



CONNECTICUT

Department of Veterans' Affairs E-Newsletter

April 6, 2010

Volume 1, Number 3

“Welcome Home, Vietnam Veterans!”

Commissioner's Remarks from Ceremonies March 30, 2010

Over 40 years ago, America experienced a period of profound social and political upheaval. And the epicenter of that time and a major force in shaping this nation was the Vietnam War. For those of us who left our hometowns and families and answered the call to serve, there is a special and sobering reality to this belated Welcome Home. No one called us warriors: No one called us heroes: we could not even wear our uniforms on the streets of America and, when we came home...there were no Yellow Ribbons; there was an empty silence.

Over 9 Million military served on Active Duty which was 9.7% of our generation. Over 3.4 Million served at sea. 265,000 women volunteered for duty in a time men fled to Canada rather than serve. The unfailing acceptance of women in the military was made strong when veterans of the Vietnam War began to say “my brother and sister vets.” Someone asked me if Connecticut lowered the flags when someone was killed in Vietnam? My answer was probably not because with 612 deaths the flags would have been lowered over 3,000 days, almost 8 years in time.

Those of us who served in uniform during the Vietnam War did so at a great cost of our youth, our innocence, our personal pride and our future. However, we have made the long march from that time to this and within this journey; we have much to be proud of. We know the World is safer for our service. We know that we have left a Legacy that the men and women wearing the Uniform today do not have to Fight for Respect or deal in silence with the frightening symptoms of PTSD or wait years to be thanked for THEIR SERVICE TO THE NATION. Never again will America hide our fallen soldiers in the intangible anonymity of body counts to hide the cost of war. Because we were shunned, we made a promise that “Never again would one generation of veterans abandon another” and we have made good on that pledge.

We should take satisfaction in knowing that the POW/MIA movement evolved from our generation's steadfast demand for the fullest possible accounting of our missing, with much of that activity coming from Connecticut and the “Forget Me Not” vigils and campaigns. We have fought the hard Agent Orange War with chemical companies, the Institute of Medicine and the VA - a struggle that is almost 50 years long. While it came too late for our generation, we have planted the seed and proved that exposure to toxic and hazardous materials are as deadly as any weapon to our troops and their children.

I was also reminded that the Vet Center program which provides so much to our veterans today was designed, maintained and saved by our generation so that other veterans might have the understanding and help denied to us.

We, the Veterans of the Vietnam War, have cut a wide swath across the landscape of America and probably will continue for years to come. On this day, I thank all who made this celebration special and salute all of Connecticut's 84,000 living Veterans of the Vietnam War!



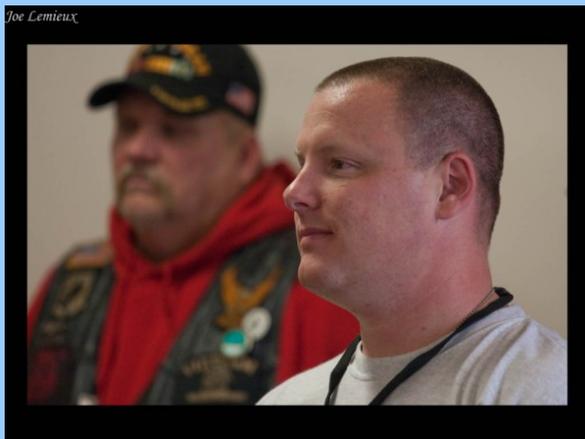
Commissioner Schwartz at Coventry “Welcome Home, Vietnam Veterans Day”

[Click here for Governor Rell's Proclamation](#)
Declaring March 30, 2010 as Connecticut
“Welcome Home, Vietnam Veterans Day.”



Rachael Dumais, 6th grader at Capt. Nathan Hale Middle School, read her winning essay.

[Click here to read her words.](#)



Coventry hero, Sgt Jared Luce, USMC who was wounded in Iraq, welcomed Vietnam Veterans on behalf of the newest veterans of OEF/OIF



Governor announces \$9.5 million in State and Federal Funds for improvements at State Veterans Home in Rocky Hill!

