049	X	X
BROOKLYN	0072		X
BUFFALO	0077	X	X
GLEN FALLS	0079	X	X
NASSAU	0082	X	X
ONEONTA	0085	X	X
SYRACUSE	0103	X	
MANHATTAN	0126	X	X
ORANGE COUNTY	0140		X
WARSAW	0193	X	X
NIAGARA COUNTY	0268		
ROCKLAND	0333	X	X
FINGER LAKES	0377		
STATEN ISLAND	0421	X	X
DUNKIRK	0459		
OWEGO	0480		
PUTNUM/DUTCHESS	0541	X	
AUBURN	0704	X	X
ELMIRA	0803		
HERKIMER	0827		
JAMESTOWN	0865	X	X
DUTCHESS/COLUMBIA	0869		
ENDICOTT	0896		
UTICA	0944		
FREWSBURG	0978	X	
TOTAL		17	15

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Central District Report**Nick Valenti****VVA Chapters #85, #103, #377, #480, #704, #708, #803, #827, #896, #944**

VET CENTERS help veterans and their families build meaningful connections and develop tools for achieving success in both our military and civilian lives. Their priorities include confidentiality, professionalism, and no strings attached services.

There is a service that has been brought to my attention that I would like to share with everyone. It is the service of providing **“FREE LEGAL ADVICE & ASSISTANCE.”** The Syracuse, New York Vet Center has identified legal service providers who are still available at no cost to the veteran. Here is an outline of these services provided by Syracuse, New York Vet Center:

LEGAL SERVICE**PROVIDER**

	<u>Hiscock Legal Aid Society</u>	<u>Legal Aid Society of Mid-NY</u>	<u>Legal Services of CNY</u>	<u>Volunteer Lawyers Project</u>
<u>Eviction/ Renters Rights</u>	X	X	X	X
- <u>Family/Custody/ Domestic Violence</u>	X			X
- <u>Unemployment</u>	X		X	
- <u>Employee Rights</u>			X	
<u>Public Benefits/ Health Insurance</u>		X	X	
<u>Wills/Power of Attorney</u>		X		X
<u>LGBT Rights</u>			X	X
<u>Immigration</u>	X	X		X

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The following information is provided to assist anyone wanting to contact the above providers and avail themselves of their FREE assistance.

PROVIDER:

Hiscock Legal Aid Society (315) 422-8191 or www.hlalaw.org

The Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York (315) 703-6600 or www.lasmny.org

Legal Services of Central New York (315) 703-6500 or www.lscny.org/intake

Volunteer Lawyers Project (315) 471-3409 or www.onvlp.org/intake

Everyone who needs these kinds of services should check the local availability for free legal services in their respective communities. Just contact your local Vet Center.

Legal services on an in-person basis may be paused in your area, however it should be available via phone and online.

Do you meet the eligibility requirements to receive services? Just take a short read of the requirements. Starting with are you a Veteran or service member, including members of the National Guard and Reserve? You can access the services of the Vet Center if you:

Served on active duty in any combat theater or area of hostility.

Experienced military sexual trauma (regardless of gender or service era).

Provided mortuary services or direct emergent medical care to treat the casualties of war while serving on active duty.

Performed as a member of an unmanned aerial vehicle crew that provided direct support to operations in a combat theater or area of hostility.

Accessed care at a Vet Center prior to January 2, 2013, as a Vietnam-Era Veteran.

Served on active military duty in response to a national emergency or major disaster declared by the president, or under orders of the governor or chief executive of a state in response to a disaster or civil disorder in that state.

Are a current or former member of the Coast Guard who participated in a drug interdiction operation, regardless of the location.



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I encourage you to contact your Vet Center, even if you are unsure if you meet these criteria. If they can't help you, they will find someone who will. Call them 24/7 at 877-927-8387 or visit www.va.gov/find-locations.

It is because of Vietnam Veterans that Centers exist today. We refused to be forgotten, refused to be stigmatized, and insisted on a program that made themselves the center of their care. We ensured generations of men and women could turn to the support and community of a Vet Center.

The resources of New York State Council of Vietnam Veterans of America have supported the Veteran Service Officers program for a number of decades in our State. The impact of our efforts and those other service organizations who go to bat for our men and women who have earned benefits by virtue of their service is undeniable. Yet few of us know the financial impact of the combined programs initiated to help our veterans return to civilian life access their earned benefits and become responsible productive citizens.

To try and put this in some perspective I have put together this report that shows the financial impact on each of the counties in Central District and how our vigilance has benefited our fellow brothers and sisters who have born the burden of National Service.

<u>VVA CHAPTER</u>	<u>COUNTY</u>	<u>VETERAN POPULATION</u>	<u>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</u>	<u>UNIQUE PATIENTS*</u>
ENDICOTT	Broome	12,160	67,610,000	3,198
AUBURN	Cayuga	5,309	44,091,000	1,911
ELMIRA	Chemung	6,721	58,590,000	2,128
HERKIMER	Cortland	2,807	26,059,000	1,032
	Herkimer	4,770	30,819,000	1,269
UTICA	Oneida	15,404	125,832,000	4,807
SYRACUSE	Onondaga	26,471	283,233,000	9,249
ONEONTA	Otsego	3,991	16,490,000	983
OWEGO	Tioga	3,994	20,686,000	1,023
DRYDEN	Tompkins	3,839	27,041,000	1,023
	TOTAL	<u>85,466</u>	<u>700,451,000</u>	<u>26,623</u>

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*Refers to individual patients served.

Source: FY19 Geographic Distribution of VA Expenditures (GDX)

Tom Buono, President of Utica, NY VVA Chapter #944 has sent me a very important link that I wish to share with Central District Chapters. https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/98674/best-of-2021-top-veteran-resources-of-the-year/?utm_source=Feature&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=VetResources&utm_id=29DEC2021 (To access this site simply press the control button on your key board and left “click”).

As a brief explanation: every week VA sends a weekly newsletter called #VetResources that is filled with valuable content – including free resources, important updates and discounts for Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors.

There is no endorsement by the VA with respect to the offers from private resources. The resources are shared to increase awareness of what is available to the Veteran community.

Topics most popular in calendar year 2021 were:

- Veteran discounts available year-round.

- Veterans, Gold Star Families get free entrance to National Parks, Refuges, other public lands.

- Guitars for Vets offers lessons, guitar for Veterans.

- Free tax preparation, electronic filing services.

- RallyPoint provides networking, and access to counseling, job, mentorship services.

- Free Veteran training for Microsoft Software and Systems Academy.

- Register your SNAP EBT card on Amazon for exclusive benefits, discounts.

- Experience live events through Vet Tix.

- Together We Serve launches new “Veteran Finder” app.

- Find your next job with help from an American Corporate Partners mentor.

Would any of these resources be of any assistance to you or someone you know? If yes, feel free to share. It is understood that sharing any of non-VA information is not an endorsement of any products or services. It is simply providing an awareness of their existence.

