

INTERCHANGE ONLINE



THE OFFICIAL ONLINE NEWSPAPER OF THE
NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL

Vol. 28 Issue 01

Veteran's News that needs to be Read SPRING 2018



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ELECTION COMMITTEE

The New York State Council of the Vietnam Veterans of America will hold elections for all officer and director positions on June 30, 2018 at its quarterly meeting. The meeting is held at the Tioga-Downs Casino.

Any current member of the VVA who is interested in being nominated must meet all the minimum qualifications of the position applying for set forth in the NY SC By Laws (as amended) and be prepared to make a significant time commitment.

Letters of Intent or questions can be sent to the Election Committee Chairperson before June 30th:
Tom Harris, email bkrdad@aol.com.

Nominations will be accepted from the floor during the election.

IN MEMORIAM



VVA Chapter #20

Henry E. Meschi died April 15, 2017 (Life Member) 69 USMC

Ronald Bryant who died November 5, 2017 73 . Army

MAY THEY REST IN PEACE



VVA-NYSC Meeting Dates 2018
 January 26, 27, 28 April 27, 28, 29
 June 29, 30, Jul 01 September 21, 22, 23

On-Line INTERCHANGE is the Bi-monthly 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 Chapter by the **deadline** of the **Third Friday of each month**. Editor reserves the right to edit for length, grammar and reject any libelous or obscene material.

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President's Report

Ned D. Foote

We began our new year and we are starting off with a bang. Our first meeting was just held in our new digs at Tioga Downs. Brand new hotel with beautiful rooms. Many choices of restaurants. It is connected to the casino, but it is a walk so if you are not into that stuff no need to go near it.

The meeting room is much bigger than we had, and the staff cannot be anymore helpful. I did not hear any complaints. We are open to suggestions though to make it better. We did rearrange our tables for the meeting and might tweak that some more. Hope to have all microphones working and projector up and running. So, we have a few small details to work out but overall, I think we will be very happy.

Also some of you got to meet the owner Jeff Gural. He is 75 and he lost some friends in Vietnam. He has been sympathetic to us since as he really was pissed how we were welcomed back and has been helping those Veterans in the Southern Tier for many years. Speaking with him and some of you guys meeting him he likes what we do. So much so he gave us a donation to help us continue what we do for our Veterans. So, if you run into him please thank him.

One last note. This place makes a nice getaway weekend. Maybe you would like to bring your partner. Stay overnight on Friday or Saturday or both. If you like horse racing you can see the track from most rooms. We are trying to make us more family than just attending a meeting. At 99.00 dollars a room how can you go wrong.

Now to a bit of business. February 28th is end of our fiscal year and yes. Annual Finance Reports and in April, elections. I know many of you dread this as you think it is such a hard report and you need your treasurer to make it out and secretary do the election. Keep in mind it does not matter who makes it out **You as President** is responsible for this being done.

Now a little on Finance Report. Yes, you have until July 15th to do but do you really need to wait that long? This report should not take you any more than ½ hour and for you slower ones it should be one hour.

The VVA side is one page and **it is a cover letter** that does not ask any of your finances. The second page is the 990n that you must go to the IRS website. This can be simple or as hard as you wish to make but if you read the whole screen in front of you and follow the directions you should not have any problems. I would start as new. Don't try to remember what your ID and password was from last year.

The one important part as you go through the process is the last. It comes up that you have submitted your 990n. Many of you go ahead and print that page. **That is not what we need.** If you are looking at that page at the top it says wait 7 minutes and you can get an updated report that will say the IRS has accepted your 990n. That is what we want and again no finances are reported so anyone of you can do this.

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I will send out instructions again and hound you all into doing which I should not have to do but I'm the one who has to answer to National why you did not do your report. Also **remember this is an IRS requirement.**

Okay enough. I bought a new helmet so now when I bang my head against the wall I won't bruise as much.

July 24th to 29th is Leadership Conference. I know hardly any of you go to these and this one is in Palm Springs CA. What is important with this one will be reports from the Working Groups as to where VVA is going. We do have a shelf life and we are addressing the situation. Come next convention. the delegates will be voting on what we do.

I know many of you have talked in your chapters. You have made up your minds without listening to all. I ask you keep an open mind. Now you say, we have 8.2000 members that have a say in this. Only if that was true. What is true, is that only 800 members attend the convention, as delegates, and they will decide where we go.

So, if you want a voice in this, you will need to attend the convention in 2019. New York State has the largest membership and is entitled to around 120 delegates. Last convention we had 55 registered. So, if you really care of what happens to Vietnam Veterans of America, please start plans now to send all your delegates you are entitled.

In this edition you will see a letter from our Benefits Director Kelsey Yoon. It has to do with the VA's new RAMP program. We are not endorsing this, at this point, and warn all of you that if you get a letter from the VA do not opt into this. It may harm more than helping you.

Finally, on the medical marijuana front. The VA will not do any studies on this because it is still illegal on the Federal side. This is what I have been trying to warn you all that if you go ahead and find a doctor to prescribe this for you and then go to the VA for other stuff you may get tested for drugs and this could show up and then you could lose out big time. VVANYSC, I believe is the only Veterans organization who opposed legalizing this.

Also, don't forget that in the month of June 2018 all positions for President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and District Directors are open for qualified individuals to seek these positions.

Until the next time!

PS Reminder: At the April meeting we will have our **Memorial Remembrance** for our deceased members.

Tioga Downs Hotel Information

Grant has down his job well with locating and negotiating our deal.

2018 Meeting Dates (Saturday meeting)

January 27 April 28 June 30 September 22

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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.

