



TO VIEW DIGITALLY:



VETERANS JOURNAL



SUMMER 2026

FROM SERVICE TO LEADERSHIP:

A MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR & FIRST GENTLEMAN



As U.S. Navy Veterans, we understand that service shapes more than careers; it shapes character. Every veteran in New Jersey carries a story of sacrifice, resilience, and love for this country. It's an honor to continue that service here at home. Our state's veterans deserve not just gratitude but results. That's why we are committed to empowering veterans with access to affordable, safe housing, quality physical and mental health care, and workforce training that recognizes the unique skills veterans bring to the civilian economy. New Jersey's Department of Veterans Affairs ensures these priorities move from promise to reality with accountability and focus. We also know that veterans and their families are affected by broader challenges, from rising utility bills and housing costs to difficulty accessing quality education and health care. We are tackling these affordability issues head-on because when costs are lower and services are more dependable, all New Jerseyans, especially those who served, thrive.

As Governor and First Gentleman, we are on ending veteran homelessness. Like communities across the United States, veteran homelessness in New Jersey has been a historic, persistent challenge. Not on our watch. Our Administration's first budget included an \$11 million investment in the Bringing Veterans Home initiative, which has permanently housed over 2,500 veterans. Our mantra is simple: any veteran who needs help can get it – quickly and consistently. This is what well-run government looks like. Bringing Veterans Home has become a model for solving broader housing challenges, ensuring more New Jerseyans can afford to stay here.

We've seen how these programs transform lives. Scott Easdale, a sharpshooter injured in Lebanon, struggled for years but now has a stable home in Montvale, thanks to our state's help. With continued investment in Bringing Veterans Home, New Jersey is holding up its end of the bargain. We are thankful to Commissioners Suarez and Solomeno and the teams at DCA and DVA, as well as all state leaders and veteran advocates who make Bringing Veterans Home work. To every service member, veteran, and military family: you have our vow that your government works for you. You have a seat at the table, and your voice will always be heard.

Sincerely,
Governor Mikie Sherrill &
First Gentleman Jason Hedberg

NEW JERSEY LEADING THE WAY



I believe that one of the greatest achievements of state government over the course of the last decade is the success of Bringing Veterans Home, New Jersey's whole-of-government effort to build a system that ensures that veteran homelessness in the Garden State is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

At the heart of Bringing Veterans Home is the belief that no one who served this country should ever have to worry where they're going to sleep at night. That means identifying veterans experiencing homelessness, reaching them wherever they are, connecting them with services, and helping secure permanent housing.

"At the heart of Bringing Veterans Home is the belief that no one who served this country should ever have to worry where they're going to sleep at night."

Since November 2024, teams of dedicated professionals at the local, state, and federal levels have worked together to deliver permanent housing for more than 2,500 veterans. Behind that number are 2,500 individual stories. They are veterans who served in different eras and experienced homelessness for different reasons. Some needed someone to find them. Some needed a housing voucher. Others needed help navigating complex systems of support. For each of these brave service members, permanent housing meant keys to a front door, a safe place to lower their head at night, a home for themselves and for their families.

Those individual successes are the human measure of Bringing Veterans Home. Behind those stories is another achievement. New Jersey changed the system itself. With support from the Legislature, we set aside dedicated veteran housing vouchers and partnered with nonprofit organizations to deploy six regional street outreach teams and provide wraparound case management across the Garden State.

None of this would have been possible without the leadership of my colleague, Commissioner Jacquelyn A. Suarez and her team at the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs. They brought expertise in housing and homelessness prevention while my colleagues and I brought an understanding of the needs of veterans and connected them with the benefits, programs, and services that they earned through their time in uniform.

Our goal is not to claim that another veteran would never face a housing crisis in New Jersey. Veterans lose jobs. Families experience emergencies. People face unexpected hardships. We committed ourselves to ensuring that more veterans exit homelessness for permanent housing than enter it.

Moreover, independent validation has been essential to knowing whether that system is working. Community Solutions, a national nonprofit organization that works with communities across the country to measurably reduce homelessness, has examined New Jersey's data and progress. That external review gives us confidence that the milestone we marked in July is supported not simply by our aspirations, but by measurable results.

This work will continue. Our responsibility now is to sustain what New Jersey has built and ensure that this system works for the next veteran who needs it. Under Governor Sherrill's leadership, the State of New Jersey is committed to doing just that. Success does not mean that no veteran will ever again experience homelessness. Success means that when it happens, it is rare. When it happens, it is brief. And with the right system and the right support, it does not happen again.

That's a promise made to Garden State Veterans, and when an entire state works together to fulfill it, one that we can keep.

Vincent Solomeno III
New Jersey Commissioner of Veterans Affairs

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3

New Jersey Leading the Way
- 4

Governors First Budget Prioritizes Veterans
- 6

Memorial Day Honored Services Across the State
- 8

Serving Veterans, Honoring Volunteers
- 9

Jersey Serves: Featuring the First Gentleman
- 10

The Week of the Woman Veterans
- 11

Honoring New Jersey Vietnam Remembrance Day
- 12

Bringing Veterans Home: Ending Veteran Homelessness in New Jersey
- 14

An Honorable Milestone: America's 250th Birthday
- 16

Veterans Honored at D-Day Observance
- 18

A Q&A with WWII Veteran Edrward Diprospero
- 19

Connecting with New Jersey's Veteran Service Organizations
- 20

A Final Resting Place for NJ Heroes
- 21

New Jersey Medal Ceremonies

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



Facebook/ Instagram | @NJDVA
X | @NJ_Veterans
LinkedIn | <https://www.linkedin.com/company/njdva>



New Jersey Governor Mikie Sherrill and Commissioner of Veterans Affairs Vincent Solomono at the State House, Trenton.

