



# Department of Veterans' Affairs E-Newsletter

June 23, 2009

Volume 1, Number 2

## Welcome to our new Electronic Newsletter!

*"I am delighted to share this new communication with you! As we work to serve the 277,000 veterans of Connecticut, efficiently and effectively, I hope you will use this opportunity to share your thoughts on how we are doing, and how we can better serve those who have served." - Dr. Linda S. Schwartz, Commissioner*

## Commissioner's Comments - Memorial Day 2009

On May 29<sup>th</sup>, at a solemn ceremony held at the State Veterans' Cemetery in Middletown, Commissioner Linda S. Schwartz, accepted the folded flags from a member of the Connecticut Army National Guard at the conclusion of the a burial service for the unclaimed cremated remains of two world War II veterans. The cremains of Archibald Fyfe of Stratford and Alexander Pavluk of Branford were placed in their final resting places after the discovery and identification after sitting unclaimed for decades. The "Missing in America Project" worked with the Connecticut Funeral Directors Association to look for and provide military burial for any unclaimed remains of military veterans. Here are Commissioner Schwartz' remarks from this unusual and poignant funeral: *"This cemetery is a field of honor reserved for a select group of patriots who stepped forward above and beyond their peers to put their lives on the line to defend our Nation in time of peace and war. Connecticut and all who are assembled here made known their appreciation for that service. The Missing in America Project has spearheaded a search to bring these brothers home. We thank them for their efforts and their commitment to this mission. We thank the Connecticut Funeral Directors Association for joining and assisting us in this noble endeavor. Sixteen million Americans served in World War II. We lose thousands of these heroes of the past every day across this Nation. Archibald Fyfe and Alexander Pavluk were but two of these veterans. As I look across this land I see that the work of many have brought them home to this honored place where valor proudly sleeps."*

On the battlefield

On the streets of America

In death

Leave no one behind.

We come today to lay to rest

With all the respect, dignity and honor

These men earned

By their service to this Nation.

For we who have worn the uniform

This cloth we are like the clans of old

Here with our banners and our finest uniforms as a sign

Of keeping faith with these men and with each other

A noble cause.

**...REMINDER...**

**CONNECTICUT VETERANS HALL OF FAME CLASS OF 2009 APPLICATIONS MUST BE POSTMARKED BY JUNE 30, 2009 PLEASE GET YOUR APPLICATION IN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!**



Commissioner Linda Schwartz received folded flags at the interment of cremains for two World War II veterans at the State Veterans Cemetery.

*"The Department of Veterans' Affairs continues to 'Serve Those Who Served' by offering programs and hosting events throughout the state to serve the needs of veterans of all generations and remember those who died in service to our nation."*

- Commissioner Linda Schwartz

**- DEADLINE IS FAST APPROACHING FOR VETERANS HALL OF FAME APPLICATIONS**



[Applications for the Class of 2009 must be postmarked June 30, 2009](#)

# STAND DOWN 2009

Friday September 18<sup>th</sup>

## 1. Form for Veterans to Register for Stand Down 09

(veterans are urged to bring DD 214 form)

## 2. Form to Apply as a Volunteer for Stand Down 09

We are collecting \$20 gift cards instead of used clothing this year.

All volunteers MUST pre-register.

We are limited to 150 able-bodied volunteers. No exceptions!

For details, please call Cathy Cook 860-721-5826



Governor M. Jodi Rell, Commissioner Schwartz and Allahna Torres unveiled a replica of the Vietnam Veterans Women's Memorial to honor Connecticut's Women Veterans of all eras in the Veterans Alcove of the State Capitol Complex.



A BIG Thank You to the Bikers from Wethersfield/Rocky Hill Elks who recently held a Bike Run and Fund-Raiser for Stand Down donating \$9500 to support this year's event!

Call Cathy Cook at (860) 721-5826 if your organization would like to raise funds for Stand Down 2009.



Our thanks go out to sailors from the Sub School in Groton who helped load some of the new furniture donated to the Veterans Home from Navy surplus!

## NEWS FROM THE VETERANS HOME "On the Rock"

### Connecticut Veterans' Home Wins Big at the 2009 National Veterans Creative Arts Competition!

We are SO EXCITED! We are proud to announce that the CT Veterans' Home received **five** (5!) medals in the music division of the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival! The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival showcases the achievements of veterans across the country in each of the five artistic divisions. Each Festival features an art exhibit showing the 1<sup>st</sup> place artwork from 52 categories. A live stage show, with full orchestra, is performed by veterans who achieved medal winning status in a variety of categories from the music, dance, drama and creative writing divisions. The 2009 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival will be held in San Antonio, Texas, hosted by the South Texas Veterans Health Care System, from October 5-11. We are proud of our winners! **Alvin O'Connor will go to San Antonio to perform!**

### **Our Winners are...**

Alvin O'Connor - 1<sup>st</sup> place Solo Classical - *Nessun Dorma*

CT Veterans' Home Choir – 2<sup>nd</sup> place Vocal Group Broadway – *Edelweiss*

CT Veterans' Home Choir – 3<sup>rd</sup> place Vocal Group Patriotic – *My Country 'Tis of Thee*

CT Veterans' Home Choir Senior Ensemble – 2<sup>nd</sup> place Senior Vocal Group – *National Anthem*

John Fields – 3<sup>rd</sup> place Instrumental Solo Drums/Percussion – *Rhythmic Collage '09*



The Legislature's Veterans Affairs Committee held an informational hearing at the new Levitow Building.