(Continue on pg. 5) Tioga Hotel

RESERVATION

So go ahead and make your reservations. Also don't forget **your Tax Exempt forms.**

If you are unable to attend the meeting, you have a responsibility to call the hotel and cancel your reservation. All rooms have two queen size beds.

Hotel number is (607) 699-3900. Press '1'

Make reservation using name "Vietnam Veterans of America"

Address - 2384 W. River Road (exit 62)

PO Box 509

Nichols, New York 13812

Get out on EXIT #62, then make a right turn to hotel.

Tioga Downs is 100% Smoke Free

50 Years Later, Vietnam Veteran Recalls Tet Offensive

Fifty years ago, February 5, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army launched massive attacks throughout South Vietnam.

The Tet Offensive, named for the Vietnamese new year, surprised the American and South Vietnamese military forces that were fighting to keep the country from falling under communism. Although they eventually beat back the attackers, the Tet Offensive turned many Americans against the war in Vietnam.

"It was the biggest battle of the Vietnam War," Curran said. Forty-thousand communist troops were killed while American and South Vietnamese losses were only a fraction of that total, he said.

Militarily, the communists were defeated in the Tet Offensive, he said. Politically, however, they gained, because American public opinion began to shift sharply against the war.

The Vietnam War was the first conflict that Americans could watch on their televisions, he noted. They were shocked to see the Viet Cong attack the U.S. embassy in Saigon.

The public execution of a Viet Cong officer by a South Vietnamese police commander during the Tet Offensive, captured by an Associated Press photograph, contributed to Americans' disillusionment with the war.

Yet the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army never defeated United States forces on the battlefield.

Western District Report**Mike Walker****VVA Chapters #20, #77, #193, #268, #459, #865, #978**

The Western end of the state is doing well. The only bad thing is the weather that's keeping my travels down.

I hope all had enjoyed the holidays their chapter brothers and their families.

Chapter 268 is doing a great job bringing the chapter back from the brink of being shut down. They went out and doubled the membership, doing a lot in the community and getting the word out that they are open for business.

Chapter 20, 77 and 268 are putting ads in the local newspapers about the Household Goods program that helps national, state council and the chapter. The ads will be run around days that people will look at the paper and hope it stirs them to give

I hope to get on the road and visit the chapters soon, that is if Mother Nature cooperate.

VVA Chapter #77**Ed Bodine**

Sept. Collected for at local high school football game for our food pantry.

Oct. Mike Newfield the pilot of our Cobra helicopter family traveled from all over the country to meet with us at our monument. We had a nice lunch with them after.

Nov. We celebrated our 1ST anniversary on Veterans Day with our missing man table, rifle salute and taps.

Dec. AVVA collected toys of our needy vets families. They made up bags for our hospitalized vets at the VA.

Dec. VVA 77 had their annual Christmas Party.

Jan. We had our annual spaghetti dinner for out Peter Tyce scholarships. Last year we gave out 35 this year hoping for 40 this year.

Southern District Report**Joe Ingino****VVA Chapters #11, #32, #72, #82, #126, #421, #807**

I like to say thank you all my Chapters for their prayers. I had meetings with the New York senators, Elaine Phillips, and John Brooks , about veterans issues. Also met with Assemblywomen Christine Pellegrino.

I was invited to an award ceremony for New York State Assemblyman Chuck Levine at the Nassau County Armour Museum . I went upstate for VVANYSC meetings. I attended the Suffolk County board meeting and we talked about the river fluke and went to Northport VA hospital for a VSO meeting and spoke about the new emergency department. February 4, the four chaplain legion of honor awards. I would like to congratulate, Richard Torth and Robert Moore, for receiving their awards.

VVA Chapter #11 Report**VVA Chapter 72****VVA Chapter #72**

Danny Friedman - President

Hello and Season's Greetings,

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(Continue from pg. 7) VVA Chapter #72

3/13 - Participated in Ceremony at the McKinley School honoring Vietnam Veterans

3/25 - Participated in Vietnam Veterans Recognition Day ceremonies at the NYC Vietnam Memorial

3/30 - Participated in Vietnam Veterans Recognition Day ceremonies at Fort Hamilton

4/30 - Participated in fund raiser for Memorial Day Parade

5/23 - Participated in Memorial Day Program at the McKinley School

5/29 - Marched and had a float in Brooklyn's Memorial Day Parade

6/4 - Fund raising and educational table at Brooklyn's 5th Avenue Street Fair

8/22 - Met with Cong. Donovan concerning the proposed cut in services at Brooklyn VAMC

9/28 - Bus trip and memorial ceremony at The Wall and Arlington National Cemetery

10/12 - Participated in VA Town Hall Meeting in NYC

10/14 - Chapter 72's 35th Anniversary Dinner Dance

10/15 - Fund raising and educational table at Brooklyn's 3rd Avenue Street Fair

10/19 - Met with Congressman Donovan and VA Nurse's Union concerning proposed cut in services at Brooklyn VAMC

11/9 - Participated in Veterans' Day Ceremony hosted by NYS Senator Golden

11/11 - Marched and had a float in NYC's Veterans' Day Parade

11/14 - Participated in Veterans' Day Program at the McKinley School

12/19 - Held a holiday party for Chapter members and spouses

12/23 - Held a holiday party for 15 West including food, beverages and a DJ

Provided pizza parties for our adopted ward of 15 West at the Brooklyn VA Hospital for Easter, Memorial Day, 4th of July, and Veterans Day

Provided approximately \$400 for the purchase of sundries for our deployed troops as part of our Operation Troop Cheer

Purchased \$1700 worth of new clothing for homeless veterans

Donated \$1000 each to Fischer House and Team Rubicon

Donated \$500 each to VVA State Councils in Florida, Texas and Puerto Rico for hurricane relief

VVA Chapter #11

Steven Bonom



Ed Mangano, Nassau County Executive thanks Ralph Esposito, Nassau Veterans Service Director; Steve Bonom, President of Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 82 Nassau County and Bob Chiappone, Commander, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Chapter 417 for their combined effort in raising over \$5,000 for the Help Rebuild Texas Fund after hurricane Harvey.