GOVERNOR'S FIRST BUDGET PRIORITIZES VETERANS

In June, Governor Sherrill passed an affordability budget, holding the line on the \$60.7 billion figure she set in March. In addition to record property tax relief aimed at the middle class, investments in kids, cutting the structural deficit in half and growing the state's surplus, the budget makes historic investments in state-delivered veterans benefits, programs, and services. This is good news for Garden State Veterans. Here's what that means specifically, and how it might impact New Jersey's veterans directly:

- The budget sustains support for New Jersey's 21 county network of Veterans Service Offices. Staffed by trained and accredited teams these offices serve as points of entry for veterans to file federal benefit claims, enroll in U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs healthcare, and access to counseling, education, employment, food, housing, and burial services.

- The Governor's budget increases operational funding for New Jersey's Veterans Memorial Homes at Menlo Park, Paramus and Vineland. This includes investments in staffing, infrastructure, and clinical excellence within these homes, directly enhancing the living experience for the Veterans, Veteran Spouses, and Gold Star family members who call our facilities home.
- The budget also focuses on building mental health resilience, providing support to those who need it, and decisive efforts to reduce the number of veterans who die by suicide.



Employees of the New Jersey Veterans Memorial Home at Menlo Park attend an appreciation lunch celebrating the facility's deficiency-free health inspection in Edison.

- The budget also focuses on building mental health resilience, providing support to those who need it, and decisive efforts to reduce the number of veterans who die by suicide.
- Under the umbrella of the Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and Their Families, this includes statewide mental health first aid training, New Jersey's nation-leading Vet2Vet peer support line, and the State of New Jersey's no-cost Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Counseling Program. In the year ahead, DVA's Office of Women Veterans will expand outreach to ensure increased support to victims of military sexual trauma.
- The Governor's budget enables the continued operation of Brigadier General William C. Doyle Memorial Cemetery. With matching funds from the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs, DVA recently completed a nearly \$18 million 14-acre expansion, creating an additional 7,520 grave sites to ensure New Jersey's ability to honorably inter Veterans, Veteran Spouses, and their eligible dependents.



Wreaths for each branch of the Armed Forces were placed at Brigadier General William C. Doyle Memorial Cemetery, Wrightstown by Civil Air Patrol cadets.

- The budget sustains the state's investment in homelessness prevention within the veteran community, by simultaneously maintaining support for DVA's transitional housing facilities – Veterans Haven North at Glen Gardner and Veterans Haven South at Winslow Township – as well as investments in the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs budget to ensure the continued success of the Bringing Veterans Home program. The budget directly augments our statewide whole-of-government effort to ensure that veteran homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State of New Jersey is investing more, doing more, and achieving more for the Garden State Veterans than at any time in our history.

MEMORIAL DAY HONORED AT SERVICES ACROSS THE STATE

REMEMBERING THE FALLEN AT DOYLE VETERANS CEMETERY

Governor Mikie Sherrill led the state ceremony on a rainy morning at the Brigadier General William C. Doyle Veterans Memorial Cemetery. Governor Sherrill rendered honors to veterans during a pass and review that included the state leadership of the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Marine Corps League, Montford Point Marines, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Vietnam Veterans of America, and American Gold Star Mothers.

"May we always honor and remember the sacrifice of those who fought and died in the defense of the United States," said Governor Sherrill, herself a U.S. Navy Veteran.

Commissioner of Veterans Affairs Vincent Solomeno also offered remarks and read the names of Americans killed in action in Operation Epic Fury, the United States' 2026 military operations against Iran. U.S. Senator Andy Kim and U.S. Rep. Herb Conaway (District 3) also offered their perspectives and underscored the importance of caring for the survivors of fallen heroes. The three joined the Governor in the presentation of a Memorial Day wreath on behalf of the people of New Jersey.



VIETNAM VETERANS MUSEUM

Commissioner Vincent Solomeno spoke and presented a proclamation from Governor Mikie Sherrill during a Memorial Day ceremony held at the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial and Museum in Holmdel, New Jersey, May 25, 2026. Other speakers at the ceremony included Amy Osborn, NJVVM CEO; Former New Jersey State Senator Edward T. O'Connor Jr.; Former New Jersey State Senator Nicholas Asselta; U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Clark Martin; U.S. Rep. Herb Conway Jr.; and New Jersey Assemblywoman Margie Donlon M.D.

CAMDEN COUNTY

A Memorial Day ceremony was held at the Camden County Veterans Cemetery in Camden, New Jersey, May 22, 2026. Speakers at the ceremony included Commissioner Vincent Solomeno, Victor Carstarphen, mayor of Camden; New Jersey State Senator Nilsa Cruz-Perez; New Jersey State Assemblywoman and Gold Star Mother Melinda Kane; and U.S. Rep. Donald Norcross.



NEPTUNE

On May 25, 2026, Esther Chucaralao, Deputy Commissioner of Veterans Affairs, attended the Neptune Township Joint Veterans Memorial Day Observance. She presented a proclamation on behalf of the Governor and acknowledged the hard work of American Legion Post 346.



VETERANS MEMORIAL HOMES

Memorial Day ceremonies were held at each of the Veterans Homes in Menlo Park, Paramus and Vineland, giving residents and guests a chance to honor the memories of those who made the supreme sacrifice in their service to our country.



SERVING VETERANS, HONORING VOLUNTEERS



Each year, the Veterans homes host volunteer luncheons to honor those whose service helps enrich daily life for residents through companionship, recreational activities, special events, and countless acts of kindness.

Their generosity and dedication make a lasting impact not only on residents, but on the entire Veterans Memorial Home community. This year, plaques were given in recognition of the efforts of many active volunteers and organizations.

