

Home for the Heroes

Official Newsletter of the
Connecticut Veterans' Home at Rocky Hill



May 2007 Issue

A Memorial Day Message from Commissioner Linda S. Schwartz

“Where valor proudly sleeps”



When I was growing up in a small town in Ohio, Memorial Day was the most celebrated of any holiday.

It was the only day we had a parade. Most of the town gathered at the Junior High School and marched to Woodlawn Cemetery. Back then, the most revered participants

were the aged members of the Grand Army of the Republic which my Grandpa explained were the “fellas” that saved the Union.

In my lifetime America has been engaged in hostilities around the world, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Beirut, Grenada, Somalia, Panama, Kuwait, Iraq, Afghanistan. This reads like the roll call of the United Nations yet it is Americans who have made the sacrifices in the name of freedom and all that our Nation stands for.

This Memorial Day, Connecticut has a proposed law banning demonstrations at all funerals. While it is regrettable that we had to legislate dignity and respect at the last moments of remembrance, this law would not have seen the light of day had it not been for the need to protect the last honors for our fallen war dead. Now, the demonstrations at military funerals are well known and represent perhaps the last sacrifice these honored dead and their families made for their Country. The disregard for the feelings of families and friends that mourn the passing of a military member who “gave the last full measure” was so outrageous that changes were made to protect this sacred right for all Connecticut citizens. For all who came out and fought for the passage of this legislation, this is a victory for justice most deserving of the thanks of us all.

Thank you to those who offer Military Honors

We also want to thank all who labor tirelessly throughout the year to provide military honors to those who have worn the uniform of this nation in war and peace. We are all indebted to groups such as the Antique Veterans, Connecticut National Guard Military Honors Units, Patriot Riders, the hearty band of gentlemen from Madison, Marine Corp League (and their riderless horse) and all the Veteran Service Organizations who gather in good weather and bad, week days and weekends to pay their respects and bring comfort, honor and dignity to veterans and their families throughout our state.

In essence these volunteers render of military honors as a last tribute of gratitude for faithful service to the nation. They stand in our stead to pay honor to the men and women who have done us the honor of serving the Nation. We all owe them gratitude and thanks for the fine job they do.



Governor Rell and Legislators Recently Toured Our Construction Sites—Our First New Building Here in 60 Years!

By Charley Williams, Chief of Staff and Project Manager



The new 125 bed Health Care Facility is well underway. And we are ON TIME and ON BUDGET for our early 2008 Opening! A drive by tour of Rocky Hill will show you that we are making great progress, and you can really imagine what a fine facility our veterans will enjoy. All exterior walls have been blocked and currently red brick is going on over the block. All five of the wards within the new facility are framed up and currently all electrical, plumbing, heating and A/C are going into place.

A Fully Functional Facility A-wing will be the administrative wing along with Occupational/Physical Therapy, canteen, library, mail room, barber shop and veterans recreation area. B-wing upper level will house the health care facility clinic and a 25 bed ward with 5 private rooms and 10 two person rooms. C-wing upper level will house 5 private rooms and 10 two person rooms. D-wing upper

level will have a chapel and 5 private rooms and 10 two person rooms.

A New 25 Bed Alzheimer’s Unit On the lower level B-wing will be a 25 bed Alzheimer’s ward. Just off the Alzheimer’s unit will be a prep kitchen for plating food for our veterans. Lower level C-wing will be another 25 bed ward. All five wards will be laid out the same. D-wing lower level will house all the mechanical and storage spaces to support the new building. Currently the General Contractor, PDS Engineering is on track and on time with 234 days left to completion as of 14 May 2007. **A New Water System, too.** The new Water Loop system with water tower is all laid out and all the pipe is in the ground. What a relief it will be to have this modern and up to date system flowing!

Follow the construction on our website. To view current information about the two projects please go to our web site at: www.ct.gov/ctva and click on the “New Construction” button on the left side of our home page. This will take you to the construction site which is updated daily and new construction photos are put up once a week.