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RE: VVA's Guidance for the Rapid Appeals Modernization Program (RAMP)

Dear State Council Presidents:

This letter is intended to provide general guidance on the Rapid Appeals Modernization Program (RAMP) for you to use or disseminate as appropriate to your membership. On August 23, 2017, Congress enacted *the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017*, which will drastically change the VA claims and appeals process. The new law will officially go into effect February 2019; however, VA has already initiated a temporary program that partially implements the new law. This temporary program is called RAMP.

To participate in RAMP, veterans must receive an "opt-in" letter from VA asking if they wish to participate in this **optional** pilot program. Choosing to opt-in to RAMP is an **irreversible decision**. RAMP uses different legal standards and rules that may not be pro-veteran; a "faster decision" does not mean a "favorable decision." **Due to various factors, it is the current position of the Veterans Benefits Program (VBP) that veterans not opt-in to RAMP at this time.**

Importantly, it is strongly encouraged for anyone receiving a RAMP letter who has questions to reach out to his or her local accredited service representative for guidance. Accredited service representatives are able to look up the claim and see what is going on, as well as provide claim-specific advice. Without the proper training and expertise, it may be difficult for a person who is not a service officer to answer some of the more intricate and complex questions that may arise from RAMP inquiries. Thus, the VBP makes the following recommendations:

1. State Council Presidents and leaders in the state that are *not* accredited service representative should refer any questions about RAMP to an accredited service officer. To locate an accredited service representative that is nearby to your membership, please visit <https://vva.org/what-we-do/veteran-services/claims-assistance/> and search by zip code or state.
2. If a state is receiving questions about RAMP from its membership and there is not an active service officer program in that state, state leadership should refer the VVA-represented veteran or family member to VVA's National Veterans Benefits Program office. The direct line to that office is (202) 530-9180. For states that do not have an active service officer program, please know that VVA's VBP is directly reaching out to each veteran or family member that will receive an opt-in letter to provide legal support and guidance if the individual is represented by VVA.

For any additional questions about RAMP or the new law, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at the contact information below.

Sincerely,

Kelsey Yoon

Director, Veterans Benefits Program

Vietnam Veterans of America

Elections for VVA-NYSC positions of President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and for all District Directors will be at our Annual Meeting in June 2018.

As per VVA National Constitution and VVA-NYSC By-Laws the following are the requisite for these positions.

**VVA NATIONAL CONSTITUTION:
ARTICLE II
STATE PROVISION**

SECTION 4 - OFFICERS

The delegates to a State Council shall elect from the membership within the state, whether Chapter or otherwise, a President, a Vice President, a Secretary, a Treasurer, or Secretary/Treasurer, and such other officers as may be deemed necessary or proper by the Council. Election of officers of the Council, held after December 31, 1986, shall, upon nomination, be by vote at a meeting of the Council to be held the second calendar quarter of each even-numbered year. Officers shall serve for a term of two (2) years or until the seat held by such officer shall be deemed vacant pursuant to the provisions of this Constitution. **VVA National Constitution**

VVA-NYSC BY-LAWS:

ARTICLE V – EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The delegates of the Council shall elect, from the individual membership within the State, whether Chapter or otherwise, a President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer or Secretary/Treasurer, District Directors, and such other officers as may be deemed necessary by the Council. These elected Officers and District Directors shall constitute the Executive Committee of the New York State Council, Vietnam Veterans of America, and Inc. Candidates that are to run for office at the state level, must be a member in good standing, for a continuous period of (1) not less than the 12 months preceding the annual election at which the candidates seek election and (2) candidates must have held positions as an elected officer (President, Vice President, Secretary or Treasurer), Director or Delegate of VVA, at the Chapter level, during any continuous period of twelve months prior to the date of the election. Election of Officers and District Directors of the Council shall be by vote at the second calendar quarter meeting of the Council in each even numbered year. Officers and District Directors so elected shall serve for a term of two (2) years or until the seat held by such officer shall be deemed vacant according to these By Laws. In the event that any member of the Executive Committee shall be deemed to have vacated his or her seat as provided herein; any office held by such Officer, except the President, shall likewise be deemed vacant. The first order of business at the next meeting of the Council following such vacancy shall be the election of a regular delegate to fill the office so vacated. In the event of the vacancy of President, the Vice President will assume the presidency for the remainder of his or her term. Any Officer or District Director must have his or her primary residence in the State to continue as an elected Officer or Director. District Directors shall be a member in Good Standing of a Chapter located in the District that he/she represents to continue as an elected Officer or Director.

Any Officer or Director who must move his or her residence to another state will be asked to resign that position and the position filled as per Article V, 2nd paragraph.

The State of New York shall be divided into four (4) Districts. The member Chapters of the State Council located in these four (4) Districts shall vote at the second calendar quarter meeting, in each even numbered year, for a District Director of each district. Only the Chapters in a given District will be able to vote for the new Director for that district.

The four (4) districts shall be the Western, Central, Eastern and Southern.