In April, the New Jersey Veterans Memorial Homes at Menlo Park, Paramus, and Vineland observed National Volunteer Week and celebrated the dedicated individuals and organizations who give their time, talent, and energy to support the residents who call these facilities home.

"We extend our sincere thanks to every volunteer and partner organization for helping us fulfill our mission of honoring and caring for New Jersey's Veterans."

-Derick Glenn, Supervisor of Life Enrichment at the Vineland Veterans Home



In Paramus, Donald Molzon was among those recognized for his contributions. An active member of their volunteer team since 2023, Molzon generously contributed 140 volunteer hours in 2025. He dedicates his time to serving residents in a variety of ways, including escorting them throughout the facility to entertainment programs, off-unit trips, social events, and other activities. He also spends time engaging residents in meaningful conversations and consistently demonstrates a strong commitment to volunteer service.

In Vineland, Doug and Barb Freund received the Volunteer of the Year Award for their service and leadership with the New Jersey State Elks Association. The Elks are indispensable partners at all three homes and both Doug and Barb's recognition reflects the organization's values of charity, justice, brotherly love, and fidelity.

"All of our organizations as well as individual volunteers give their time — no matter how big or small — to touch the lives of our residents in a meaningful and caring way."

-Christine Caratozzolo, Supervisor of Recreation at the Menlo Park Veterans Home



JERSEY SERVES

FEATURING: THE FIRST GENTLEMAN

'JERSEY SERVES' PODCAST LAUNCHES WITH INTERVIEW WITH THE FIRST GENTLEMAN JASON HEDBERG

Commissioner Vincent Solomano recently sat down with First Gentleman Jason Hedberg for the first episode of the New Jersey Department of Veterans Affairs' "Jersey Serves" podcast. The new show will focus on the experiences of veterans and public servants. Hedberg, a U.S. Navy Veteran, became First Gentleman in January when his wife, Mikie Sherrill, was inaugurated as the 57th Governor of New Jersey.



Hedberg shared his thoughts on the challenges facing leaders in public service, the issues he believes are important to veterans, balancing the responsibilities of husband, father, and First Gentleman, America's 250th Semiquincentennial, and more.

BELOW ARE HIGHLIGHTS FROM THEIR Q&A, FOR THE FULL TRANSCRIPT, GO TO [VETERANS.NJ.GOV](https://veterans.nj.gov)

Vincent Solomano: *There are so many shapes, so many forms [of service] that people in the Garden State take action with every day, so my question is when did you first feel called to serve?*

Jason Hedberg: *When we were children, I remember my mom would visit old folks homes. For people who maybe didn't have relatives who would come and visit, she would take my brother and I with her. So that was an early idea of service, of "why are we going?" and the idea of helping other people. I think that foundation that my parents instilled carried through. When I was thinking about college and what I wanted to do with a career — and at 17 or 18 you don't always know what you want to do — but my parents were both educators and big believers in education, and so I thought college would help, but for the idea of "what next?" the military was really compelling because of the idea of giving back. I was grateful for so much and [was wondering] "how can I continue to give?"*

VS: *As First Gentleman, have you had opportunities to attend lots of events about the 250th? Anything that stands out that you have seen?*

JH: *Yes — a lot of stuff around the 4th of July was incredible, the tall ships in the harbor was really spectacular for somebody from the Navy. To see those ships come through was really so impressive. The flyovers, the Blue Angels, the Thunderbirds ... so impressive. But I would also say visiting the battlefields at Princeton. We're going to come up on the 250th anniversary of the battles of Trenton and Princeton in 2027, so it's not just about the 4th of July, I think we are in a period of history where*

so many milestones will be celebrated over the next decade. It's been great touring New Jersey and seeing some of those sites.

VS: *I bet when you were getting out of the Navy you never thought you'd be married to the governor of the greatest state in the union. What is that like, when you didn't necessarily sign up for public service, but how does that feel when you're in this role?*

JH: *Wow, that's a great question, and I would say, you know, being married to a force of nature like Mikie Sherrill, you know, maybe it's just part of the adventure. I think she's wonderful, and I know that her moral compass is pointed in the right direction, and you combine that desire to serve with a sense that we can do things better. You don't get in the way, you get on board. And it's been great being married to her and parenting our kids alongside her and watching her own journey from the military to service in the U.S. Attorney's Office, in Congress, and now as governor. I just think that she's so impressive. I hope that everybody in this great state gets to know her and understand what drives her, because I just feel lucky to be married to her and I feel lucky to have her as the governor, so I hope everybody else gets a taste of that, too.*

SCAN TO VIEW THE FULL EPISODE OR FUTURE EPISODES:



THE WEEK OF THE WOMAN VETERAN

SUNDAY, JUNE 7TH The week kicked off with two important events. Commissioner Vincent Solomeno served as a keynote speaker at the Latino Veterans of New Jersey SHEROES breakfast in Fairfield. Over 40 Latina veterans were recognized and honored for their service. Women leaders from DVA's Division of Veterans Services also joined Deputy Commissioner Chucaralao for the 16th Annual Knights of Columbus & Catholic Charities 80,000 Ton Army Tank Pull. They pitched and pulled with the Women Veterans of New Jersey Tank Team.



Women veterans pose with their SHEROES Awards at the Latino Veterans of New Jersey's SHEROES Awards Breakfast, held in celebration of Women Veterans Appreciation Week.