Governor M. Jodi Rell announced that nearly \$2.5 million to cover the state's share of a \$9.2 million upgrade to the "domiciles," or living areas, at the State Veterans' Home in Rocky Hill has been approved by the state Bond Commission. In addition, Governor Rell included \$250,000 to rehabilitate five vacant, state-owned homes across the street from the Veterans' Home for use by veterans returning from Iraq or Afghanistan who need a temporary place to stay.

The federal government has given final approval to pay 65 percent of the costs (\$5.6 million) of the upgrades to the domiciles at the Veterans Home, which currently house nearly 400 homeless and needy veterans. The improvements include making the brick, two-story buildings – completed in the 1940s – handicapped-accessible, installing centralized air conditioning in the veteran sleeping areas, and replacing roofs and gutters. The state's share comes to \$2,474,157. Under Governor Rell's Administration, the state and the VA have jointly invested an unprecedented \$42 million in federal and state funding in the Veterans' Home – the most new funding for improvements at the facility in over six decades!

Five single family houses located across the street from the State Veterans Home campus will be renovated and upgraded to provide temporary housing for recently returned veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars who may need short term accommodations while they adjust to civilian life. The Connecticut Department of Public Works is leading the renovations project. The Department of Veterans' Affairs has already received several offers from groups wishing to hold "housewarming showers" to outfit the kitchens, bedrooms and living spaces once the renovations are completed. Interested groups may contact Cathy Cook, Director of Community Affairs at the Department of Veterans Affairs at 860-721-5826 or Catherine.Cook@po.state.ct.us.

Governor Rell announced \$2.5 million state bond funds will match federal funds for \$9.2 million in renovations for the Veterans Home Domicile for 350 indigent veterans.

"This federal stimulus grant and state matching funds will update the living conditions in our 1940's dormitory style buildings with modern heating and air conditioning, handicapped accessible bathrooms and other upgrades our veterans deserve."

- Commissioner Linda Schwartz

In addition, Governor Rell included \$250,000 to rehabilitate five vacant, state-owned homes across the street from the Veterans' Home for use by veterans returning from Iraq or Afghanistan who need a temporary place to stay.

[Click here for full text of Gov. Rell announcement](#)



The US Air Force Academy Woodwind Quintet, "Rampart Winds" entertained guests and patients at the Veterans Home in early March.

THANK YOU!

We thank donors for their generosity to improve the quality of life for the 500 veterans living in Rocky Hill. This holiday season we received new gift items valued at tens of thousands of dollars from donors and organizations from across the state. Thanks go out as well to our steadfast volunteers who collected, inventoried, stacked, wrapped and distributed thousands of gifts for the 500 veterans who live here.



Many have asked for our newest "Wish List" for the Veterans Home. Please [click on the eagle](#) for the latest list of personal items and gifts for the general welfare of our veterans. And again, we send our sincerest thanks!



Asnuntuck Community College Veterans OASIS



Naugatuck Valley Community College OASIS

The Department of Veterans' Affairs sends its thanks to members of the Greater Federation of Women's Clubs of Connecticut, AAUW and Business and Professional Women – the State's Partners in the Veterans OASIS Program. Clubs from across the state have collected and donated furniture, electronics and funds to help set up OASIS Centers at our public colleges and universities.

Corporate donors have also brought desks, computers, televisions and other items to OASIS.

Creating an OASIS for Veterans Returning to College

Joe O'Keefe, a twenty-five year old combat Marine, is one of over 1000 veteran students at Central Connecticut State University. He states that he sometimes just wants to be around other vets who know what it was like to have seen the world through the ever-vigilant eyes of combat. How do you describe to an 18-year old schoolmate what it was like to bury a comrade who was killed by a thirteen year old with an AK-47?

Joel Patrick Leger, a former Blackhawk helicopter crew chief, also returned from deployment to attend Central Connecticut State University. He missed the fellowship of his fellow soldiers, and found civilian college a difficult adjustment. "We don't have our battle buddies to hang out with anymore." Coping with crowded lecture halls, volumes of paperwork demanded by the GI Bill and dealing with PTSD, family issues, anxiety and the other common issues for returning veterans made studying more difficult.