Central District Report

Nick Valenti

VVA Chapters #85, #103, #205, #296, #377, #480, #704, #708, #803, #827, #896, #944

My email has crashed somehow someway. I have a new email address. Please use the following email to contact me: nickvalenti46@yahoo.com

The last quarter of 2017 proved to be a very busy time of the year. One of the biggest projects of the year that I am involved with is the annual Wreaths Across America Program held on the 3rd Saturday of December. This past year I was again the moderator for the event that took place in Auburn, New York for the 8th consecutive year. The ceremony included thirty (30) participants. Wreaths were placed for all the branches of service; for each of the four Cayuga County servicemen killed in Afghanistan; the Army National Guard; all Cayuga County Medal of Honor Recipients – nine in all; Korean War Veterans; Vietnam Veterans; Gold Star Mothers; Service Dogs; America Legion & VFW organizations each laid a wreath in memory of their brothers & Sisters; County Sheriff, NY State Police, City of Auburn, County Legislature, City Fire Department, City Police all laid wreaths in the names of our service men and women; the final wreaths were laid by the Daughters of the American Revolution; and the Dana L. West Jr. / Sr. High School in recognition of the military service of that school's former students; POW / MIA wreath was the last presentation.

All in all, the Posting of the Colors, rifle volley and tapes gave the ceremony a very solemn and meaningful air. The guest speaker was Lorie Schneider, Chairperson of the Cpl. Kyle R. Schneider Foundation. Her son was killed by an I.E.D. on June 30, 2011 in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. She and her husband founded the Foundation in Kyle's name to focus on giving aid to the military community and military support groups both locally and nationally.

The Quilters of the Finger Lakes have had another successful year here in Central New York. On the national level they have handmade and distributed approximately 179,000 quilts. These items are presented to all servicemen and women who are willing to accept them. Vietnam Veterans Chapters are encouraged to locate a local quilters group and work hand in hand with them distributing quilts to area veterans as Chapter #704 does. Their working group comes from the Village of Union Springs and with the assistance of Lou Patti, Chapter President and Jerry Fulmer Chapter Chaplain many a veteran is in receipt of these personalized quilts.

This past December I was invited and was able to attend Utica Chapter #944's Christmas luncheon. I was able to attend when my grandpa duties were temporarily relieved. While there I took the opportunity to discuss the new State Council meeting location and answered several questions. After a brief discussion the attendees were informed as to what to expect and why we needed to change our venue. As in past meetings I have had the pleasure to attend this meeting that was heavily attended by representatives of numerous veteran's groups all of whom work in a united effort to help local veterans.

Veterans Incarcerated and in the Justice System Chapter #205 is moving ahead with its crochet squad. This successful program seems to keep growing as the years go by with volunteers supplying local homeless, charity organizations and children with outerwear for use during our cold-winter months.

I was given the opportunity to speak at the preview screening of the Ken Burns documentary "The Vietnam War" at Cayuga Community College in Auburn, New York. The event was a joint effort with WCNY and was well attended. One of our speakers was USMC Vietnam War veteran Steve Weldon. Steve recalled that fateful day July 2, 1967 when he became part of a handful of Marines who survived that day and are referred to as the "Walking Dead." Looking forward to meeting everyone at Tioga Downs for the quarterly New York State Council meeting on April 28, 2018.

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(Continue from pg. 10)

VVA Chapter #377 Report

Harvey Baker

As far as the Interchange goes, we do not have anything to report, except it's cold and snowy up here. Except this upcoming event in July:

10th Annual

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway of Valor*

"Tribute Ride"

The 100 mile ride is free and open to the public - motorcycles, cars, trucks, planes and helicopters welcome:

Ride will Begin @: 11:00 am ...@ Owego Free Academy, Sheldon Guile Blvd. Owego, NY

(Register to ride between 8:00 & 10:00 AM on day of ride) (Police Escorted Ride)

Ride Ends: @ American Legion Village of Hannibal, NY

SPONSORED BY:

Vietnam Veterans of America Chapters #377, #480, #704 and Blue Knights Chapter 17

For more information contact:

Harvey Baker, Chapter #377 Vietnam Veterans of America (607)898-3507

Dan Baker – Chapter #17, the Blue Knights (607) 229-8153

VVA Chapter #896 Report

Larry Holdredge

We have had an interesting time the last few months. We had to cancel our last fundraiser due to illness and have sadly lost a few family members. Our thoughts and prayers are with them. Larry came through his surgery fairly well and is supposed to be taking it easy.

Our Chapter is still working on getting the Silver Rose Monument in Endicott. We are happy to report that we have raised the money needed and the stone has been ordered. It will be placed at The American Legion Post 1700 on Maple St. in Endicott along with their Pow-mia Memorial. We plan to have a ceremony when the weather is warmer.

We had the help of Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo and her staff along with the American Legion to raise the money needed. We held a Halloween/fundraiser party. We dressed up and had a band plus the food all added up to a fun time.

Since my last report we have supported with our prayers and concern for four of our members, we hope they continue with their recovery.

We held our first meeting of the year January 18th 2018. We discussed our declining meeting attendance and fundraiser attendance. Will take solution ideas in February.

The Silver Rose Monument is almost complete and we will soon have the ceremony to dedicate it.

Our fundraisers so far this year are: July 21 and September 15th both at Sam's club. We are looking for other places to set up.

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(Continue from pg. 12)

Eastern District Report

Sam Hall

VVA Chapters #8, #49, #60, #79, #140, #333, #537, #541, #869

VA Chapter #49

Dan Griffin

In 2017 Chapter 49 gave \$27,000.00 worth of kitchen and bathroom kits to veterans that were homeless; the kitchen kits consist of dishes, glasses, silverware, coffee maker, toaster, etc. The bathroom kits consist of a shower curtain, towels, washcloths etc. We also purchased monthly bus tickets and train tickets for vets so that they can get to their new job or School for the first month. We also teach computer skills to homeless vets.

