



Home for the Heroes



Official Newsletter of the Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs "Serving Those Who Served" November 2007

From Commissioner Linda S. Schwartz

Faces of Connecticut's Fallen -A Moving Tribute

Last May the Department of Veterans' Affairs sponsored a ceremony in the State Capitol to remember the men and women from Connecticut who had died in the line of duty since 1990. As we prepared the list of names of the fallen, we could not believe how many this state had lost in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Global War on Terror. Too often the deaths of these fine Americans are marked at the time and then often stored neatly in the subconscious of the Nation not to be thought of again.

As a veteran of the Vietnam War, I have experienced first hand the profound effect a trip to "The Wall" in Washington, DC can have on veterans and visitors alike. The sheer number of names strung across the shiny black granite conveys the staggering loss of life in the war. However we are spared the weighty question of what the "last full measure" really means in human terms. We do not have to face the fallen and see how young and full of life they were. We do not see smiles or dancing eyes full of promise and energy. Thus it seemed fitting that along with the name, rank and service we should also have a persona to remember them by.

So it is fitting that on the day we unveiled



our memorial to "Connecticut's Fallen Heroes" in West Hartford, I would open the Hartford Courant early edition webpage and see all the faces once again featured. We commissioned this "Traveling Tribute" so that all citizens of our State would have a

chance to see the faces and perhaps reflect on the sacrifice these individuals and their families have given to our country.

Connecticut's has lost 42 from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. These men and women represent diverse educational, cultural and religious backgrounds from every county and every corner of the State. They served in every branch of the military services, officers, enlisted...sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, aunts, cousins, uncles, mothers and fathers. Life was waiting for them. However they shall come no more walking down the streets of Connecticut. They will not come laughing into their parents house or proudly marching home. And though we will see them no more, they continue to enrich and inspire our State and our Nation.

When I first heard the music of American Anthem by Norah Jones, I was haunted by the words and the quiet elegance of the phrasing she used. We chose it for the Memorial Tribute because the words convey so well what we see passing before our eyes.

"All we've been given by those
who came before,
The dream of a nation where
freedom would endure
The work and prayers of centuries
have brought us to this day
What shall be our legacy?
What will our children say?
Let them say of me I was one who believed
In sharing the blessings I received
Let me know in my heart
when my days are through
America, America I gave my best to you."

I would say in the spirit of this Veterans Day there can be no doubt that all who served and especially all who lost their lives gave America their very best.



Commissioner Linda Schwartz, a Vietnam veteran, spoke of the need to remember our heroes at the dedication of The Faces of Connecticut's Fallen Exhibit which features a 10 minute video presentation of the portraits of our heroes who have fallen.

Ray and Leesa Philippon of West Hartford, whose son Marine Lance Cpl. Lawrence R. Philippon died in Iraq, shared these words on behalf of the Gold Star Families at the Opening and Dedication of the "Faces of Connecticut's Fallen" Exhibit on November 5, 2007

"Ray and I are deeply grateful for this honor that is being presented today. Remembering our fallen, honoring their sacrifice and respecting their choice to serve our country is a duty that we, as American citizens, must hold in high regard. Certainly, your presence here today speaks highly of that importance in your lives. We thank you for being here to share in the receipt of this memorial for Connecticut's fallen and their families.

Our Nation's survival will always depend on those who value and wish to preserve the rights and freedoms for which so many have died. The very oath that each individual takes upon entry into the Armed Forces, requires great commitment to those ideals, incredible courage and faithful integrity. We are indebted to all who have taken that oath in the past, in the present and will take in the future. We must ourselves vow to never forget those who have loved America enough to serve, protect and at times give their ultimate sacrifice.

Adlai Stevenson wrote "men who have offered their lives for their country know that patriotism is not the fear of something, it is the love of something."

