



# Home for the Heroes



Official Newsletter of the Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs

September 2007



## Operation Outreach: Whatever it Takes!

From Commissioner Linda S. Schwartz

### WHAT'S GOING ON?

STAND DOWN IS FRIDAY SEPT 21st

CONSTRUCTION IS 80% FINISHED

GOV. RELL SIGNS NEW VETERAN FRIENDLY LAWS

CARNIVAL SEPT 9th

THE VET EXPRESS

In response to Governor M. Jodi Rell's charge to do "whatever it takes" to respond to the needs of Connecticut's disabled service members and veterans, The Department of Veterans' Affairs has initiated "Operation Outreach". Just as the name suggests, this is a concerted effort to identify any soldier, sailor, marine or airman who is back in Connecticut recovering from wounds or injuries sustained during their military service. Because there is no formal notification to the State when casualties were returning to Connecticut, they were not receiving all the help they needed and were falling through the cracks. With Governor Rell's full support, I initiated this program because several families of recovering service members were in crisis situations which could have been

avoided had the Department of Veteran's Affairs known of their circumstances.

Operation Outreach is based on the simple idea that neighbors can help neighbors. Veteran Service Organizations like the Military Order of the Purple Heart, Disabled American Veterans, Connecticut Nurses Association, Connecticut Traumatic Brain Injury Association and the New London Sub Base Community are all part of our growing "safety network." Because we are able to bring many resources and the help of good people across this state, we have the flexibility and ability to be a bridge between the needs of military members being separated for medical disabilities as they recover.

Since this effort began, families in danger of foreclosure on their homes, soldiers without funds even to buy clothes, injured in need of modifications so they can shower in their own homes are only a few of the situations that have been addressed. The Department is also asking all citizens to help identify members of the armed services, who are returning home and may need help in learning about services and programs available to assist them make a successful transition from the military to civilian life.



**Operation Outreach Contact Number is 1-866-928-8387**

*We Salute All  
Our Stand Down  
Volunteers*

## Stand Down “Connecticut Cares” Friday September 21, 2007

This year’s event is scheduled for Friday September 21st on the grounds of the Connecticut Veterans’ Home in Rocky Hill. We expect over 700 veterans to use services from the State of Connecticut Agencies, veterans’ organizations, community nonprofit organizations, corporations and others. The Connecticut Transit provides free transportation from stops all across the state. The Judicial Department sets up court with Superior Court judges who work with state prosecutors and public defenders to address misdemeanor offenses and other legal matters for homeless and indigent veterans with legal impediments to their lives. The Department of Social Services and the federal Social Security office have counselors on site to help veterans apply for disability and other state and federal benefits. The Department of Labor offers employment and training assistance. The Department of Veterans’ Affairs Office of Advocacy and Assistance will assist in applications and appeals for federal and state veteran’s benefits. The Motor Vehicle Department brings their licensing van and officials who can reinstate drivers’ licenses or clear problems for nominal fees.

Volunteers from the Yale School of Nursing, UConn Dental School, the Connecticut Community Health Centers, and Connecticut Lions, and other health care professionals offer health screenings, treatment of dental needs, and eye exams for any who wish such services. Our most popular services depend on community volunteers who provide haircuts, offer clothing and personal supplies, and most of all, give their thanks to those who have served. As you can imagine this event is a Herculean task and involves volunteers providing a myriad of healthcare, personal and counseling services to veterans. We thank all who help.





## *Ken Burns' Preview of "The War"*

Tickets are available for \$15.00 for a LIVE Preview of Ken Burns' "The War" on Monday, September 10, 2007 at 7 pm at Waterbury's Palace Theater. Call the Box Office at 203-755-4700.

THE WAR, a new seven-part documentary series directed and produced by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, explores the history and horror of the Second World War from an American perspective by following the fortunes of so-called ordinary men and women who become caught up in one of the greatest cataclysms in human history. Six years in the making, this epic 14-hour film focuses on the stories of citizens from four geographically distributed American towns — Waterbury, Connecticut; Mobile, Alabama; Sacramento, California; and the tiny farming town of Luverne, Minnesota. These four communities stand in for — and could represent — any town in the United States that went through the war's four devastating years. Individuals from each community take the viewer through their own personal and quite often harrowing journeys into war, painting vivid portraits of how the war dramatically altered their lives and those of their neighbors, as well as the country they helped to save for generations to come.