VVA National Third Party Insurance

I believe most of us are aware that VVA National purchases event insurance which is available for Chapters and State Councils, but that a form must be filed and a certificate must be received for each event. This is important if you are having picnic, events or for a float in a parade.

[http://chapter.vc.ons.org/file_depot/010000000/010000/1337/folder/14081/ChapterCertificateRequestForm+\(3\)+\(6\).pdf](http://chapter.vc.ons.org/file_depot/010000000/010000/1337/folder/14081/ChapterCertificateRequestForm+(3)+(6).pdf) that contains a fillable pdf. The form contains outdated email addresses a Hays insurance agent assured me the form is valid and the phone and fax numbers are correct.

Veterans Health Administration Update: Agent Orange

The latest release of the yearly Agent Orange Newsletter features information on VA environmental health registries, clinical and education services, presumptive service connection for skin conditions, research efforts, and more. Read this newsletter at <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/publications/agent-orange/agent-orange-summer-2017/index.asp>

SAVE THE DATE Saturday, March 24, 2018

READING OF NAMES OF THE FALLEN

8:30 - 10:30am Location TBA (Near 55 Water Street)

TRIBUTE MARCH

8:30 - 10:30am Retracing the route of the 1985 Welcome Home Parade from Brooklyn to Vietnam Veterans Plaza in Brooklyn, NY

WREATH LAYING CEREMONY 11:00am - 11:45am Vietnam Veterans Plaza • 55 Water St.

Secretary's Report

Francisco Muñiz III

Had a rough Holiday Season due to pneumonia, bronchitis, and wife in hospital due another TIA and seizures.

Continue working on Interchange, attending veterans advisory committee with the congressional office of Representative Kathleen Rice. She is trying to address the issue of the fluke parasite, as well with the issue of VA Choice program. This is one way that the government is trying to privatize the VA system. Trying to help Stony Brook Veterans State Nursing home to establish a Day Care site in Nassau County.

Fighting to avoid the privatization of Medicare and Medicaid. This will lead to loss of healthcare for veterans. Due to the government rescinding the Affordable Healthcare Act many veterans are losing healthcare if they are not entitled to VA healthcare, especially those in assisted living facilities.

Interchange next edition, SUMMER Edition, will be a week after the April meeting, deadline will be May 10 for submission of Officers, District Directors, Committee Reports, Regional Director and Chapter's Reports. Please submit all reports to: **VVAINTERCHANGE@AOL.COM**

At the next State Council meeting we will have our Memorial Remembrance for our deceased veterans. I am requesting that Chapter leadership send in the list of deceased members to update our files. Please take a look at the VVA Veteran newspaper under TAPS for names of some Chapter members from NY. Sometimes the family send info to Father Salois at National and not to the Chapter. I have found a few listing that were not sent by Chapters.

We had some technical problems in sending the last Interchange edition. Pres. Ned is looking for a host company to help us with this. Unfortunately, it will cost money for this service.

Also, chapter leadership, please review the Chapter News link on the website. Please remove the old news that you listed. We have info from 2016! Thanks

Received the following news from President Ned Foote that Tioga Downs Hotel owner Jeff Gural has made a substantial donation toward our VVANYSC Service Officer's Program. He stated that he loss a few friends during the Vietnam War. Ned stated, "as you all know I have had some discussions with Jeff. Not a lot but just told him what we do especially with SO's. He said he wanted to make a donation from his personal funds and he did! I have sent a thank you to him and also invited him to stop by our April meeting to accept all of our thanks. Maybe this can become a yearly thing. Who knows. This guy like us and helps local Veterans allot from what I hear."

Veterans Incarcerated And In The Justice System Committee Report

Nicholas C. Valenti - Chair

Once again VVA Chapter #205 is leading the way to show other Correctional Facilities how they can have a successful Veterans Organization within the confines of a walled city. This VVA Chapter has already mapped out their 2018 schedule of events. Ever since they started working with Veterans of Modern Warfare Chapter #24 I have watched them gain new energy. Fresh faces, fresh hands and fresh ideas continue to spur them on. The best example is how well they have organized their "Special Events Calendar" before the ink is dry on the fourth quarter of 2017. I should be able to give everyone an update in the near future, however today I want to share with you what 2018 could shape up to be.

The following is the activities calendar for 2018 at Auburn Correctional Facility:

<u>MONTH</u>	<u>DAY</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>EVENT</u>
March	Friday	2 nd	7:00 PM	Gen Membership Meeting (GMM)
May	Monday	28 th	8:30 AM	Vigil - Memorial Day
June	Friday	8 th	7:00 PM	GMM
September	Monday	3 rd	8:30 AM	Vigil - Labor Day
	Friday	7 th	7:00 PM	GMM
November	Monday	12 th	8:30 AM	Vigil - Veterans Day
December	Friday	7 th	8:30 AM	Give-A-Way
	Friday	14 th	7:00 PM	GMM - Banquet

I keep talking about the crochet squad at Auburn Correctional. I wanted everyone to know that they are still going strong and are in need of more yarn donations. The Correctional System in New York State will only allow certain colors in their facilities. Those colors are: WHITE, GREEN, BROWN, YELLOW, PURPLE, RED and PINK.

Anyone wishing to donate can contact me at 315-252-4535 (if no answer, just leave a message).

Never Again Will One Generation of Veterans Abandon Another.

The attached report is the schedule of activities for calendar year 2018 for Vietnam Veterans Chapter #205. As you can see this is a very active Chapter despite the fluctuations in their membership. They continue to be a force for good at Auburn Correctional Facility and to the surrounding communities. I look forward to working and meeting with them in the 2018 calendar year.