If you do not receive the #VetResources weekly newsletter, sign up at www.VA.gov/VetResources.

Past newsletters can be found here and all #VetResources blog posts are online at <https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/category/vets-experience/vetresources/>.

Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York has opened a new \$62.5 million dollar Veterans Center. The Center is located at the Daniel and Gayle D’Aniello Building, which opened on November 3, 2021. It features a state-of-the-art information lab and career development resources for veterans. It will also annually train and support 40,000 former troops through programs that have generated 4,000 new jobs and \$225 million in revenue, per university officials.

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The 115,000 square-foot facility will serve as a center of research, innovation and programing for veterans while advancing their economic and wellness needs. This is adding to the 160,000 former troops who have been assisted by Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans and Military Families inexistence since 2011.

It is estimated that tens of thousands of other veterans will receive training and supporting programs at the new venue or online.

Want to learn more? Visit them at <https://ivmf.syr.edu>. Or visit the NVRC website (<http://nvrc.syr.edu/>).

The acronym (IVMF stands for Institute for Veterans and Military Families.

The acronym (NVRC) stands for National Veterans Resource Center.

The fall of 2021 saw a flurry of Veteran related bills signed into law by both President Biden and New York Governor Kathy Hochul.

President Biden, on November 30, 2021 signed into law:

S. 796, the "Protecting Moms Who Served Act of 2021, which codifies the Department of Veterans Affairs" current maternity care coordination program.

S. 894, the "Hire Veteran Health Heroes Act of 2021," which requires the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense to identify separating members of the Armed Forces with a health care occupation for potential employment with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

S. 1031, which requires the Government Accountability Office to conduct a race and ethnicity study regarding certain Department of Veterans Affairs benefits.

S. 1095, the "Colonel John M. McHugh Tuition Fairness for Survivors Act of 2021," which requires the Department of Veterans Affairs to disapprove any course of education offered by public institutions of higher learning that do not charge the in-State tuition rate to individuals using education benefits under the Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance Program.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/11/30/bills-signed-bills-signed-s-769-s-894-s-1031-and-s-1095/>

The week prior President Biden signed into law:

H.R. 1510, which requires the VA to report to Congress on the use of cameras in VA medical facilities.

S. 108, which authorizes the Seminole Tribe of Florida to convey interests in certain off-reservation land owned by the Tribe.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/11/23/bills-signed-h-r-1510-and-s-108/>

On Veterans' Day of 2021 Governor Hochul signed several veteran related bills into law. The hard work of our New York State Legislative Director Bing Markee has paid huge dividends for all veterans in New York State. Bing I don't know what else to say or do but to make sure we let you know how much we appreciate your hard work on our behalf. Semper Fi young man.

The bills that were signed and presented in a legislative package to support veterans and their families included:

Legislation S.7124A/A.7388B changing the Vietnam War dates to November 1, 1955. With the signing New York State's law conforms to federal government.

Legislation S.3623/A.7514 ensures that individuals who voluntarily leave their jobs to accompany spouses who are subjects of military transfer will be eligible for unemployment benefits.

Legislation S. 701A/A.1140 creates the women advisory committee whose purpose will be to support and assist the Division of Veterans' Services in locating, educating and advocating for all women veterans in the State of New York.

Legislation S.3638/A.7472 establishes a task force on veteran employment opportunities.

Legislation S.2977A/A.6100A requires that all intake forms for admission or residency to any nursing home, assisted living facility or homeless shelter ask individuals whether they or their spouses ever served in the military. This helps those who have a military service background be identified and helps them receive the benefits they have earned.

Legislation S.7125/A.2658 authorizes Westchester County to waive certain fees for veterans' organizations.

Legislation S.6452/A.3920 enables veterans and reservists to receive benefit information upon applying or receiving a driver's license.

Legislation S.5245A/A.6249 provides in-state tuition continuity at SUNY and CUNY colleges for spouses and children of active-duty service members following their stationing in New York State.

Legislation S.5743A/A. 6528 allows for children of military families who are relocating under military orders to preliminarily enroll in the school at which they will be a student.

Legislation S.5543/A.7685 expands the State's Military Enhanced Recognition, Incentive and Tribute (MERIT) Scholarship by making it available to all families of fallen and disabled service members by removing the current requirement of military service occurring and after August 2, 1990 for their children and spouse to be eligible to receive such scholarship.

Legislation S.763/A.5447 provides all men and women that have served with the ability to receive credits for civil service appointments and promotions by removing the restriction that only combat veterans can receive credits.

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Legislation S.6535/A.4089 authorizes a county board of supervisors to require ferries operating within said county to provide free transportation to any member of the United States Armed Forces in uniform during their enlistment.

Wow—June Report by Valenti!

JUNE 2022

The Veterans Administration (VA) has a program that provides assistance for family caregivers. It is called “Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC).

If a veteran has a disability rating from the VA of 70% or more (single or combined) for a service-connected disability (or disabilities), incurred or aggravated in the line of duty and requires six (6) continuous months of personal care services that is provided by a family member of the Veteran or by a person who lives with the veteran (or will do so if designated as a Family Caregiver, that Veteran may meet the criteria for the VA’s Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers.

In New York State there are nine (9) locations for Caregiver Support Teams. Here are some of the VA Medical Centers Caregiver Support Teams servicing Central District:

Albany Stratton VA Medical Center

113 Holland Avenue

Albany, New York 12208

518-626-6020

<https://www.albany.va.gov/services/caregiver/index.asp>

Bath VA Medical Center

76 Veterans Avenue

Bath, New York 14810

607-664-4512

<https://www.fingerlakes.va.gov/services/caregiver/index.asp>

Canandaigua VA Medical Center

400 Fort Hill Avenue

Canandaigua, New York 14424

585-282-9321

<https://www.va.gov/finger-lakes-health-care/health-services/caregiver-support/>

Syracuse VA Medical Center

800 Irving Avenue

Syracuse, New York 13210

315-425-4400 ext. 52302

<https://www.va.gov/syracuse-health-care/health-services/caregiver-support/>

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The VA's National Caregiver Support phone line is a toll-free number for caregivers, Family members, friends, Veterans and community partners to contact for information related to caregiving and available supports and services. There are five (5) more Caregiver Support Teams.

Currently they are James J. Peters VA Medical Center, 130 West Kingsbridge Road, Bronx, New York 10468; Northport VA Medical Center, 79 Middleville Road, Northport, New York 11768; VA Hudson Valley Health Care System, Montrose and Castle Pointe – Franklin Delano Roosevelt Hospital, 2094 Albany Post Road, Montrose, New York 10548; VA New York Harbor Health Care System, Brooklyn Campus, 800 Poly Place, Brooklyn, New York 11209; and VA Western New York Health Care System, Buffalo VA Medical Center, 3495 Bailey Avenue, Buffalo, New York 14094.

Call VA's Caregiver Support Line to learn more about the support that is available to you and for assistance connecting with the Caregiver Support Team at your local VA Medical Center.

