

# INTERCHANGE ONLINE



THE OFFICIAL ONLINE NEWSPAPER OF THE  
NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL

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**FALL-WINTER 2024**



**In Memorial—May They Rest In Peace**

## **VVA # 20**

Terry B. Blanchard  
Wayne F. Miller  
Laurence P. Gaudino  
Robert M. Kasprzyk  
Eugene Lenyk  
Edward W. Rebis  
Edward R. Bauer  
Bernard A. Connolly  
Larry K. Kindler  
John G. Swartzenberg  
John M. Kiereck

## **VVA #72**

Roger Rigoll

## **VVA #82**

Barry Seplow  
Terrence Regnier  
Anthony Buonogura

## **VVA #333**

John Coritsidis  
Debbie Collins  
Jeremy Honey  
John R.. Mascia

## **VVA #421**

Lee Covino

Paul Agrisano

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

[Secretary@nyvietnamvets.org](mailto:Secretary@nyvietnamvets.org)

[membership@vva.org](mailto:membership@vva.org)



*Alleluia, alleluia! Happy are those who die  
in the Lord; let them rest from their labours  
for their good deeds go with them.*



VVA-NYSC Meeting Dates 2025

January 25  
April 5  
June 14  
September 6

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8 Queen Diana Ln Queensbury, NY  
12804

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**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	John Rowan	jrowan6990@hotmail.com
WESTERN DISTRICT DIRECTOR	Bill Paton	blpaton36@gmail.com

Liaisons	NAME	E-MAIL
Region II Director	Ted Wilkinson 585-322-6722	twilkinson@vva.org
Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America (AVVA)	Lori Paton—President (C) 716-418-4246 (H) 716-694-4477	greeneyedlady57@roadrunner.com
CDCE	Danny Friedman	danny.ola@optimum.net

<b>Legislative Director</b>	<b>Bing Markee</b>	<b>bingvvanys@gmail.com</b>
<b>Sergeant of Arms</b>	<b>Jay Book</b>	<b>jaybook1947@gmail.com</b>

SERVICE OFFICER PROGRAM	TELEPHONE NUMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS
Dolores Garcia—Chief SO	716.857.3344	Dolores.Garcia1@va.gov



*WA-MSC Officers and District Directors*  
*Wishing all of our membership and supporters a*  
*Merry Christmas, Feliz Navidad, Happy*  
*Hanukkah, Happy Kwanza, Happy Holidays*  
*and a Healthy, Prosperous and*  
*A Happy New Year*

**President's Report**

Ned D. Foote

This time of year, is when I do not like to write something for the Interchange. Only because it is the fall edition, and it tells me summer is over and that dreadful winter is coming. Do not me wrong. As a kid I loved winter but now that I am almost seventy-six not so much, I guess this is why we live here.

Back to business. We just finished the Leadership Conference. We had a particularly good turnout that I did not think would be. The State Council attended with our BOD but no chapter in NY sent anyone. In this edition our attendees have a report on their thoughts on the LC.

Mine will be short. My interest is in our Benefits program and the Legacy of VVA. I am not clear in our direction with either one. NY has not been taking any new claims now for 3 years as Dee is working on all the claims that we have outstanding and thought that is our direction for working on transferring VVA claims to another organization. What I now see is we are expanding with an MOU with Purple Heart organization and collaborating with Veterans Voices but slow progress.

The Legacy committee is in the initial stages of gathering info and wanting to get history from chapters which is good. Me, I see us treading water and not moving as fast as I thought we would. They say in 2027 we will have a report on this but do not know about you all, I will be seventy-eight.

My thinking is I joined VVA in 1981 and attended the founding convention. It did not take us long to grow VVA and now have 90,000 members, trying to move now to finish what we started, and it is not easy.

So, all I can tell you, when and if I receive information on anything, I will let all of you know. It would be wise to attend our state meetings to hear what info we might have on our direction but you all should continue what you are doing with your chapters.

Which brings up another item. We just closed Chapter 8. Our oldest chapter. We have others that are barely functioning and should think about what you want to do. We also have chapters that are moving like gangbusters and doing magnificent work in communities with our Veterans.

Please keep that up and we try at SC and trying gets harder as we age, and health issues prevail.

So, with that, get your snow shovels and blowers oiled up. Clean your furnace because old man winter is a coming.

In my haste, I guess I did not tell the Chapters that we have not received reports. Chapters that we need both Finance and Election: 480,803,827—Finance only: 11,49,103—Election: 140

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Sorry for the delay in finalizing the VVA-NYSC Interchange newspaper. This is the final issue for this year. I have combined the FALL & Winter edition for this year. This is due to my unforeseen medical condition of the bladder cancer. I am finally getting my strength back slowly and will fulfill my officer's responsibilities. Thanks for your understanding of the situation.

**Secretary's Report** Francisco Muñiz III

First, I would like to Thank the VVA-NYSC Officers, District Directors, VVA Chapter membership, and of course Associates of Vietnam Veteran of America for their best wishes for my recovery, cards and E-mails wishing me full recovery.

Well, for approximately, two years that I had been complaining to my VA primary that I had a left flank pain and that I had a history of kidney stone episodes. They performed a sonogram and x-rays and found that there were no kidney stones in my kidneys or crystals in my urine. The discomfort continues and then decided to see a private primary physician. They performed the same tests and came to same conclusion: No Kidney stones!

Unfortunately, both misdiagnosed the reading! Was then referred to an urologist who decided to do a cystoscope. As I am laying there trying to calm myself, I saw on the monitor a strange object on my bladder. After the exam, the urologist asked me how many packs of cigarettes did I smoke a day. Told him that I had never smoked and that I used to give my C-rations of cigarettes to my fellow soldiers.

He stated the bladder cancer was mostly from smoking. I asked him if he had heard of Agent Orange and that I was exposed to it while serving in the US Army in Vietnam.

It seems that the tumor was pressing into my left kidney and had shut it down and that was the discomfort that I was receiving.

The tumor was 6 cm and stage 3 because it had gone into my bladder cell wall. Was informed that there was no cure but that with treatment I could live for about five years!

I thought that I had survived my Vietnam Experience and that the VC's didn't get to me but little did I know that after 50 years after the war, Uncle Sam got me with exposure to Agent Orange. After investigating, I found that the village (Phuoc Vinh) that the First Infantry Division was based was the most highly sprayed area with Agent Orange.

So I went to an oncologist and was put on Keytruda, immunogene therapy and immunoglobulins treatment. Was told there were many effects to this treatment but the only effect that I have is constipation and urinating a lot.

Last week I started my second dosage of treatment and had port placed in my chest to get my treatments because my veins have gotten to get scare tissues and it was difficult to get a good vein for treatment. That is my life story.

Thanks to President Ned Foote who has given me an opportunity to recover during these difficult times. Sorry, to the delegates, that I was not able to get the minutes out in time for the September meeting.

Thanks to my second family for their support at this time. So letting you know that,

# That I'm Still Alive!



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

The 2024 New York State legislative session ended on June 8<sup>th</sup>. Currently there is no indication that our lawmakers will return before the end of the year to conduct further business. Of the 805 bills passed by both houses of the legislature only a select few impact veterans, and only if signed into law by Governor Hochul. In this report our legislative advocate, Bing Markee & Company, Inc. outline the nine laws passed by Senator Jessica Scarella-Spanton, Chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security, and Assemblymember Kimberely Jean-Pierre, Chair of the Assembly Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. Both committees, per Bing, have operated in a bipartisan manner at a level that benefits veterans and can only come about due to the leadership and commitment of the chairs.

The first bill I am parroting from Bing is Senate Bill S8076/Assembly Bill A8485. This bill was signed into law and calls for the New York State's Office of Mental Health to identify information and training programs relating to the diagnosis and treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder for military veterans.

The next three bills will affect veterans but most likely not Vietnam Veterans. In keeping with our awareness of how all veterans are affected by legislation it is important to us to be aware of these bills. We have a long standing and ongoing commitment to all veterans, regardless of where or when they served. None of us had a say as to where we were deployed, or whether their service will entail a combat role.

The first is Senate Bill S8596-A/Assembly Bill A9205-A relates to expanding eligibility under the veterans' tuition awards program to all New York State veterans, regardless of combat service.

The next bill is Assembly Bill A4611-B/Senate Bill S5195-B. This bill removes the wartime service requirement for veterans to receive several benefits provided by New York State that would otherwise be denied to them.

The third bill is Assembly Bill A8162-A/Senate Bill SB 9259. This proposal would establish a maternity care coordination program for pregnant and postpartum veterans.

The next five bills could directly impact our members.