In New Jersey, June 12th is Women Veterans Appreciation Day. Enacted by the Legislature and signed into law by former Governor Philip D. Murphy, this day serves as an opportunity to honor the contributions of women who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces. This year, from June 7th to June 13th, the New Jersey Department of Veterans Affairs' Office of Women Veterans expanded this commemoration from one day to a week of action and engagement. The goal was to connect with women veterans and provide access to earned benefits, programs, and services. Data from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs shows that women, who made up only 4% of veterans in 2000, are expected to represent 18% by 2040. This big change shows not only the evolution of military service but also the increasing acknowledgment of the important contribution women make defending our country. Today, over 27,000 women veterans call the Garden State home. They are the fastest growing veterans demographic statewide. During the Week of the Woman Veteran, DVA partnered with a range of organizations and community partners.

MONDAY, JUNE 8TH On Monday, DVA convened a virtual women veterans leadership and empowerment event that brought together community members with prominent women veterans serving in leadership roles in government, business, nonprofits, and public service. Attendees heard from Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Dr. Cindy Jebb, President of Ramapo College, U.S. Navy Capt. (Ret.) Jean O'Brien, U.S. Marine Corps Veteran Maia Molina-Schaefer, as well as Rekeshia McMillan, veteran career coach with the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and Jermaine Pharmes of the New Jersey Economic Development Authority.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10TH Together with NJ SOS Veteran Stakeholders, YWCA Northern New Jersey's Operation Sisterhood, and Catholic Charities of Paterson, DVA held the Women Veterans Appreciation Celebration at the Brownstone in Paterson. The dinner included an awards ceremony honoring women veterans leading in the community. Honorees included U.S. Army Veteran Martha Papson-Garcia, Director of Fairleigh Dickinson University's Office of Veteran Services, U.S. Marine Corps Veteran Catherine Guterrez, program manager at Community Hope, U.S. Army Maj. (Ret.) Susanne Williamson, and the Horizon Foundation for New Jersey.



Women Veterans pull an 80,000-ton Army tank during the 13th Annual Army Tank Pull Competition.

THURSDAY, JUNE 11TH On the Week of the Women Veteran's Community Impact Day, DVA teamed up with Dress for Success of Northern and Southern New Jersey to support women veteran job seekers. At events in Madison and Lawrenceville, Dress for Success carried out their mission of empowering women to achieve economic independence by providing support, professional attire and development tools for success. It was extremely well received.

FRIDAY, JUNE 12TH On Women Veterans Day, Deputy Commissioner Chucaralao and Lucy DelGaudio, DVA's Coordinator of the Office of Women Veterans, joined Governor Mikie Sherrill for the signing of a proclamation declaring June 12th Women Veterans Appreciation Day throughout New Jersey. In addition, Deputy Commissioner Chucaralao led a State of New Jersey Medals Ceremony honoring women veterans at the American Legion Department of New Jersey's 107th Annual State Convention in Wildwood. 24 women veterans were presented with state military awards in recognition of their service in the U.S. Armed Forces.

HONORING NEW JERSEY VIETNAM VETERANS REMEMBRANCE DAY

On May 7th, the New Jersey Department of Veterans Affairs proudly joined Veterans, families, and community leaders at the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans Memorial and Museum in Holmdel to recognize New Jersey Vietnam Veterans Remembrance Day.

Governor Mikie Sherrill signed an official proclamation recognizing the day and honoring the service of the over 115,000 New Jerseyans who served during the Vietnam War. The proclamation reaffirmed the state's commitment to honoring their service and sacrifice. Commissioner Vincent Solomeno presented the proclamation as part of the ceremony. U.S. Army Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Edward Chrystal served as the keynote speaker, and Sen. Vin Gopal and Assemblyman Gerry Scharfenberger provided remarks on behalf of the New Jersey Legislature.



Attendees bow their heads for the benediction during the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans Remembrance Day ceremony.

New Jersey Vietnam Veterans Remembrance Day is observed annually on May 7th. In history, New Jersey was one of the first states to declare an official day of honor. The date was established by legislation signed into law by Governor James Florio on April 16, 1991, and coincides with President Gerald R. Ford's May 7, 1975 declaration of the end of major hostilities in Vietnam.

The designation serves as a meaningful tribute to the men and women who served during the Vietnam Era and ensures their courage, resilience, and contributions are formally recognized across the Garden State. Today, and every day, New Jersey honors Vietnam Veterans and remains committed to ensuring that their service is never forgotten.



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

Proclamation

WHEREAS, we honor the thousands of New Jerseyans who served honorably in the United States Armed Forces; and,

WHEREAS, the Vietnam War, also known as the Second Indochina War, was a conflict in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia that began on November 1, 1955, and ended with the fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975, with United States involvement ending in 1973; and

WHEREAS, all residents of New Jersey should honor the service of the 119,910 Garden State Service Members who served in the Southeast Asiatic Theater of Operations and memorialize the 1,566 New Jerseyans who made the ultimate sacrifice during the Vietnam conflict; and

WHEREAS, while these heroic Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, Airmen, and Coast Guardsmen returned home to a polarized and divided society, today all New Jerseyans should be united in bestowing the respect and honor that these Service Members have earned; and

WHEREAS, we must remain committed to assisting Vietnam War Veterans who need support, not only for their physical wounds, but also the countless invisible traumas that they carry with them each day; and

WHEREAS, the State of New Jersey and the Department of Veterans Affairs will partner with all citizens of this great State and Nation to remember and honor our Vietnam Veterans, as well as their families, for their patriotism, courage, and sacrifice;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Mikie Sherrill, Governor of the State of New Jersey, do hereby proclaim:

MAY 7, 2026
AS
VIETNAM VETERANS REMEMBRANCE DAY

in New Jersey.



Don C. Hall
Lt. GOVERNOR

Mikie Sherrill
GOVERNOR

GIVEN, under my hand and the Great Seal of the State of New Jersey, this ninth day of April in the year two thousand twenty-six, the two hundred fiftieth year of the Independence of the United States.



