



# CONNECTICUT

# Department of Veterans' Affairs E-Newsletter

July 22, 2010

Volume 2, Number 1

## *From the Commissioner...*

### *Honoring the Past...Creating the Future*



The Iwo Jima Survivors Association, Inc. will be holding a Candlelight Ceremony of Remembrance at the National Iwo Jima Memorial Monument and Park in New Britain on August 14, 2010 at approximately 6:00 pm. Go to our website for details and directions. [www.ct.gov/ctva](http://www.ct.gov/ctva)

Who has not seen the monuments, film footage or pictures of the iconic image of US Marines raising the American Flag, in all it's glory, on the heights of Mount Suribachi? The bitter and bloody battle for Iwo Jima will remain one of the greatest testaments to the grit and determination of the Marine Corps and the will of the American people to bear the burdens of fighting for freedom. Sixty-five years later, the once young and invincible "Survivors of Iwo Jima" have become treasured heroes and very special veterans of that great struggle to the death. Now in 2010 word has come that that these, honored warriors of the past will be holding their **65<sup>th</sup> and FINAL REUNION** on August 14<sup>th</sup> in New Britain. This news hit me like a bolt of lightning for I have come to know some of these wonderful gentlemen and the people who have supported them and worked to maintain their legacy and the Iwo Jima Memorial in New Britain. In rain and snow the eternal flame keeps watch over the land as a reminder to all that we are the "land of the free" because we are the "home of the brave". On August 14<sup>th</sup> at approximately 1800hrs (6pm) a Candlelight Ceremony of Remembrance will be held at the Iwo Jima Memorial. I have made a challenge to myself that we fill the Memorial Park for that Ceremony. I ask all veterans and citizens of Connecticut to join me in thanking and remembering this hearty band of Survivors for one last tribute and a moment of remembrance for all who died, especially the 100 men of Connecticut. I believe their story of Iwo Jima will be told for generations to come but before they slip away into the history books let's thank them now.

### *And Now the FUTURE*

Some people find it hard to believe that today almost 20% of US Armed Forces are women. In fact Connecticut has over 16,000 living women veterans who have served from World War II days to the present Iraq and Afghanistan. These women represent a special group that has had to earn their way at every step by proving themselves, breaking new ground and challenging the status quo. Now, women command vessels at sea, supervise weapon systems and lead fighter squadrons. A group of Connecticut women pioneers recently met to create the **Connecticut Women VETNET** with the idea in mind of banding together and reaching out to like minded women veterans to increasing awareness about the role of women in the military, creating a social network for mutual support and help for women who served and celebrating the contributions women have made and continue to make in defense of freedom. To that end, we are proud to announce a Kick Off event open to women veterans of all era's and periods of war. **November 14, 2010**, the Women's VETNET is planning a brunch with featured speaker General Wilma Vaught, a pioneer in her own right, President of the Women in Military Service to America (WIMSA) . We have the speaker and we have the date, details will be posted on the [www.ct.gov/ctva](http://www.ct.gov/ctva) website which now has a special link for women veterans. If you would like to be part of the NET you may use that website to sign up for email and meeting announcements using that portal to send your information by using the [link to Cathy Cook](#). Our goal is to reach to as many women veterans in Connecticut as we can and to begin planning the future and more activities for women veteran in our State.



Women veterans of many eras and Governor Rell dedicated the Connecticut Women Veterans Memorial in the State Capitol this year.



## GOVERNOR RELL ANNOUNCES \$500K TOWARD STATE VETERANS MEMORIAL

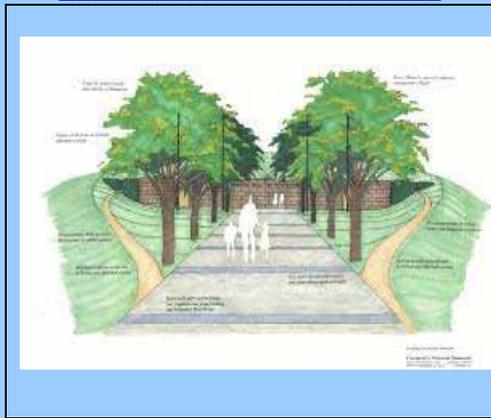
Governor M. Jodi Rell announced \$500,000 in state funding to start construction of a statewide memorial to the service of all Connecticut veterans was approved by the state Bond Commission on July 13. Construction of the memorial, to be located adjacent to the Col. Raymond F. Gates Memorial Cemetery on West Street in Rocky Hill, is slated to begin by Veterans' Day 2010.



Governor Rell announced \$ 500,000 in state Bonding to get the ball rolling on construction of a State Veterans Memorial. Fund-raising continues for the \$1.5 million project. Go to [www.cthonorsvets.org](http://www.cthonorsvets.org) for details.