First, Assembly Bill A4201-B/Senate Bill S7501. This bill relates to veterans' health care, and would create a veterans health care review to ensure veterans and their families have access to health and mental health treatment, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, military sexual trauma, reproductive and mental health conditions, and suicide prevention.

Second, Assembly Bill A7173/Senate Bill S7544. This bill would require each state agency to designate a veterans' liaison to provide information and assistance to veterans regarding benefits and services available to veterans through that agency.

Third, Assembly Bill A7701-A/Senate Bill S6523-A would require the NYS Department of Veterans' Services to establish and maintain a database of resources available in the state for veterans, members of the

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uniformed services, and their families. There is an important caveat – effective immediately, the addition, amendment and or repeal of any rule or regulation necessary for the implementation of this act on or before its effective date are authorized to be made and completed on or before such effective date.

Fourth, Assembly Bill A9850/Senate Bill S9258. This bill clarifies the process providing that individuals requesting and obtaining a “Veterans” notation on their driver’s license or non-driver identification card shall be advised that the Department of Veterans’ Services and local veterans’ service agencies provide assistance to veterans regarding benefits under federal and state law.

Lastly, Senate Bill S2413-C/Assembly Bill A4613-C. This bill would increase amounts paid to congressionally chartered veterans’ organizations for funeral and burial service expenses for certain veterans.

These last eight bills will not take effect until signed into law by Governor Hochul. Historically, bill affecting veterans are signed on or around Veterans’ Day. However, the governor has until the end of the year to act.

The hard work of Bing Markee on behalf of Vietnam Veterans of America New York State Council as our lobbyist at the state level in New York has been going on since 2007. He has tirelessly been our representative in Albany and 2024 was his 18<sup>th</sup> legislative session representing us. Thank you, Bing, we owe you such a debt of gratitude I don’t know how if ever we could repay you.

Toxic Water claims to “Sunset” in August 2024. The time frame set aside for filing a claim in the Camp Lejeune Justice Act (CLJA) is coming to an end. Some interesting developments are shaping up. On February 6, 2024 the court decided that victims could not have a jury trial, but would have their case heard by a federal judge. Attorneys for victims and their families are advocating for bundling trials – individuals with the same disease would be heard in groups. There have been approximately 1,500 lawsuits filed in federal court. Any one can sue if they resided, worked or were exposed to water at Camp Lejeune for at least 30 days between 1953 and 1987 as long as they show that they suffered harm as a result of their exposure. Bergmann & Moore has been selected by VVA to assist their members in filing CLJA claims. Claimants who believe they were exposed to toxic water at Camp Lejeune may speak to someone personally by calling (800)-898-9450, or by filling out the form on line at [camplejeunelitigationteam.com/al](http://camplejeunelitigationteam.com/al). If you have questions before filing a claim, call retired Marine Anita Best, Bergmann & Moore’s CLJA spokesperson, at (301)-290-3148. With an August 10<sup>th</sup> deadline approaching, claimants only have a a short time remaining to file.

The time frame from our State Council meeting in April to our June meeting proved to be a busy time for many of us. My schedule is always filled with things to do and this year was no exception. Beginning April 26, with the Department of New York, American Gold Star Mothers who held their 87<sup>th</sup> State Convention in Auburn, New York. We were able to coordinate VVA Chapters 377, 704, VFW and New York National Guards personnel to participate in this annual event.

The month of May saw me act as Master of Ceremonies at a service for Robert Stryker, medal of honor recipient, at a grave yard service. In attendance were family members with a rifle volley by our local

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American Legion Post followed by shadow taps with buglers from a local High School who volunteer every year for the ceremony. The ceremony was followed by a social gathering of participants at an ice cream shop with hot dogs, hamburgers, French fries and fountain drinks. A local flying group providing a flyover performed their annual show of support and respect for the ceremony as well as family and friends of Robert Stryker.

The next day was the Memorial Day Parade in two municipalities in my County. The Village of Weedsport, the location of our Cayuga County Vietnam Veterans Memorial held a drive by Memorial Day that was well attended by the Village and Town residence. Chapter 704 Chaplain Jerry Fulmer was in attendance and I attended the Memorial Day Parade in Auburn. Setting up a table with the Chapter's homemade poppies and American Gold Star Mothers t-shirts offered to the public. The poppies carry the names of each of our 29 Cayuga County brothers killed in Vietnam with the town of origin, location on "The Wall," date of death and service rank.

June saw me participating and helping to organize my counties' Special Olympics 'Torch Run.' This event requires the participation of several area elementary schools, taps, bagpipes, color guard and another flyover from our local pilots. This year was exceptional. We had the reading of the names of law enforcement officers, and corrections officers who have died while serving their communities as well as the deceased members of VVA Chapter #704. All in remembrance of their lives dedicated to the community, state and nation. Chapter 704 alone had 26 of its deceased members read. These members had their names announced going back to 1994 when the Chapter was founded.

The month of June also saw the culmination of our annual Scholarship Program. We were able to form a coalition of five veteran's groups to provide a scholarship to one graduating senior in each of the eight high schools who participate. The overriding requirements include the student being enrolled in a college and that there is a veteran in the family. This successful program is in its 20<sup>th</sup> year.

#### **BERGMANN & MOORE: CAMP LEJEUNE JUSTICE ACT REVISITED:**

In the June Central District Report we talked about the firm of Bergmann & Moore and the lawsuits associated with the Camp Lejeune Justice Act (CLJA). This report deals with the Justice Act and the New York State Division of Veteran Services. As was related to everyone Bergmann & Moore put forward the following assertion: "The agency, (VA), has plainly stated in its official guidance that "if you are awarded relief from a CLJA lawsuit, your VA benefits will not be reduced, and if a veteran is already receiving benefits or other compensation for injuries caused by the water at Camp Lejeune, the act still gives them the right to sue and benefits will not be lost even if an action is brought under the act. I would strongly suggest exercising caution in pursuit of the lawsuit as Benjamin P. Pomerance, Deputy Commissioner for Program Development, New York State Department of Veteran's Services sent out an email that was shared by Vietnam Veterans Chapter #944 out of Utica that stated ".... Procedures from the Camp Lejeune Justice Act lawsuits. With the lawsuits, any verdict or settlement awarding money to a Veteran who is already receiving disability compensation for a Camp Lejeune-related medical condition WILL BE

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OFFSET by the amount received in VA disability benefits for the Camp Lejeune-related condition(s). That statement came about from a question-answer portion section of an email from Aaron D. Conklin, Veterans Service Officer / Retired Navy, Executive Director, New York State County Veterans Service Officers Association dated September 8, 2023 on the subject. There seems to be a new player regarding Camp Lejeune toxic water exposure: the United States Department of the Navy. The payout for which a qualifying individual is eligible varies, depending on their diagnosis. If you wish to learn more, I can forward the email to you upon request. Here is the question that led to the response. "If a claimant is receiving VA benefits due to a Camp Lejeune-related illness, will money received from the Department of the Navy under the Elective Option be offset by the amount that the claimant is receiving in VA benefits? The answer was "Surprisingly, no! Any payments issued under the Elective Option are NOT OFFSET by VA disability benefits. However, this was added to the same answer: THIS IS DIFFERENT FROM THE GOVERNING PROCEDURES FROM THE Camp Lejeune Justice Act lawsuits. With the lawsuits, any verdict or settlement awarding money to a veteran who is already receiving disability compensation for a Camp Lejeune-related medical condition will be offset by the amount received in VA disability benefits for a Camp Lejeune-related condition(s).

#### REMEMBERING THOSE WHO WE LOST DOING MIA FIELD WORK:

Grant T. Coates, Chair of the POW / MIA Committee took the time to commemorate the 23<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the tragic Mi-17 helicopter crash in Vietnam, which resulted in the loss of seven U.S. service men and nine Vietnamese government officials and crew members serving as an advance party for a Missing-in-Action joint field activity. This incident occurred in Quang Binh Province when the helicopter collided with a cloud shrouded mountain. The date was April 7, 2001.

#### A CALL TO ACTION:

Grant reminds us that the "Veterans Initiative Program" seeks your assistance. Personal items, maps, stories, after-action reports, pictures, and military items retrieved from the battlefields of Vietnam are not merely keepsakes or war trophies. They hold the key to possibly locating the final resting places of missing war dead. Your contributions and dedication to uncovering these stories play a critical role in our ongoing efforts to bring every servicemember home.

Currently approximately 1,577 are still not accounted for - this number is fluid and can change at any time. The breakdown is as follows: VIETNAM 1,237; LAOS 285; CAMBODIA 48; and THE PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF CHINA territorial waters 7.



