



# Department of Veterans' Affairs E-Newsletter

March 31, 2009

Volume 1, Number 1

## 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 [click highlighted text for details]

I am happy to report [good news for our 22,000 disabled veterans](#) in Connecticut. Governor Rell has introduced legislation to the General Assembly this year to correct the paperwork snafu many veterans experienced when they went to apply for property tax exemptions at their local tax assessor's office. The legislation, Senate Bill 862, which is working its way through the Capitol, orders local assessors to ask for proof of service connected disability only once, without resubmitting a letter annually. Veterans whose disability rating changes may submit proof of change at any time.

[Great news for military retirees!](#) As of January 1, 2008, one-half of your military retirement pay is exempt from the Connecticut state income tax. When you file this year's tax return to the Connecticut Department of Revenue Services, be sure to take that deduction!

The state's economy is suffering along with the rest of the nation. But I want you to know that the DVA is working hard to meet all of our obligations while staying within our reduced allocations. There are some changes we will have to trim from our activities so we may concentrate on our core missions. We have cut back on travel and recreation options that are costly. We can no longer provide financial support or incur expenses when outside groups using our facilities. We are cutting back on use of overtime and reducing staff support of unfunded activities. We depend on the community to assist our programs, and we are delighted that so many organizations are stepping up to help out. Thank you!

## CONNECTICUT VETERANS HALL OF FAME

*Applications for the Class of 2009 due June 30, 2009*

[Click here for Application Package](#)

### *History*

Governor M. Jodi Rell created the Connecticut Veterans Hall of Fame by Executive Order in 2005 to recognize the post-military achievements of outstanding veterans and to spotlight the substantial contributions of veterans to communities across the state. Governor Rell believed this was a critical time in state history to establish this honor and institution as more than 12,000 Connecticut citizens have performed military service in support of the Global War on Terror since September 11, 2001.

The Connecticut Veterans Hall of Fame is designed to increase the awareness of the lifetime contributions of veterans after they complete their honorable military service. The Connecticut Veterans Hall of Fame is not a military hall of fame. Those selected for the honor of induction are veterans who honorably served their country through military service and who continue to serve and inspire their fellow man with their deeds and accomplishments throughout their lifetime.

Each year, an appointed Executive Committee recommends to the Governor ten inductees from applications received from across the state and nation. These veterans are leaders in a variety of areas, such as arts, education, public service, volunteer activities, and community and business leadership. Most importantly, they all will have made significant impacts on the lives of others and their communities.



*"In this challenging economy, I believe it is more important than ever that we reach out to help our veterans in need. The DVA stands ready to offer a hand up to any veteran who needs our help."*

- Commissioner Linda Schwartz

*Late Breaking NEWS: Governor M. Jodi Rell seeks Federal Stimulus funding for renovations of Rocky Hill Veterans' Home Residential Areas [\[click here\]](#)*



[Applications for the Class of 2009 due June 30, 2009](#)

SAVE THE DATE!  
**STAND DOWN 2009**  
*Friday September 18<sup>th</sup>*

We are collecting \$20 gift cards instead of used clothing this year.  
All volunteers MUST pre-register. No exceptions!  
Call Cathy Cook 860-721-5826  
Check our website in the coming months for details.



*Governor M. Jodi Rell visited Stand Down 2008 and conversed with many Connecticut Veterans.*



*Commissioner Schwartz speaks with Navy Submarine School students who visited with the Rocky Hill veterans recently.*



*Members of the Windsor Lions Club recently came to test vision and distribute free reading glasses to our veterans.*

### **Happenings "On the Rock"**

Now that the veterans are all settled in to the new Levitow Veterans Health Center, we have been planning lots of activities and events. In an effort to improve patient social time, the Therapeutic Recreation Staff are encouraging "Game Days." To begin this initiative, Cathy Cook, our Director of Community Affairs, has arranged for several military units to visit and play cards or board games with our veterans in the health center. In the last few months, our Military Game Time has included 30 nominees for Submarine Force Sailor of the Year from Groton, CT, Norfolk, VA and Portsmouth, NH. We enjoyed a visit and games with about 15 new graduates of the Navy Submarine School. Some West Pointers came to visit, and the upcoming weeks include visits from CT Army National Guard members, CT Air National Guard members, Army reservists, Navy reservists and the students at the Officer Candidate School of the US Coast Guard. Our veterans truly appreciate the time and company of these visits, but it is the active duty service members who report getting the most from the day. How proud we are of their service, and how pleased we are to show off our wonderful Connecticut Veterans Home to these sailors and soldiers! Thank you!