1-855-260-3274 (toll-free)

Monday – Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 10 p.m. ET

Saturdays, 8:00 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Whether you're in need of immediate assistance or have questions about what services you may be eligible for, the Caregiver Support Line team can help you.

If you are just getting started with VA, calling the Caregiver Support Line is a great first step to learn more about the support that's available to you.

The application process for participation in PCAFC is as follows:

Application Submission – Veteran and caregiver complete the application.

Application Intake – local Caregiver Support Program (CSP) member meets with Veteran and caregiver.

Veteran Assessment – clinical assessment with the veteran is conducted.

Veteran Functional Assessment – assesses the Veteran's functional abilities.

Caregiver Assessment – clinical assessment with each Family Caregiver applicant.

Initial Application Review – Centralized Eligibility and Appeals Team reviews application.

Caregiver Training – Each Family Caregiver applicant completes caregiver training.

Home-Care Assessment – Clinical Assessor conducts the Home Care Assessment with the Veteran and each Family Caregiver applicant.

Final Application – Assessment reviewed and final eligibility determined.

Notification – Within 90 days of the application being received by VA, a member of the CSP Team will call the Veteran and Family Caregiver applicants to notify them of the determination

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MILITARY WOMEN'S MEMORIAL

Formerly "Women in Military Service for America" (WIMSA) Memorial

This Memorial is located on Memorial Avenue, outside the main entrance to Arlington National Cemetery.

The purpose of this Memorial is to recognize all women who served our Military from the Revolutionary War to today. This Memorial is for the women who have served in or with any of our Armed Forces, to include such women as Rosie the Riveter during World War II or members of the Red Cross or the USO. There are over three million women who deserve to be recognized. Today, about 300,000 have been registered.

To register yourself or someone you know, past or present, who should be recognized, please follow the below instructions:

VVA Chapter #377 Report

R. Jay Book

On Thursday, February 17, 2022 members of Chapter 377 Vietnam Veterans of America from Dryden, New York helped remove Christmas wreaths from the headstones at Sampson Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Romulus, New York.

On Tuesday March 1, 2022 Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 377 presented chapter member Gene Barnes a collage and a framed picture of him enjoying a cold beer. Here are the words on his picture, Have No Fear! My Yuengling is Always Near!! Gene went above and beyond to help raise money to restore the Eternal Flame Memorial Dedicated to Vietnam Veterans at Cortland, New York.

In February Nicholas (Nick) Valenti, Central District Director from the New York State Council Vietnam Veterans of America, was invited to Jim and Wahneta Evener's home to discuss with the officers of Chapter 377 what reports they needed to complete for the state and national VVA. Pictured left to right are Greg Harvey, Gary Napieracz, Mike Moran, Jim Evener and Nick Valenti. Thanks to Nick for coming to help us out

On Thursday, March 24, 2022, the Cortland County Legislature presented Chapter 377 Vietnam Veterans of America with a proclamation signed by County Chairman Kevin Finch, declaring March 2022 to be Vietnam Veterans Remembrance Month in Cortland County. In the photo were Tom Tedesco Veterans Service Officer for Cortland, New York, Norm Stitzel from Veterans Search and Rescue, and from Chapter 377 Vice President Jim Evener and President Gary Napieracz.

VVA Chapter #377 Vietnam Veterans of America from Dryden, New York would like to thank the Homeville Museum from the CNY Living History Museum in Cortland, New York for hosting the Vietnam Veterans Remembrance Day on March 31, 2022. The chapter had a great time touring the museum, meeting other Vietnam Veterans and enjoying the wonderful luncheon.

"Here's to us who fought for it, the sheltered shall never know the price, or glory, of freedom" by an anonymous Vietnam soldier.

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VVA CHAPTER #704 REPORT

James Bryant, President

VVA Chapter #704 President James Bryant is announcing a partnership with the Cayuga County Sheriff's Office. These two organizations have launched a program to recognize our local military heroes that gave their lives defending our freedom. The Sheriff's Office will be displaying magnetic signs featuring photos and information related to local veterans on the back of select Sheriff Patrol Vehicles. The information will include the Veteran's name, where they served, and the date they made the ultimate sacrifice.

The Cayuga Onondaga BOCES Graphic Design Students designed the graphics that will be displayed to honor our veterans.

Chapter #704 is proud to announce that each of the 29 Cayuga County Veterans killed in Vietnam will be represented.

We have also included the Cayuga County warriors we lost in Afghanistan, four in all. At the ceremony the Gold Star families made their approval and support for the program known.

Trying to bridge the gap that plagues all service members who try to transition from military life to civilian life, our Chapter is supporting an effort referred to as "Expiration Term of Service Sponsorship Program" also referred to as (ETS-SP). It is ground in a personal relationship between the transitioning service member and their matched sponsor living in the community where the future veteran will reside. The areas that the sponsor will assist with include: Employment, Housing, Service Benefits, Education, Legal Concerns and Medical and Mental Health Care Issues.

The sponsors are trained and certified to build relationships and resiliency. The goal is to set conditions for service members and sponsors to achieve purpose and prosperity, reduce stress and risk and engage together for continued service to the Nation.

Anyone, military, or civilian, who cares about our service members and veterans and is willing and able to commit the time can become a sponsor.

Gene Barnes

March 5, 2022 from 5 to 8 pm, PAST MY BEDTIME is doing a fundraiser for and at the DRYDEN VETERANS MEMORIAL HOME, Dryden, NY. Free admission, kid friendly, great music, and a great cause. Channel 9 News is doing a piece on the BARNES kids and will be there also. Hope to see you there. God Bless America.

Channel 9 news is doing an episode of extraordinary talented youth on both Annie and Gino Barnes. This is a long running series of special interest episodes by reporter Carrie Lazarus that focuses on extraordinarily talented youth in our region.

Annie and Gino Barnes are well known teenagers in Cortland, NY. Both Annie and Gino are popular

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students in the Cortland School District. Annie is in 11th grade and Gino is in 8th. Losing their mother at a young age they grew up with their single father and extended families. Both Annie and Gino are exceptional students and put forth a great effort in their education.

News 9 is highlighting the kids and their musical talents. The kids have both been professional musicians for 5 years now. Annie is an accomplished drummer and Gino is a guitar and saxophone player.

Annie has been playing the drum set since she was in 3rd grade in school. She had also studied piano for a short time. Today she is involved in her school band program on percussion. She plays many different percussion instruments in the school band ranging from snare to timpani. In the modern band program Annie plays the drum set, ukulele, guitar, and some keyboards. She is looking to attend music school after graduating and become a touring drummer.

Gino has been playing the guitar since 2nd grade and the saxophone since 3rd grade. He is involved with the school band program on the soprano saxophone. He has played in the school bands on alto saxophone in the past. In the school rock club Gino plays guitar and saxophone.