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**JACK MCMANUS, NATIONAL PRESIDENT HAS OUTLINED THE 2024 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES. THEY INCLUDE:**

- \*Planning for Aging Veterans Act: To address the long-term care of veterans, including the implementation of policies for the administration of state homes.
- \*The Major Richard STAR Act: This would allow veterans with a combat-related disability and fewer than 20 years of credible service to receive retirement pay, without reduction, concurrent with disability compensation.
- \*The Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act: The intention is to expand access to non-VA providers for the delivery of care to elderly veterans in their community; update on line access for veterans and caregivers to medical care and information; initiate a pilot program to address homemaker and health aide services; license access to respite care to give caregivers a temporary break, for starters.

**VETERANS OUTREACH CENTERS (VOC):**

The issues veterans encounter may be challenging, however VOC's know how to address them. They serve as a homeless shelter, food bank, clothing store, and job training center, to name a few. These services are provided to our heroes free of charge. A proud legacy of Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.

**17th ANNUAL TRIBUTE RIDE:**

On Saturday, July 13, 2024 the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway of Valor "Tribute Ride" held this year's ride was dedicated to the "Gold Star Families." This 100-mile ride is free and open to the public – motorcycles, cars, trucks, planes and helicopters all were welcomed.

Loren Dates, who was the architect behind the push to have New York State Route 38 designated as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway of Valor, is also part of an air group that does the flyover for the annual event. He is accompanied by Harvey and Dan Baker who organize the rides for all these years. A very special group of men who took an idea and brought it to fruition.

**AMERICAN GOLD STAR MOTHERS (AGSM) 88<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONVENTION:**

The Convention is scheduled to be held from Thursday, April 24<sup>th</sup> thru Sunday April 27<sup>th</sup>. The Convention Day is Friday, April 25<sup>th</sup> with the Dinner scheduled for Saturday, April 26<sup>th</sup>. There are plans for the dedication of the American Gold Star Mothers Memorial that weekend. Further information to follow. The Gold Star Mothers were very pleased to have such a wonderful color guard provided by VVA #377. Eleven (11) flags in all were presented by the Chapter, the largest number in recent memory that has ever been presented at one of the AGSM Conventions.

**AMBULANCE OR EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT ACCESS:**

Veterans do not need to check with the VA before calling for an ambulance or going to an emergency department. During a medical emergency, the VA encourages all Veterans to seek immediate medical attention without delay. It is however important for you to promptly notify the VA within 72 hours of a Veteran presenting to the emergency room. Call 1-844-724-7842. (Nam Express-2024).

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### 50<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE END OF THE VIETNAM WAR:

There are plans in the making for a ceremony at the Cayuga County Vietnam Veterans Memorial located at Centerport Aqueduct Park on New York State Route 31 between Weedsport, New York and Port Byron, New York, just a mile from New York State Thruway Exit 40, for May 31, 2025. More information to follow as progress is made on the event.

### VVA Chapter #377 Report

Mike Moran – Secretary

**Chapter 377** members Charlie Harrington, James (Jim) Jones and Gary Napieracz stopped by to thank New York State Assemblymember Anna R. Kelles and District Office Director Cathy Emilian for their help making it possible to have this year's poppy drive.

New Book Published by Chapter 377 Member Harvey Baker Harvey Baker has been a contributing editor and writer for the Nam Express since it was launched in 1989, and at this time we would like to applaud his efforts and highlight the books that he has published. Harvey Baker has a new novel published "We're Going to Listen" and it is available at the Kindle Bookstore. It is another Two Feathers and Rommel story where they're mission is to lead a CIA agent and a team of Marines out to the Ho Chi Minh Trail to place Top Secret ASIDs , Acoustic Seismic Intrusion Detectors, in other words listening devices planted along the NVA resupply routes to detect enemy movements. For those that are not aware of all of Harvey's books, here is a review: Harvey E. Baker was born and raised in the Finger Lakes region of Up-State New York. After graduating high school in 1965, Harvey enlisted in the Marine Corps. Along the way, Harvey volunteered to serve in Marine Scout Dogs and eventually served two tours in Vietnam in 1966-67 and 1968 serving the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Marine Scout Dog Platoons. This series of books is a continuing story written in the order listed below. The stories would be better understood if read in order.

National VVA recognized VVA # Chapter 377 on their 35<sup>Th</sup> year of Service to America – Outstanding

### Veterans Incarcerated and In the Justice System

June 2024 Report—Nick Valenti

Dominic Yezzo, National Chair, Veterans Incarcerated and in the Justice System is pressing parole board appointees to include the following paperwork in determining fate of a veteran coming before them seeking a return to life outside the prison walls. That paperwork can include (1) medical and psychological exams;(2) PTSD and TBI at time of arrest; and (3) veterans military record, including any war time service.

The point of all this is to make parole boards aware of the background and circumstances that

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have formed a veteran's background and may have impacted his behavior responses to particular circumstances. He doesn't want to leave behind anyone who served with honor in the military and who was damaged by the wounds of war. Dominic is not soft on crime. He simply wants a veteran's past to be taken into consideration in determining the outcome of a parole board hearing. Her has even volunteered to appear at any parole board training class to speak on such issues as PTSD and TBI.

As for my work, I finished with my reorientation with the New York State Department of Corrections. This annual training session acts as a reminder of the guidelines for working in a facility for my own safety and the safety of the people who protect me when I am in a facility.

I am still in the market for yarn. The crochet squad at the Auburn Facility has a schedule of days and times they do their volunteer knitting on behalf of Children and adults. The colors they are allowed to work with are: WHITE, BROWN, RED, GREEN, PINK Purple , and Yellow.

If anyone wishes to contact me simply email me at [nickvslenti46@yahoo.com](mailto:nickvslenti46@yahoo.com) or call me at 315-252-4535. I will get back to you if I am not at home to receive.

### **Veterans Incarcerated and In the Justice System**

September 2024 Report - **Nick Valenti**

The New York State Department of Veteran's Services had put to pen and ink the "Incarcerated Veterans Program." Administered by the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS), the program is designed to address the readjustment and reentry needs of veterans returning to society following a period of time incarcerated.

The goal as four (4) objectives (1) help incarcerated veterans become aware of their entitlements and benefits and available community resources;(2) assist them in verifying their veteran status;(3) provide counseling to address service-related problems; and (4) help incarcerated veterans back into the community upon release.

Part of this process includes understanding how incarceration impacts benefits eligibility. The following is the reader's digest version of their benefit eligibility:

- \*On the 61<sup>st</sup> day of imprisonment on a felony conviction, veterans with a disability compensation rating of 20% or higher will have their monthly VA payment reduced to the 10% level. For veterans with a 10% rating, the payment is reduced by one-half.
- \*On the 61<sup>st</sup> day of imprisonment, payments will be terminated for veterans in receipt of VA non-service-connected pension.
- \*Incarceration does not completely terminate VA education benefits.
  - 1) Beneficiaries incarcerated for a non-felony offense can receive the full monthly VA education benefits for which they are eligible.
  - 2) Beneficiaries incarcerated for a felony offense can be paid the costs of tuition, fees, and necessary books, equipment and supplies. The VA cannot make payments for tuition, fees, books, equipment, or supplies if another Federal, State or local program pays these costs.

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\*VA benefits payments are not reduced for recipients participating in work release programs, residing in residential reentry centers, or under community control.

#### **APPORTIONMENT OF BENEFITS TO FAMILY MEMBERS.**

All or part of the compensation not paid to the incarcerated veteran may be apportioned to VA-approved dependents- based on a showing of financial need by the dependent(s).

The VA will not apportion benefits to an eligible dependent automatically. The beneficiary must file the proper paperwork with the VA for this apportionment to occur.

#### **DEBT WAIVERS.**

If you're facing difficulties repaying a VA debt, a waiver could be an option worth exploring. A waiver for debt related to VA disability compensation, non-service-connected pension or education benefits is possible.

#### **HOW DOES IT WORK?**

If you are unable to afford your full debt balance, even with small monthly payments over time, you can request a waiver. Depending on your circumstances, VA may grant a waiver for part or all of your debt. If approved, you won't be required to repay the waived amount.

#### **IS THERE A TIME LIMIT FOR REQUESTING A WAIVER?**

Yes. You have 30 days for education debts and 90 days for other types of debt to avoid late fees, interest, or other collection actions while the VA review your request.

The VA can only consider waiver requests within 180 days for education, disability compensation, or pension benefit debt from when you receive your first debt letter.

#### **CAN A REPRESENTATIVE REQUEST A WAIVER FOR A VETERAN?**

Absolutely, the VA can assist with that. If you need assistance, or just want to learn more about the benefits and services you may be eligible for schedule an appointment with one of the Veterans Benefits Advisors – call 1-888-838-7697; or schedule a phone or video consultation online; or find a Service Officer near you.