Volunteers from Connecticut Innovations, Inc. planted new beds at the Veterans' Home with dozens of flowering perennials they collected from area donors – Sweet Thanks!



The Rocky Hill Veterans' Softball Team participates in local league play and now plays home games on our newly restored McKinnon Field.

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

**Governor Rell has signed several new laws of interest to veterans. Click on the link to read the new laws in their entirety.**

- [Public Act 09-5 Placement of US Flags on Veterans Graves](#)
- [PA 09-90 Allowing Posthumous Award of CT Wartime Service Medal](#)
- [PA 09-117 Redefining Service in Time of War for Certain Veterans](#)
- [PA 09-159 Tuition Waivers at CT Universities and New GI Bill](#)
- [PA 09-163 Expanding the Military Family Relief Fund](#)
- [PA 09-176 Concerning the Disabled Veterans Property Tax Exemption](#)

## VETERANS TELEPHONE DIRECTORY

Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs	1-800-550-0000
CT Veterans Benefits Information	1-866-928-8387
CT Veterans Cemetery	860-721-5838
Soldiers' Sailors' & Marines Fund (emergency)	860-296-0719
MILITARY SUPPORT PROGRAM (toll free, confidential)	1-866-251-2913
CT VETS INFOLINE (toll-free)	1-866-9CT-VETS

### Web links

- CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS: [www.ct.gov/ctva](http://www.ct.gov/ctva)
- US Department of Veterans' Affairs: [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)
- State of Connecticut Official Website: [www.ct.gov](http://www.ct.gov)

## James J. McKinnon Veterans Memorial Softball Field

The veterans of Rocky Hill dedicated the refurbished softball field in honor of recently retired Jim McKinnon, long time Director of Residential and Rehabilitation Services. AFSCME Council #4 was recognized for their contribution of funds to restore the field. The donation of a wheelchair accessible gazebo and storage shed for ball equipment was also honored. The Spc. Wil Perez, Jr Foundation donated the structures in honor of fallen soldier Wil Perez of Norwalk who was killed in action in Iraq. The Annual Softball Game between staff and veterans was resurrected along with a barbecue for staff and residents. It was a grand time, the staff won the game, and a rematch is in the offing.



Our extraordinary volunteer, Judy Barnes was honored with a window dedicated to her work helping our veterans.



Judy Barnes, who has volunteered over 11,000 hours at the Veterans' Home, was speechless when Commissioner Linda Schwartz unveiled the heart shaped window honoring her devotion to the veterans of Rocky Hill.

### *Need assistance or help?*

**Veterans Help Line (toll free)  
1-866-9CT-VETS**

**Military Support Program  
Confidential 1-866-251-2913**

## Volunteer Awards Event & Dedication of Chapel Windows

Over 50 volunteers attended our Annual Volunteer Recognition Dinner on Thursday June 18<sup>th</sup>. We were thrilled to have our event in Charley's Place in the Levitow Building for the first time with no worries about rain or bugs. Everyone loved the lovely spread of assorted wraps, salads and strawberry shortcake. Cathy Cook, Director of Community Affairs and Volunteer Services handed out Certificates of Appreciation documenting a lifetime total of 68, 275 hours of volunteer time from 35 volunteers. WOW!

The evening was capped off with the Dedication of the Stained Glass Windows in the new chapel. Veterans' organizations and individuals contributed over \$25,000 for the beautiful windows that complete our new chapel. [Click here for a list of the donors and their windows.](#) Thank you to everyone!



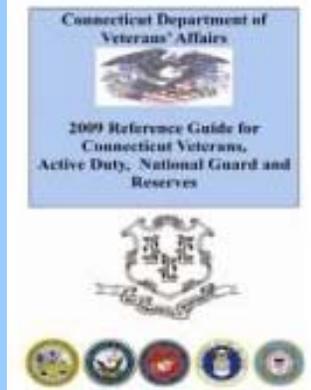
Father Kula, Rabbi Okolica and Rev. Celella offered blessings at the Dedication



Our wonderful volunteers enjoyed an "indoor" picnic to honor their service.

Volunteers are always welcome at the Connecticut Veterans Home. We hold training and orientation classes quarterly. Please contact Cathy Cook, Director of Community Affairs and Volunteer Training if you are interested.

### [VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORMS \[click here\]](#)



*2009 VETERANS RESOURCE GUIDE IS NOW AVAILABLE*

*Please [click here](#) to connect to this important guide of federal and state veterans' information and programs.*

**CT Department of Veterans' Affairs and Veterans Home**

**287 West Street**

**Rocky Hill, CT 06067**

[Click here for directions](#)

**Veterans Help Line**

**1-866-9CT-VETS**

**We're on the Web!**

<http://www.ct.gov/ctva/>