Military Support Program

by John Wiltse, Deputy Commissioner

Military personnel and their families often experience adjustment issues when called to serve overseas. These problems may occur while deployed or upon return to civilian life. Some military personnel may experience transitory adjustment problems or more serious problems as a result of combat experiences. At the same time, families are dealing with the stress of impending or actual deployment of a loved one.

In response to these unique needs, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Service in collaboration with the Office of the Governor, the State Department of Veterans’ Affairs and the Connecticut Military Department developed the **Military Support Program** that will offer confidential, transitional services across the state to Connecticut military members and their families who are preparing for possible or actual deployment in support of the Global War on Terrorism.

Support for service members and their families will be available through a provider network of specially trained clinicians, and will be covered by State of Connecticut funding when services are unavailable or not covered by insurance through the Department of Defense or Veterans’ Healthcare systems.

Governor M. Jodi Rell addressed Connecticut’s military and their families at the launch of this unique program by saying, **“Deployment ushers in a period of transition and stress as families adjust to the change. The deployment adjustment may give rise to complicated issues as families and couples strive to cope with problems related to parenting, finances, jobs, and relationships. I want to assure you that the feelings and thoughts you may have are expected. We know that during this time, many of you might benefit from assistance in coping with issues on the home front. The State of Connecticut has developed the Military Support Program designed to assist you and your family as you prepare for deployment, while you are away, and upon your return to civilian life.”**

Military personnel and their families are urged to call the Military Support Program anytime toll-free at 866-251-2913.



Stand Down 2007—September 21, 2007

Calling All Volunteers

From James McKinnon, Director of Residential Services

Every year, the Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs conducts a full day event called "Stand Down" to provide free assistance and service information to homeless and indigent veterans of our state. This year's event is scheduled for Friday September 21, 2007 on the grounds of the Connecticut Veterans' Home in Rocky Hill.

In 2006, we provided over 500 veterans in need with physical exams, legal assistance, motor vehicle licensing assistance, haircuts and new clothing. This year, we are expecting in excess of 750 homeless and indigent Connecticut veterans, whose ages range from 19 through World War II vintage. As you can imagine this event is a Herculean task and involves hundreds of volunteers providing a myriad of healthcare, personal and counseling services to veterans.

Stand Down is a term used from the Vietnam War era which came to mean an area behind the front lines that was safe and represented a place where battle-weary soldiers would relax and take care of personal needs such as haircuts, showers, a full meal and minor health care. Across the nation, Stand Down events are now held to offer the same kind of respite and care.

Connecticut's first Stand Down was held on the grounds of the Department of Veterans' Affairs at



**Hamden Elks Club
Donates \$2500 for
STAND DOWN Expenses**

Rocky Hill in 1992 when five hundred veterans in need attended. Throughout the 1990's attendance built up to one thousand per year until 2001 when the commissioner at the time changed to more frequent mini events throughout the year. Over time, enthusiasm for these events waned and services were curtailed. In 2005, Commissioner Linda Schwartz reinstated the day-long annual Stand Down at Rocky Hill with added services for veterans. Since 2005, over 1100 veterans have come to Rocky Hill for a full day of respite, assistance and camaraderie with fellow veterans and volunteers from across Connecticut.

Many state agencies and community programs volunteer their services to homeless and indigent veterans at Stand Down. This year we expect nearly 750 veterans to use services from the State of Connecticut Agencies, veterans' organizations, community nonprofit organizations, corporations and others. Stand Down sets up court for a day at our facility and Superior Court judges work with state prosecutors and public defenders to work through misdemeanor offenses and other legal matters for homeless and indigent veterans with legal impediments to their lives. The Motor Vehicle Department brings their licensing van and officials who can reinstate drivers' licenses or clear problems for nominal fees.

Our own Margaret Concannon, Director of Healthcare at Rocky Hill, arranges for health screenings for Stand Down attendees as well as educational workshops to instruct veterans in prevention and other health care matters. Volunteers from the Yale School of Medicine, UConn Dental School and Connecticut Lions offer health care, treatment of dental needs, and eye exams for any who wish such services.