The David L. Woodburn Chapter #978, Viet Nam Veterans of America (VVA), has been collecting yarn in the Frewsburg area. The yarn was presented to Nicholas Valenti, Central District Director, VVANYSC at their quarterly meeting by Rev. Bob Lewis, president of the Frewsburg VVA Chapter and State Council Chaplain. This yarn will be used by VVA Chapter 205, Incarcerated Veterans at Auburn Correctional Facility. Those incarcerated veterans use donated yarn to make knitted and crocheted items such as hats, mittens, booties, scarves and toys for those in need.

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VVA Chapter #82

Eight members of the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 82 visited with the veterans that reside at the Bristol Retirement home. The members brought hats and shirts to the residents with their specific branch of service. They chatted with the veterans of which several were WW I I veterans. A couple were Korean War vets and one gentleman was a Korean War and Vietnam Era vet. That gentleman spent a total of 40 years in the military between the Air Force and then the Army. After that the Chapter members joined the residents for lunch. REALLY A GREAT DAY.

VVA Chapter 421 ReportFrank A. Russo frank@farusso.comSecretary / Webmaster www.vva421.org

Congratulations to Nicky Castoro and Gene DiGiacomo who, on February 3, 2018, became recipients of the prestigious Four Chaplains Legion of Honor award. Visit our website at www.vva421.org and watch their acceptance speeches.

VVA Chapters Donate Funds towards the VVANYSC Service Officer's Program

Chapter 77 –(R) Pres. Mike Walker, (L) 1st V P Ed Bodine, Center is VVANYSC President Ned D. Foote



Chapter 268 – Treasurer Gordon Bellinger

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Chapter 865 –Jay Book & Pres. Foote



AVVA NY – President Kathy Penfield presenting donation to VVANYSC from AVVA raffles

Enhanced STAR Exemption

Hey gals & guys, do you own your own home in New York State? Are you 65 or older? Do you know about the Enhanced STAR Exemption?

If you are 65 or older and own your own home in New York State, you are eligible for the enhanced STAR exemption. You may already have the basic STAR exemption, but the enhanced exemption offers you an even bigger break on your school taxes which are due in the fall.

The enhanced STAR exemption is available to homeowners 65 years of age or older whose income did not exceed \$86,000 in 2016. For property jointly owned by spouses, only one owner must have reached 65, and the eligibility is based on the combined income of the owners.

If you are not aware of this program, you should contact your local assessor's office and complete a STAR application by the deadline, which is March 1, 2018.

If you miss that deadline, fill out an application for 2019 taxes.

VVA News Updates**Mattis to Fight Possible Deportation of 'Dreamers' on Active Duty**

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Thursday that he will fight to protect the estimated 800-900 so-called "Dreamers" currently serving on active duty from the possibility of being deported next month.

"We would always stand by one of our own people," Mattis said of the Dreamers in the ranks who could possibly be stripped of their uniforms and deported when the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program is set to expire on March 5.

Those covered by DACA now serving in the military are among more than 10,000 non-citizens who joined the ranks under the Military Accessions Vital to National Interest (MAVNI) program, which can lead to citizenship.

Over 133,000 Veterans Who Got Military Disability Are Due Tax Refunds

In February, the DOD will begin sending notifications to more than 133,000 veterans who may qualify for a refund of federal taxes paid on disability severance pay dating back to January 17, 1991.

Under federal law, veterans who suffer combat-related injuries and who are separated from the military are not supposed to be taxed on the one-time lump sum disability severance payment they got from the military. For years DOD improperly withheld taxes on these payments from thousands of unsuspecting veterans, who were typically unaware that their benefits were being improperly reduced.

Armed Vet, Facing Eviction over Service Dogs, Shot to Death by Police

A despondent military veteran -- slated for eviction because of complaints about his service dogs, Roxie and Ranger -- was shot to death after police say he pointed a gun at officers on Monday afternoon near Homestead, Florida.

Raymond Bishop, 84, died inside his home at the Hidden Grove apartments. Miami-Dade police officers had rushed to the home after receiving a call of an armed man threatening to kill himself.

At least four Miami-Dade officers wound up opening fire on Bishop from just outside the doorway where he stood, gun in hand.

Feds: Military Impersonator Used Helicopter to Impress Woman

A man wearing a "full military battle dress uniform" and displaying three stars that implied a rank of lieutenant general wanted to impress a woman when he unexpectedly landed in a chartered helicopter at the headquarters of a North Carolina technology company last year, a federal agent testified Monday.

Christian Desgroux, 57-year-old is charged with pretending to be a military officer, which carries a maximum of three years in prison. Desgroux later acknowledged to federal agents that he had never served in the U.S. military.

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(Continue from pg. 18) VVA News Updates**The Worst Duty Assignments for Every Branch of the Military**

Army: Fort Polk, Louisiana

Navy: NAS Lemoore

Air Force: Cannon AFB, New Mexico

Marine Corps: Twentynine Palms, California

Coast Guard: You tell me. I'm told the station at Venice, Louisiana can be pretty bad

VA Attempts Faster Payments to Private-Sector Providers

The VA has been slow to pay private-sector health care providers, according to government watchdogs. The issue has plagued the VA since 2014, when the agency put more dependence on the private sector to care for veterans who faced long wait-times at VA facilities.

The number of VA medical appointments made in the private sector has increased since Congress created the Veterans Choice Program in 2014, allowing veterans to go into the community for treatment if they live more than 40 miles from a VA facility or can't get an appointment at the VA within 30 days.