#### **HOW DO I REQUEST A WAIVER?**

To request a waiver two forms need to be submitted: a Financial Status Report (VA Form 5655) and a personal statement explaining why you believe you shouldn't have to repay the debt. Make sure to include additional information to support your waiver request that hasn't been provided in writing or isn't in your VA records. You also have the option to request an oral hearing.

#### **WHAT CAN I EXPECT AFTER I REQUEST A WAIVER.**

Once a decision is made, you will receive one of three outcomes: a full waiver (no repayment required); a partial waiver (partial repayment required); or a denial (full repayment required).

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## RESTORING BENEFITS!

Within 30 days of a veteran's anticipated release date, a veteran may contact the VA to have their benefits resumed. In doing so, the veteran needs to provide evidence verifying their scheduled release date.

If the VA receives notice of the veteran's release within one year following the veteran's date of release from incarceration, the VA will provide benefits payments dating back to the veteran's date of release.

A special notation for the purposes of restoration of VA benefits; parole, participation in a work release program, or participation in a residential reentry center qualifies as "release from incarceration" that can trigger restoration of VA benefits.

## WHAT IS BEING DONE ON INCARCERATED DISABILITY VETERAN'S PENSIONS?

Dominic Yezzo, National Chair of Veterans Incarcerated & in the Justice System Committee, is focusing on the issue dealing with the regulation of incarcerated disabled veterans' pensions by the Department of Veterans Affairs. The current regulation caps these pensions at 10% during incarceration, regardless of the awarded percentage. The Committees' position is that the FULLY awarded pension should be disbursed during incarceration, BUT held in escrow until a veteran's release. This would ensure that upon reintegration into society, veterans have the financial support they were granted. Especially for service-connected disabilities incurred while serving in overseas wars.

Being an organization that champions veterans' causes we have the unique opportunity to educate lawmakers on veterans' needs, to advocate for new legislation and to amend existing laws. Vietnam Veterans of America is committed to working at the state and federal levels in order to influence legislation championing the unique needs of our incarcerated veterans.

### Western District Report

Bill Paton

VVA Chapters #20, #77, #193, #268, #459, #865, #978



(Continue from pg. 14)

## VVA CHAPTER #77 MEMBER PROFILE

### DAN BRADY

Dan graduated from Tonawanda High School in June of 67. Drafted a year later, entered the Army in June of 68. Basic Training Ft. Campbell, KY, AIT, Ft. Polk, La, the pre-cursor to Vietnam.

He arrived in Nam in December of 68. Assigned to the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, 2/12 Charlie Company. Sent to Firebase Stuart for 2 months then Firebase Pershing for the remainder of his tour. For those who don't know, the infantry maintains security for the Firebase and goes out on daytime and nighttime ambushes. I believe in my conversations with Dan, he carried the 50 Cal. It was here while on patrol he tripped a bobby trap grenade, medevacked to a rear hospital. While he was recovering a Colonel threw a Purple Heart on his bed, never acknowledged him, never shook his hand, simply walked out. God bless those who have no idea what combat is or what it feels to be wounded!!! Another thing, when Dan arrived in Vietnam, he signed paperwork to notify his parents ONLY in the event of his death. Imagine two officers showing up at his parents' house to inform them of his injuries. Then his Purple Heart never showed up on his DD-214. Eventually after considerable paperwork and investigation it was added.

Dan has been awarded Bronze Star, Purple Heart, Army Commendation Medal, Air Medal.

And to me one of the most important, The Combat Infantry Badge!

Leaving Nam in 69, Dan was assigned to Ft Knox, KY an Armor Division. A Colonel even said "What are you doing here? This is an Amor Division, your Infantry. I'll give you an easy job." He spent 6 months there.

While at Ft, Knox his high school sweetheart, Faye, came down and they were married on February 10, 1970. Their first date in high school was on 6/6/66. He always says "the devil made me do it! "They left Ft Knox in June of 70 and came home to Tonawanda. Dan worked briefly at a local factory, then a ware-house. He was appointed to the City of Tonawanda police department in March 75. Attended the police academy and graduated as a patrolmen, September, 75. In 1989 he made Detective and retired in the Y2K year January 2000.

They have 2 sons:

Patrick has been a sergeant in the Richmond, VA Police Dept. for 22 years. He resides with his wife, Keisha and their daughter, Elia.

Jeffery has been an investment advisor with Morgan Stanley in Naples, FL for 4 years. He resides with his wife, Dawn, and their daughters, Francesca and Finnegan.

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### VVA Chapter #77

Presidents Report by Tom Thompson June 27, 2024.

This season started off with a great deal of rain but now has transitioned to greater sun and heat which is more conducive for our many upcoming outdoor activities.

The Orange Blossom crew headed by Joe Pascek had great success at the two Poppy events in May. They hand out poppies, small American Flags, and informational data flyers about Agent Orange and The Pact Act. The community always donates generously to VVA Chapter 77 at these events.

On May 26, 2024 the Tonawanda's Veterans Council held their Memorial Day Ceremony at the center of the Renaissance Bridge over the Erie Canal between the twin Cities of Tonawanda and North Tonawanda, New York. All attendees were invited to VVA Chapter 77 afterward for refreshments.

Our Memorial Day Ceremony held at the Buffalo Naval Park had to be cancelled due to inclement weather.

VVA 77 was asked to provide the sole concession stand for all the Monday evening Pist-N-Broke Car Shows at Wurlitzer Park for the whole summer till mid-September. This car show is very veteran oriented and always has a few WWII and Korean Veterans at the center of activities. The 500 plus cars showing up each week with their owners plus the attracted visitors, bodes well for Chapter 77 fund raising to support the chapters expenses.

On August 17<sup>th</sup> there is a KIA Road March held at Chestnut Ridge Park. The marching participants are required to bring a RUCKSACK filled with nonperishable food to donate to food pantries. We have been notified that 77 will receive the majority for our food pantry. We are also receiving continued funds from VALOR run by member Paul Rudnicki.

We held the last member meeting June 20<sup>th</sup> before summer break. The BOD and members still come in on Wednesdays and Saturdays for coffee and discussion. Beginning in September the Monthly meetings will change from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday each month.

The Home Depot Organization gave us a grant to purchase new flooring for the chapter/museum and air conditioning system for the chapter and the food pantry next door. We have to pay for the AC installation. Our chapter assistant treasurer Ed Bodine is the liaison between 77 and Home Depot.

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Marshall and Mary Woods both VVA 77 members are involved with the Air and Space Force Association that does lobbying to promote better conditions, food, housing etc. for the Air and Space Forces. They just had a golf tournament raising funds to provide high school students STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) courses.

The Chapter 77 AVVA President Lori Paton and Vice President Mary Lynn Bodine were both inducted at the past VVA state council meeting to the positions of NYS AVVA President and Vice President respectively. Congratulations to them.

On September 1<sup>st</sup> VVA 77 and Legion Post 264 will be holding the annual car show at Niawanda Park, Tonawanda, N.Y.

### **VVA #268 Report,**

Gordie Bellinger,

Chapter #268 has completed is Financial (990-n) and Election Reports on time.

The Officers and Board of Directors for VVA Chapter #268 are as follows.

#### **Officers;**

President	Robert Hull
Vice President	Edward Jackson
Secretary	David Benedict
Treasurer	Gordon Bellinger

#### **Board of Directors:**

Edward Miller  
Robert Parker  
Gary Walker

Our monthly meetings are the fourth Tuesday of each month, no meetings in the month of July or August.

Meetings are at 6:30PM (1830) Navy Marine Club Inc., 37 Park Ave., Lockport, New York 14094

Remember to look out for each other.

### **VVA Chapter #978 Report**

**Stanley Collver - President**

Even though our Chapter 978, Frewsburg, NY may be the smallest chapter in the NYS Council, we are enthusiastically seeking to increase our membership and activities while at the same time striving to serve the critical needs of our members.

Each one of our members has a "story". During our meetings of between 16 and 20 of our 36 members, as I look over the faces of the veterans attending meetings (most waiting to hear "what is interesting and

important to them personally"), I can picture their past and put together each one of their "stories".

I am in the process of compiling "Case Notes" on all of our members as months go along so that I can better communicate with each one as well as possible, if applicable, share situations or needs with the membership. It is my strong belief we need to look after our veterans... we're all getting old, but some are in much more need than others.

About 6 to 8 members of our chapter will be attending a July 1 Vietnam Veterans Honor Pinning Ceremony by Congressman Nick Langworthy, to be held at the Cassadaga High School at 1 PM. We will have a table display set up at the event to promote our chapter and activities.

