

Veteran Journal

SERVING THOSE WHO SERVED

MAY 2011



2011 NJDMAVA

VETERANS OUTREACH CAMPAIGN SCHEDULE

May 7, New Jersey Vietnam Veterans Memorial

NJ Vietnam Veterans Remembrance Day Ceremony and
DMAVA Medal Ceremony at 11 a.m.

PNC Bank Arts Center, Garden State Parkway
Exit 116, Holmdel, NJ 07777



May 24*, 25 & 26, Paramus Park Mall

Medal Ceremony @ 10:30a.m. on May 24
Kiosk hours 10 a.m. – 8 p.m. daily
700 Paramus Park, Paramus, NJ, 07652



May 21, American Legion Post #65

Metuchen - Veterans Outreach Day

Outreach Events Only 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Fugle-Hummer American Legion Post #65
Lake Ave. & Holly St., Metuchen, NJ 08840



June, Wildwood Convention Center

Outreach events only (8 a.m. – 1 p.m. daily at each location)

Elks State Convention: June 2-3

American Legion State Convention: June 8-10

Veterans Of Foreign Wars State Convention: June 15-17

Wildwood Convention Center

4501 Boardwalk, Wildwood, NJ 08260

August 5, Lakewood BlueClaws "American Legion Night"

First Energy Park, Lakewood

6-9 p.m. on main concourse field level – 1st base side
game time 7 p.m.

2 Stadium Way, Lakewood, NJ 08701

New Jersey awards five service medals – the New Jersey Distinguished Service Medal, New Jersey Meritorious Service Medal, New Jersey Korean Service Medal, New Jersey Vietnam Service Medal and the New Jersey POW-MIA Service Medal. Anyone interested in applying should call 1-888-8NJ-VETS (1-888-865-8387) and press 7, to request an application.

A WORD FROM THE DCVA

Dear Veterans,

It's no secret that these are challenging budgetary times in New Jersey.

Gov. Chris Christie has asked every state agency to find efficiencies, re-evaluate existing programs and in some cases, face steep cuts in funding.

Fortunately, the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs was already poised to weather a tough financial environment – and has been for years. The Department has long been an innovator among state agencies for finding ways to reduce costs and generate additional revenue.

The Department reduced its central office payroll by 25 percent during the past decade and pared its vehicle fleet by more than one third

over that time. Simply turning down the thermostats and other measures helped the department save more than \$2 million last year.

At the same time, the Department has been hailed as a national model for its use of alternative energy and has been successful in using federal dollars to support critical veterans programs.

For all those reasons -- and the fact Gov. Christie remains committed to our Veterans – the Department emerged from the latest budget cycle with no reduction in funding for any key programs that serve the men and women who have worn our nation's uniform.

There's another reason the Department fared well even in this era of tough choices: New Jersey enjoys one of the most robust Veterans' communities in the nation. You are this Department's partners in every sense of the word. Your voices have been clear in Trenton about the need for funding that adequately supports DMAVA's mission. And your spirit of volunteerism has enhanced everything from the care provided at our Veterans Memorial Homes to the beauty of the Brig. Gen. William C. Doyle Cemetery.

Even in these difficult financial times, our service to Veterans continues to grow. By the end of the year, both a 44-bed expansion at Veterans Haven and the long-awaited Multipurpose Room at the Paramus Memorial Home will be completed. The Veterans Haven project will double the number of homeless Veterans the Department can assist in getting their lives back on track. And the Paramus project will enhance the quality of life for residents at a home that has already been recognized with an elite five-star rating.

The financial challenges faced by all levels of government show no signs of abating. But our commitment to finding innovative ways to serve Veterans will never waver.

One of our newest projects will be to harness the power of social media to bring together our Veterans' community with the launching of a Facebook page. So, look for us online and become our "friend."

In the meantime, have a safe and prosperous year.



Raymond L. Zawacki, left, congratulates Ronald Janus after presenting him the New Jersey Distinguished Service Medal at an award ceremony at the Quaker Bridge Mall on Feb. 8. In the background from left to right are Maj. Gen. Glenn K. Rieth, The Adjutant General; State Senator Linda Greenstein and State Assemblymen Wayne DeAngelo. Photo by Mark C. Olsen, NJDMAVA/PA.