The art deco grandeur of the George Washington Ballroom at the War Memorial in Trenton served as the perfect backdrop for the Bringing Veterans Home Celebration, which took place on the morning of July 29. The Ballroom’s towering windows bathed the space in sunbeams as distinguished guests, veterans, government officials, and members of the media filed in.



BRINGING VETERANS HOME: ENDING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS IN NEW JERSEY



The morning marked an important milestone. Bringing Veterans Home, the State of New Jersey’s effort to effectively end veteran homelessness through housing and supportive services, has permanently housed over 2,500 Garden State Veterans. A program of the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, with the New Jersey Department of Veterans Affairs in support. The initiative was first launched in November 2024. It included a surge of dedicated veteran housing vouchers, the deployment of six regional street outreach teams, and wrap around case management services.

Today, veteran homelessness in New Jersey is rare, brief, and non-recurring. New Jersey joins a select number of states and cities that have built a system that can rapidly respond to unhoused and at-risk veterans in need.

Governor Miki Sherrill offered praise for the outreach workers, case managers, nonprofit organizations, housing providers, landlords, federal partners, local communities, and public servants who made this achievement possible. She was joined on stage by U.S. Marine Corps Veteran Senator Raj Mukherji, Chairman, New Jersey Senate Military and Veterans Affairs Committee, Jacquelyn A. Suarez, Commissioner of Community Affairs, and Vincent Solomeno, Commissioner of Veterans Affairs.

“I am incredibly honored to announce that because of the quick and effective response of our Bringing Veterans Home initiative, every veteran in New Jersey can now access stable housing. This milestone is a groundbreaking achievement,” said Governor Sherrill.

U.S. Air Force Veteran Richard Bilo, one of the human stories behind the success of Bringing Veterans Home, performed a beautiful rendition of “The Star Spangled Banner.” Other veterans shared their stories and offered thanks for the program’s assistance.



Senator Mukherji has been a leading advocate for increased support for veteran homelessness prevention.



Addressing the crowd of several hundred, he said, “The phrase ‘homeless veteran’ should not be a thing. Those who served in uniform deserve, at a minimum, to never go without a roof over their heads. This milestone and Governor Sherrill’s whole-of-government commitment represents serious progress.”

For Governor Sherrill, herself a U.S. Navy Veteran, she affirmed, “No veteran in our state should endure the hardship of homelessness. We are proud that New Jersey is a leader in ending veteran homelessness and we stand ready to serve as a model for other states on this critical issue.”



“Our work is more than housing placement,” explained Commissioner Suarez, who leads state government’s housing subject matter experts. “It is about long-term stability. We are making sure veterans have access to services and support they need to remain in stable, quality housing that they can call home.”



Commissioner Solomeno praised the intensive planning, determined execution, and daily work of the teams behind Bringing Veterans Home. “Bringing Veterans Home demonstrates what is possible when government stops asking people in crisis to navigate bureaucratic boundaries and instead organizes itself around the outcome we want to achieve,” said Solomeno.

A key component of the state’s efforts, the New Jersey Department of Veterans Affairs also proudly provides transitional housing at Veterans Haven North in Glen Gardner and Veterans Haven South in Winslow Township. If you or someone you know is a veteran in need of housing support, visit <https://bvh.dca.nj.gov> or call NJ Vet2Vet helpline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 1-866-838-7654.



AN HONORABLE

July 4, 2026, marked the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, as well as the birth of the United States of America. The event was cause for celebration around the country, with events big and small being held throughout, each bursting with pride for the Red, White, and Blue. Two hundred and fifty years is an impressive milestone for the entire country, but it's a particular honor for New Jerseyans, as our state is one of the original thirteen colonies. Over that time, when viewed through the historical lens of New Jerseyans who served, it is but one in a long series of highlights spanning over our nation's proud and storied history.

THE FIRST VETERANS

The story begins with the Revolutionary War. The men and women who fought for American independence became the nation's first veterans. They helped establish the ideals and rights that Americans continue to enjoy today. New Jersey played an important role in that fight, with 2,695 confirmed Revolutionary War veterans identified as being from the state.

THE BIRTH OF VETERANS HOMES IN THE GARDEN STATE

Though there have been veterans living in our state since the 1700s, the idea for the first state-run veterans home didn't come about until 90 years later, in 1866, when the concept was introduced by New Jersey Governor Marcus L. Ward as a way to care for injured and ill Civil War veterans. Today, we have three dedicated veterans homes in the state, with locations in Vineland, Menlo Park, and Paramus. These facilities offer care, socialization, and activities to those brave men and women who dedicated themselves and risked their lives to defend our country.

NAVAL PRIDE FROM THE JERSEY SIDE

The USS New Jersey (or Battleship New Jersey as it's often known) resides in Camden, New Jersey, and currently operates as a museum and memorial. But the ship itself stands as a notable point of pride for the state's veterans, as it is the most decorated battleship ever to have served in the US Navy. With its initial launch being Dec. 7, 1942, the ship saw action throughout World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and other conflicts until it was finally retired in 1999 after serving as a reserve ship throughout most of the 1990s. In October of 2001, it was officially turned into a museum and memorial and has remained as such to this day.



MILESTONE

NEW JERSEY: A SOURCE FOR WORLD WAR II HEROES

Well over 100,000 New Jersey residents served in World War II, and their stories of bravery are innumerable. One of the most notable was John Basilone, a United States Marine Corps gunnery sergeant who grew up in Raritan, NJ. Basilone received the US military's highest award for valor, the Medal of Honor for his heroism during the Battle for Henderson Field as well as the Navy Cross, which he received posthumously for his actions during the Battle of Iwo Jima, where he lost his life on Feb. 19, 1945.



