



APRIL-JUNE 2022
NEWSLETTER

OUR MISSION

Easton Veterans' Services is here to inform and assist Easton veterans and their families in the navigation of applicable local, state, and federal benefits.

OUR STAFF

Cory Ahonen

Deputy Director of Health and Community Services— Financial and Veterans' Services

Lisa O'Hearne

Administrative Assistant/
Transportation Coordinator

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Women Veterans had opportunity to share legacy during International Women's Day

In celebration of International Women's Day this past March 8, the Department of Veterans Affairs' Center for Women Veterans is gifted stories of women Veterans to the Library of Congress Veterans History Project. Collected letters, diaries, photographs, and video and audio recordings of personal histories and testimonials of women Veterans will be used to create a collection of the original recordings.

To commemorate the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women Veterans a virtual celebration was held 6 p.m. ET, March 8 on Facebook. Panelists engaged in conversation sharing their experience participating in the collaboration between the I Am Not Invisible campaign and Veterans History Project — and how everyone can contribute to being better advocates for women Veterans. "What better day to honor these brave women through sharing their experiences and advice?" said VA Center for Women Veterans Deputy Director and co-creator of the I Am Not Invisible Project Elizabeth Estabrooks.

"Women are the fastest growing group in the Veteran population. VA understands women Veterans have a place in history and that's why 'The I Am Not Invisible Campaign 3.0' focuses on giving women Veterans a safe platform to share their memories, reflections and thoughts."

Congress created the Veterans History Project in 2000 to collect, preserve and make accessible the firsthand remembrances of United States war Veterans from World War I through the more recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan so that future generations may hear directly from Veterans and better understand the realities of military service.

By 2040, women will be 18% of the Veteran population, yet collections only consist of 6% of stories of service from women Veterans. That's one of the reasons why the "I Am Not Invisible" campaign was created. Veterans can start preserving their story in history by contacting the Center for Women Veterans at 00W@VA.Gov, Veterans History Project or by calling 888-371-5848.

Shared by the U.S Department of Veterans Affairs



PICTURED ABOVE

'A Time To Honor'

This book has been generously provided, free of charge, from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services. Please call us today to reserve your copy, you've earned it.

On behalf of the Town of Easton, we thank our Vietnam veterans and their families for their selfless service and sacrifice to our country. WELCOME HOME!



15 Barrows Street, Easton, MA 02356



(508) 230-0690



cahonen@easton.ma.us



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UPDATES FOR YOUR HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Proposed closure of MA VA medical center gets pushback

With the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs proposing a dramatic shift in where thousands of veterans in Massachusetts receive medical care, one state senator — a veteran himself — is threatening to call a public hearing if the Biden administration doesn't back off its plan.

Sen. John Velis, co-chair of the Committee and Veterans' and Federal Affairs, called the VA's plan to realign medical services in Massachusetts a "slap in the face." The Westfield Democrat focused on the recommendation that the medical center in Northampton be closed, and that services for the 24,000 veterans who received care there be shifted to clinics in Springfield and Newington, Conn.

"Transportation is already a challenge for our Veterans, and it is unconscionable that we would consider pushing them further away from the medical care that they so desperately depend on," Velis said in a statement.

While the recommendations published Monday are just the starting point in the process, Velis said if the plan continues to move forward he intends to call a public hearing and "do everything in my power to

prevent this closure."

The VA said its recommendations were intended better align services in a more cost effective manner that accounts for a declining numbers of veterans seeking care in federal medical center and community clinics.

The plan also calls for a new medical center to be built in the "vicinity" of Bedford to replace the Bedford medical center, which was built in 1928 and requires \$345.2 million in facility upgrades. Services in Jamaica Plain would also be scaled back, with veterans redirected based on needs to facilities in Bedford, Brockton and West Roxbury, and community clinics in Lynn and Gloucester would be closed with services replaced by a new facility in Salem.

The Quincy VA clinic would also be closed, under the proposal, with patients redirected for care to South Weymouth.

Lynn's Director of Veteran Services Michael Sweeney told The Item Tuesday that the recommendation would make accessing care more difficult for veterans in that North Shore city.