On top of their school activities the kids are part of their family band Past My Bedtime. Past My Bedtime is a gigging rock band that plays shows all around central NY. Before the current band they played in the band Von Barnes Band which was them plus their father and a friend of vocals. A very successful band in it's own right, Von Barnes Band folded after losing it's singer to a job far away. After that they were joined by friends Dicky Reome and Tom Beattie, and formed Past My Bedtime.

NEW YORK STATE VETERANS INCARCERATED AND IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM COMMITTEE REPORT

Nick Valenti - Chair

THE MAKEUP OF DOCCS

The New York State prison system had its beginnings in 1797 with a single prison called Newgate located in New York City. A second state prison opened 20 years later in Auburn in 1817, and in 1825 a group of Auburn prisoners made the journey across the Erie Canal and down the Hudson River to begin building Sing Sing.

The New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision is responsible for the care, confinement and rehabilitation of approximately 32,000 inmates (as of January 2022) at 50 correctional facilities owned and operated by the State of New York. To my knowledge, New York does not contract with private prisons in accordance with state law.

The list of New York state prisons include: one (1) facility for Drug Treatment, seventeen (17) facilities are Maximum Security prisons, twenty-seven (27) are designated as Medium Security incarceration facilities and five (5) are referred to as Minimum Security facilities.

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For the time period 1999 – 2021 approximately twenty-three (23) closures of New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision facilities have taken place. There is a plan to close an additional six (6) facilities in the near future. The Department of Corrections has identified: Ogdensburg Correctional Facility (Medium), Moriah Shock Incarceration Correctional Facility (Minimum), Willard Campus (Drug Treatment), Southport Correctional Facility (Maximum), Downstate Correctional (Maximum) and Rochester Correctional Facility (Minimum) as the targeted prisons as downsizing goes forward. It should be noted that each of the six (6) proposed closures have an inmate population of less than 1,000 people and some are operating at less than half capacity.

WE NEED FAMILY REUNIONS

One of the stated purposes of DOCCS is to promote a positive, emotionally nurturing atmosphere that reinforces family bonding. The Family Reunion program was begun to do just that. The preservation and strengthening of family ties disrupted by incarceration fosters positive responsible conduct, facilitates post-release reintegration into the family and community while reducing the likelihood of recidivism. Sadly, the program has been closed since March 2020.

So, why are family ties so crucial to the incarcerated? For the incarcerated person visits from family and friends mitigates against becoming institutionalized, supports positive behavior and emotional well-being. Visiting helps family (especially children) understand what prison is like for their loved one and can provide emotional comfort for the traumatic experience of separation. Visits make it more likely that the family remains intact. Upon release the incarcerated person has a better chance at being integrated into society. Finally visits and the maintenance of family ties can help prevent the intergenerational cycle of incarceration.

A volunteer in the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision works closely with the facility in which they willingly participate in services to the inmate population. In Auburn Correctional I have the pleasure of working with the Division of “Ministerial, Family & Volunteer Services.” These men and women work, among other things, with religious as well as veteran services volunteers. In order to qualify as a volunteer New York State has some very strict guidelines that must be adhered to in order to ensure the safety and security of not only the volunteers but also the civilian workforce and Correctional Officers. The road leading us back into New York State Correctional Facilities has been a long one. The process that a person has to go through is quite time consuming and requires a good relationship with Department personnel.

Luckily, the Auburn Correctional Facility has helped me work through the process and all I currently have left to do is to update my picture on my Corrections Volunteer Identification Card. Working with these people required a serious commitment on my part, as I really had to start from scratch. The pandemic has caused many programs to be suspended and sadly that includes the crochet squad that I have been promoting for many years in my annual yarn donation program.

What I learned was that I needed to complete a “Refresher Orientation” session as part of the Volunteer Certification process. The purpose was to update “Volunteers” on the expectations

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of Corrections and how to comply with an ever-changing environment while keeping oneself and others safe and secure. Due to the restrictions brought about by COVID the Refresher session needed to be conducted remotely. The orientation was held via WebEx utilizing audio only. The day of the meeting required me to use my computer to access the Orientation. In an email I also received an educational/informational packet and documents that I needed to sign and return to receive credit for the course. By the end of the first quarter of 2021 (the logistics of coordinating a remote class were worked out) I was able to complete the Orientation and proceed with filling out the required paperwork to regain "Volunteer" status. The documents included the Refresher Orientation packet, the acknowledgement documents form, the updated personal file information form, a copy of the Standards & Policies packet, acknowledgement of the Standard & Policies form and the appropriate job description for the specific service I volunteer for (Veteran Services). Once completed the Department of Correction reminded me that my annual TB test was once again due. Upon notification I contacted my primary physician and the results were sent to the Correctional Facility.

Some of the memorandums that guide the activities of Volunteers include:

Cannabis Prohibition. Wrist Watches/Devices – Revised Contraband Electronic Device – Smart Rings. Contraband – Smart Glasses. Policy on Writing Letters of Recommendation for Inmates. Language Access.

These are but a handful of guidelines that need to be followed. It took some time to reacquaint myself with these instructions. However, I was happy to do it in order to regain access to the facility and to the veterans that took over from the former Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), Chapter #205 and American Veterans (AmVets) Chapter #24 and formed the Veterans Group of Auburn (VGOA).

With the specter of COVID hanging heavily over Corrections, Acting Commissioner Anthony J. Annucci put out a memorandum to all facilities that affected all in-person volunteers such as myself. The memorandum addressed vaccination verifications and testing for volunteers providing in-person services. Once I provided proof of my vaccinations my paperwork was finally in order.

Once I gained access to VGOA I met with them and we discussed future projects and activities. Their concerns included a continuation of their fundraising efforts inside the facility (they have made a commitment to help the homeless veterans in Auburn and Cayuga County as well as helping local food banks and charities as their finances will allow). They are waiting for permission to restart the crochet squad and look forward to receiving donated yarn. Everything continues to be in limbo until Corrections allows group activities to resume.

I am still accepting yarn for the squad. I will continue to store any donated yarn until I receive permission to bring it to the facility. Anyone who wishes to donate just give me a holler at [315-252-4535](tel:315-252-4535) if no one answers leave a message and I will get back to you as soon as possible or email me at nickvalenti46@yahoo.com

CHAPTER MEMBER PROFILE

Eugene DiGiacomo

Gene DiGiacomo, president of the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 421, was honored by Sen. Andrew Lanza (R-South Shore), for his service and bravery in both military and civilian life. DiGiacomo expressed his surprise when Sen. Andrew Lanza, announced his induction.

"I was told a couple of years ago, before COVID that I would be put up for this, but then COVID happened and then it went away," said DiGiacomo. "Nothing was ever said, and I never thought about it. Today at the service that Lanza does for us graciously, it was really an honor in a half and surprise. This day [for Vietnam Veterans] is a 'thank you' and a 'welcome home' and fit the celebration," he said.