Latino Veterans of New Jersey's 2026 SHEROES Award Recipients

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

For many years, restrictions kept women from entering the military, however, female contributions have been a presence in the Armed Forces since the Revolutionary War, when Deborah Sampson famously dressed up as a man in order to help fight the British. She was discovered after falling ill but was honorably discharged and eventually received a military pension as a veteran. Since then, women veterans have continued to make their presence known, and that's certainly the case for Cherry Hill, New Jersey's own May Brill, a 102-year-old World War II veteran who has been an inspiration for women for the last eight decades. In 2019, Brill spearheaded a project titled: "Women Veterans are Not Invisible" creating military caps for female veterans. In 2024, at age 100, she was awarded the Camden County MLK Freedom Medal, and she continues to make an impact to this day.

NJDVA: A REBIRTH

In Sept of 2025, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy officially signed legislation which established a cabinet-level agency dedicated exclusively to veterans' services. This historic moment resulted in the reorganization of the former New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, with the New Jersey Department of Veterans Affairs now being established as its own entity.





VETERANS HONORED AT D-DAY OBSERVANCE

In June, New Jersey leaders and Veterans Service Organizations gathered at the New Jersey World War II Memorial in Trenton to commemorate the 82nd anniversary of the Allied invasion of Normandy. It was a beautiful spring day with a light breeze, blue skies, and a palpable sense of pride in the service and sacrifice of New Jerseyans who participated in the 1944 liberation of Nazi occupied Europe.

Lieutenant Governor Dr. Dale G. Caldwell joined Commissioner of Veterans Affairs Vincent Solomeno and U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Arthur Roscoe, Deputy Adjutant General of New Jersey, to honor and remember those who fought on D-Day and in the days that followed.

The three also paid tribute to the World War II veterans present at the ceremony. They presented State of New Jersey Distinguished Service Medals to Melvin Sher, Tony Spinuzzi, and Alfred Cohn; and recognized previous awardees John Gramby and Edward Diprospero.

Members of the Governor's Cabinet, the New Jersey Legislature, and Trenton Mayor Reed Gusciora were also present to show respect to the veterans, both living and dead, who fought fascism and ensured the freedom of millions of oppressed people.



NJ Distinguished Service Medal recipient
Melvin Sher

RECIPIENTS

MELVIN SHER

U.S. Army Air Forces Veteran Melvin Sher enlisted when World War II began, with an interest in radio mechanics and communications. He served as a Supply Sergeant, before marrying his wife of 69 years, with whom he raised three children. To Sher, joining the Army meant protecting the United States from foreign threats. Sher received the New Jersey Distinguished Service medal.

TONY SPINUZZI

Tony joined the U.S. Navy right out of high school because he “didn’t want to walk in the mud” in the Army. He became a mechanic on a supply ship and turned his trade into a career once he returned to civilian life. Spinuzzi believes every man should serve, as his military service prepared him for life. Looking back, he says he would “do it all over again.” Spinuzzi received the New Jersey Distinguished Service medal.



NJ Distinguished Service Medal recipient
Alfred Cohn

ALFRED COHN

Alfred Cohn, an Army Veteran who served with the 473rd Fighter Group, enlisted shortly after D-Day, when he turned 18. Cohn served in the European Theater of Operations throughout 1945, earning the Army of Occupation medal and the Victory medal. At this year’s ceremony he received the New Jersey Distinguished Service medal.

JOHN GRAMBY

U.S. Army Veteran John Gramby had just turned 14 when Pearl Harbor was attacked, and he ran down to Selective Service to sign up to join the military. Later, when the official papers came to his home, they realized he was not yet old enough to serve, but 3 years later he reported to Fort Hancock. He served primarily in Guam as a Switchboard Operator, and believes service is about behavior and doing your duty. Gramby previously received the New Jersey Distinguished Service medal.



NJ Distinguished Service Medal recipient
Tony Spinuzzi

EDWARD DIPROSPERO

Edward Diprospero is a 102-year-old U.S. Army Veteran who grew up in Philadelphia. He served as an Infantryman and Scout right after high school during World War II. Though he was eventually wounded in combat, he remembers never being afraid in battle, instead he proudly recalls that he and the members of his unit were all “gung-ho in those days.” Diprospero previously received the New Jersey Distinguished Service medal.

A Q&A WITH WWII VETERAN EDWARD DIPROSPERO



U.S. Army World War II Veteran Edward Diprospero served in the European Theater of Operations from April 1943 to December 1945. Together with his fellow soldiers, he served in France and as a result of his service he received many awards and citations, including the Purple Heart, Good Conduct Medal, European African Middle Eastern Campaign Medal 4, Bronze Service Stars, Distinguished Unit Badge with Oak Leaf Cluster, American Campaign Medal, and the World War II Victory Medal. We sat down with Mr. Diprospero to learn more about his time in uniform.

Veterans Journal: Where did you grow up?

Edward Diprospero: I grew up in Philadelphia.

VJ: What branch of the military were you in and what was your role?

ED: I was in the Army, and I was an Infantryman and Scout.

VJ: What memories do you have of being in the Army around D-Day?

ED: I was wounded. Each time we would start a new offensive, since I was the Scout, that meant I was the first person in. I drew the fire. The night before, we went on patrol, and we saw them all [enemy soldiers]. They must have been looking at us and laughing. And then I saw a tank coming at me directly. [The tank fired] and one shell landed behind me. I jumped in a ditch by the side of the road, and another hit right beside me and the shrapnel got all in here [points to his side]. They took it out and a Russian doctor saved me. It wasn't a large wound, but I was starting to get gangrene, but eventually, it cleared up.

VJ: Was it frightening for you to be in the middle of World War II?

ED: Not really. We were gung-ho us kids those days!