Not just for Veterans Day, or Memorial Day, but everyday we urge you to reach out and honor these individuals by showing respect to our flag for which they have fought, respect to our memorials, and the show of gratitude to our precious veterans. Veterans, who bear the burden through out their lives, and carry in their hearts the fullest measure that was given by their comrades in arms. Veterans, who at



**Marine Lance
Corporal
Lawrence R. Philippon
gave his life in
Iraq 5/8/2005**

times, have witnessed the fall of their friends and perhaps even held them in their arms as they breathed their last breath.

We know that it is these very veterans, the depth of their devotion and their commitment to our nation that our son, Larry, revered and desired to follow.

We stand before you with great pride for all of Connecticut's fallen in this War on Terror. For they did not hesitate to accept their duty and they are a testimony to the words of John F. Kennedy- "Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe in order to assure the survival and success of Liberty."

At times, God allows the memories of the darkest days of our life to come forward, and see them in a different light. Recently, we remembered words that were spoken by the chaplain at Larry's graveside service in Arlington. These words seemed very appropriate to use today in speaking about this memorial.

Chaplain Foskitt put a challenge to those present that day. He asked that we consider our fallen often and ask ourselves a question. Today, we are asking that question of you.

When you gaze upon these beautiful faces of valor, ask yourself, "Am I living my life in a way that deserves these individuals giving their lives for me?"

In closing, we wanted to share a correspondence we received after Larry's death.

In an email dated May 15 2005 from Larry's 1st Sgt in Iraq to Larry's Color Guard Unit in Washington D.C.: "Philippon was a team leader. He loved being a Marine and was good at it. He had the courage to run face first into a machine gun. Squad leaders normally don't go in first. Philippon Did. Where do men like this come from?"

We are proud to say that Connecticut claims our son along with all of the heroes that grace this wonderful memorial. To each of these heroes we wish to say in according with scripture, You have fought a good fight, you have finished your race, you have kept the faith.

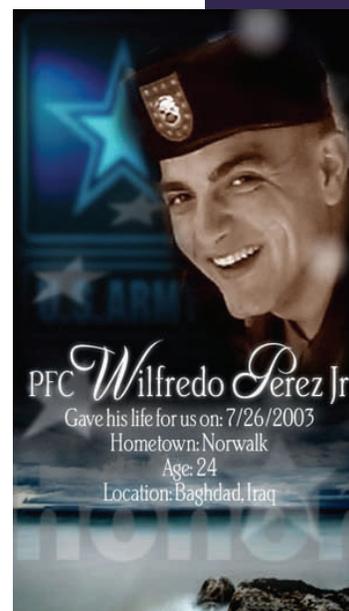
Thank you again for opening your hearts to Connecticut's fallen sons and daughters and for sharing in the honor of these precious individuals. May God's love continue to bless America and unite our citizens in the support of those who serve."

Ray and Leesa Philippon

Please come to West Hartford Town Hall to see and hear this magnificent traveling exhibit honoring our forty-two (42) fallen heroes of Iraq and Afghanistan. By special permission granted to the Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs, artist Norah Jones performs her moving solo American Anthem which captures the refrain, "America, America, I gave my best to you." The exhibit will be on display at the West Hartford Town Hall Lobby through January 4, 2008 and will then move to locations throughout the state.

Faces of Connecticut's Fallen will be on display at the West Hartford Town Hall Lobby during Town Hall hours, Including evenings, from now through January 4, 2008

The Exhibit will then travel to a public location in each of the eight counties of the state during 2008.



Stand Down 2007—The Largest and Most Successful Ever!

With over 250 volunteers and with the assistance from many state agencies and community organizations, we showed that together, we have the power to change lives! Our final count was 755 veterans receiving services. That is a 34% INCREASE over last year's 564 veterans served! CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL! Well done! Here are a few milestones:

Over 1400 meals were served. Over 1300 coats were distributed to needy veterans. Tons of clothing were collected, sorted and given out. Forty veterans received financial contributions from donors to defray the \$125 cost to have their motor vehicle drivers licenses restored, enabling them to keep a job.

The Stand Down Court is still counting the record number of veterans who received judicial services ranging from the clearing of fines and misdemeanors to adjudication of child support and other matters.