We are in the process of planning our PACT ACT/Agent Orange Town Hall Style Informational Seminar for veterans, spouses and survivors to be held on Saturday, October 12 from 1 to 3 PM. We have all of our excellent speakers booked - including our own Bill Paton.

I will make an attempt to keep you better informed as time goes on and my skills improve and health allows!

Stan Collver, President, DAVID L.WOODBURN CHAPTER 978, Frewsburg, NY

### **Eastern District Report**

#### **Sam Hall**

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

Westchester Veterans Alliance, Inc. and is provided by the WVA and or other sources for your information and to help you assist our Veterans.

Please let me know if you do not want to receive information of this kind and I will remove you from the email list.

I am getting word that the Traveling Vietnam Wall is coming to Dutchess County in September 2024. My understanding is that the Traveling Vietnam Wall will be in Dutchess Co. at Bowdoin Park in Wappingers Falls, NY, right off route 9.

The Wall is arriving on September 17th, assembly on the morning of the 18th, open to the public beginning at noon on Wednesday September 18, 2024. It will be here until the 22nd with disassembled on the morning of the 23rd.

They need volunteers to assemble, disassemble and to be there daily to assist the community in finding their loved one on the wall. They are also looking for Veterans to be at the Wall on Thursday 9/19, and Friday 9/20 because the schools will be attending and they are looking for escorts for the kids who can provide information and answer questions.

More information to follow as I get it.



**VVA Chapter #49**

Dan Griffin – Executive Officer

Chapter 49 hosted our Monthly Pizza parties at the Hudson Valley VA at Montrose PTSD Unit. We sent kitchen kits and bathroom kits to 2 formally homeless veterans.

**VVA Chapter #333 Report**

Howard Goldin — Delegate & former Chapter President

Every year, VVA-333 goes into high schools and middle schools to do a teaching program called “Vietnam Memories, Stories Left At The Wall”. This April we went into Felix Festa Middle School, located in the Clarkstown School District. These students are eight graders. There are two components to doing our presentations.

We do a 45-minute interactive slide/video presentation where we show students actual photograph from our War and we have letters written to The Wall. Students, Teachers and Veterans read the actual letters. 639 students attended this presentation

For our second part, we set up a museum in the school library where 8<sup>th</sup> grade students attend our class and we discuss the pros and cons of war using a timeline. Here, in-country Vietnam Veterans discuss from his perspective how his tour of duty went. We have a wide range of Veterans from Tunnel Rats, Cooks, Engineers, brown water Navy, etc. Our presentations talk about the draft, lottery draft and volunteers. We discuss Agent Orange and its aftermath along with PTSD. We encourage the students to ask questions as we are a first source information. We also have photographs of then and now of our instructors and we handout the photos and ask the student to figure out who that person is now. We let the administration know that we will not answer “how many people you have killed?” as we are not here to glory war. We had 618 students attend these classes over a one-week period.



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Chapter 333 activities from April 12 to June 13, 2024 April 4 to April 18 teaching Vietnam Memories Program at Felix Festa Middle School 639 students attended interactive assembly presentation & 618 attended Library/total 1,257. April 24 – 30 ories at Suffern Middle attended assembly, 329 museum total 725 one got involved in PBL where students inter-before the war, during questions) and they put Gulf War Monument May 26 Key note speaker vices at our Veteran's



May 29-30 Attended four permanent loca-Levy Park, Bowline Park, Piermont Pier embarkation point), Clausland Mountain Roast 230 + attendees plus donated a handcycle to Disabled Marine Veteran June 6 at our Chapter general meeting Patriotic scholarships totaling \$950.00 from Felix Festa & Suffern Middle students donated time to show or ex-otism via art, and volunteerism

Vietnam Memories, Stories Left At The for fall & spring 2024-25 Tappan Zee Dutch Hill Road, Orangeburg, NY 10962 8, 2024 November 4th full Assembly 9-starting at 8:15am full Assembly 11 – starting at 9:00am Teaching in Library 10:34am November 5 – 8 teaching in the 3:00 pm Felix Festa Middle School 30 West Nyack, NY 10994 April 3 – 10, 2025 April 3rd Auditorium presentation 9:52-10:37 & 10:41-11



Museum presentation teaching Vietnam mem-School. 396 students attended library/month 1,982 kids Also (Public Based Learning) view Vet what they did and after (total of 10 it into a video May 23 Wreath laying ceremony for Memorial Day ser-cemetery.

watchfires at tions (Gene (Camp Shanks June 1st Pig \$3,500.00 Alan Saxton we presented 4 to students School. These press patri-

Wall Program High School 15 November 4 – 10th grade 12th grade period 4, museum 8:15 – Parrott Rd,

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Chapter 333 members Marcus Arroyo, John Leighton and Roy Tschudy assisting Hand cycle recipient Disabled Veteran Alan..... Marcus knowledge and mechanical skills of the intricate workings of the cycle proved to be a great help for Alan.\_

Presentation of the Hand cycle will take place tomorrow at our annual pig roast Barbecue\_



Tom Carroll

Yesterday I went to the dedication of the memorial to the 13 service members who died in the suicide bombing just before our withdrawal from Afghanistan.

It is located at the James A. Anderson Legion Post 1199 in Pearl River (right next to the Little League fields). Similar to our Watchfire ceremony, each name was read out followed by a bell ring.

### **VAVS Report – June, 2024**

Danny Friedman—Chair

VAVS is officially renamed CDCE for Center of Development and Civic Engagement. COVID deeply affected the participation of volunteers and in-person meetings at the VA Medical Centers. CDCE is struggling to resume activities and recruit new volunteers.

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### Southern District Report

John Rowan

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

#### Southern DISTRICT District Director's Report for June 15, 2024

On April 26th I was the presenter for the Air & Space Forces Association Award to the Outstanding Squadron Cadet, Cadet Senior Master Sergeant Edward Oh, in the La Guardia Civil Air Patrol Squadron at Vaughn College.

On May 5, 2024 I along with Chapter 32 attended the Dedication Ceremony and Open House for the new Queens Vet Center at 50-05 Metropolitan Avenue, Ridgewood, NY 11385, celebrating 45 years of service to the Queens community.

On May 17th I joined a Zoom meeting of the Brooklyn Technical HS Veterans Alumni Association. We are developing a memorial for KIA alumni.

On May 18th Mariann and I attended an event at Clintonville American Legion.

On May 19th I was honored to be the guest speaker at the East Coast Car Show's dedication to their former member and VVA former VSO the late Peter Garon. We had a great turnout.

On May 21st Mariann and I attended a meeting of Chapter 72 in Brooklyn.

On May 23rd I attended a Memorial Service at the Queens Vietnam Veterans Memorial sponsored by Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz.

On May 26th Mariann and I attended the Maspeth Memorial Day Parade. Len Williams, President of Chapter 32 was one of the Parade Grand Marshalls.

#### VVA Chapter #11

Clarence F. Simpson

-Chapter 11 received a commendation certificate from NY Rep. Nick LaLota for National Vietnam Veterans War Day on March 29, 2024.

- Rich Kitson President Chapter delivers keynote address at the Long Island State Veterans Home, Stony Brook NY commemorating National Vietnam Veteran War Day

- Chapter 11 hosts meet and greet monthly for our veterans at the LISVH, Stony Brook NY.

Patriot Guard Riders Annual Flag Day 2024 and award BBQ Ceremony for the Veteran of the Year awarded to VVA 11 Clarence Simpson VP.

VVA 11 will again participate in the Annual Southampton July 4th Parade. Long Island's largest and most patriotic.

-VVA 11 participated in the Memorial Day ceremonies at both the Long Island National Cemetery and the Calverton National Cemetery.





**VVA chapter #32 Report**

Linda Robins

June 14 -16 NYS VVA Conference – Nichols, NY – Leonard Williams and John Rowan attended the meeting.

June 15<sup>th</sup> – The Chapter participated in the Father's Day BBQ at Queens Boro Hall hosted by Donovan Richards, Queens Boro President,

June 20<sup>th</sup> – Eileen Reilly's semi-retirement celebration will be at Maspeth Town Hall. Chapter members presented her with a plaque and flowers for the help she has given the Chapter over the years.

June 21<sup>st</sup> – Tom (Milk) Bullaro inducted in the NYS Veterans Hall of Fame – A luncheon as held to honor Tom on his induction into the Hall of Fame. Senator Addabbo presented Tom with a plaque for his induction into the NYS Veterans Hall of Fame. Representatives from Queens Boro Present Donovan Richards and DA Melinda Katz office attended the luncheon to honor Tom. All had an enjoyable time.