DiGiacomo served in the United States Navy Seabees as a Second Class Petty Officer from 1969 to 1970. He served nearby Quang Tri and Qua Viet, where he was involved in the process of purifying the water for the camps. It was there he witnessed sacrifices made by all those who served during the conflict.

The Veterans' Hall of Fame honored DiGiacomo for being an active participant in helping to curate and preserve the memory of those who fell during the Vietnam War by sharing their stories, and ensuring that school-aged children on Staten Island understand the sacrifices and hardships endured throughout their time at war.

DiGiacomo said he is looking to continue his service and extend it to his "brothers and sisters" of the Vietnam Conflict -- and those that are not part of his chapter -- for anyone who may need help.

"[Vietnam Veterans] need to come and be part of the chapter so that we can work with them and their problems," said DiGiacomo. "Right now, our battle is the problems with the VA hospitals closing. But this could mean anything that they may need help with."

DiGiacomo expressed that when many Vietnam Veterans became "closet veterans because if you were recognized as a veteran, you were shunned on."

"A lot of us just chose to forget and that didn't help during the healing process," said DiGiacomo. "It's terrible to go through a war, and then come home and have people spit on or rocks at you. I was, unfortunately, part of that when I came home."

Lanza stated that it was "with great honor that I induct Gene DiGiacomo into the New York State Senate Veteran's Hall of Fame. Under his leadership, Staten Island became the birthplace of Vietnam Veterans Day in New York State. Gene served as a hero in Vietnam and he serves as a leader and patriot to this day."

DiGiacomo advocated nearly 15 years ago for a day to honor Vietnam Veterans. His advocacy caught the attention of Sen. Lanza.

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“It’s a very touching experience,” said DiGiacomo. “The one thing that is so great to me about this day is the politicians who show up, whether they are republican or democrat, politics are not involved. Instead, they are there for us -- the Veterans -- and they are working together. To see that and say thank you, it’s a big part of our healing process.”

Southern District Report

Joe Ingino

VVA Chapters #11, #32, #72, #82, #126, #421

I am still at the New York State Veterans Nursing Home in Stony Brook, NY. I am having physical and occupational therapy as well treatment at Sloan Kettering Hospital. Unfortunately, had an infection and had to be transfer to Stony Brook Medical Center for a couple of days. But, am back at the Nursing Home and doing much better. Hope to see you all soon at the Chapter level and at the State Council meeting. Thanks for your calls and prayers.

VVA Chapter #11 Report

Clarence Simpson

Here are the activities VVA Chapter #11 accomplished during the pandemic era.

- 12 years of participation with the Suffolk County Veterans Justice Outreach Court. 98.7% success rate.
- Landmark 25 years with the Suffolk County Corrections / VVA #11 Incarcerated Veterans program. Less than 2% recidivism rate.
- Veterans Treatment Court graduated 23 veterans.

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Suffolk County and VVA #11 celebrated VVA's Region 2 Southern District Director Joe Ingino, with a Proclamation presented by Suffolk County Executive declaring Joe Ingino Day, on April 6, 2022.

- VVA 11 participation in the swearing in ceremony of Suffolk County DA Tierney.
- VVA 11 by invitation to participate in the 2nd Inauguration of Suffolk County Sheriff Errol D. Toulon Jr., This VVA #11 second invitation to be a part of this event.
- 15th Anniversary of the PFC Garfield M. Langhorn Riverhead Elementary School, Essay Contest. PFC Langhorn is Suffolk County's only recipient of the Medal Of Honor from the Vietnam War (Posthumously).
- VVA 11 has two members on the Northport VAMC Directors /VSO Advisory Committee.
- VVA 11 added 26 new members to our chapter.

Stay well Stay safe



Left to Right:
Joan, (Joe's wife), Ingino and
Suffolk County Executive
Steven Bellone presenting
Proclamation.

VVA Chapter #32 Report
John Rowan—Delegate

Chapter has moved to a new location after the VFW was sold. Starting to regroup and begin a new beginning.



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VVA Chapter #72 Report

Danny Friedman—President

Hopefully, you are all well and have weathered most of the winter in stride (knock knock). I am happy and hopeful to announce that we will be having our next general meeting in person on Tuesday, March 15th, at 7 PM at the Argonne Marine Park Post 107 of the VFW. They are at 2414 Gerritsen Avenue, off Whitney Avenue.

There is plenty of free parking across the street. It will be good to see your smiling faces or at least your smiling eyes. Facemasks are optional. There is plenty of room in the meeting hall to space out in accordance with your comfort level. Please feel free to hug or elbow-bump your buddies.

On February 7th we had our first VAVS meeting with Acting New York Harbor HCS Director, Bruce Tucker. He appeared to be up on our major issues. That is not to say he is prepared to resolve all of them. The homeless Veterans' domiciliary has not reopened. When it does it will be at 50% capacity as rooms are being converted to one person.

Twenty Vets with decent shelter and services are better than none so let's get on with it. The subject of PTSD groups led to a lively discussion with the director stating they are committed to having all groups led at the minimum by a peer group leader. He also committed to having case notes recorded for all PTSD groups.

Face-to-face medical appointments have been increased to about two-thirds. The rest of the elevator repairs are awaiting parts. Our greatest concern was staffing. Although this is a nationwide issue we wanted to know what is being done here. The director said his budget is in good shape and he is meeting with personnel to streamline the hiring process. VAVS is having its annual virtual baby shower for expectant and recent Vet and active-duty mothers. VVA 72 is contributing \$500.00 in By-by Baby gift cards.

There are still many needs if anyone is interested such as Amazon.com Sea Animal fabric cloth book, soft baby books, soft activity crinkle book, toys for early education for babies, and several other items. For more information, please contact VAVS Chief, Yvette Cintron at 718-836-6600, ext. 6786. VVA 72 is also sponsoring/sponsored a pizza party for 15 West on Saturday, February 26th.

Although our funds continue to be depleted due to the inability to have fundraising events during COVID, we will always prioritize our core mission of supporting our fellow Veterans. Does anyone have any spare change? Seriously, we don't feel we have the participation to pull off one of our past fundraisers. We will be discussing how to celebrate our 40th Anniversary this year. It is my thought that we do something on a smaller scale for our membership. Perhaps a dinner dance, but not on the level of our prior endeavors. To be continued.

The oldies concert featuring the Excellents and our own Joe Cavanna has been rescheduled for Saturday, May 21st at 3 PM. VVA on a national level is still a major and respected voice for Veterans and important Veterans' legislation. We will continue to put out updates on such issues.

I can't mention how I feel about what's going on in Ukraine. Young men and women continue to die for the egos of politicians with visions of grandeur. We pray that saner minds prevail. I look forward to seeing you all in person on March 15th. We can start to move forward with our lives. Be well

Our April Meeting on 4/19/22 will be our annual meeting but there will be no elections. Our elections at our April 2021 Zoom meeting were for two-year terms. We will still have food and beverages so please make every effort to attend. We have a lot of business to get through.