Three hundred veterans learned about the benefits they have earned because of their service to America and 110 received specific assistance with their claims to the Veterans Administration.



vices. Some were transported from Stand Down to the Newington VA Hospital for immediate treatment.

Over 100 dental screenings were done.

Eighty-seven were tested for glaucoma and received vision care from the Connecticut Lions.

“Reason to Ride” volunteers handed out new clothing to over 600 veterans.

Seventeen veterans started the process to come to Rocky Hill for rehabilitation and residential services. It was an historic day for Connecticut. Thank you to all who made it happen. Please mark your calendars for next year.

***Stand Down 2008 will be
Friday September 12, 2008.***

Update on the Construction of Our New Healthcare Facility from Chief of Staff & Project Manager, Charley Williams



It has been a busy three months since the last news letter. If you follow the web site you have seen many pictures of the progress. We are currently about 94% done. Final landscaping is done. The lawn has been cut for the first time with one more cutting by the contractor and then we own the lawn. Final painting, floor tile, bathroom tile, signage, carpet, lights, plugs and fine tuning the mechanical room are all going on. Currently we anticipate getting the building turned over to us sometime in January. Most of February will be spent get all the new equipment placed in the building (\$2.6 m). After all the equipment is placed and we have all our final inspections we anticipate a ribbon cutting early spring and move in of all residents right after that.



A Summit for Returning Veterans—Listening and Learning

At the invitation of Governor M. Jodi Rell, the Department of Veterans' Affairs in conjunction with the Central Connecticut State University, held an all day Listening Program to hear the concerns, experiences and recommendations of veterans recently returned from Iraq and Afghanistan. Governor Rell and Commissioner Schwartz initiated this conference to hear from Connecticut's newest veterans and to prepare new initiatives and changes to public policy affecting veterans. Nationally known veteran advocate Steve Robinson kicked off the program by highlighting his advocacy efforts with Congress and federal agencies.

Nearly 200 attendees then separated into break out sessions with facilitator/expert panelists in areas such as: Veterans Healthcare, Traumatic Brain Injuries, Family Issues, Readjustment to Civilian life, Education and Benefits, mental health, substance abuse and women veteran issues.

After a full day of sharing experiences with the current system, brainstorming and developing ideas for improvements, each group reported on their recommendations for new pub-

lic policy. Ideas ranged from a gubernatorial task force on returning veterans to the display of posters with veteran benefits at the DMV offices. As Governor Rell noted in her opening remarks, "This day is just the beginning of a dialog and discussion that will shape our policies for the future."

The end of the productive day was highlighted by a moving speech from former Army Captain Marc Giammatteo. A West Hartford native and West Point Grad, Captain Giammatteo was severely injured in Iraq and subsequently endured over 30 operations at Walter Reed Army Medical Hospital on his leg and ankle. Capt. Giammatteo's role as patient advocate for his fellow patients led to his appointment by President Bush to serve on the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors, a commission that was co-chaired by Senator Bob Dole and Secretary Donna Shalala to review and improve patient care for Veterans.

Proceedings of our Summit are in production, and will be shared with the veteran community when they are finalized. Check our website at www.ct.gov/ctva.



Bringing benefits to you—The Office of Advocacy and Assistance

In addition to the busy schedule of manning district offices as well as satellite offices, Advocacy and Assistance continues its outreach into communities around the state. The CT Wartime Service Medal Program is proving to be popular with Connecticut veterans, communities and civic organizations. With Veterans Day close at hand, the requests for ceremonies has increased. The following is a glimpse of what your Office of Advocacy is up to in the state.