**Yale Medical School Students
Assisted with Healthcare
Assessments at Stand Down 06**

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.

Please mark you
calendars for
Stand Down 2007 on
Friday September 21 at
Rocky Hill
Veterans' Home

To help with
Stand Down 07
Go to www.ct.gov/ctva to
register as a volunteer or
call Jim McKinnon at
860-721-5832

*“If you think you’re too small to make a difference,
you haven’t been in bed with a mosquito!” Anita Roddick*

The Department of Veterans’ Affairs is pleased to be joined by Cathy Cook who is our new Director of Community Affairs and Volunteer Services. Cathy is modernizing our communications with volunteers and donors who are so important to the mission of the Department of Veterans’ Affairs. Please bring your ideas and interests to Cathy as we all work together to “Serve those who served.”

She looks forward to your call to her at 860-721-5826



Honoring our Precious Volunteers

The Department of Veterans’ Affairs is very grateful for the dedicated and selfless service of many volunteers who come to Rocky Hill throughout the year to help us “Serve those who have served.” We are so appreciative of those who come in to run Bingo nights, assist with patient care, help out in the Schwartz Store, provide recreational opportunities in the communities or bring in much needed donations. All these activities contribute to the quality of life and well-being of our honored veterans.

In 2006, the following volunteers passed remarkable milestones in their years of volunteering with us. Please join us in saying a special “Thank You” to:

| | | | |
|------------------|--------------|---------------------|-------------|
| James Bachand | 14,700 hours | Louise Silvester | 1,500 hours |
| Emma Prince | 10,500 hours | Elaine Bastarache | 1,000 hours |
| Edgar Prince | 9,000 hours | Laurie Bastarache | 1,000 hours |
| Bernice Bergeron | 7,700 hours | Veronica Stankowski | 1,000 hours |
| Judith Barnes | 7,000 hours | Alexander Oliphant | 800 hours |
| Hoyt Grant | 1,500 hours | Barbara Armfield | 700 hours |
| | | Robert Rocco | 500 hours |

Celebrating Connecticut’s Women in the Armed Services

We recently held the 2nd annual Women in the Armed Services Day with over 200 women participating. Hosted and funded by the Connecticut Department of Veterans’ Affairs, the all day program featured opening remarks from General Wilma Vaught, Founder of the National Women Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. There was a special ceremony to award the Connecticut Wartime Service Medal to women from the WWII era to recently returned veterans of the War on Terror. One of the highlights was a fascinating panel discussion with women in the military who have been on the front lines in Iraq and Afghanistan. They shared personal stories of women at war and were a poignant and emotional reminder of the value of women in the military and the challenges they face as they serve the nation. The enthusiastic response of women veterans from across Connecticut assures that this will be a much anticipated annual event.

“Almost 15,000 Connecticut women served in the U.S. Military and qualify as veterans. Today, over 20% of the active military are women,” says Dr. Linda S. Schwartz, Commissioner of the State Department of Veterans Affairs. “Since I am a woman veteran, I am making a concerted effort to inform women who served in the military about their veterans’ benefits and women veteran health programs.”



Women in the Navy and Navy WAVES at Reunion ‘07

Women Veterans - Join Our Trip to Washington DC to 10th Anniversary of Women’s Memorial from Nov 1 –3. Call Cathy Cook at 806-721-5826 for information.

Office of Advocacy and Assistance Call Donna Meskony at 860-721-5915

The Connecticut Wartime Veterans Service Medal



This special award was established by the Connecticut General Assembly in 2005 to honor Connecticut residents who served for at least 90 days on active duty in a time of war and were honorably discharged. To date, over 9500 medals have been pinned on veterans of our state. If you are a Connecticut veteran with an honorable discharge who served in wartime, you may be eligible. Call our Office of Advocacy and Assistance.