Chris Christie
Governor

Maj. Gen. Glenn K. Rieth
The Adjutant General

Raymond L. Zawacki
Deputy Commissioner for
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The VeteraN Journal is an official publication of the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and is intended to serve New Jersey's veterans, their families, friends and concerned individuals and groups. All correspondence should be sent to: Veteran Journal Editor, NJDMAVA/PA, PO Box 340, Trenton, NJ 08625-0340.

Cover Photo: Phanatical

The Phillie Phanatic gives Linville Daws a smooch. The Phillie Phanatic and Millville native Mike Trout, the top Major League Baseball prospect, visited the residents of the Vineland Veterans Memorial Home on Feb. 7. (Photo by Mark C. Olsen, NJDMAVA/PA)

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Agent Orange Update

By Al Bucchi, Director of Veterans Services

The VA has recently identified three more diseases associated with Agent Orange Exposure.

They are ischemic heart disease, Parkinson's disease and chronic B-cell leukemia. See the box below for a list of the diseases associated with Agent Orange Exposure. Vietnam veterans who have experience these diseases should immediately file a claim.

Veterans may be eligible for disability compensation and health care benefits for diseases recognized as associated with exposure to Agent



Service Officers can help veterans navigate through the Veterans Administrations system.

Our VSOs will gather the information necessary to support, file and

track a claim through the VA system. Orange and other herbicides. Surviving spouses, children and dependent parents of Veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange and died as the result of diseases associated with Agent Orange may be eligible for survivors' benefits.

The New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Veteran

Officers can help veterans navigate through the Veterans Administrations system. We encourage all veterans to contact a VSO to find out what Federal and State benefits they are entitled to. For more information and a detailed list of services available to New Jersey veterans, you can contact the Department of Military and Veteran Affairs at 1-888-8NJ-VETS or on the web at www.state.nj.us/military.

track a claim through the VA system. They can also assist in filing appeals for denied claims. This service is free of charge. Their expertise can help avoid the pitfalls and delays that missing paperwork or improperly filled out claims forms can cause. Every day, DMAVA Veteran Service Officers help deserving veterans and their families collect thousands of dollars in retroactive compensation plus monthly compensations.

DISEASES ASSOCIATED WITH AGENT ORANGE EXPOSURE

Acute and Subacute Peripheral Neuropathy is a nervous system condition that causes numbness, tingling, and motor weakness. Under VA's rating regulations, it must be at least 10 percent disabling within one year of exposure to herbicides and resolve within two years after the date it began.

AL Amyloidosis is caused when an abnormal protein, amyloid, enters tissues or organs.

Chloracne (or similar acneform disease) occurs soon after exposure to chemicals and looks like common forms of acne seen in teenagers. Under VA's rating regulations, chloracne (or other acneform disease similar to chloracne) must be at least 10 percent disabling within one year of exposure to herbicides.

Chronic B-cell Leukemia affects white blood cells. VA's regulation recognizing all chronic B-cell leukemias as related to exposure to herbicides took effect on Oct. 30, 2010.

Diabetes Mellitus (Type 2) is characterized by high blood sugar levels resulting from the body's inability to respond properly to the hormone insulin.

Hodgkin's Disease is characterized by progressive enlargement of the lymph nodes, liver, and spleen and progressive anemia.

Ischemic Heart Disease is characterized by a reduced

supply of blood to the heart that leads to chest pain. VA's regulation recognizing ischemic heart disease as related to exposure to herbicides took effect on Oct. 30, 2010.

Multiple Myeloma is a cancer of plasma cells, a type of white blood cell in bone marrow.

Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma affects the lymph glands and other lymphatic tissue.

Parkinson's Disease is a progressive disorder of the nervous system that affects muscle movement. VA's regulation recognizing Parkinson's disease as related to exposure to herbicides took effect on Oct. 30, 2010.

Porphyria Cutanea Tarda is characterized by liver dysfunction and by thinning and blistering of the skin in sun-exposed areas. Under VA's rating regulations, it must be at least 10 percent disabling within one year of exposure to herbicides.

Prostate Cancer is one of the most common cancers among men.

Respiratory Cancers include cancers of the lung, larynx, trachea and bronchus.

Soft Tissue Sarcoma (other than Osteosarcoma, Chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or Mesothelioma) is a group of cancers in body tissues such as muscle, fat, blood and lymph vessels and the connective tissues.