"They say the multi-clinic recommendation would offer more expanded services for veterans," Sweeney told the newspaper.

"Why can't we do that in Lynn?"

U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren, in a statement, said she intended to work with Congress and the Biden administration to make sure any realignment doesn't make it harder for veterans to access care.

"Veterans deserve quality health care at VA facilities in their communities, and I'm deeply concerned that the VA has not been thoroughly engaging and communicating with veterans in Massachusetts about decisions impacting their health and their families," Warren said.

By Matt Murphy, State House News Service



THE EASTON FOOD PANTRY

Since 1978, The Easton Food Pantry has been dedicated to providing food to our neighbors in times of need. The Easton Food Pantry is located at The Fellowship Church, 604 Foundry St, South Easton. Distribution hours are on Mondays 11:30am-3pm. *please call 508-230-0670 for more information.* Monetary Donations/mailings can be sent to Easton Food Pantry, Inc. PO Box 1481 Easton, MA 02334

Are you missing out on benefits?
Make an appointment today!

YOUR BENEFITS: ARE YOU USING THEM?

ANNUITY FOR MA VETERANS AND FAMILIES

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts provided an annuity to 100% service connected disabled veterans, or to the parents, and or un-remarried spouses (Gold Star) of men and women who gave their lives in the service of their country during wartime. To apply, contact your VSO or visit mass.gov/veterans

BONUSES

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts provides a one-time Welcome Home bonus to eligible veterans who served during wartime from World War II through OPERATIONS Iraqi and Enduring Freedom. Call 617.210.5927 for the Persian Gulf War Bonus. For all other bonuses, contact the Office of the State Treasurer 617.367.3900, ext. 543, or for OEF/OIF ext. 539

MOTOR VEHICLE BENEFITS

The Registry of Motor Vehicles now offers the option of having a "Veteran" designation added to licenses upon renewal. The RMV also provides a variety of veterans' license plates and a registration exemption for certain veteran. Call 617.351.9222 or see massrmv.com. Certain disabled veterans and former POWs are eligible for motor vehicle sales and excise tax exemptions. Contact the Dept. of Revenue at 617.887.6367.

THE EASTON VETERANS DISCRETIONARY FUND is used to sustain daily living for Easton veterans. If you would like to donate or are in need of assistance, please contact the VSO.

DISABILITY COMPENSATION

Federal disability compensation is one of the most common benefits provided by the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs (VA). For additional information visit the Compensation and Pension Benefits section of the VA website at: www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/.

Soldiers' Homes

The Soldiers' Homes in Chelsea 617.884.5660 and Holyoke 413.532.9475 provides a variety of services to veterans, such as acute hospital, domiciliary, and long-term care; physical and occupational therapy and more.

VET CENTERS

Vet Centers provide readjustment counseling, outreach, and referral services to veterans and their families in a relaxed, community based setting. Vet Centers also provide counseling for military sexual trauma and bereavement to parents, siblings, and spouses. Locations include Boston, Brockton, Hyannis, Lowell, New Bedford, Springfield, and Worcester. For more information visit: www.vetcenter.va.gov

SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline provides service for veterans in crisis. Call 1.800.273.8255 and press 1 to be connected immediately to VA suicide prevention and mental health professionals. Visit www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

MASSACHUSETTS SAVE PROGRAM

Statewide Advocacy for Veterans' Empowerment (SAVE) program that assists veterans in need of referral services and seeks to prevent suicide and advocate on behalf of Massachusetts' veterans. Toll-free 1.888.844.2838, save@state.ma.us

HOME BASE PROGRAM

Home Base Program is a partnership between the Red Sox Foundation and Mass General Hospital that offers OEF/ OIF veterans & their families diagnostic assessments, treatment & referral services To learn more about the program call 617.724.5202 or homebaseprogram@partnership.org

BURIAL AND MEMORIAL BENEFITS

Most veterans are entitled to state and federal burial benefits and other memorial services. To locate the burial site of a veteran use the VA National Gravesite Locator at http://gravelocator.cem.va.gov/j2ee/servlet/NGL_v1.