Veterans Registry

A new Connecticut law asks the Department of Veterans' Affairs to collect the names and addresses of our living veterans and keep them in a secure file to be used only for state business to contact veterans with information about benefits and/or other official communication.



Coming to your town soon—The Vets Express Van with information on federal and state benefits and programs for veterans.

Operation Outreach—We are here to help

We want to help now!

At the Commissioner's request, the DVA is reaching out to any soldier, sailor or airman who is back in Connecticut recovering from wounds inflicted during the Global War on Terror. Commissioner Schwartz has launched this grassroots effort to find wounded troops as they work through their recovery. Using the grassroots, the Department of Veterans Affairs seeks information about wounded warriors through newspaper articles, word of mouth and any other source that will help us offer assistance and support at this time in their lives.

If you know of a member of the armed services from any branch who has been wounded and lives in Connecticut, please let us know. We will reach out to those who have returned to our state for recovery, or those who are from Connecticut but who may be receiving treatment outside our state.

We are sensitive to the privacy issues of all parties, and will only reach



out to those troops who are interested in hearing from us. This is often a difficult and stressful time for the troops and their families. We are truly here to help, and will be waiting and ready whenever a veteran needs us.

**Call us at 860-721-5818 or
go to www.ct.gov/ctva**

Serving Those Who Served...

By Margaret Concannon, M.Ed., NHA, CTRS,
Healthcare Services Administrator

It is an honor for us at the State Veterans' Home to serve the healthcare needs of those who served our nation. Our dedicated staff of nearly 160 staff members on three shifts care for the veterans by providing medical, nursing, rehabilitation therapy and recreation to 125 veterans in the chronic disease and long term healthcare facility and 380 residents in the domiciliary and veterans recovery program. Our colleagues include two Physicians, four Nurse Practitioners, around the clock nursing provided by registered nurses and nursing assistants, rehabilitation therapists, social workers, pharmacy, dietitians, laboratory technicians, and many other support staff. The Veterans' Recovery Program provides education, motivation and environmental support for veterans seeking recovery from the effects of substance abuse. We have a clinical psychologist and four Substance Abuse counselors assigned to this program and we are supported by a comprehensive Mental Health team consisting of two full time psychiatric nurse practitioners and part-time psychiatrist on staff from the Federal VA. The best results happen as we all work together to establish a comprehensive care plan that emphasizes collaborative relationships with the veterans, the families, and each of the healthcare professionals.

We integrate medical, health, wellness, recreation, rehabilitation, and social support to enhance our veteran's quality of life. By working closely with the Federal VA we coordinate the medical and health related services of our veterans which results in better health outcomes and continuity of care for our veterans. The Healthcare Facility treats veterans with chronic illnesses such as stroke, Parkinson's disease, pulmonary disease, and cancer. The Healthcare Facility which is equipped with its own pharmacy, radiology and dental departments also provides a variety of services such as podiatry, optometry and mental health support.

The DVA offers Hospice and Palliative care, a specialized Alzheimer's Care unit, Respiratory Care unit, and Respite Care Program. Our residents, depending on the nature and seriousness of their medical



needs, are treated in the Healthcare Facility by our staff or at area hospitals. Times are changing for us, too. Not long ago most of our residents were World War II veterans, but today we are proud to serve an increasing number of Vietnam veterans in need of chronic care.

It was a grand day when we broke ground for the new, state of the art, 125-bed Healthcare Facility to be completed in January, 2008. The new facility will offer all the same services we now provide, but will also have up to date rehabilitation facilities for veterans to actively participate in physical and occupational therapy. It will boast

a huge "family friendly" dining room with a fieldstone fireplace overlooking the Glastonbury hills and a large recreation room complete with aquarium, game tables, comfortable furniture, and movie screen for ongoing entertainment and enjoyment. The staff here are all anticipating this wonderful new facility, knowing that the quality, dedication and workmanship that we see going into our new home will improve the lives of our deserving Veterans.



Many family members send letters, praising the staff for the treatment, service and kindness they displayed in caring for their loved one here. They are living proof of our Home's motto, "Serving those who served."