Governor M. Jodi Rell, Commissioner Linda S. Schwartz and Connecticut's College Chancellors and Presidents listened to these and many other stories from returning veterans at a Connecticut Summit for OEF/OIF Returning Veterans held in October 2007. The returning veterans' "SOS" for help in making the transition to civilian life was immediately translated into action.

With enthusiasm and strong will, and with little funding, in less than two years, new OASIS Centers have opened on seventeen of Connecticut's twenty-four college campuses, with additional centers in the final stages of planning and renovation. OASIS (the "Operation Academic Support for Incoming Servicemembers") centers are co-sponsored by the Governor of Connecticut, the Commissioner of Veterans' Affairs, the Commissioner of Labor, Commissioner of Higher Education, and the Presidents and Chancellors of our public universities and community colleges. Community partners from the General Federation of Women's Clubs of Connecticut and the American Association of University Women in Danbury and many corporations and local businesses as well as veterans' service organizations have provided support, materials, furniture, computers and comfort items for the OASIS Centers.

The US Department of Veterans' Affairs participated in this project by providing veteran work study internships housed in the OASIS Centers, and by scheduling Vet Center Counseling appointments and group discussions in the OASIS Centers. State Veteran Service Offices provide benefits materials and workshops to assist veterans in accessing the benefits they have earned. The state Labor Department assists with vocational rehabilitation, work-study programs and job training and placement information.

Each of Connecticut's campuses now boasts a Veteran's Club and faculty staff coordinator fostering regular meetings and events to provide support and awareness of the needs of veteran students. The seventeen college campuses with OASIS Centers are lively places where "battle buddies" become "study buddies" and counselors are available to assist with academic or personal issues. This is the way our nation should assist those who have served, and Connecticut is proud to offer a model program.

US Department of Veterans' Affairs Assistant Secretary Tammy Duckworth toured the new Sgt John Levitow Veterans Health Care Center in Rocky Hill on a recent visit to Connecticut.



USVA Assistant Secretary Tammy Duckworth's Visit to "The Rock"

She started out applauding and thanking the residents of our new Sgt. John Levitow Veterans Health Care Center for their service. And it only got better from there! US Department of Veterans' Affairs Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Tammy Duckworth, escorted by 2nd District Congressman Joe Courtney toured our new long-term care home and marveled at the bright, state-of-the-art facility. She spoke with the patients and staff, and gave her sincere appreciation for her brother and sister veterans. Recalling her own combat incident when the Blackhawk helicopter she piloted was shot down in Iraq, she reflected on how veterans rely on their "buddies." Duckworth noted, "I could not get out of the crash myself – my buddies got me out."

The US Department of Veterans Affairs has been upgrading and revamping the federal agency to support all veterans. Recent announcements include important new information for veterans:

The US Departments of Defense, Labor and Veterans' Affairs introduced the re-designed and enhanced National Resource Directory Website, <http://www.NationalResourceDirectory.gov> The National Resource Directory provides access to over 10,000 services and resources at the national, state and local levels to support recovery, rehabilitation and community reintegration. We are proud to assure our users they can trust the content on the NRD as resources are reviewed regularly by a content management team that includes several Veterans and subject matter experts.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) has founded a **National Call Center for Homeless Veterans hotline** to ensure that homeless Veterans or Veterans at-risk for homelessness have free, 24/7 access to trained counselors. The hotline is intended to assist homeless Veterans and their families, VA Medical Centers, federal, state and local partners, community agencies, service providers and others in the community. To be connected with a trained VA staff member, call **1-877-4AID VET (877-424-3838)**.

[Proposed Regulation Change Adds Illnesses to List of Diseases Subject to Presumptive Service Connection for Herbicide Exposure](#) [\[see full announcement\]](#) Over 80,000 of the Veterans will have their past claims reviewed and may be eligible for retroactive payment, and all who are not currently eligible for enrollment into the VA healthcare system will become eligible. The new rule will bring the number of illnesses presumed to be associated with herbicide exposure to 14 and significantly expand the current leukemia definition to include a much broader range of leukemia beyond chronic lymphocytic leukemia previously recognized by VA.

Recently Returned OEF/OIF Veterans should check out the website designed just for them: <http://www.oefoif.va.gov>

Secretary Duckworth was moved by our modern facilities. She paused for a moment of reflection in the new chapel at the window dedicated to fallen Connecticut soldier, CW3 William Brennan, USA, who served in Iraq with Major Duckworth.