In December, Shulkin said the VA authorized 6.1 million appointments in the private sector in 2017 – a 64 percent increase from the 3.7 million in 2016.

The amount of money that the Department of Veterans Affairs owes private-sector medical providers will be made public now – one of several moves the agency announced this week, in an attempt to hold itself accountable for faster reimbursements to outside doctors who treat VA patients.

8th Army Welcomes New Commander on Tension-Filled Korean Peninsula

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea – The 8th Army welcomed a new commander to lead its soldiers on the tense Korean Peninsula during a ceremony Friday at its new home south of Seoul.

Lt. Gen. Michael Bills accepted the unit's colors inside Collier Fitness Center at Camp Humphreys saying he would do his best to maintain the Army's "fight tonight" posture. The highest Army headquarters unit on the peninsula, the field army overseas the 2nd Infantry Division, 19th Expeditionary Sustainment Command and other brigades, including the air-defense brigade.



Bills – who previously served as U.S. Forces Korea's assistant chief of staff of operations will be charged with overseeing the final touches of a \$10.7 billion expansion at Humphreys, which will eventually replace Yongsan Garrison in Seoul as the main U.S. military base in South Korea.

**Black History Month—Veterans Legacy Program: Sgt. William H. Thompkins, Buffalo Soldier, trailblazer, American hero**

Sgt. William H. Thompkins is an American hero. He showed extraordinary courage in the face of the enemy. At the time, he believed that he was just doing his duty as a soldier, but his actions saved the lives of his comrades and helped change the way that the country perceived African-American soldiers. Thompkins was a Buffalo Soldier in the 10th U.S. Cavalry Regiment. He was awarded the Medal of Honor for his military actions.

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The Buffalo Soldiers were African-American soldiers from four cavalry regiments that the Army formed in 1866. The young men who served in these units sought a new life in the post-Civil War Era. These units offered young African-American men opportunity beyond the South during Reconstruction. The Buffalo Soldiers became pioneers of Westward expansion, and participated in every major conflict of the late nineteenth and early twentieth Centuries. They served in the American Indian Wars, the Spanish-American War, the Philippine-American War, the Mexican Border War, World War I, and World War II. In 1951, during the Korean War, the last remaining segregated Buffalo Soldier regiments integrated into other units.

VA Announces New TBI and PTSD Treatments

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced that it will use two innovative treatments to help veterans living with traumatic brain injury (TBI) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Veterans with a history of mild to moderate TBI now have access to light emitting diode (LED) therapy, which may improve brain function including attention and memory, emotions, and sleep. Also, the stellate ganglion block (SGB) used to treat Veterans with PTSD symptoms involves an injection of medication into the neck. For more information about other emerging therapies, visit VA's Center for Compassionate Innovation.

Women History Month**First Female General, Who Served as Army Nurse in 3 Wars, Dies at 97**

Anna Mae Hays -- an Army nurse who served in malaria-infested jungles during World War II, pioneered the service's nurse corps and became the U.S military's first female general -- died Jan. 7, according to a report in The Washington Post.

Hays, 97, died of complications from a heart attack, the Post reported.

Hays retired from the Army in 1971 after making history when she became the first woman to be promoted to brigadier general on June 11, 1970.

She joined the Army in 1942 and deployed to Ledo, Assam, India, with the 20th General Hospital in January 1943, according to a biography on armyheritage.org.

Military Bases Linked to Cancer and Health Problems

In 2001, communities near Hill Air Force Base in Utah showed a high risk of developing brain cancer, while Fallon Naval Air Station was investigated for acute childhood leukemia incidents, and Kelly Air Force Base near San Antonio, Texas, was revealed to have contributed to water and air pollution when clusters of cancer and leukemia popped up.

In 2016, residents near Wurtsmith Air Force Base in Michigan discovered that the water they drank, bathed in, swam in, and fished in was contaminated with jet fuel, cancer-causing chlorinated solvents, and toxic fire retardants. Military families and members of the local community have since reported cases of hypertension, lung disease, nervous system issues, blood vessel damage, asthma, spinal defects, and thyroid problems.

And now, in 2018, the communities near Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado, are considering a class action lawsuit due to the health defects linked to contaminated water.

The number of people -- service members, their families, and civilians in communities near military bases -- affected is in the millions (as of 2014, there were 21.8 million living veterans alone).

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But if war takes the service to the Korean peninsula, he wants Marines to know the daunting challenges they would face.

Speaking to deployed Marines at a base in the Middle East while on a Christmas tour of deployed units, Gen. Robert Neller sought to temper their enthusiasm at the potential of a future ground fight.

"Ever been to Korea? Korea sucks," he told the troops bluntly. "The people are wonderful; the country is tough."

Navy's Stealthy Mega-Destroyer Still Doesn't Have a Round for Its Gun

The Navy's futuristic destroyer Zumwalt is some two years away from being ready for battle -- but service leaders still don't know what to load in its main weapon.

In late 2016, the service canceled plans to buy the long-range land attack projectile, or LRLAP, a round designed to be fired from the ship's massive 155mm Advanced Gun Systems weapon. At about \$800,000 per round, the ammo was just too pricey to load up on the three ships in the limited Zumwalt large destroyer class.

But it's now 2018, and the ship is expected to reach initial operational capability by fiscal 2020. And there's still no substitute round for the AGS.

Shulkin: VA Can Study Marijuana, But Won't

Shulkin wrote in a letter to House lawmakers that the VA was restricted from marijuana research because of federal law. Later in the week, he acknowledged while testifying before the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee that the law does allow the VA to study the use of marijuana, but it makes research difficult. Marijuana is on the list of Schedule I drugs, which are designated as having no medical use and have the most regulatory hurdles to overcome in order to access and research them.