VJ: When you came back home to America, was it easy to go back to regular life?

ED: As we were about to head back home, before we left, they offered us a 15-year program [followed by retirement]. They said, "you already have almost 3 years, all you need is another 12 years or so" — but everybody refused. We were Infantrymen, and we didn't want to go back to the front lines again. But in the end, [I went home] and everything turned out alright.

CONNECTING WITH NEW JERSEY'S VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Every year, New Jersey Veterans Service Organizations gather in May and June for annual conventions to conduct business, share best practices, and hear the voices and feedback of members from up and down the state. From Governor Mikie Sherrill on down, state leaders made the trek to some or all of these conventions to listen and affirm their commitment to Garden State heroes and the people who love them.

On May 28, the Governor traveled to the Wildwoods Convention Center in Wildwood to present awards and address members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. She was joined by Vincent Solomeno, Commissioner of Veterans Affairs, and U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Yvonne L. Mays, The Adjutant General of New Jersey.

"Service doesn't just start the day we enlist or are called up," said Governor Sherrill, acknowledging the good work performed by VFW members every day. "It doesn't end the day we come home. It's a calling and a mindset. A constant choice that we make new, every day. It's why we continue to serve - in thousands of ways, big and small, here at home."

Commissioner Solomeno also attended the Marine Corps League Convention in Galloway Township, the Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America Convention in Toms River, as well as the New Jersey State Elks, the American Legion, and the Disabled American Veterans Conventions in Wildwood.



IMPROVEMENTS COMPLETED AT CEMETERIES

Earlier this summer, the New Jersey Department of Veterans Affairs completed two major capital improvement projects to honor deceased veterans and their families. The projects include a federally funded expansion of the Brigadier General William C. Doyle Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Wrightstown and a state funded restoration of the historic Soldier's Circle at Arlington Park Cemetery, Kearny.

"The dignified interment of veterans, veteran spouses, and eligible dependents is our team's most somber responsibility," said Vincent Solomeno, Commissioner of Veterans Affairs. "Under Governor Sherrill's leadership, we are committed to doing the work and making the necessary investments to ensure that their final resting places remain fields of honor long into the future."

At Doyle, the busiest state-run veterans cemetery in the United States, the recently completed expansion covers nearly 14 acres and includes road improvements, 7,520 burial crypts, and 3,420 cremains sites. DVA completed the project with funds from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Administration. The need for improvements to Soldier's Circle, which features 754 graves of New Jerseyans who served from the Civil War through Vietnam, was first highlighted by Doreen Bloomer, President of the Hudson County Genealogical and Historical Society.



Renovations at the Soldier's Circle in Kearny's Arlington Cemetery, shown before, in January 2026 (left), and after work was completed in June 2026 (right).

"The reason was and always has been 'respect.' These veterans gave the ultimate sacrifice for us."

Bloomer first learned about Soldier's Circle in 2019 when she traveled to the cemetery to photograph a headstone for genealogical research. She recently recounted, "The headstones were as black as night, unreadable, weathered, many were broken or missing. I was appalled when I saw this, and that began my quest to have the circle returned to a proper and respectable state." Unlike most private cemeteries, a long-ago statutory change had placed responsibility for Soldier's Circle with the State of New Jersey. Bloomer brought this matter to the attention of state leaders and her advocacy resulted in state funds being set aside to complete the cemetery restoration.



American flags on graves at the Brigadier General William C. Doyle Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Wrightstown.

As part of the project, all headstones were carefully removed, and the field was leveled. Any headstones that were found to be illegible were replaced and placed back in its original location. Once the site preparation was complete, all headstones were reinstalled on a crushed stone base to reduce future settling and minimize sinkage over time. The entire field was then covered with new sod to restore the appearance of the grounds. The total cost of this project was \$900,000.



On May 20, the New Jersey Department of Veterans Affairs held a State Medals Ceremony honoring veterans from the Department of Law and Safety. The event was held at the New Jersey Forensic Science & Technology Center in Hamilton.

VETERANS HONORED:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Holly E. Andrews | Lawrence G. Clifton | Francisco A. Hurtado |
| John P. Bardunias | Darryl T. Curtis | Paul Jones |
| Alvin M. Cabrera | Joseph J. Danna | Dovid Y. Kohn |
| Michael G.T. Cheeseborough | Alexander B. Gelfand | Francisco Melendez |
| Kwang C. Choi | June A. Guerrero | Scott P. Orman |
| | | Connor A. Weber |

STATE MEDAL CEREMONIES RECOGNIZE VETERANS

On June 12, the New Jersey Department of Veterans Affairs held a State Medals Ceremony, which honored 24 women veterans. The event was part of the American Legion Department of New Jersey's 107th Annual State Convention at the Wildwoods Convention Center in Wildwood. During the ceremony, Esther Chucaralao, Deputy Commissioner of Veterans Affairs, and Lucy DelGaudio, Women Veterans Coordinator, Division of Veterans Services, presented a proclamation from Governor Mikie Sherrill that designated the day as Women Veterans Day.

VETERANS HONORED:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Laura Bailey | Rhonda D. Hood | Mary H. Prendergast |
| Tatiana T. Bleasdel | Rosita D. Jackson | Iris Ruiz |
| Jacquelyn M. Burrell | Phillis A. Jones | Heather Runyon |
| Bertha M. Carter | Vernita Jones | Maria T. Sanders |
| April M. Chillemi | Melissa Klotz | Roberta S. Skievaski |
| Elizabeth A. Costanza | Vicky A. Leone | Trina L. Stratton |
| Nardia Cunningham | Kerri A. Long | Sylvia M. Velez |
| Nancy J. Elliot | Michelle E. Miller | Xiomara A Velez |
| Keeshe D. Harris | Patricia A. Orsini | Kimberly Yoder Notaro |



UPCOMING EVENTS



STATE OF NEW JERSEY VETERANS DAY CEREMONY

11:00AM Sharp
New Jersey Vietnam Veterans Memorial and Museum, Holmdel



SAVE THE DATE!