July 19<sup>th</sup> – the Chapter along with Councilman Bob Holden's office distributed toiletries to the veterans at Borden Ave Shelter.

July 27<sup>th</sup> – the Chapter participated in a BBQ for veterans that was hosted by the Kiwanis Club of Glendale.

Street Fairs – the Chapter has participated in a number of Street Fairs in Queens since the beginning of the summer.

**VVA Chapter 72 Report – June, 2024**

Valentine's Day week was the National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans and Chapter 72 sponsored a pizza party and distributed gifts to all the in-patients at the Brooklyn VAMC, as well as those receiving infusion and dialysis treatments.

We provided pizza parties for the veterans rehabbing from substance abuse on Easter and Memorial Day.

We provided wreaths for the VAMC's Memorial Day Program and Brooklyn's 158<sup>th</sup> Memorial Day Parade and Service. This is the longest continuous Memorial Day Parade in the USA. W had our own float and also marched in review.

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We provided support for the VAMC's annual baby shower for expectant military and veteran families. We also purchased new clothing to be distributed by the VAMC to homeless and hospitalized veterans.

Former National President, and current Southern District Director John Rowen and his wife, Mariann, attended our May General Membership Meeting.

We made a connection with the DeVito-Watson Foundation who agreed to sponsor our general membership meetings and also provide clothing and personal items for hospitalized and homeless veterans.

Three of our members participated in the most recent NYC Honor Flight and reported it was quite an experience. We also had a fundraising and information table at Brooklyn's 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Street Fair.

**VVA Chapter #82 Report**

Richard Guevara—1st Vice President

On May 11, 2024, we provided the color guard at the Air Force Association Vietnam 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. Our members also welcomed the guests and provided them with gifts.

On May 13, 2024 we honored a ROTC graduate from Hofstra with a plaque and a gift.

On May 17, 2024 we provided the color guard for the Town of Oyster Bay picnic honoring the town's veterans and active duty members.

On May 26 we participated in the Nassau County Memorial Day service at Eisenhower Park. We provided a color guard and members of our chapter attended the event.

On May 26 we provided a color guard at the National Cemetery.

On May 27, 2024 one of our members, Arturo Edwards, was the grand Marshal at the Plainview-Old Bethpage Memorial Day Parade.

On June 20, 2024 Chapter 82 had its monthly meeting and swearing in of our officers, board members and directors along with a dinner sponsored by the Blue Star Mothers.

On July 9 we will provide the color guard at the Town of Oyster Bay's Salute to America celebration.

On July 12 we will provide the color guard at the Air Force Association Shootout for Soldiers event recognizing Vietnam Veterans for their service.

On July 16 we will provide the color guard for the Long Beach Parade.

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### VVA Chapter #421

We presented our scholarship award to Santina Ruggerio a student at the Father Capodanno Catholic Academy at a breakfast and ice cream social on May 23<sup>rd</sup>. The scholarship is to the student of the Academy's choosing, based upon academics and need.

May 27<sup>th</sup> We held the Memorial Day Parade





June 9<sup>th</sup> we held our Day of Remembrance for the 85 Staten Islanders who made the supreme sacrifice. This was our largest event, with attendance about 300 people.



Photo by  
Maria Russo



Photo by  
Maria Russo



Photo by  
Maria Russo

**VVA CHAPTER #421 MEMBER PROFILE****Lee Covino 1951-2024**

Lee Covino, a U.S. Army veteran who served three borough presidents and many other elected officials and was a leading voice in advocating for veterans on Staten Island and nationally, has passed away at age 72.

The name Lee Covino is synonymous with service to country and community.

Lee Covino served in the US Army veteran from 1970-71 during the Viet Nam War. He became an advocate for veterans' affairs as a peer counselor while attending the College of Staten Island on the GI Bill from 1973-1977. From 1980-1984, he worked as an intervention counselor for the VA's Vietnam Veterans Outreach Center in Brooklyn and Staten Island, assisting close to 1,000 Vietnam era and combat vets.

In July 1990, he was appointed to the cabinet of Staten Island Borough President Guy V. Molinari, where he served as the Veterans Affairs Advisor and Director of Contracts & Procurement. He continued his tenure in the administration of Borough President James P. Molinaro, and with Borough President James S. Oddo, until his retirement in March, 2014. In May 2002, Covino was appointed to the City's Veterans Advisory Board by Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg. He was re-appointed to the board by the Mayor in 2007 and in 2012, ending his term as Vice-Chairman of the Board in April, 2015.

Lee was active in supporting public officials who supported U.S. veterans. Many generations of Staten Island elected officials sought his counsel and advice on veterans and community issues.

Over the years, Lee had played a major role in bringing the Vet Center and the VA Clinic to Staten Island, as well as in obtaining a Staten Island bus link to the VA Hospital in Brooklyn. Working with the Borough Presidents, he helped coordinate annual Fleet Week activities, developed Operation Vet Care, which brought the VA's outreach van to minority-based areas on Staten Island, Operation Vet Call, which assisted vets with resume development and job search through the State Department of Labor, and

Operation Vet Link, which assisted veterans with learning basic computer skills through free courses donated by local business schools.

Lee was a steadfast presence at public events supporting veterans' causes. He always heeded a call-to-action on behalf of vets and indeed he led the charge many times over the years to oppose any budget cuts to programs designed to help vets. In addition, Lee testified and spoke up at public hearings on

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issues of importance to people in need, from senior housing to mass transportation to health and human services.

Lee was a member of the VFW, American Legion, Vietnam Veterans of America, the Catholic War Veterans, AMVETS, the NYC Veterans Alliance and the 369<sup>th</sup> Veterans Association. Covino also served as Treasurer of the United Staten Island Veterans' Organization, Inc. (USIVO), an umbrella group of Staten Island veteran organizations which sponsor the annual Memorial Day Parade. He was to be inducted into the NYS Veterans Hall of Fame later this year.

## **NEW YORK STATE SENATOR JESSICA SCARCELLA-SPANTON POSTHUMOUSLY HONOR HIM BY PLACING HIS NAME IN THE SENATE VETERAN'S HALL OF FAME IN 2024**

### **PTSD Report**

**Tom Harris - Chair**

Here's an interesting topic for today's meeting and the drive home.

### **Why is being part of a VVA community important to your mental and physical health?**

Personally, I can recall back in the 1980's being part of a start-up VVA chapter. The meetings were long, loud and often left Vietnam veterans wondering why they would even be part of this type of organization. (Ned and I were at the same meetings) I'd come home super pissed and revved up. Topics in those days are almost still with us-PTSD, Agent Orange, VA benefits, employment, re-entry issues, ceremonies, recruitment and respect.

Okay, fast forward to today and ask yourself how you feel about being part of this VVA organization or any other organization for that matter.

Let's look at some medical facts first: CORTISOL. Your body produces this chemical hormone. That's a good thing. When it produces too much over a long period of time, that's not so good. When cortisol is chronically elevated the immune system becomes less sensitive to it, which can lead to chronic inflammation which is linked to many diseases such as obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, arthritis etc. In the mental health scheme chronic inflammation can be part of depression, anxiety and PTSD.

So, now that we're old and cranky (I speak for myself) I'm thinking I need to try to keep this cortisol in the right range, as much as I can.

Tips:

1. Healthy eating-choose single -ingredient foods. There seems to be an association with high calorie foods and increase levels of cortisol. SO eat right.

Physical activity-I've brought this up for over ten years and I personally know how hard it is to stay in shape through exercise. I can make a list of ten reasons why I'm not walking tonight but I can also make

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1. of list of all the physical and mental reasons why it's important. It's a matter of getting in the habit (so I've heard!).
2. Journal writing-aka Therapeutic writing. Can't say I've ever been successful at keeping a journal. Here's my idea. My choice is to write in a journal for, say, 30 minutes (including thinkin' time) or take a walk for 30 minutes. Fair trade, right?
3. Okay, here's where being part of something like VVA fits in. Research shows that 'being connected to other humans is really important. "Just that social connection and finding yourself in a place where you know you're valued and you value others". True, right?
4. Get the right sleep and mediate. Old news, not so easy to do.

Anger just sucks on all levels. Feeling angry can impair your blood pressure leading to increased risk of heart attacks and strokes. Anger can serious effect your blood vessels. Topic for another time. Shake it off and walk away

Anyhow, this hormone (cortisol) plays a huge role in PTSD and mental health issues. Start thinking about it today

Second topic for those staying around in the nice cool meeting room deals with something that's getting way too close to my orbit. Dementia. I just hate thinking about it every time I just can remember something. A Vietnam Navy neighbor of mine is right on the edge. He realizes something 'ain't right upstairs' but has decided worrying about it is his treatment of choice.