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Below is a partial summary from the VA nurses' union rep. of a PowerPoint presentation given to NY Harbor employees by Acting Director Bruce Tucker. Mr. Tucker provided a similar presentation, minus the PowerPoint, to the VAVS Representatives of VSO's Monday. Paul Friedman and I were on the call for VVA 72. This is my understanding of additional things you should know:

The **AIR** (*Asset and Infrastructure Review*) **Commission** was established by Congress under HR 4243 as part of the Mission Act.

The Commission conducted a market Assessment of VA Healthcare from 2018-2021, by interviewing stakeholders. They reportedly took into consideration the following: Structure; Changing needs of vets and vet population; Changes in healthcare, including demand, access, impact on mission, quality of healthcare and sustainability.

Politics aside, this commission was established under the previous administration and continued under the present one.

The members of the commission included owners/officers of private healthcare entities.

This, to me, sums up all VVA has been warning against for many years – privatization of the VA and selling out our healthcare to the lowest bidder.

Ann Marie's timeline below appears to coincide with my understanding of what Director Tucker told us except to add the following under Brooklyn VAMC: "status quo if unable to establish a strategic collaboration".

This something I believe we must fight against. We must engage with our members of congress. Write to them, email them and/or meet with them. We can't afford to wait until the bulldozers come so we can chain ourselves to the gates. By then it will be a nice gesture but way too late.

Following up on what I previously sent out, Congresswoman Mallitokis is calling for rallies outside the Staten Island VA Clinic this Sunday at noon, and at the Brooklyn VAMC at 2pm. I hope you will all come out and show our displeasure for the findings of the AIR Commission. We want the VA to make NY Harbor's hospitals better, not make them go away.

This pass Sunday, March 27th US Senators Schumer and Gillibrand will have a news conference and rally in front of the Manhattan VAMC at 11 AM to protest the AIR Commission's finding to close the Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Castle Point VAMCs. The AIR Commission finding also drastically reduces services at the Northport VAMC. We cannot let any part of this to happen. Please show up and show your support to nip this in the bud.



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VVA Chapter #82 Report
Rich Guevara 1st VP

Chapter 82 Accomplishments April 2022

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, VVA activities were curtailed to ensure the safety of our members and the general public. We expect we will be able to resume all of our activities in the near future in accordance with CDC guidelines.

On January 3, 2022 we provided the color guard at Joseph Saladino's inauguration as the new Town of Oyster Bay Supervisor.

On January 21, 2022 Chapter 82 provided the color guard at the opening ceremony of an Islanders home game in the new UBS Arena in Nassau County.

On February 8th Steve Bonom was a guest on "Veterans News" a TV program hosted by Ed Aulman and Sabrina Lacy covering VVA Chapter 82's involvement in community and veterans' affairs.

On February 11, members of Chapter 82 paid condolences at the funeral of one of our fallen brothers, Charles Tonna.

On February 8, Steve Bonom was a guest on "Veteran's News," a TV program covering VVA Chapter 82's involvement in community and veteran affairs.

On March 6 we led and provided the color guard to the Bethpage St Patrick's Day Parade.

On March 24 we participated in the planning of the annual Hicksville Memorial Day Parade.

On April 5 Members of the Chapter provided a proper send off for a Vietnam Veteran's burial. The veteran was homeless with no known next of kin,

On April 5 we participated in the Nassau County Veteran's Service Organization meeting. One of the agenda items was the Iraqi/Afghanistan monument to be installed at Eisenhower Park.

On April 16, 2022 members of Chapter 82 will team up with the Long Island Airforce Association to recognize the services of approximately 30 Vietnam Veterans. We will provide the color guard and provide the guests with a gift in appreciation for their service.

CONGRATULATIONS OF YOUR AWARD FOR CHAPTER NEWSLETTER OF THE YEAR FROM THE NATIONAL OFFICE



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VVA Chapter #126 Report

Mick Moreno – VP

VVA Chapter 126 continues to have our monthly meetings in person and via Zoom, in which our members and guests can participate via their smartphone, tablet, or home computer. During the past few months, our Zoom meeting attendance has increased. Hopefully, as the COVID restrictions decrease, our in-person attendance will increase. We plan to have an information section at meetings where we will have informed guest speakers present lectures on veteran topics such as PTSD, Agent Orange, and VA Benefits.

With the rumors that the VA will close VA hospitals in New York City, we are actively lobbying with local officials at these hospitals against their closures. We are also writing to our federal, state, and local officials, requesting their support in opposing these proposed closures.

On the lighter side, we celebrated Vietnam Veterans Day on March 26 at the NYC Vietnam Veterans Memorial in downtown Manhattan. With over 300 in attendance, we read the names of the over 1700 New York City service members that were killed in action during the war.

We reenacted our first Welcome Home march in 1985 from Brooklyn, over the Brooklyn Bridge, down the Canyon of Heroes, to the memorial.

Our mayor Eric Adams and other dignitaries were in attendance and spoke in honor of our Vietnam War veterans. Many veteran organizations participated in the wreath-laying ceremony ending the event with a 21-gun salute and the playing of taps.

After the event, there was a resource fair with sponsor tables distributing useful veteran information and offering their services. It was great to see many of our veterans in person again.

A special thank you to the UWVC for putting this event together.

VVA Chapter #421

Sal Napolitano salnap7@aol.com

On March 19, Vietnam Veterans Day was celebrated at local Tottenville High School. In attendance was NY Senator Lanza who presented our chapter 421 president, Gene DiGiacomo with the induction to NY State Veterans Hall of fame. Also in attendance was Congresswoman Malliotakis. Video available on our Chapter web site vva421.org.

On May 20, we will host our annual Jay O'Donovan memorial golf outing.

A rally against the closure of VA hospitals in Manhattan and Brooklyn, as well as the clinic on Staten Island was held on Sunday March 13th at noon in front of the Vet Center on Staten Island and at 2pm outside the VA Hospital in Brooklyn.

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Big Apple Honor flight will fly NYC veterans to Washington, DC at no cost to them to give them an opportunity to visit their memorials during a one-day trip.

Congresswoman Malliotakis introduced HR 2475 last year to allow HOV Lane access to disabled Vets.

Home Depot changed their Veterans discount program.

Eligible participants each have a maximum \$400 discount that can be applied annually purchases of up to \$4,000. according to the Home Depot website.

To enroll, visit homedepot.com/military/discount or open the Home Depot mobile app. Log in to your existing personal account or create a new account. Go to the Military Discount page, select "Verify Military Status" and follow the on-screen instructions to complete your military verification. Once you've successfully completed each step, your personal account on HomeDepot.com will reflect your verified military status.

The Home Depot partners with SheerID, our trusted third-party verification service, which uses private and secure data sources to confirm the accuracy of the information you provide. The verification process typically takes five minutes or less.

You will only need to verify your military status once when you register for an account. Once your account is set up, you may access the military discount for all eligible purchases. To use in store, use your Virtual ID at checkout and the discount will be applied to eligible items.