Khe Sanh Veterans Mark 50th Anniversary of Vietnam Battle

21 Jan 2018 marks the 50th anniversary of the start of one of the most significant battles of the Vietnam War -- the Battle of Khe Sanh. Across the U.S., groups of Vietnam veterans are gathering to commemorate the 77-day battle, in which some 6,000 U.S. Marines defended a small combat base from tens of thousands of North Vietnamese fighters.

Russian Spy Ship Spotted Snooping Around US Nuclear Submarine Bases

A Russian spy ship has been spotted sailing up the US's east coast over the past few weeks, recently coming close to a US Navy base that houses ballistic-missile submarines.

Army to Send Female Infantry, Armor Officers to 3 More Bases

As more female soldiers move into frontline combat jobs, the Army's top leaders have decided to integrate female officers into infantry and armor brigades at three more military bases around the country. The decision comes a year after the first women began enlisting in the ground combat units, and it will send female officers to Fort Carson in Colorado, Fort Campbell in Kentucky, and Fort Bliss in Texas.

War in Korea Would Be 'Game of Thrones-Like,' Top Marine Says

UNDISCLOSED LOCATION, Southwest Asia -- The commandant of the Marine Corps is clear: He's not looking for a fight.

But if war takes the service to the Korean peninsula, he wants Marines to know the daunting challenges they would face.

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(Continue from pg. 21) VVA News Updates

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6 Bragg Women Become First in Army to Earn Expert Infantryman Badge

Women quietly broke through barriers last fall when they became the first in the Army to earn the prestigious Expert Infantryman Badge at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

The badge, which was created in the 1940s, only recently opened to women when the Department of Defense struck down regulations that prevented them from serving in infantry jobs.

The women earned the badge during testing with hundreds of male candidates in November -- about two years after infantry jobs opened to women.

"This historic achievement is a reminder of the great things we can achieve when women are seen and treated as equals and given the same chance to contribute to their country," U.S. Sen. Tammy Duckworth said in a statement. The Democrat from Illinois was among the first Army women to fly combat missions during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Don't Accidentally Call This Sex Hotline When Dialing Tricare

Be careful how you dial the newly minted Tricare East's 800 number, or you could unintentionally end up on what appears to be a phone sex hotline.

That's a lesson one Tricare East user learned the, er, hard way Wednesday, when she misdialed the Tricare East contractor by one digit. Instead of dialing Humana's number 1-800-444-5445, she dialed 1-800-444-5455.

"Hey there hot stuff," a sultry female voice greets callers. "I've been waiting for your call. Are you ready for some tantalizing fun?"

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(Continue from pg. 22) VVA News Update**VA Launches New Tool To Make Upgrading Your Discharge Easier**

If you received a less than perfect discharge from the military and are confused about how to get it changed, the VA and DOD have a new program that may help you. The VA's VETS.GOV has launched a new online tool in partnership with the DOD to make filing for a discharge upgrade a lot easier. For more details, see this [Military Advantage](#) blog post.

New VA ID Card Reopens to Most Vets

Veterans are once again able to apply for the free Department of Veterans Affairs ID card after technical problems late last year forced a delay to the program.

The free ID card, originally rolled-out in late November, was ordered by Congress in 2015 as a way to give veterans proof of service at businesses without carrying a copy of their DD-214 forms. It is available for all honorably discharged veterans, regardless of era or time in service

Army Veteran Loses Appeal, Could Be Deported Soon, Attorney Says

A U.S. Army veteran and green card holder with a felony drug conviction could be deported as soon as this week, his attorney said Monday, after a federal court denied his appeal to remain in the U.S.

Miguel Perez Jr., 39, a Chicago resident who served two tours of duty in Afghanistan and recently finished a prison term on a drug conviction, had sought to remain in the U.S., arguing his life would be in danger if he were deported to Mexico, where he has not lived since age 8.

A three-judge panel for the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals rejected that argument last week.

Isakson to VA: Time for No More Excuses

Last year, the [Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs passed 10 major pieces of veterans legislation](#) – all of which have been signed into law – that aim to strengthen veterans' health care, benefits and support.

Background:

The [Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act](#) seeks to improve accountability at the VA by increasing the VA's authority to remove employees at all levels of the department, shortening the removal process and ensuring an individual removed from the VA is not kept on the VA's payroll while appealing that decision. It also makes it easier for the VA to remove poor performing senior executives and replace them with qualified candidates.

The [Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017](#) makes much-needed updates for reservists, Purple Heart recipients, veterans who face school closures while enrolled, and surviving family members. Most significantly, this bill eliminates the arbitrary 15-year period within which a veteran is required to use their G.I. Bill and instead allows them to use their benefits at any time in their professional career.

The [Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017](#) creates three separate paths for veterans to choose from when seeking redress from a decision by the Veterans Benefits Administration on their claims for VA benefits. It also allows certain veterans already going through the appeals process to opt in to the new system.

The [Caring for Our Veterans Act](#) would establish a permanent, streamlined 'Veterans Community Care Program' to provide veterans with access to health care and services in their own communities. Under this legislation, a veteran and his or her doctor will decide where that veteran will receive care, taking into consideration the veteran's healthcare needs and the availability and quality of both VA and community care. In addition, the legislation will help improve existing VA health care and services by removing barriers for VA healthcare professionals to practice telemedicine, strengthening opioid prescription guidelines for VA and partnering community care providers, and eliminating impediments to hiring and retention of VA healthcare professionals. It also expands eligibility for the VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers to veterans of all generations, including Vietnam-era veterans.

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