Some research says that brain changes leading to Alzheimer's start 20 years before symptoms start showing. Here a just a smidge of the risk facts that could lead to dementia.

Hearing loss and not using hearing aides increase the chances of developing dementia. "What??"

Smoking can lead to a 5% increase in developing dementia in your life time. Guess you have to live long enough to prove that theory.

Untreated depression, social isolation and lack of physical activity are all risk facts. SO, eat well (not a lot), exercise, staying social are the start of better brain health.

If someone you trust says you seem a little: off-mood changes, altered judgement, poor decision making, see a doctor. Maybe if I can just stop worrying about dementia, yup, that would help.

So, my friends, relax and enjoy life!!

Plato once said (I think he said since my hearing aid batteries crapped out)

"Be kind, because everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle"

Me: "Nice turn signal asshole!"

### Health Committee Report

Tom Harris—Chair

Ever wonder where the term "stroke" comes from as it relates to a medical emergency that involves your brain? Well, I don't have an answer to that.

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A stroke has been called a 'brain attack'.

Although there are many types of strokes it basically involves a loss of blood to your brain. A blood vessel to part of the brain either has a clot or blockage, or burst. The longer a stroke goes untreated the more brain cells die.

Most strokes are ischemic ones (80%) caused by a clot leading to a blockage in a blood vessel. The other major type is hemorrhagic caused by a ruptured blood vessel leading to the brain bleeds.

Symptoms you may be having a stroke need to be treated immediately. REMEMBER the term **FAST**:

**Face:** Can you smile and does one side look drooping?

**Arm:** Raise both arms, does one drift downward?

**Speech:** Does speech sound strange? Slurred

**Time:** Make a note of the time. ER docs can administer clot busting medication within 4.5 hours of the start of symptoms.

A few DON'TS if you think someone is having a stroke.

Don't delay and think nothing is wrong. Call 911 or get to the ER immediately. Don't drive yourself to the hospital.

Don't give the person any drugs, food or drinks.

Even if symptoms seem to pass have it checked out-could be a Transient Ischemic Attacks or TIA.

Warning signs something is wrong that could lead to a stroke.

Constantly hot , wicked headaches, squiggly lines in your vision, vomiting, feeling like your drunk.

Strokes are a medical emergency that need your attention immediately. Before to visit the Emergency Room than wait to see if symptoms go away.

How to avoid having a stroke: Eat right, healthy weight, exercise, don't smoke, limit alcohol, lower cholesterol, control blood pressure.

Stay well my friends!!

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## Membership Report

Ted Wilkinson—Chair

## Decade 2014 - 2024 NY Chapter Membership Growth

Chapter	Sept 2014	April 2024	% +/-
At Large	744	1047	+303
8	53	63	+10
11	447	508	+61

20	579	618	+39
32	246	233	-13
49	276	395	+19
72	166	173	+13
77	593	713	+120
79	88	68	-20
82	327	334	+7
85	43	42	-1
103	202	191	-11
126	102	113	+11
140	118	115	-3
193	124	152	+28
268	43	118	+75

333	211	216	+5
377	65	95	+30
421	229	249	+20
459	46	40	-6
480	80	81	+1
541	36	34	-2
704	49	45	-4
803	179	252	+73
827	28	23	-5
865	182	152	-30
869	44	32	-12



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944	73	169	+96
978	24	35	+11
TOTALS	5397	6306	+909

## May 2024 VVA Top 25 VVA Chapters by Membership

Rank	Chapter	State	Members		Rank	Chapter	State	Members
1	0172	MD	962		14	317	MO	441
2	0203	TN	955		15	1048	FL	442
3	1036	FL	953		16	0227	VA	408
4	0862	PA	912		17	0137	TX	407
5	0154	MI	805		18	0165	WA	398
6	0077	NY	713		19	0049	NY	398
7	1067	AL	637		20	0299	IL	372
8	0020	NY	612		21	0628	WV	370
9	0391	CA	609		21	0012	NJ	370
10	0451	MD	528		23	0295	IN	359
11	0011	NY	509		24	0047	CA	355
12	1054	SD	477		25	1078	TN	348
13	0941	ND	458					

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## VETERANS NEWS

### REMEMBRANCE

"Remembrance" is a collection of "Galleries" containing imagery, stories, poems, songs, maps, and narratives from or about the Vietnam War era. This section also contains a "Glossary" of terms and slang used in this era and found in the writings throughout this Site.

<http://www.vietvet.org/thepast.htm>

[https://www.huffpost.com/entry/unresolved-grief-signs-experiencing-ano\\_1\\_66219506e4b01006be16132a?utm\\_campaign=share\\_email&ncid=other\\_email\\_o63gt2jcad4](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/unresolved-grief-signs-experiencing-ano_1_66219506e4b01006be16132a?utm_campaign=share_email&ncid=other_email_o63gt2jcad4)

#### Exposed to Agent Orange at U.S. Bases, Vets Face Cancer Without VA Compensation

As reported April 29 by Hannah Norman and Patricia Kime for *KFF Health News*, mounting evidence shows, as far back as the 1950s, in an effort to kill the ubiquitous poison oak and other weeds at Fort Ord, the military experimented with and sprayed Agent Orange. As a young GI at Fort Ord in Monterey County, Calif., Dean Osborn spent much of his time in the oceanside woodlands, training on soil and guzzling water from streams and aquifers now known to be contaminated with cancer-causing pollutants. "They were marching the snot out of us," he said, recalling his year and a half stationed on the base, from 1979 to 1980. He also remembers, not so fondly, the poison oak pervasive across the 28,000-acre installation that closed in 1994. He went on sick call at least three times because of the overwhelmingly itchy rash. While the U.S. military used the herbicide to defoliate the dense jungles of Vietnam and adjoining countries, it was contaminating the land and waters of coastal California with the same chemicals, according to documents. The Defense Department has publicly acknowledged that during the Vietnam War era it stored Agent Orange at the Naval Construction Battalion Center in Gulfport, Miss., and the former Kelly Air Force Base in Texas, and tested it at Florida's Eglin Air Force Base. According to the Government Accountability Office, however, the Pentagon's list of sites where herbicides were tested went more than a decade without being updated and lacked specificity. GAO analysts described the list in 2018 as "inaccurate and incomplete." Fort Ord was not included.

<https://mail.aol.com/d/list/referrer=newMail&folders=1&accountIds=1&listFilter=NEWMAIL/messages/ANtAD35To4GxZjVlwgr-IsQvAc#TWO>

#### Veterans Affairs leaders improperly approved almost \$11 million in bonuses for senior executives, watchdog finds

The VA's inspector general has found that more than 180 senior executives received improper bonuses last fall, with several taking home more than \$100,000. The bonuses came from money Congress had earmarked to recruit and retain specialists. VA executives have been ordered to repay the money, but some are challenging the ruling.

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**VA Cited for Over Yearlong Delay on Benefits for Agent Orange Exposure**

As reported May 9 by Linda Hersey for *Stars and Stripes*, more than 10,500 benefits claims for leukemia, multiple myeloma, and other diseases related to herbicide exposure were overlooked for more than a year by the VA, according to a new report by the VA Office of Inspector General. The report, issued this week, identified decision delays for a group of VA claims submitted in 2021 from Navy veterans seeking disability compensation and healthcare benefits for medical conditions developed after exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides during the Vietnam War. The inspector general launched the review after learning about significant delays in claims from Navy veterans who had not received decisions for more than 365 days. Passage of the *Blue Water Navy Veterans Act in 2019* extended VA benefits for the first time to veterans who served off the Vietnam coast or in the Korean Demilitarized Zone. Nearly all the claims identified involved medical conditions related to herbicide exposure, which required review by teams with specialized training, according to the report.

<https://mail.aol.com/d/list/referrer=newMail&folders=1&accountIds=1&listFilter=NEWMAIL/messages/AClfDvsF185yZj5vwQMFCBaPOY0#ONE>

**VVA Calls For Swift Passage of the *SERVICE Act***

**(Washington, D.C.)** – “Vietnam Veterans of America applauds the introduction of the *SERVICE Act*,” said Jack McManus, VVA National President. “This legislation will save lives as it provides law enforcement with tools and training to help respond to veterans in crisis. We have seen the “suicide by cop” scenario played out all too often. With the appropriate training, police will have tools to both recognize and de-escalate such a situation and avoid unnecessary tragedy.”