VA OPERATED CEMETERIES

Massachusetts National Cemetery
Bourne, MA 508.563.7113
Woodland Cemetery Soldiers' Lot
Harvard St., Ayer, MA 01432

GRAVE MARKERS AND HEADSTONES

The VA will provide markers or headstones for eligible veterans buried in private cemeteries at no cost to the veteran or his or her family.

CHAPTER 115 BENEFITS

Chapter 115 provides a needs based means tested program of financial and medical assistance for indigent veterans and their dependents. Qualifying veterans and their dependents receive necessary financial assistance for food, shelter, clothing, housing supplies and medical care. These benefits are available for dependents of deceased veterans as well.

Education Benefits

A variety of programs available ranging from MA Veterans Tuition Waiver to GI Bill (Forever GI Bill), Veterans Vocational Rehabilitation, and Ch. 35 (Dependents of 100% disabled Veterans).

STANDING NOTICES

CH. 115 BENEFITS FOR VETERANS AND SURVIVING SPOUSES

You may be eligible for Ch. 115 benefits if you are a veteran or surviving spouse of a veteran with a single income below \$2,147/month and assets below \$8,400 or if you are a married veteran with income below \$2,904 and assets below \$16,600. Ask your VSO for more details if you may be close to these amounts. This benefit may help with monthly medical and dental costs as well as a monetary benefit to help cover costs necessary to daily living.

THE EASTON VETERANS DISCRETIONARY FUND

accepts donations and provides assistance and gift cards to Easton veterans in need for items and services needed to sustain daily living. If you, or someone you know, are in need please contact: Cory Ahonen, VSO, to find out more about this fund. 508-230-0690.

Easton Releases First Phase of Planned American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Investments and Survey for Public Feedback

On March 11, 2021, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) was signed into law by the President of the United States. This bill included funding for state, county and local governments around the country to respond to the pandemic and its negative impacts on health and the economy, support educational services and services for disproportionately impacted communities, provide premium pay for eligible personnel, fund water, sewer or broadband infrastructure, and more.

SNAP (FOOD ASSISTANCE)

Please call the MA Department of Transitional Assistance at 877-382-2363 and ask to learn more about what type of assistance may be available for you.

MEMORIES...MEMORIES...MEMORIES

Easton Veterans' Services is offering an opportunity for veterans to preserve a cherished memory in print. Stan Siegel, U.S. Army veteran of The Korean War Era, will transform your words and pictures into your own personal or family memoir. Stan is a former Executive Director of The East Norwalk Association Library and now lives in Easton. To begin your journey backward stop by the Easton Veterans' Services office to get your guide to help you start your story in words and pictures. This service is free to anyone who may be interested. Please call 508-230-0690 for more information.

Easton has released its first phase of planned American Rescue Plan Act investments and a community survey to hear your thoughts on these and possible future investments.

Visit <http://easton.ma.us/arpa> to read the plan and take the survey.



MILITARY HONORS AT FUNERAL

The Department of Defense "Honoring Those Who Served" program provides dignified military funeral honors to veterans. To arrange military funeral honors, contact your local funeral home.

DEATH PENSION

The VA provides pensions to low-income surviving spouses and unmarried children of deceased veterans with wartime service.

REPLACEMENT MEDALS, AWARDS, AND DECORATIONS

Veterans and their families may obtain replacements for lost medals or other decorations awarded to the veteran. Requests can be submitted online at www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/.

EDUCATION BENEFITS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Many State and Federal programs are



VA LAUNCHES AUTOMATION PILOT TO PROCESS VETERAN DISABILITY CLAIMS FASTER

The Department of Veterans Affairs is processing its backlog of disability claims faster than ever before, but is looking to accelerate this pace through an automation pilot it launched last month.

The VA is running the automation pilot through its newly created Office of Automated Benefit Delivery, an initiative that has the potential to dramatically reduce the time it takes to process an individual claim.

The pilot is processing claims within a day or two, while the traditional method of processing these claims currently takes well over 100 days, on average.