Veterans from Rocky Hill to Receive Culinary Arts Certifications from Capital Community College



We've all been eating pretty well lately at Rocky Hill. By Maria Cheney

Have you noticed the new aromas coming from the kitchens? Have you seen the new pride in the faces of Connecticut's newest chefs-in-training? On June 12, 2007 we

will proudly announce the graduation of 13 veterans as new chefs from Capital Community College's Food and Beverage/Hospitality Program. As their final exams approach, we are all looking forward to being the "taste-testers."

This ground-breaking program is a newly created partnership with the Department of Veterans' Affairs, Capital Community College, and the Connecticut Hospitality Education Foundation, a state wide organization with over 200 members. Thirteen veterans who live here at Rocky Hill and one student from the community have been studying, cooking and preparing for new careers in the food service/hospitality sector of our economy. When they complete their training in June, they

will have earned 5 nationally-recognized certifications and a Certificate of Completion from Capital Community College. Our graduates will have Certification as a Qualified Food Service Operator; Certification in Alcohol Service; Certification in Food Preparation; Certification in Customer Service; and Certification in Hospitality and Restaurant Management.

Commissioner Linda S. Schwartz was instrumental in supporting this new opportunity for veterans by providing agency funds for fifty percent of the costs of the program. The other costs were funded through state funding in the Incumbent Worker Training Program supported by the Connecticut Department of Labor, the Workforce Investment board and Capital Workforce Partners. Thanks go out to Deputy Commissioner John Wiltse, and Jim McKinnon and Maria Cheney from our Domicile Program. Instructors Joseph Jenecaro, Business & Industry Director at Capital Community College arranged to conduct the classes at our facility with instructors Bill Williams, Director of Workforce Development and the Connecticut Hospitality Educational Foundation and Randy Thurlow, our Head Chef.

And while the aromas are tantalizing, and the new dishes are tempting, the best result is the pride on the faces and the new career opportunities for our veterans. Please join with us in congratulating Connecticut's newest food service professionals!

DONATIONS WISH LIST

Stand Down Wish List: Beginning in August, for this event only, we are accepting clean, used clothing in good repair on hangers.

Schwartz Store Wish List: We need new clothing and underwear, accessories such as belts, wallets. Toiletries, shower shoes, large dial watches, stationery items and postage.

For Entertainment and Amusements

We need portable radios, batteries, headphones, personal TV headphones, large print crossword and sudoku books

And Gift Certificates to local stores, restaurants, and movie theaters are always welcome

Call Earle Lee at 860-721-5970 or Cathy Cook at 860-721-5826 if you have items to donate. And thank you for remembering our veterans in need.

Calendar of Upcoming Events at Rocky Hill

May 26th.....Memorial Day Picnic for Veterans in Residence at Rocky Hill
 May 28thMemorial Day Monday
 June 9thSalute to the Armed Forces, Dodd Stadium, Norwich —BBQ and Baseball
 June 12thMemorial Service at the Veterans' Health Care Facility at 6:30 pm
 June 14thVolunteer Recognition Ceremony 4:30pm at Commander's Home
 August 9th.....102nd US Army Band Concert, Under the Trees 1:30 pm—All are Welcome
 September 9th....Carnival—for Veterans at Rocky Hill, Sunday
 September 21st...Stand Down—MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW!

Directions:

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.



VETERANS' TELEPHONE DIRECTORY

- State of CT Department of Veteran's Affairs..1-800-550-0000
- Admission to Residential Domicile.....(860)-721-5833
- Admission to HealthCare Facility.....(860)-721-5877
- Admission to Veteran's Recovery Center.....(860) 721-5933
- Hospice Program/Respite Care.....(860) 721-5955
- Office of Advocacy and Assistance.....1-866-928-8387
- Office of Community Affairs.....(860) 721-5826
- Connecticut Veterans' Cemetery.....(860) 721-5838
- Soldier's Sailors' & Marines Fund(860) 296-0719
(for temporary, emergency assistance)

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