***"The valiant men and women who have served our nation throughout the generations deserve a central, permanent memorial,"*** Governor Rell said. ***"Our state is dotted with lovely tributes to local residents and monuments to specific battles. Yet nowhere is there a single memorial to all Connecticut veterans – living and deceased – who have served throughout the years."***

The winning design for the new statewide memorial will incorporate both a tree-lined walkway with honors to the many battles in which Connecticut veterans have served and a large gathering place where groups can hold events to pay homage to our veterans. The state funds will be augmented by an aggressive fundraising effort among Connecticut citizens, businesses, veterans groups and others to support the design and construction of the project. The Connecticut State Veterans Memorial Foundation, a non-profit, tax-exempt organization will receive donations and manage the project. To make a donation to the fundraising effort, checks and money orders should be made payable to Connecticut State Veterans Memorial, Inc. and mailed to: Connecticut State Veterans Memorial, Inc., c/o Rockville Bank, P.O. Box 660, Rockville, CT 06066. More information can be found by visiting [www.cthonorsvets.org](http://www.cthonorsvets.org) or call Adam Jeamel, the Governor's Director of Public Affairs, at (860) 524-7351.



Artist rendering of the State Veterans Memorial

## UPDATE ON FEDERAL STIMULUS GRANT CONSTRUCTION AT VETERANS HOME

Deputy Commissioner John Wiltse reports that the renovations and upgrades to the Residential Wings of the Veterans Home in Rocky Hill are underway, with financial support from the federal Veterans Administration and a federal stimulus grant of \$5.9 million, matched by state construction funding of \$3.2 million. The state Department of Public Works is now overseeing the rehabilitation of our World War II era brick buildings. New roofs are going up (watch out for the scaffolding!), new gutters are assembled, and the "outside" work is well along. Soon the interior bathrooms will be upgraded to be handicapped accessible, and new plumbing fixtures will replace inefficient and old technology. New fire suppression systems and air conditioning are being installed throughout the living space, and the old on or off heating system will be traded in for a new system that will allow for individual room temperature controls.

Next door, the Department of Public Works is also overseeing the new construction of a public health testing laboratory building for the Department of Public Health. "The Rock" is a busy (and noisy) place these days with contractors, renovators, and hard hats everywhere.



Gov. Rell signed Public Act 10-40 Designating March 30 as Annual Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day in Connecticut

## HOMES FOR RETURNING VETERANS



Recently, the State Bond Commission approved \$250,000 proposed by Governor Rell to improve five residences across the street from the main campus and make them available to returning veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. The homes are located on West Street, near the Col. Raymond F. Gates State Veterans Cemetery. The homes will offer a place for veterans to stay while transitioning back to civilian life. State bond funding has been used to make a wide range of improvements such as new roof and gutter repairs, new siding, windows, painting, plumbing repairs, refinishing of wood floors and installation of new kitchen cabinets.

The Governor's office has reached out to interested organizations and non-profit groups who have "adopted" the houses and are donating items to make the houses into homes. Thanks to the donation of furniture that was transferred to the State of Connecticut by the US Navy Sub Base in Groton, each home has been completely furnished. The sponsoring organizations, American Legion, VFW, Military Order of the Purple Heart, and Jewish War Veterans, along with other community organizations are acquiring new appliances and linens, dishes, and other items to prepare the homes for returning veterans in need of transitional housing.



### **SAVE THE DATE – STAND DOWN 2010 is Sept 10, 2010**



Stand Down is a one-day, one-stop veterans benefits event for homeless and indigent veterans who have been discharged under at least honorable conditions. Federal, state and community providers will be available to assist needy veterans access VA benefits, CT benefits, CT Superior Court, and community assistance programs. Pre-Registration Forms for needy veterans will be available starting July 1, 2010 at [www.ct.gov/ctva](http://www.ct.gov/ctva) or Call [1-860-616-3802](tel:1-860-616-3802) or 860-616-380. Applications to be considered for a volunteer position will be processed starting August 1, 2010. Additional information is available on our website at: [www.ct.gov/ctva](http://www.ct.gov/ctva).

***Save the Date!***  
***Stand Down 2010 is Friday***  
***September 10, 2010***

***At the Connecticut  
Veterans Home  
287 West St,  
Rocky Hill, CT  
From 7am to 3pm  
Veteran Registration for  
Services closes at 1pm***

[Stand Down 2010 "Wish List" \(click here\)](#)

[Stand Down Veteran Pre-Registration for Services  
\(click here\)](#)

[Stand Down 2010 Volunteer Application \(click here\)](#)



Check out our newly redesigned website!  
[www.ct.gov/ctva](http://www.ct.gov/ctva) with easier access to important news and information.

**Special Tabs for  
 OEF/OIF Veterans  
 Women Veterans  
 Veterans Home Info**

*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](mailto:Catherine.Cook@po.state.ct.us)*

## VETERANS TELEPHONE DIRECTORY

Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs

**New phone number 860-616-3600**

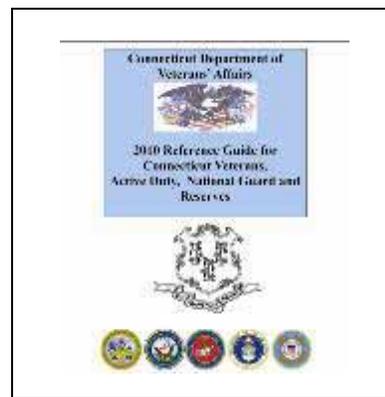
CT Veterans Benefits Information Toll-Free	1-866-928-8387
Soldiers' Sailors' & Marines Fund (emergency)	1-860-296-0719
Military Support Program (Toll-free, confidential)	1-866-251-2913
CT VETS INFOLINE (toll-free)	1-866-9CT-VETS

### 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/>





Thank you, Sub Base sailors for helping assemble the new games!