“Automation is the way that we’ll really break through this backlog and get vets their earned benefits as quickly as possible,” VA Secretary Denis McDonough told reporters Tuesday.

The VA currently has around 260,000 claims in its backlog right now, a significant increase compared to approximately 70,000 backlogged cases the agency had before the start of the pandemic.

“Despite COVID, we’re processing these claims faster than ever before in VA’s history ... The challenge is that the claims are also coming in faster than ever before, making it difficult to drive the backlog down,” McDonough said.

McDonough said the VA plans to hire and train 2,094 additional claims processors and support staff before the end of spring. The agency, he added, has already hired 1,078 of these employees, and 900 of them are already in training. In the meantime, the VA is using funds from the American Rescue Plan to pay overtime for claims processors.

Rob Reynolds, the acting deputy undersecretary of VA’s Office of Automated Benefit Delivery, said the agency launched the pilot last month to eliminate unnecessary medical examinations, streamline workflows and reduce manual processes.

The pilot is currently focused on claims related to service-related hypertension, and processing claims through the agency’s Boise Regional Office and should look to significantly decrease the back log of claims going forward.

By Jory Heckman @jheckmanWFED

YOUR LOCAL VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

ROLL CALL

VFW Post 2547

Meets on the 3rd Wednesday of every month at 6:30pm

American Legion Post 7

Meets on the 4th Tuesday of every month.

Dinner at 6pm, meeting 7-8pm

Where:

61 Rockland Street, N. Easton

Note: Meeting status has been affected by COVID-19. Please be aware that meetings are subject to change during this time.



Memorial Day 2022

Please join us for the Town of Easton Memorial Day Parade. The parade will be held on 5/30 beginning at 1pm. Due to construction on Depot Street, the location may have to be moved to Main Street (the Veterans Day parade route). Please keep your eyes and ears out for details on location change due to circumstances beyond our control. Come out and support our fallen heroes! For more information, call Cory at 774-273-1991.



Please note that The Easton Reveille is intended for informational purposes only and does not constitute an endorsement by any federal, state, or local government agency. Easton Veterans' Services has compiled this information from a variety of sources

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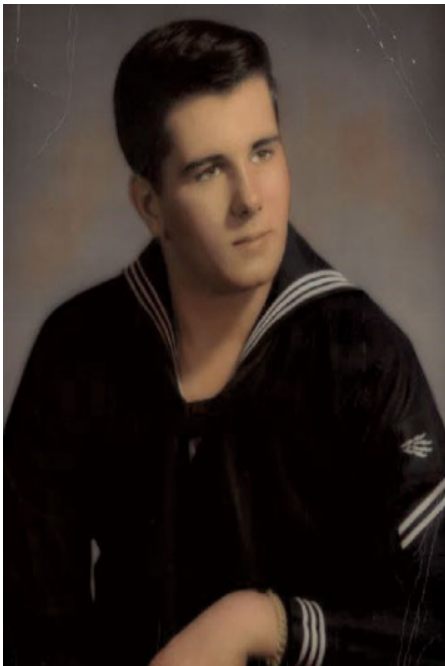
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We're on the Web! Visit us at:

http://easton.ma.us/departments/veterans_service/index.php

FRONT AND CENTER



In this edition of the Easton Reveille, we would like to call Former RM2 John Ippolito Front and Center. John is a veteran of the US Navy and he served in Vietnam, and stateside, as a Radioman from 1966 to 1969.

John is also a shuttle driver for the Easton Council on Aging. He enjoys golfing, spending time with friends and family, and relaxing at his house near the Cape. We thank John for his service to our country and continued service to our community!

If you know someone who you would like included in our 'Front and Center' section, please let the VSO know!



EASTON VETERANS DISCRETIONARY FUND

The Veterans Discretionary Fund is reserved for the purchase or reimbursement of expenses required to sustain daily living for any veteran who is a resident of Easton, MA. If you would like to donate please contact us at 508-230-0690 x3.

Please send thoughts, suggestions, and ideas to:
Cahonen@easton.ma.us
or call 508-230-0690 x3