**Approximately 210,000** men and women from Connecticut served between 1941 and 1945 in the conflict that spanned the globe. About 4,500 Connecticut men between the ages of 16 and 49 were killed in action or died of combat wounds; approximately 1,000 others died of illness or in accidents. Aircraft and submarine manufacturers, already stalwarts of the defense industry, revved up to meet growing demand. Factories and mills that had turned out toys and silk fabric were quickly transformed - churning out bullet casings, uniform buttons, parachutes and thread for those parachutes, and much more - all to feed the fighting machine.

**To honor those** who fought on the battlefield and those who labored on the home front, and to pass the light of understanding on to a new generation, CPTV has developed a yearlong initiative built around the new PBS program, "The War," a Ken Burns documentary series directed and produced by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick. Part one of The War premieres Sunday, September 23, 2007, on CPTV.

*THE WAR will air over two weeks, beginning Sunday, September 23, 2007 (four nights the first week and three nights the second week) from 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. (8:00 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. on three nights) on CPTV.*

## The New Veterans' Health Care Facility is 80% Complete!



**They say a picture is worth a thousand words—  
Just look at our wonderful new facility!**

### *A CONSTRUCTION UPDATE from Chief of Staff Charley Williams*

**The new 125 bed health Care Facility** is over 80% complete with an estimated completion date of January, 2008. We are currently on time and on budget. Landscaping has started on the exterior. The new tunnel connecting the new building with the existing buildings is now complete. With the completion of the new tunnel we can now finish several storm drains and begin to put the covered front entrance in place. The last area to receive dry wall is the hospital clinic and that is pretty much done. The new fire place in the main dining room has its new mantle and really looks like a fire place now. Overhead lights and dropped ceilings are going in throughout. Electrical power is now hooked up, loading dock is poured and the mechanical room is almost finished. Windows are now in place for most of the entire building.

**The New Water Loop System** is now complete around the campus. We have a new eight inch water main with all new hydrants. We also have a new six inch domestic water main with only three more buildings to be hooked up. There is a new 151,000 gallon water tower to support the fire and domestic loops. The old health care facility, the veteran recovery center, transitional living and the west domicile are now on the new system. Completion date is September, 2007 for the system to be 100% functional. This project is currently on time and on budget.

**On our web site at [www.ct.gov/ctva](http://www.ct.gov/ctva)** you will find a button on the right hand side called New Construction. You can follow our progress there. We update that site almost daily and weekly we publish new photos of the construction.

## Memorial Day Wreath Laying Ceremony—Honoring Our Fallen

On Wednesday May 30th, in a quiet and moving ceremony, Governor M. Jodi Rell, and Commissioner Schwartz on behalf of the citizens of the State of Connecticut laid a wreath in the State Capitol in honor of Connecticut's fallen. A ship's bell from World War II was rung following the reading of the names for each hero in Connecticut's Roll of Honor from the Gulf War and the current conflicts in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. Family members of the fallen and dignitaries placed a flower on the wreath for each fallen hero.




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## Governor Rell Signs Veteran Friendly Legislation

The first new law, “An Act Requiring A Service Officer with Proficiency in English and Spanish within the Department of Veterans Affairs,” requires that at least one of the six veterans service officers in the state’s Veterans’ Advocacy and Assistance Unit be proficient in both English and Spanish.

Governor Rell also signed “An Act Concerning Professional Licenses of Members of the Armed Forces and the Connecticut National Guard.” Effective immediately, the act extends, from six months to one year after discharge, the grace period during which the Department of Public Health (DPH) must renew certain credentials that become void while the holders are on active duty in the armed forces



*Governor Rell & Commissioner Schwartz, Rep Mike Alberts and Rep Ted Graziani of the General Assembly’s Veterans Committee, CT National Guard members, and friends of the national Guard at the bill signing ceremony at the Department of Veterans’ Affairs.*

## Bringing benefits to you—The Office of Advocacy and Assistance



**Need help getting your benefits?  
Just call us at 1-866-928-8387**

Deputy Commissioner John Wiltse (top left), Director of Community Affairs, Cathy Cook (top right), Office of Advocacy and Assistance Director Donna Meskony (bottom left) and Benefits Coordinator Fran Burba (bottom right) recently assisted veterans at the “Heroes for Hire” Job Fair co-sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Labor. This huge event was our second job fair this year at Rentschler Field and it brought 100 employers together with nearly 1000 veterans.