The *Supporting Every At-Risk Veteran In Critical Emergencies (SERVICE) Act* (H.R. 3180), introduced to Congress by Representatives Dale W. Strong (R-AL), Lou Correa (D-CA), Maria Elvira Salazar (R-FL), and Glenn Ivey (D-MD), would establish a pilot program to allow local law-enforcement agencies to use the Department of Justice’s (DOJ) Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grants to establish dedicated “Veterans Response Teams” within departments to respond to emergency calls involving veterans in crisis.

Law enforcement officers who have a background in military service would be given preference in selections for Veterans Response Teams. Members of those teams would be available 24/7 to respond to instances of a veteran in crisis, including mental health or substance abuse situations. Following the initial response, members of the team would assist in connecting the individual with community and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) resources.

“The deployment of the proven strategy of veterans helping veterans, combined with a new focus on mental health or substance-abuse situations, will more effectively address veterans in crisis and those contemplating suicide,” McManus noted. “For these reasons, VVA calls for the swift passage of this legislation.”

**VVA Urges Congress to Pass the *Donut Dollies Congressional Gold Medal Act***

**(Washington, D.C.)** – “Vietnam Veterans of America strongly supports the *Donut Dollies Congressional Gold Medal Act* (H.R. 3592),” said Jack McManus, VVA National President. “We believe it is vital to recognize these largely unacknowledged heroes of the Vietnam War, three of whom did not make it home from Vietnam—Hannah Crews, Lucinda Richter, and Virginia Kirsh.”

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“These women were selfless, brave, and resilient. Every Vietnam veteran I know respects and admires them for the guts they showed as they braved incoming mortars, snipers, and ground-to-air fire to visit the firebases,” McManus continued. “They were a lifeline. They brought a touch of home to the frontlines, and offered compassion and comfort when servicemembers needed it most.”

1,120 women volunteered to serve with the Red Cross during the Vietnam War, and 627 of those women worked as Donut Dollies. They were members of the Supplemental Recreation Activities Overseas (SRAO) program. Providing critical morale boosts to soldiers, Dollies traveled by jeep, truck, and helicopter to forward operating positions, logging over 2,000,000 miles visiting combat troops at remote fire bases. Their job was to bring smiles, songs, games, and a touch of back home to the men who were in the bush and the wounded in evacuation hospitals. This all-volunteer cohort of women embraced the perilous and demanding work. As one Donut Dolly put it, “Our job was to smile and be bubbly for an entire year— no matter what the situation.”

The bill was introduced in May 2023 by Representative Mikie Sherrill (D-NJ) and it is co-sponsored by Representatives Madeleine Dean (D-PA), Mike Thompson (D-CA), Deborah Ross (D-NC), Jamie Raskin (D-MD), Dean Phillips (D-MN), Anna Paulina Luna (R-FL), Chrissy Houlahan (D-PA), Jack Bergman (R-MI), and Brittany Pettersen (D-CO).

#### VVA chapter 421 - Memorial Day Tribute - poem

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e76va1\\_e0qg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e76va1_e0qg)

#### National Women Veterans Recognition Day Celebration

<https://womensmemorial.org/program/national-women-veterans-recognition-day-celebration/>

#### Largest Veteran Housing Development in US Breaks Ground in West LA

As reported May 31 by Leo Stallworth for KABC, the largest veteran housing development in the country broke ground Friday in West Los Angeles. “We are building a community here on the West L.A. VA campus for veterans,” U.S.VETS President and CEO Stephen Peck said. “So today, we are celebrating a groundbreaking of two buildings.” More than \$1 billion is committed in development funds, which includes the two new housing projects that will provide 87 homes for veterans. Once the development is completed, the 80-acre campus will feature 1,200 housing units, 100,000 square feet of new amenities, and supportive services for more than 3,000 veterans and families.

#### DD214: What You Need to Know

<https://www.military.com/benefits/records-and-forms/dd214.html?>

[ESRC=dod\\_240705.nl&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=dod&utm\\_campaign=20240705](https://www.military.com/benefits/records-and-forms/dd214.html?ESRC=dod_240705.nl&utm_medium=email&utm_source=dod&utm_campaign=20240705)

Our veterans and their families have sacrificed so much for our country. Now, it's time for us to stand up for them. The *Molly R. Loomis Research for Descendants of Toxic Exposed Veterans Act of 2024* is a critical piece of legislation aimed at understanding and addressing the health impacts of toxic exposures on the descendants of our brave servicemembers.



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### Statement from the President of Vietnam Veterans of America Regarding Recent Comments on Medal of Honor and Civilian Presidential Medal of Freedom

**(Washington, D.C.)** – In light of recent statements made by a political candidate equating the Medal of Honor with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, it is essential to clarify the distinctions between these prestigious awards. As President of Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), I feel a deep responsibility to ensure that the honor and significance of these medals are accurately represented and understood.

The Medal of Honor is the highest military decoration awarded by the United States government. It is bestowed upon members of the armed forces who have distinguished themselves through acts of valor beyond the call of duty. This medal is a symbol of extraordinary courage and sacrifice, often awarded posthumously. It is important to note that receiving the Medal of Honor does not require an individual to have been severely wounded; rather, it is awarded for acts of heroism that demonstrate exceptional bravery and gallantry in combat.

In contrast, the Presidential Medal of Freedom is the highest civilian award in the United States. It recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to the national interests of the U.S., world peace, or cultural endeavors. While it is a tremendous honor, it is fundamentally different from military honors and should not be compared directly to the sacrifices made by our servicemembers.

Additionally, the Purple Heart is awarded to those wounded or killed while serving in the U.S. military. It serves as a poignant reminder of the personal sacrifices made in the line of duty and represents a different aspect of military service than the Medal of Honor.

As we approach the upcoming elections, it is crucial for all candidates and public figures to fully understand these distinctions. Misrepresenting the meaning and significance of these awards not only disrespects the sacrifices made by our veterans but also undermines the integrity of our national honors. VVA urges all candidates to take this opportunity to educate themselves about the medals awarded to our nation's heroes. Accurate understanding and respectful discourse regarding these awards can foster a greater appreciation for the sacrifices made by our veterans and their families.

### Understanding Veterans in New York

A new report commissioned by the New York Health Foundation (NYHealth) and conducted by RAND offers a comprehensive assessment of the mental and physical health needs, access to care, and other factors like food security affecting recently separated veterans in New York. It offers the first comprehensive look at New York veterans' health and social service needs since RAND's landmark needs assessment nearly 14 years ago.

Some key findings from the report include:

- **High Disability Rates:** More than 60% of new veterans have a disability, double the rate from 2010.
- **Mental Health Challenges:** 25% have probable depression or PTSD, with nearly 20% experiencing both.

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**Food Insecurity:** 25% of veterans faced food insecurity in the past year, despite high levels of employment and education.

[https://nyhealthfoundation.org/resource/new-york-rand-assessment-veterans-2024/?utm\\_source=email&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=RAND+Conference+email&utm\\_id=RAND+Conference+email](https://nyhealthfoundation.org/resource/new-york-rand-assessment-veterans-2024/?utm_source=email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=RAND+Conference+email&utm_id=RAND+Conference+email)

"What Do New York's Veterans Need?"

Most military veterans returning home to New York adjust to civilian life without major difficulties. But how can we best support those who struggle with that transition? What do they need and want when it comes to health care, mental health, and social services? A recent NYHealth-commissioned needs assessment by RAND asked these questions of more than 1,100 New York veterans who recently separated from the military.

In his latest [column](#), NYHealth President and CEO David Sandman highlights key takeaways from the needs assessment and opportunities to better support New York's veterans.

### [Trump picks former congressman Doug Collins to lead Veterans Affairs](#)

The Republican from Georgia is a longtime ally of the president-elect and was a staunch defender of Donald Trump during both impeachments. The Veterans Affairs Department is the second-largest agency and oversees health care, disability and other benefits for former service members.

On behalf of the **Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA)** and the **Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH)**, we write to convey our strong and unified support for the passage of **H.R. 8371, the Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act**, along with the following companion legislation in the Senate, if it comes to the floor with these attached:

**S. 3958, the Molly R. Loomis Research for Descendants of Toxic Exposed Veterans Act of 2024, sponsored by Senator Tester, and;**

**S. 5074, the Protecting Regular Order for Veterans Act of 2024, introduced by Senator Sullivan.**

We also support the inclusion of S. 3958 and S. 5074 in any broader legislative package alongside H.R. 8371 to ensure these critical measures benefit all veterans and their families. These bills collectively address essential aspects of healthcare access, toxic exposure research, and VA accountability, making them a legislative priority for the veteran community.

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	John Rowan	jrowan6990@hotmail.com
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	bkrdad@aol.com
Veterans Incarcerated Committee & In Justice System	Nick Valenti	nickvalenti46@yahoo.com