LEGION COMES THRU FOR VETERANS HAVEN

By Mark C. Olsen, DMAVA Public Affairs

“Originally we just wanted to furnish each bedroom.”

That was the goal according to Robert Looby, the American Legion State Commander for New Jersey, when he talked about his 2010 Commander's Project to raise enough money to furnish all 44 rooms in the new addition to the existing 55-bed Veterans Haven – a transitional housing program in Winslow Township run by the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

What no one expected was the outpouring that came from all the American Legion posts across the state for the residents.

It began in 2009 when ground was broken for the 44-room addition at the Veterans Haven.

Because of increased construction costs, the original amount appropriated for the furnishings was absorbed for construction and a new source was needed if the project was to be completed.

Enter the American Legion.

“Since the opening of the original facility in 1994, the American Legion, along with other veteran’s service organizations have been instrumental in obtaining donations, both monetary and material and services for the facility, said Sean VanLew, Assistant Superintendent, Veterans Haven.

“It would cost \$2,000 a room,” said Looby. No easy feat during these economic times.

Then money started rolling in.

To raise awareness, Looby had a scale model of the room on display at the American Legion meeting at the War Memorial in Trenton on Dec. 4, 2010. Dave MacKinnon of Norix



Ray Zawacki, right to left, Deputy Commissioner for Veterans Affairs, along with American Legion State Commander for New Jersey Robert Looby and Dave MacKinnon, Norix Furniture, pose in front of the furniture that the Legion is purchasing for the new addition at Veteran's Haven during the American Legion meeting at the War Memorial in Trenton on Dec. 4, 2010. MacKinnon is also assisting his two children with a project to provide a lamp and clock for each night table. Photo courtesy American Legion

Furniture was also at the meeting to answer any questions that may have arisen about the set up of each room.

By that point with donations from 12 counties, Looby had raised almost \$82,000 toward furnishing the addition. With another 10 counties to add to the final amount, there seemed little doubt that the veterans would be taken care of.

What happened next exceeded everyone’s expectations.

Still more donations came in.

As the money arrived, it quickly became apparent that Looby’s goal of furnishing the rooms would be easily met.

Looby now had to consider what else could be done for the veterans. So he reached out to VanLew and asked him what else the Legion could get.

VanLew said that the treatment lab needed furniture so Looby had that programmed into the purchase.

The money just kept coming in. “Everytime we almost reached

our goal I would ask Sean what else we could get him,” said Looby.

As more money came in Looby asked VanLew what else could be purchased; VanLew said that the facility’s new computer lab needed computers.

“So we got an estimate for the computer lab and the Ocean County Post is going to buy all the computers,” said Looby.

That’s \$13,000 worth of computers.

The New Jersey American Legion Posts had taken this project to their hearts resulting in them buying all the furnishings for the new addition.

As of this writing the American Legion has raised an unprecedented \$151,000 making this one of the largest single donations in support of New Jersey’s veterans ever by a veterans’ organization.

“We still have another four counties; so we're not done yet,” said Looby.

5-Star general of Paramus retires

By Sgt. Wayne Woolley, DMAVA Public Affairs; photo by Mark C. Olsen, DMAVA Public Affairs

For Doris Neibart, serving 15 years as the chief executive officer of the Paramus Veterans Memorial Home was both a labor of love and a learning experience.

She said the love part – for her staff and the residents – came easy.

“Amazing, amazing people,” she said.

The learning part – navigating the worlds of budgets and funding capital projects – was trickier.

“I learned all about how to work within a system to get things done,” she said.

As she prepared to retire on Dec. 31, Neibart said that one of the things she had to work the hardest to achieve during her tenure was the completion of the multi-purpose room at the home. Securing funding for the \$2 million addition took several years.

“It gave me a real sense of accomplishment to be able to help provide something that was going to improve the lives of our residents,” Neibart said.

Another project that was of lower-profile but no less importance to residents was the replacement of a new heating and cooling system and a new fire alarm system.

But one of the biggest achievements during Neibart’s tenure, in the eyes of Maj. Gen. Glenn K. Rieth, the Adjutant General, was the Paramus Home’s continued improvement in patient care. The home received a five-star rating, the highest possible, during several of Neibart’s final years as director.