### New Benefits Director Tom Stefanko



Commissioner Schwartz is pleased to announce her selection of Thomas Stefanko as the new OAA Director/Leadership Associate. Mr. Stefanko is a retired Iraq combat veteran and commissioned infantry officer with nearly 30 years of service with the U.S. Army. Col. Stefanko served on active duty with the CT National Guard for over 20 years holding a variety of senior management positions including Director of Plans, Operations and Training and Chief of Staff. He is a graduate of numerous military schools and courses, including the U.S. Naval War College from which he holds a Master's Degree in Strategic Studies. Tom can be reached at 860-616-3682 or [Thomas.Stefanko@po.state.ct.us](mailto:Thomas.Stefanko@po.state.ct.us)

## News from "The Rock" – at the CT Veterans Home

**Game Room** - Thank you to the many donors, including the staff of the Connecticut Convention Center, American Legion Aux #117 of Newington, Southington American Legion Aux Kiltonic #72 and the AARP of Southington, and Anne Benedetto of the Farminbury Womens Club who answered our "wish" for game tables, equipment and scoreboards for a new Game Room for the veterans! And thank you, too, to the sailors from the Hospital Unit at the US Subbase in Groton who spent a long, hot day in Rocky Hill assembling and setting up the new recreational space. Now, in addition to the three pool tables and ping pong, we have foosball, air hockey, shuffleboard, basketball, electronic darts, and Wii interactive video games for all to enjoy. Let the games begin!



### Volunteer Appreciation Event

Over seventy volunteers were treated to dinner and an Art Show of veterans works at the annual June Volunteer Appreciation Night. Community Affairs Director Cathy Cook presented Volunteer Judy Barnes with special recognition for her tireless dedication to the patients.

The Veterans Home is so fortunate to have such a large contingent of willing hands to assist our staff with entertainment evenings, patient visits, and holiday celebrations. Grateful veteran residents expressed their thanks on behalf of all the residents by helping with the preparations, serving tables, and even speaking in appreciation of all the support they receive from the community. Thank you, Volunteers!

**Broadway and screen star Ben Vereen visited with the veterans at Rocky Hill** recently while he was in Connecticut for a week of performances with the Hartford Stage. Veterans from Rocky Hill were treated to tickets to see him on state. One of our resident veterans, a 79 year old tap dancer himself, was thrilled that Mr.



Mr. Vereen joined him in a tap dance tribute to the veterans! What a show! Governor Rell greeted Mr. Vereen and thanked him for spending time with "those who served." Earlier in the week, he spent time with the patients at the West Haven Veterans Hospital.

**Thank You**  
United States of America



Department of  
Veterans Affairs

## News from the US Department of Veterans Affairs

Be sure to check our website: [www.ct.gov/ctva](http://www.ct.gov/ctva) and link to the USVA for important announcements and information or go to: [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

### **Aid and Attendance & Housebound assistance for eligible veterans**

The US Department of Veterans Affairs wants eligible veterans to know about two important programs of assistance that will help for those in need of home care. The "Aid and Assistance" (A & A) benefit is paid in addition to monthly veteran pension and disability compensation. The "Housebound" Program also pays a stipend to veterans in addition to their monthly pension. The A & A and Housebound benefits may not be paid without eligibility to a pension, and an eligible veteran may receive both A & A and Housebound benefits at the same time.

The CT DVA Veteran Service Officers can assist eligible CT veterans as they apply for these special programs through the VA Regional Office. To learn more about the eligibility for these programs, go to <http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-benefits/aid--attendance-and-house-bound-benefits>.

Click on the photo (below) to connect to the 2010 Federal Guide to Veterans Benefits.



### ***Attention Living Veterans of 3 or more wars–***

Commissioner Linda Schwartz would like to honor your extraordinary service in the armed forces at a future event to be announced. If you are a Connecticut veteran or know a living Connecticut veteran of three wars, please contact the Commissioner's office at 860-616-3603.

### **SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT FOR KOREAN WAR VETERANS!**

**The 60th anniversary of the  
beginning of the Korean War  
was June 25, 2010.**

**A letter signed by the  
President of the Republic of  
Korea expressing that free  
nation's profound gratitude is  
available to each living Korean  
War Veteran and can be  
obtained on line at**

**<http://eng.koreanwar60.go.kr/apply.asp>**

**or by writing to: U.S. Branch  
ROK 60th AKW  
Commemoration Committee,  
2450 Massachusetts Ave., NW,  
Washington, DC 20008.**

**See more details at our  
website:**

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