POW Committee Report 04/09/2022

Grant T. Coates – Chair

Missing: 1,584 as of 04/08/2022

Vietnam: There is no one at Detachment 2, Hanoi from Stony Beach. The quarantine was lifted on April 1, 2022. Colonel Hai (VNOSMP) and Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) Stony Beach are discussing working together on investigations outside of JFA time periods.

Laos: Pete Loverde (Stoney Beach) is retiring. The Defense Intelligence Agency hope to hire someone soon. Currently there is a three month gap before someone gets there. Laos is expected to lift their quarantine.

Cambodia: University of Illinois – Chicago is conducting the Koh Tang investigation and recovery related to the Mayaguez incident in 1975, under the supervision of Stony Beach's Cambodia specialist Eric Phillips who reports positively on this public/private partnership. Thirteen of the 18 Americans missing from that incident have been recovered and identified.

May 15th, 1975, at the Kho Tang Island, Cambodia. "More than 230 Marines stormed ashore on Kho Tang, expecting an easy job of overcoming a small enemy encampment numbering no more than 20. Instead, they were met by a well-armed force of 150. A furious battle lasted three hours.

Among the losses was the CH-53A helicopter, on which 13 GIs died. Department of Defense documents covering the SS Mayaguez Incident and rescue stated the rescue resulted in the deaths of 23 airmen. Protecting the perimeter during the final evacuation was the machine gun squad of PFC Gary L. Hall, LCpl. Joseph N. Hargrove and Pvt. Danny G. Marshall. They were declared Missing in Action. "Although their fate is not entirely certain, it is believed the trio survived for several days before being captured and killed. One was shot to death after being caught stealing food

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from the Khmer Rouge camp. The other two apparently were bludgeoned to death."

There are currently only 7-8 analysts at DPAA for the Vietnam War and this does not mean they are qualified or focused on analysis, but spending most of their preparing Case Summaries for DPAA-hosted "Family Member Updates (FMUs).

There are only 3 DPAA billets that are designated intelligence analyst billets.

DPAA is leaning further toward lumping all wars together, by using the same language in descriptions, referring to their mission as one of recovering and identifying remains of the 80,000 "missing" from WWII to the present.

This policy is designating all wars the same. Such an approach not only runs against the Director's pledge of accounting for Vietnam War Missing as DPAA's highest priority, but reinforces the Lab's preference for handling the easiest and/or most notable cases that bring the most favorable media coverage to DPAA. And there are major, inexpensive disinterment plans on known dead, individually unidentified, that continue in US cemeteries in Europe, the Pacific and in the US. AN example is the special projects undertaken by DPAA Labs at the Punchbowl.

A VFW hosted VSO/National League Luncheon was held on April 1. Representatives from VVA, VFW, DAV, American Legion, Special Operations Association, Special Forces Association and the National League of Families were in attendance. The intent was to have a responsible engagement of the mainstream VSOs, including the Special Operations Association and Special Forces Association. All in attendance agreed and committed their respective organizations to continuing awareness programs to gather information from all avenues regarding the Fullest accounting of missing from the Vietnam War.

VVA's ongoing educational /awareness efforts include

The VI Needs Your Help card

Committee report in The Veteran

Committee report to the National Board

Periodic "Were You There" location specific information request in The Veteran

Lectures/Educational presentations at various locations

VVA National News

New Veterans' Benefit Updates Pertaining to Vietnam War Veterans

Earlier this year we wrote about the [National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 \(H.R. 6395\)](#) which came into effect on January 1, 2021. Among other things, the new legislation saw Parkinsonism, bladder cancer, and hypothyroidism [added to the list of medical issues for which Veterans may receive benefits](#).

This change arrived as the culmination of research conducted over decades demonstrating a conclusive link between the presence of the aforementioned conditions and Vietnam War Veterans' exposure to the tactical herbicide Agent Orange. When first introduced, only those Veterans who had served on the land-mass of the Republic of Vietnam or its inland waterways became newly eligible for benefits. The [Blue Water Navy Update](#) expands this eligibility to Veterans who served in the country's offshore waters during the war, as well.

Veterans of the Korean War who served in or near the Korean demilitarized zone (DMZ) for any length of time between September 1, 1967, and August 31, 1971, are also now eligible for benefits under the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021. Also eligible for new benefits are those who had contact with Agent Orange either through Air Force service, involvement with transporting or testing tactical herbicides, or who were assigned as a Reservist in specific locations [described on the Department of Veterans Affairs website](#).

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Additionally, eligible survivors of Veterans who died as a result of diseases related to Agent Orange exposure may benefit from this update in policy and qualify for benefits based on the Veterans' service. In such cases, a monthly payment called a Dependency and Indemnity Compensation may be issued to surviving spouses, dependent children, and dependent parents. Further, surviving spouses and children of Veterans who died from a VA-rated, service-connected disability may be eligible for health care benefits under the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA).

Any Veteran or survivor of a Veteran who suffers or suffered from parkinsonism, bladder cancer, or hypothyroidism should apply for benefits. What's more, those who have previously applied and been denied coverage should reapply as claims now eligible under the new legislation will be re-adjudicated. This means that the VA will review evidence of record and provide replacement decisions in appropriate cases.

VA Agent Orange Benefits Would Expand Under Landmark Burn Pit Bill

Plan to Give New Benefits to Burn Pits Victims Passes House, Faces Difficult Path Ahead

A bill passed by the House on Thursday that would expand benefits for post-9/11 veterans sickened by burn pits and other battlefield pollutants also would affect more than a half-million veterans exposed to Agent Orange.

The \$208 billion legislation, which passed the House in a 256-174 vote, faces an uncertain future in the Senate. But it would add hypertension and monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance, or MGUS, to the list of diseases linked to Agent Orange -- provisions that would make an estimated 490,000 Vietnam veterans with these illnesses eligible for disability compensation.

It also would update the locations where Vietnam-era veterans served that are covered, adding some areas where former service members said toxic herbicides were sprayed or stored.

If the bill became law, the following locations and service dates would be added:

Thailand at any U.S. or Royal Thai base between Jan. 9, 1962, and June 30, 1976

Laos between Dec. 1, 1965, and Sept. 30, 1969

Cambodia at Mimot or Krek, Kampong Cham province, between April 16, 1969, and April 30, 1969

Guam or American Samoa or their territorial waters between Jan. 9, 1962, and July 31, 1980

Johnston Atoll or any vessel that called on the atoll between Jan. 1, 1972, and Sept. 30, 1977.

The measure faced significant opposition from Republican lawmakers worried about its cost and scope, and Senate lawmakers have thus far backed smaller measures on the issue.