“Doris really raised the bar on patient care at Paramus,” Rieth said. For Neibart, it all goes back to the



Gov. Chris Christie, left, shakes hands with Doris Neibart, right, Chief Executive Officer at the Paramus Veterans Memorial Home while Maj. Gen. Glenn K. Rieth, The Adjutant General watches prior to the Veterans Day ceremony at Paramus.

love she felt for the residents.

“I enjoyed every single moment I was there,” Neibart said. “The patients, the staff, they are all special. I love them all.”

In retirement, Neibart plans to spend more time with her six grandchildren. But she’ll still be around the Paramus Home from time to time.

“I live so close, I won’t be a stranger,” she said.

DIANNE TABRON-FELDER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, PARAMUS VETERANS MEMORIAL HOME

Dianne Tabron-Felder was appointed Chief Executive Officer of the Paramus Veterans Memorial Home on Jan. 1 and is the daughter of Korean combat veteran Peter E. Tabron Sr. Tabron-Felder began her career in health services administration while employed as the Assistant to the Chief Executive Officer of the Methodist Church for the Aged in Riverdale, N.Y., one of the oldest non-profit nursing homes in the United States. She then served as Assistant Administrator followed by Administrator at Clearview Nursing Home in Queens, N.Y. Prior to joining the Paramus Veterans Memo-



rial Home, Tabron-Felder spent five years as Administrator at Inglemoor Center. Tabron-Felder attended both the University of Houston and Fashion Institute of Technology where she received a Bachelor’s Degree in Marketing. In 1996, she earned her Master’s Degree from the New School of Social Research in Manhattan. During this period, Tabron-Felder worked with such companies as Grey Advertising, Mitsubishi, Coca-Cola and Burke Marketing Research, which helped develop her marketing skills. Dianne also has a Geriatric Scholar Certification from Columbia University, New York.

Gold Star Family plates: Recognizing the fallen

By Sgt. Wayne Woolley, DMAVA Public Affairs; photos by Mark C. Olsen, DMAVA Public Affairs

After U.S. Navy SEAL David Tapper was killed in Afghanistan in 2003, his mother, Judith Tapper began a campaign to have the sacrifices of fallen service members from New Jersey memorialized in a way visible to everyone.

The effort bore fruit on Jan. 31 when Gov. Chris Christie signed legislation allowing for the issuance of Gold Star Family license plates to be issued to the loved ones of the fallen. Tapper and other Gold Star Families and veterans groups were at Christie's side when he signed the legislation, S-2192.

"While these Gold Star Family plates cannot replace their loved ones, they are a symbol of their sacrifice, and a small token of our gratitude and thankfulness that we can never fully repay," Christie said.

The new plates are emblazoned with an American flag with a Gold Star in the center and imprinted with the word Hero.

Motor Vehicle Commission Chief Administrator Raymond P. Martinez credited Tapper, who serves as President of the NJ Gold Star Mothers, and her organization for working tirelessly to make the license plates a reality.

"Today is the happy culmination of a lot of work and



Gov. Chris Christie, flanked by war veterans and families of those who made the ultimate sacrifice, signed legislation bill S-2192 that clears the way for the first Gold Star Family license plate to be issued in New Jersey on Jan. 31.

shear tenacity," Martinez said. "The Gold Star Mothers of New Jersey are a devoted group of women dedicated to preserving the memory of children."

The genesis of the Gold Star Mothers dates back to World War I, when a Blue Star was used to represent each person in the Military Service of the United States. As military personnel were lost in combat or died of their wounds, the Gold Star became an accepted symbol to use to honor the service member's supreme sacrifice and the pride of the family.

Eligibility for the plates will be determined by the Gold Star Mother's organization and provided by the MVC free-of-charge. Those eligible include spouses, parents, brothers, sisters, children, legal guardians or other legal custodians of any member of the armed services who dies while on active duty.

The MVC offers three other gratis military based specialty plates including one honoring prisoners of war and recipients of the Silver Star and the Medal of Honor.

Prime sponsors of the Gold Star legislation include Senators James Beach and Sean Kean and Assemblymembers Jack Connors, David P. Rible, Nancy F. Munoz, Matthew W. Milam, Valerie Vainieri Huttle, Anthony M. Bucco and Scott T. Rumana.



Gov. Chris Christie, left and Judith Tapper, President of the N.J. Gold Star Mothers, stand next to a larger than life version of the Gold Star Family license plate.