The Office of Advocacy and Assistance has Veteran service Officers in 11 locations throughout the state, as well as the Vet Express Benefits Bus which travels to veterans wherever they live in Connecticut.

### ***COME ON BOARD THE VETS EXPRESS!***

Our \$75,000 van is equipped with computers and printers to allow DVA veteran service officers to initiate claims for veteran’s benefits. The service officers will also provide general information and assistance. The van is handicapped-accessible and has two work stations along with a waiting space. The Vet Express will visit convenient locations such as town halls, libraries, state facilities and shopping centers to provide direct customer service to the state’s veterans. No appointment is needed to visit the van at any of its scheduled locations.

In addition to a monthly schedule of visits to towns throughout the state, organizations can request the Vet Express for special events where large groups of veterans may gather.

Organizations interested in scheduling the Vet Express for special events should contact the DVA Office of Advocacy and Assistance at (860) 721-5915 or visit “The Vet Express” at [www.ct.gov/ctva](http://www.ct.gov/ctva)



**Military Support Program—Free and confidential counseling for Connecticut armed forces and their families before, during and after deployment.**

**“We’ve got your back!” Call toll free—866-251-2913**

## Volunteer News

**Reservations are coming in for the CT Women Veterans Bus Trip to Washington, DC Nov 1-4 to attend the 10th Anniversary of the Women's Memorial at Arlington. If you are interested, please call Cathy Cook at 860-721-5826 for the details. Total cost is \$475pp/dbl occ**

**Volunteer Milestones**—We surprised some dedicated volunteers at the Volunteer Appreciation Picnic on June 14th. When the new facility is completed, 3 trees will be dedicated to Emma and Edgar Prince, Jim Bachand, Bernice and Richard Bergeron honoring their total of 47,000 hours of service to the veterans in Rocky Hill. A new **Volunteer Hospitality Room** has been set up on the first floor of the Healthcare facility. It's a place to put your personal items, have coffee and sit and chat. Stop in!



Edgar and Emma Prince and Commissioner Schwartz

## Can you help? STAND DOWN 2007 WISH LIST



Carefully used clothing, without stains or tears, is accepted for Stand Down for distribution to homeless and needy veterans. We especially need shoes, boots, outerwear, rain wear, backpacks, duffle bags and socks. If possible, please bring clothing on hangers. Volunteers are needed before Sept 21st (to set up clothing) and during Stand Down (hours are 7 am to 4 pm). Please call Cathy Cook at 860-721-5826 or go to [www.ct.gov/ctva](http://www.ct.gov/ctva) for more information and forms for Stand Down.

*"People who say it cannot be done should not interrupt those who are doing it"*  
- Unknown author

**Thank You to Our Volunteers!**

## Carnival is Coming - Sunday September 9th

This year's Carnival at Rocky Hill will be full of fun and games. Groups from the VFW, American Legion and others are gathering prizes, clothing and other items for their booths. We'll have carnival games, popcorn machines, sno-cones and picnic food. Added this year are lots of new ways to enjoy the day. Mrs.

Connecticut will visit, a barbershop quartet will sing, and we have a live band to play for us. There will be animals to pet and we'll save a few surprises, too. Thanks to all the volunteers who work all year to make this a success! Call 860-721-5826 to register for the Carnival!





Directions to Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs and Veterans Home

From 91N:  
Exit 23, right at end of ramp, take left at 3rd traffic light to enter our facility.

From 91S:  
Exit 23, left at end of ramp, take left at 4th traffic light to enter our facility.

From 84:  
Take 91 South and follow above directions.

Please visit our website for important information:  
[www.ct.gov/ctva](http://www.ct.gov/ctva)

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[www.ct.gov/ctva](http://www.ct.gov/ctva)

## The Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs

### VETERANS' TELEPHONE DIRECTORY

State of CT Dept of Veterans' Affairs	1-800-550-0000
Admission to Residential Domicile	(860) 721-5833
Admission to Health Care Facility	(860) 721-5877
Admission to Veterans' Recovery Center	(860) 721-5933
Hospice Program/Respite Care	(860) 721-5955
Office of Advocacy and Assistance (toll free)	(866)-928-8387
CTVA Office of Community Affairs	(860) 721-5826
Connecticut Veterans' Cemetery	(860) 721-5838
Soldiers' Sailors' & Marines' Fund (emergency)	(860) 296-0719
Military Support Program (toll free)	(866) 251-2913
Operation Outreach (toll free)	(866) 928-8387

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