Tainted Water 'Shatters' Native Hawaiians' Trust in Military

Jennifer S. Kelleher, in a March 3 article for the Associated Press, writes, a well-known adage in Hawaiian, *ola i ka wai*, means "water is life." Native Hawaiians revere water in all its forms as the embodiment of one of the Hawaiian pantheon's four principal gods. The resource is so valuable that to have it in abundance means prosperity. The Hawaiian word for water — *wai* — is repeated in the word for wealth — *waiwai*. So when the Navy confirmed petroleum from one of its fuel tank facilities had leaked into Pearl Harbor's tap water, many Native Hawaiians were not just concerned, they were hurt and offended. "This has been the most egregious assault on a public trust resource in the history of Hawaii," said Kama-namaikalani Beamer, a former trustee of the Commission on Water Resource Management.

Deny Until We Die

"Agent Orange killed my father. Did it also kill my sisters? Like a detective, I set out to discover the truth," states Mickey Butts in his lead to his feature article in the February 17 edition (Continue on pg. 46)

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of *Current Affairs*. "For years, I tried to forget what happened to my family in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. Now all I want to do is remember. The first to die was my father in 2003 at the age of 59. He was overweight and living in an assisted living center in Houston. Ever since his service in Vietnam, he'd struggled with too many health problems to count. My sister Ami died next in 2010 outside of Memphis, at age 39. Read full story at: <https://www.currentaffairs.org/2022/02/deny-until-we-die>

VVA Applauds the VA for Adding Rare Cancers as Presumed Conditions; Calls for the Addition of Widespread Respiratory Diseases/Cancers

"Vietnam Veterans of America is grateful to the Department of Veterans Affairs for its addition of nine very rare respiratory cancers as presumptive conditions for the purpose of veterans' disability claims," said VVA National President Jack McManus. "These newly proposed conditions are presumed to result from exposure to particulate matter, such as the smoke from burning Kuwaiti oil well fires during the 1991 Gulf War and open-air burn pits used for decades by the military."

"This action by the VA is a small, first step in addressing the serious health issues impacting countless toxic-wounded veterans, including those exposed while deployed overseas or while serving on military bases here at home," said McManus.

"We look forward to seeing additional 'toxic exposure-presumptive conditions' added next—conditions which affect a large number of toxic-wounded veterans, including the more prevalent forms of diseases, to include brain cancer, constrictive bronchiolitis, pulmonary fibrosis, sarcoidosis, and neurodegenerative diseases, to name a few," said McManus.

McManus cited hypertension as an example: "For decades, hypertension has been recommended for service connection to exposure to herbicides. The Ranch Hand Study in 2006, along with the Health Status of Army Chemical Corps Study, supported that association. In 2016, the VA published its own study of Army Chemical Corps personnel exposed to herbicides, which found that occupational herbicide exposure history and Vietnam-service status were significantly associated with hypertension risk. Yet, our aging Vietnam veterans continue to wait for the VA to acknowledge the association as a presumptive condition."

"VVA is fully invested in ensuring our nation's veterans who have been impacted by toxic exposures are fully represented," said McManus. "We will not stand by silently and allow any veteran, no matter their theater of war, to endure the obfuscation and poor treatment that we have had to endure since our return home."

VA Caregiver Program Needs Total Overhaul as Problems Mount

As reported March 23 by Leo Shane III for *Military Times*, VA's caregiver-support programs need a significant overhaul to correct deep-seated flaws within current operations, veterans advocates told lawmakers Wednesday. A day after department leaders promised to halt all program dismissals amid criticism of new eligibility rules, a coalition of caregiver groups testified before the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee that they are optimistic that real changes are on the way but emphasized it will require more than just new rules and regulations.

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Schumer Vows to Fight Biden Admin Plan to Close Two NYC Veterans Hospitals

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer vowed Sunday to fight “tooth and nail” against the Biden administration’s plan to close two Big Apple hospitals dedicated to caring for hundreds of thousands of New York City veterans. Schumer (D-NY) announced he is starting a petition drive in the five boroughs in opposition to the federal Department of Veteran Affairs preparing to close two of the Big Apple’s three local VA hospitals. “We are going to fight this proposal tooth and nail. We are going to put a dagger through its heart, and it’s not going to see the light of day,” he said at a Sunday morning press conference, while flanked by war veterans and elected officials in front of a VA hospital in Manhattan

Congress Considers Separate Funding For VA Medical Care

As reported April 6 by Nikki Wentling for *Stars and Stripes*, House lawmakers began a debate Wednesday about a White House proposal to separate funding for veterans' medical care from the rest of the federal budget — an action that would treat it the same as defense spending and could allow it to grow beyond current limits. Discretionary spending, which is subject to the congressional appropriations process, is divided into two categories: defense and nondefense. Congress provided \$1.5 trillion in discretionary spending for fiscal 2022, with \$782 billion toward defense and \$730 billion going to other areas of the government. Of the \$730 billion in nondefense spending, about \$117 billion went to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Years After Scandal, the VA Is Still Reporting Misleading Medical Appointment Wait Times for Veterans

As reported April 7 by Eric Katz for *Government Executive*, despite widespread attention and funding to address the VA's failures to present accurate data on how long patients wait for medical appointments, a new audit found the agency is still, in some instances, relying on misleading information in its public reports. Deceptive practices to hide true wait times led to a national scandal in 2014 and multiple legislative overhauls aimed at creating more transparency and allowing veterans to receive medical care more quickly. VA has launched two public websites to show patients and stakeholders what delays they might face in scheduling an appointment, but an audit from the department's inspector general released on Thursday found they are reporting the data inconsistently and in a manner that obscures true wait times. The issues stem from when VA starts the clock on how long veterans must wait for care.

VVA Meets with League, VSOs to Review Accounting Progress

On April 1, VVA'S POW/MIA Chair Grant Coates, along with VVA staffers, attended a VFW-hosted luncheon/discussion for the National League of POW/MIA Families and senior Veterans Service Organizations representatives to discuss progress on the accounting of the 1,584 Americans missing and unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War.

Left to right: Bruce Hallberg, League Board Member; Sharon Hodge, VVA Director of Government Relations; Mark Stephensen, League Board Member; Ann Mills Griffith, League Chairman of the Board/CEO; Grant Coates; Mokie Porter, VVA Director of Communications



COMMITTEES	CHAIRPERSON	E-MAIL ADDRESS
Agent Orange/Dioxin & Other Toxic Exposure	Bill Patton	bllpaton36@gmail.com
Constitution	Grant T. Coates	gcoates@stny.rr.com
Finance	Charles Tipton	ctipton237@yahoo.com
Government Affairs	Joe Ingino	biggjoe77@verizon.net
Membership	Ted Wilkinson	Twilkinson.vva.org
POW/MIA & Veterans Initiative (VI)	Grant T. Coates	gcoates@stny.rr.com
PTSD & Substance Abuse	Tom Harris	bkrdad@aol.com
Veterans Affairs	Sam Hall	Sammyjh49@yahoo.com
Veterans Health Care & Aging Veterans	Tom Harris Jerry McDermott	bkrdad@aol.com jmcdermott@murphynolan.com,
Veterans Incarcerated Committee & In Justice System	Nick Valenti	nickvalenti46@yahoo.com