HAVE I GOT A STORY FOR YOU

Story and photo by Mark C. Olsen, DMAVA Public Affairs

Most of us take reading for granted.

Yet, three percent of New Jerseyans have some sort of visual deficit, physical handicap, or learning disability which prevents them from taking part in this basic activity.

At the Vineland Veterans Memorial Home that number is higher – one out of every three of the Home's 300 residents has some form of handicap that prevents them from reading.

But that is about to change.

The Outspoken Library Kiosk combines a specially designed computer, which provides web based access to the New Jersey State Library with free portable players.

"When you lose your vision or are an amputee, you give up on reading," said Adam Szczepaniak, director of the New Jersey State Library Talking Book and Braille Center. "This service means they don't have to give up on their love of reading."

The setup is simple, the resident comes to the Home's activities office, or if their handicap prevents them, the staff goes to them. The resident then logs on to the system; downloads the books or magazines to their thumb drive and then transfers them to their player, which can hold up to 10 books.

The only thing the resident is responsible for is getting a thumb drive.

"We are working with area veteran's groups to buy the residents thumb drives," said Gary Cooper, who serves in marketing with the New Jersey State Library.

The Kiosk provides the Home's residents 24-hour access to Audio Vision, a 24-hour newspaper reading service; National Federation of the Blind



Vineland Veterans Memorial Home resident Norm Baker, right, indicates on the Outspoken Library Kiosk the service where he downloads books to, left to right, Adam Szczepaniak, Director of the New Jersey State Library Talking Book and Braille Center; Gary Cooper, Media Specialist, New Jersey State Library and Joe Romano, chief executive officer, Vineland Veterans Memorial Home. The kiosk, which was installed by the New Jersey State Library at the Home to serve the needs of the visually impaired veteran population in south Jersey, was unveiled on Feb. 15.

Newsline; the NJSL Talking Book and Braille Center and the Library of Congress Braille and Audio Reading and Downloading Web Site.

What does this mean in terms of reading? Well, imagine more than 80,000 books with 35-40 books getting added each week to the inventory, plus newspapers and magazines, literally at your fingertips.

Free, no charge

"It gives them what they need to stay in touch with the world," said Szczepaniak.

The service is also available to users outside the home with priority being given to veterans. Any New Jersey resident who has a handicap that prevents them from reading can, with a doctor's documentation, get access to the system. After registering with the Talking Book and Braille Center, users will then be able to access the Nation-

al Library Services Braille and Audio Reading (BARD) Program. Once certified, users will receive a login ID and a password to access BARD.

Resident's reaction to the service at the Home has been swift.

"Twenty-five residents are using it and I expect to have the rest registered in the next two months," said Lisa Williams, the Home's activities director.

One of those residents is Norman Baker. The 84-year old Marine Corps Korean War veteran heard about it from his wife who discovered the service last September. In fact it was Baker who told Williams about the system.

Confined to a wheelchair, Baker's eyes sparkle when he tells about what a difference the service has made for him.

"I am an avid reader," said Baker. "Without this program, I wouldn't be able to read."

Survivor Outreach provides for fallen warriors' families

By Sgt. Wayne Woolley, DMAVA Public Affairs

Military spouses and parents say they must survive an overwhelming crush of emotions when their loved one dies in a combat theater of operations. In the days, weeks and even months after that fateful knock on the door, Casualty Assistance Officers help grieving families navigate a bureaucratic tangle of paperwork and other arrangements.

But some families have found that unresolved issues or questions sometimes surface months or even years after the Casualty Assistance Officer has concluded his or her services.

For families in New Jersey, that's where Terese Acocella and Robert Engel come in.

They are the coordinators of National Guard Survivor Outreach Servic-

es, part of a nationwide multi-service effort to deliver services to surviving family members ranging from financial matters; to insurance; to questions about benefits through the U.S. Veterans Affairs and other agencies.

"It's our job to be available to these families for as long as they need us," Engel said. "The length of our services never expires."

In February, Acocella and Engel played host to more than two dozen of their counterparts from states along the East Coast for a two-day conference at Atlantic City. All of the coordinators are civilian contractors, although nearly all have a military connection. Acocella is a lieutenant colonel in the New Jersey Army National Guard and Engel is a retired New Jersey Air Na-

tional Guard chief master sergeant.