Nominations for the Connecticut Veterans Hall of Fame Class of 2010 MUST be submitted by 4 pm June 30, 2010.

[To view the History of the CT Veterans Hall of Fame and the biographies of all 51 members, click here](#)

[Click here for the Nomination Packet](#)

Check out our newly redesigned website! www.ct.gov/ctva with easier access to important news and information.

ATTENTION Veterans Organizations: You are invited to send in your events and news items to be posted on the website. Send to Catherine.Cook@po.state.ct.us

VETERANS TELEPHONE DIRECTORY

Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs 1-860-529-5271
(ALERT! New phone number effective 4/26/2010 860-616-3600)

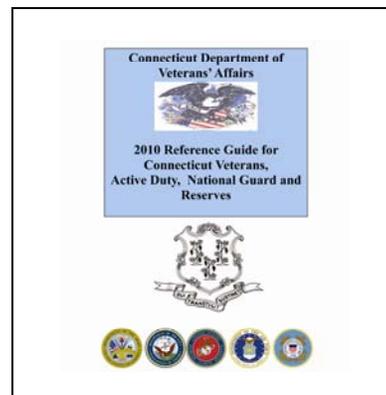
CT Veterans Benefits Information Toll-Free 1-866-928-8387
Soldiers' Sailors' & Marines Fund (emergency) 1-860-296-0719
Military Support Program (Toll-free, confidential) 1-866-251-2913
CT VETS INFOLINE (toll-free) 1-866-9CT-VETS

Web links

CT Department of Veterans' Affairs: <http://ct.gov/ctva>
US Department of Veterans' Affairs: <http://www.va.gov>
State of Connecticut Official Website: <http://www.ct.gov>

Go to <http://www.ct.gov/ctva> for veterans news

2010 VETERANS RESOURCE GUIDE IS NOW AVAILABLE (click on image to connect to this important directory of federal & state information)



Need Assistance or Help with your Veteran Benefits? Connecticut has CERTIFIED Veteran Service Officers to assist with your personal application and appeals for federal and state veterans programs. Offices are located in each Congressional District. Call 1-866-9CT-VETS to make an appointment.



We're on the Web! Check our Website often for important information and updates
<http://www.ct.gov/ctva/>

State of Connecticut Search

Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs

Home About Us Reports & Publications Contact Us

Benefits Information
Employment
Forms
Our Photo Gallery
Programs & Services
Veteran's Events
Veteran's Links
DVA Employee login

Dr. Linda S. Schwartz
Commanding Officer

CONNECTICUT MILITARY SUPPORT PROGRAM
Phone Updates by e-mail
ALERTS
F.A.Q. & STATUS
US FULL CT HALF

Department of Veterans' Affairs
207 West Street
Rocky Hill, CT 06067
860-529-2973
1-800-550-0000
Fax: 860-721-9519
Veterans Info Line
1-866-9CT-VETS
(1-866-729-3097)
Veterans News/Notes

State Veterans Home in Rocky Hill
MORE INFO

Especially for OEF/OIF Veterans
MORE INFO

State Veterans Home in Rocky Hill
MORE INFO

Stand Down
Sept. 18, 2009
MORE INFO

News and Announcements

News from the Federal VA
News from the State VA
News from Veterans Organizations
Governor Rell Signs New Law
A Special Place to Honor Our Veterans
Governor Rell Dedicates Vietnam Women's
JUST RELEASED: OEF/OIF Project Report

Frequently Asked Questions

I want to...

Get a copy of my DD214/Discharge Papers
Apply for the CT Warlike Service Medal
Apply for admission to the Veterans Home
Nominate a veteran for the Hall of Fame
Get help obtaining veterans' benefits
Apply to volunteer at the Veterans' Home
Get help for a woman veteran
Apply for Veterans Tax Exemptions
Get a copy of the Veterans Resource Guide

CT DVA E-Newsletter
US Dept of Veterans Affairs

Home | CT.gov Home | Send Feedback | Login
State of Connecticut | Disclaimer and Privacy Policy | Copyright © 2002 - 2009 State of Connecticut