Stay tuned for more details about the New Jersey Governor's We Value Our Veterans Awards Ceremony November 2026. All Awardees will be invited to formally accept their awards and network with other winners and members of the community.



COMMUNITY, EMPLOYER & ACADEMIA AWARDS

APPLICATIONS ARE OPEN THROUGH 10/11

Learn more or apply today!



If you have questions or need additional information, please contact our We Value Our Veterans Coordinator at WVOV@dva.nj.gov or at 609-530-6965.

VETERANS SERVICE OFFICES

The New Jersey Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) operates Veterans Service Offices in each of the state's twenty-one counties. These offices are led by trained and accredited Veterans Service Officers (VSOs) and serve as points of entry for Veterans and their dependents to access local, state, and federal benefits, programs, and services. DVA also conducts outreach events in the community where VSOs are present to help and assist any Veteran.

- State Supervisors Main Numbers**
1-(844) 671-1019
or (609) 671-3500
- Essex Veterans Service Office**
Newark Liaison Office
Newark VA Regional Office
Room 439, 20 Washington Place
Newark, NJ 07102-3174
(609) 671-3535 / 3536
- Ocean Veterans Service Office**
Toms River VA Clinic
Room #1213, 1055 Hooper Avenue
Toms River, NJ 08754
(609) 671-3575 / 3576
- Atlantic Veterans Service Office**
Atlantic City National Guard Armory
1008 Absecon Boulevard
Atlantic City, NJ 08401
(609) 671-3505 / 3506
- Essex Veterans Service Office**
Newark City Hall
Room B-13, 920 Broad Street
Newark, NJ 07102
(973) 424-1968
- Passaic Veterans Service Office**
Passaic County Administration Building
Room 113b, 401 Grand Street
Paterson, NJ 07505
(609) 671-3580 / 3581
- Bergen Veterans Service Office**
Suite #109, 125 State Street
Hackensack, NJ 07601-5435
(609) 671-3510 / 3511
- Gloucester Veterans Service Office**
Woodbury National Guard Armory
658 N Evergreen Avenue
Woodbury, NJ 08096
(609) 671-3540 / 3542
- Salem Veterans Service Office**
90 Market Street
Salem NJ 08079
(609) 671-3586 / 3585
- Bordentown Veterans Service Office**
Joint Military & Family Assistance Center
1048 US Highway 206 South
Bordentown, NJ 08505
(609) 671-2005
- Hudson Veterans Service Office**
Jersey City National Guard Armory
Room 6, 2nd Floor
678 Montgomery Street
Jersey City, NJ 07306
(609) 671-3545 / 3546
- Somerset Veterans Service Office**
National Guard Armory
1060 Hamilton Street
Somerset, NJ 08873
(609) 671-3590 / 3591
- Burlington Veterans Service Office**
Suite #6A, 555 High Street
Mt Holly, NJ 08060
(609) 671-3515/3516
- Hunterdon Veterans Service Office**
Veterans Haven North
200 Sanatorium Road
Glen Gardner, NJ 08826
(609) 671-3550 / 3551
- Sussex Veterans Service Office**
Catholic Family & Community Services
48 Wyker Road
Franklin, NJ 07416
(609) 671-3571
- Camden Veterans Service Office**
Governor James J. Florio Center for Public Service Building
Suite 146, 200 Federal Street
Camden, NJ 08103
(609) 671-3520/3521
- Mercer Veterans Service Office**
National Guard Armory
Room #136, 151 Eggerts Crossing Road
Lawrenceville, NJ 08648
(609) 671-3555 / 3556
- Union Veterans Service Office**
652-654 Rahway Avenue
Union NJ 07083
(609) 671-3595 / 3596
- Cape May Veterans Service Office**
National Guard Armory
600 Garden State Parkway
Cape May Court House, NJ 08210
(609) 671-3525 / 3526
- Middlesex Veterans Service Office**
National Guard Armory
625 Main Street
Woodbridge, NJ 07095
(609) 671-3560 / 3561
- Warren Veterans Service Office**
Port Murray Armory
550 NJ-57 South
Port Murray, NJ 07865
(609) 671-3598 / 3599
- Cumberland Veterans Service Office**
New Jersey Veterans Memorial Home at Vineland
524 N. West Boulevard
Vineland NJ 08360
(609) 671-3530 / 3531
- Monmouth Veterans Service Office**
Suite #320, 630 Bangs Avenue
Asbury Park, NJ 07712
(609) 671-3565 / 3566
- East Orange Veterans Service Office**
East Orange VA Medical Center
Room 3-214, 385 Tremont Avenue
East Orange, NJ 07018
(973) 676-1000, Ext. 202377
- Morris Veterans Service Office**
National Guard Armory
479 W Clinton Street
Dover, NJ 07801
(609) 671-3570 / 3571

For more information call
toll-free 1-888-865-8387
or online at:
<https://www.nj.gov/military/veterans/>

SCAN THE QR
CODE TO LEARN
MORE ABOUT THE
VETERANS
SERVICE OFFICES



GET INVOLVED

To share your voice, engage in promotional efforts, or volunteer individually or as a group to support the veterans in our Memorial Homes or Havens, please reach out to Connect@dva.nj.gov.



**SCAN TO
SUBSCRIBE**



FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



Facebook/ Instagram| @NJDVA

X| @NJ_Veterans

LinkedIn| <https://www.linkedin.com/company/njdva>