Conference attendees got the latest updates on available services from representatives of organizations such as Army One Source, Tricare and the VA.

The highlight of the event, however, was a panel made up of six Gold Star families who talked about the challenges they faced after losing a son, or daughter or husband, or wife in combat.

"Hearing the personal stories about how difficult things can be even years after a death was a big motivator for all the SOS coordinators," Engel said. "Serving these families is what we do."

To contact an SOS coordinator in New Jersey, please call Terese Acocella at 609-851-2257 or Robert Engel at 609-530-6853.

PROJECT KEEPS VETERANS' STORIES ALIVE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Story by Staff Sgt. Armando Vasquez, DMAVA Public Affairs

With veterans from past and present wars in attendance, New Jersey Sen. Frank R. Lautenberg spoke about the importance of recording their history during the Veterans History Project training workshop held at Rutgers University Student Center on Jan. 31.

He was instrumental in organizing the event along with Rutgers University to train interviewers to record oral histories from New Jersey war veterans.

The Library of Congress Veterans History Project was started in 2000 and its goal is to record and preserve the stories of veterans from all wars. The project mirrors Rutgers Oral History Archives, which was started in 1994.

So far, the Veterans History Project has collected more than 70,000 entries from veterans all over the United States, including 1,000 from New Jersey.

Rutgers Oral History Archives is an enterprise to record the personal experience of Rutgers University alumni and New Jersey residents who served on the home front or overseas during World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and the Cold War, and it includes more than 1,000 interviews with veterans.

"Our country owes them their gratitude," said Lautenberg, 87, a veteran of World War II.

"The best sources possible are those who lived the experience," said Deputy Commissioner for Veterans Affairs, Raymond L. Zawacki, who is also a Vietnam veteran.

In addition to these two projects, the National Guard Militia Museum of New Jersey, with locations at Sea Girt and Lawrenceville, has a mission of preserving and explaining the military heritage of New Jersey, and enhancing

the public understanding of how armed conflicts and military institutions shape our state and national experience.

Furthermore, the museum collects preserves and displays artifacts and related memorabilia that have specific historical significance within the Army National Guard, the Air National Guard.

Present at the workshop to tell their stories were Justin Sasso from Holmdel and Joe Nyzio from Bordentown, both Iraq War veterans; Danielle Peloquin from South Brunswick, a Vietnam War veteran; and World War II veterans Arthur Seltzer from Cherry Hill, and Tom Mahoney from Union Township.

"I've never had the opportunity," said Sasso, 32, realizing that he had never sat down and told his story from start to finish.

"It's kind of hard to look at the present and call it history," he said.

Making dreams come true

By Kryn P. Westhoven, DMAVA Public Affairs, Photos by Mark C. Olsen, DMAVA Public Affairs

For more than 18 years Rick Toler had the same dream. A dream to see and hug his child he could only remember as an infant.

“I didn’t think it was ever going to happen after so long,” said Toler a wheelchair bound Desert Storm/Desert Shield veteran at the Vineland Veterans Memorial Home.

The multi-purpose room was filled with residents on October 28th with anticipation of another large wave of wishes being arranged as part of the Second Wind Dreams program. It was only in its third month of granting small wishes but the program was a big success in the building.

Little did the 56-year-old veteran know he was going to have this wish fulfilled.

Toler was called to the front of the stage to talk about his dream, his daughter. Just a few feet away behind the curtain a nervous Brianna eagerly awaited her cue.

Even a day of travel by bus from Minnesota couldn’t slow her down as she rushed to her father’s arms for the first time. In a room bursting with emotion, the tears flowed for Rick and Brianna.

“To see the residents happy makes all the staff happy,” said Lisa Williams, Vineland Home Activities Director, who leads her staff in making sure that these dreams come true. As of March, 402 dreams were given out, at least one for every resident of the home and more than any other organization in the country.

The road to successful dream weaving started in Oc-



Brianna Trent, left, meets her father, Vineland Veterans Memorial Home resident and Desert Storm/Desert Shield veteran Rick Toler, for the first time on Oct. 28, 2010.

tober 2009 as the Vineland Home applied for a National Scholarship to Second Wind Dreams, a non-profit organization whose mission is to change the perception of aging.

It was announced in May 2010 that Vineland Veterans Home was one of five nursing homes in the country to be selected. That is when the dreaming really began.