We've enjoyed lots of entertainment, including St. Patrick's Day music from Tom Callihan, Country Music band, Oldies Movie Nights, and getting to know our new pet therapy dogs and their owners. We also have six new volunteers who have completed training and will be assisting with activities for our veteran-patients.

### **VETERANS TELEPHONE DIRECTORY**

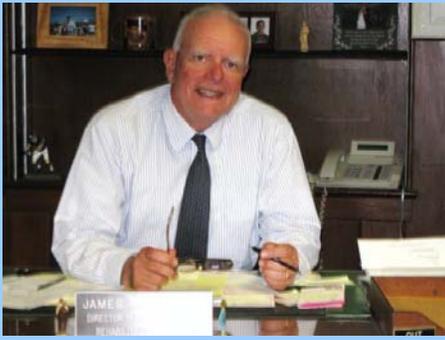
Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs	1-800-550-0000
CT Veterans Benefits Information	1-866-928-8387
CT Veterans Cemetery	860-721-5838
Soldiers' Sailors' & Marines Fund (emergency)	860-296-0719
MILITARY SUPPORT PROGRAM (toll free, confidential)	1-866-251-2913
CT VETS INFOLINE (toll-free)	1-866-9CT-VETS

### **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)



*Jim McKinnon, Director of Residential and Rehabilitation Services retires after 38 years of devoted state service to our veterans! We will miss him.*



***Need assistance or help?***

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

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

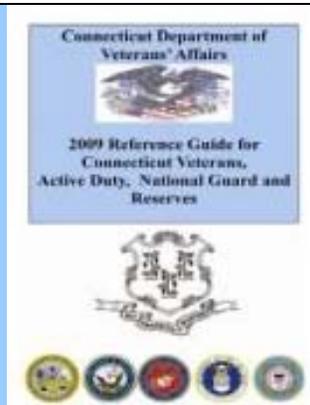
## **James J. McKinnon Retires**

After 38 years of service to Connecticut's veterans, and a lifetime of living on the campus, our venerable Director of Residential and Rehabilitation Services, Jim McKinnon has retired. It is difficult to put into words how much Jim has meant to the DVA, and the veterans he has helped along the way. He developed the Veteran Improvement Program to provide counseling and career services to veterans as they worked to rehabilitate themselves back into Connecticut community life. Jim organized and ran STAND DOWN over the years, building it into the premier one-stop benefits and services program that met the needs of 1000 homeless and needy veterans in 2008. In countless other ways, Jim has changed the DVA for the better. He also gives to the community currently as the Head Coach for the St. Joseph's College Girls Softball Team and over the years as a coach and mentor to numerous high school athletic teams. In honor of Jim's many accomplishments and to demonstrate the esteem which we feel for him, Commissioner Linda Schwartz presented him with the Commandant's Medal for service to the Connecticut State Veterans Home. And as a well-kept surprise, the commissioner unveiled a sign dedicating the newly renovated field on campus as "The James J. McKinnon Veterans Memorial Softball Field." We are looking forward to the opening day ceremony! Good luck in retirement, Jim. You have earned it!

## **Stained Glass Windows**

We are delighted to report that donors have stepped forward and ALL the windows in the new chapel have been spoken for. We hope to have the installation completed in a few weeks. Thank you to these organizations: VFW (left) Department of CT and the Ladies & Men's Auxiliaries, Blue Star Mothers, Navy Nurse Corps, Sons of the Union Veterans of the Civil War, DAV Chapter 17, Vietnam Veterans of America, The Chaplain Corps, WAVES Unit 42, DVA Human Resources Dept, Jewish War Veterans, Concannon family, Pantoja family, Schwartz family, CT DAR, American Legion Dept of CT, Sons of American Legion, Military Order of the Purple Heart, VFW Post 9929 (Levitow's post), Wall family, Matulis/Varano family, Bakanas family, Veterans Home Volunteers

We will have a Dedication and Open House when all the windows are installed, sometime in early Summer.



***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/>**