MEDAL CEREMONIES:

Returning Veterans Summit	Oct. 12, 2007
Portland WWII veterans honored	Oct. 16, 2007
ST Mary Home, West Hartford	Oct. 18, 2007
Deep River WWII veterans honored	Oct 30, 2007
Dept. of Public Health	Nov. 6, 2007
Town of Hebron	Nov. 8, 2007
Meadow Brook Farms- Trumbull	Nov. 9, 2007
Manchester Elks	Nov. 10, 2007
Town of Southington	Nov. 11, 2007
Town of Columbia	Nov. 11, 2007
Univ. of New Haven	Nov. 12, 2007
Dept. of Public Safety and Dept. of Corrections	Nov. 14, 2007

SPECIAL OUTREACH:

Danielson Expo	Oct. 9, 2007
Groton Social Services	Oct. 10, 2007
Camp Rell De-Mobilization	Oct. 19, 2007
Rocky Hill Expo	Oct. 24, 2007
Camp Rell De-Mobilization	Oct. 25, 2007
Waterford Senior Services	Nov. 16, 2007

Our new mobile benefits unit, "The VET EXPRESS" has been visiting towns throughout the state. Please call Donna Meskony at 860-721-5915 to schedule a visit to help veterans receive the benefits they have earned.



13,000 CONNECTICUT WARTIME SERVICE MEDALS have been awarded to date. Do you qualify? Call Chuck at 1-866-928-8387

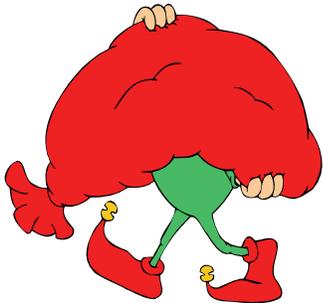


Governor M. Jodi Rell presented the Connecticut Wartime Service Medal Shane Matthews and Joel Patrick Leger at a special ceremony at the Summit for Returning Veterans on October 12th.

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

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE A SECRET SANTA TO A HOSPITALIZED VET?



This year's Holiday program has begun! The patient wish lists have been written. Our general Holiday Wish List has been compiled. All we are missing are some kind-hearted anonymous shoppers! Would you or your organization like to volunteer to help brighten a Veterans' holiday? Anyone wishing a

Secret Santa card matching a veteran's request with your donation may contact **Charlotte Storey** at 860-721-5872 or **Judy Barnes** at (860) 721-5829 or **1 (800) 550-0000** extension 5829. If you would like to make a monetary gift to this program, please designate **SECRET SANTA PROGRAM** in the memo area of your check. Checks should be made payable to **The Department of Veterans Affairs**. Please try to deliver your gifts between 10am and 2 pm to the Hospital Main Office. If these hours are impossible for you, please call and we will make arrangements to have an elf greet you at the door and whisk your gifts away to Santa's Secret Workshop.

Last year, 65.4 million Americans volunteered through or for an organization. Nearly 29% of the American population volunteers in some way. At this season of Thanksgiving, we are thankful for the blessing of our volunteers.

DEDICATION OF THE FLORENCE AND HENRY WALD HOUSE AT THE VETERANS' HOME

Renovations are complete and on Wednesday November 7th, one of the houses on Sugar Hill on the campus of the Department of Veterans' Affairs was dedicated to Connecticut's "Treasurers" Florence and Henry Wald, founders of America's Hospice model of care. This former officer's quarters at the State Veterans' Home has been repurposed to serve as a temporary "home away from home" for family members who come to visit veteran/patients who are in our hospice care at the Health Care Facility.



HONORING OUR GOLD STAR FAMILIES

was the theme of the Department of Veterans' Affairs Unit in the 2007 State veterans' Day Parade held in Hartford on Sunday November 4th. Gold Star Families of our recently fallen from Iraq and Afghanistan were invited to be the Commissioner's guests at the reviewing stand. Our "GOLD STAR FINISH" to the parade featured replicas of the Gold Star Flag and a salute from the Antique Veterans Organization in uniforms of the armed forces through history. Our "Andrews Sisters", a trio of healthcare workers from the Veterans' Home in Rocky Hill, rode in a vintage "Deuce and a Half" truck and a "Duck" amphibious vehicle. This year's Veterans' Day parade was the largest in New England, and included nearly 4000 marchers in salute to Connecticut's veterans and active duty military.



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.

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

Please visit our website: www.ct.gov/ctva

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