Dreams fall into six categories; lifelong dreams, need-based dreams, relationship based dreams, relive past experiences, dreams for fun, and quality of life dreams.

Some of the dream requests were simple like an Air Force pilot’s jacket, while other dreams were over a lifetime.

Edward Hunter dreamed of being a police officer, but World War II started before that career could begin. The Atlantic City Police made that dream a reality when the 84-year old Hunter got to wear a bullet proof vest and speed off in a police cruiser with the lights flashing and siren screaming.

Entertainers like Toby Keith have given a veteran a chance to meet the country singer and be backstage. Star percussionist, Tito Puente Jr., came to the facility to give a private steel drum lesson to a resident.

Besides the lifetime grant and training from the Second Wind Dreams organization the Harrah’s Foundation is backing the program, which means the granting of dreams will go on for a long time.

“We have only just begun,” added Williams.

Editor’s note: Rick Toler passed away on March 5, 2011.



Rick Toler, seated front, and Brianna Trent, third from right, pose with members of Rolling Thunder; left to right, Ron Parnov, Nick Santana, Colleen McIntyre-Berenotto, Jeff Nelson, Paul Berenotto (behind Rick), Roy Wilson and Dave Walters. Rolling Thunder assisted with Toler’s dream by helping to cover Trent’s expenses during her visit.

USM WAYS - SUPPORTING THE TROOPS — ONE BOX AT A TIME

Story and photo by Kryn P. Westhoven, DMAVA Public Affairs

The support of military members serving overseas in harm's way goes well beyond the efforts of the veterans' service organizations. One such group in Manchester Township is pushing towards 1300 boxes of snacks and personal care items reaching the troops on the frontlines.

It was back in 2004 when the members of the Essex-Bergen Club of The Renaissance adult community created the USM WAYS Committee. The acronym which stands for "United States Military We Appreciate Your Service" has a special meaning to the volunteers, many who never wore a uniform. All their lives had been touched from the conflicts of their lifetimes, World War II, Korea, Vietnam and the current war on terrorism.

"It is all about the people making the sacrifice for us," said Dick Lynch, chairman of the USM WAYS Committee.

Every Wednesday, committee members are at the community's clubhouse to accept donations, from moist wipes and foot powders to cookies and chewing gum.

Every three months, one home becomes packing and shipping central as half dozen or more volunteers grab empty boxes that line the living room wall.

The retirees, teamed in pairs, take over the dining room table carefully following the layout instructions, in order to use every inch of a 12 x 12 x 6 Priority Mail box. Once packed the box is handed over to the other volunteers to be sealed, labeled and then stacked for shipping.

The packing operation has out grown the dining room according to Lynch. "Our procedure for processing is now done on an assembly line approach. We all gather in the Renaissance ballroom and get the job done."

In December 2009, the group shipped its 1,000th package and is up to 1,289 boxes of cheer leaving Ocean County for far off places.

Lynch, a Korean War veteran, shares with the group, letters and e-mails he receives from the service members in



USM WAYS Committee chairman Dick Lynch, left, joins fellow volunteers Anita Drangle, Marie DeSordi, Marty Drangle, Anna Reuther and Ted DeSordi in packing boxes of snacks and personal care items for service members overseas in a home in the adult community The Renaissance in Manchester Township.

Iraq and Afghanistan. The notes of thanks share a common theme of appreciation for being remembered.

"It means a lot to all of us to know that great Americans like you support our efforts in Afghanistan. In the spirit of sharing, I distributed the contents of the package that you sent to some of our Soldiers serving in our smaller outposts without a lot of creature comforts," wrote Maj. Ed Brady, 4th Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, in an e-mail in March of this year.

Lynch uses the correspondence to keep the donations coming in, whether it is personal care items, food or more importantly cash to pay for the mailing costs and average \$37 dollars worth of items that goes in every box.

The residents of The Renaissance community have been the biggest donors along with groups outside the gates of the adult community such as the Association of the United States Army chapter at Fort Monmouth. The Doughboy Chapter of the Warrant Officers Association located on Fort Dix is active in providing money and Chief Warrant Officer 4 Tom Comyack and retired Chief Warrant Officer 5 Albert Curving providing contact names of those deployed.

Any person or group interested in helping the USM WAYS Committee can contact Lynch at 732-657-6737.

Christmas reunion: Brothers reunite at Battle of Bastogne

By Ed Leheny

Christmas Eve, 1944, Germany, had dawned dark and cold.

We were digging in for the second time that day.

I was a 23-year-old cannoneer manning a 105mm Howitzer with Charlie Battery, 358th Field Artillery Battalion, part of the 95th Infantry Division and General George Patton's Third Army fighting on the Saar Valley front, some 60 miles south of the Ardennes Sector.

The past several months had been



grueling. Since October, the Third Army had driven the Germans from Alsace-Lorraine back across the Siegfried Line toward the German border. We were supporting the 378th Infantry with constant fire missions and now they were fighting day and night to clear the enemy's heavily fortified bank on the Saar River.

Beginning on Dec. 16, we had awakened to a tremendous bombardment marking the start of the Battle of the Bulge. Within a week, Patton was ordered to move north to break the German siege of Bastogne. Our division was assigned to stay in the Saar Valley and defend the Third Army. We were spread

across 30 miles and were the target of constant enemy attacks.

There were six of us manning the gun and with the constant pressure, our crew worked as a close-knit team. We looked out for each other and, like a family, we were a real mix of personalities.

Take Eugene "Rosie" Rosinski. He had been a professional acrobat with the Ringling Brothers Circus. Once, while trudging back to camp from a 25-mile hike in 100-degree heat in Texas, Rosie finished the last 50 yards walking on his hands before a group of amazed officers.

Larry Moran was the Frog – he got that nickname because he was part French. While Allan Strange, a Tar Heel from North Carolina, was the epitome of Southern chivalry.

I got along with all of them. Ten years at St. Paul's Orphanage in Pittsburgh had tempered me. During the Depression, my mother single-handedly managed to keep my older brother and two sisters at home with her. But my kid brother, Leo, wasn't so lucky; he also joined me at St. Paul's.

After high school, Leo and I enlisted in the Civilian Conservation Corps. Later, I was drafted into the Army and Leo enlisted two days later. That was the last I saw of him. He went on to serve in the African, Sicilian, and Italian campaigns.

During that December, the routine never varied: we'd take our position; complete our fire missions and move, criss-crossing the frozen terrain eastward.

Christmas Eve brought constant artillery duels and enemy aircraft overhead into the early evening. There were no presents, no tree, and no family. It was your typical wartime Christmas.

I didn't know then, but the next 24 hours would bring one of the most life-affirming experiences I've ever had.

That night, the temperature plunged, bringing more raw weather. Combat became sporadic. Then there was a lull. But unlike the stories from World War I, there wasn't a temporary truce with carol singing or playing football in no-man's land.

We were tired, cold, and feeling homesick. To add to that, we were out of ammunition. Longing to escape the cold, Rosie, the Frog and I ran for an abandoned barn some 300 yards away. It was stacked with hay bales, but to us, it was the Ritz.

Sleep came quickly. But within seconds, we were wide awake, scratching frantically. Fleas – the hay was filthy with them.

We ran back to the gun, bitterly disappointed.

Within minutes, the sky exploded in light and we were rocked by a tremendous explosion. To our amazement, an enemy shell had hit the barn knocking it flat. Had we stayed just a few minutes more, we would've been killed.

The firing resumed Christmas morning. Amid the din of mortar and artillery bursts, we spied First Lieutenant Stephens escorting four GIs, all reinforcements loaded with gear. He assigned each man to a howitzer. As the fourth man approached our gun, we took in his shabby appearance and wondered who we were getting stuck with.

The GI approached, and my head jerked in response to a familiar voice, "Merry Christmas, Ed."

It was my brother Leo. I couldn't believe it. Leo shouldn't have been here. I was dumbfounded but blurted, "What the hell are you doing here?" We hugged. The last I had heard about him, he had been fighting at Monte Cassino, Italy.

He told us he had been transferred to the south of France and then to the Third Army. He was then assigned to a corps,

CHRISTMAS REUNION CONTINUED

division, regiment, battalion, company, and finally, to a battery. At that critical juncture along the road, Lieutenant Stephens had unknowingly assigned my brother to my gun.

Leo was with our crew for about a month. Then he suffered a relapse of malaria and was shipped to a hospital near Epinal, France. And just like that, he was out of my life again.

Some 65 years later, I still marvel at that chain of events that sent us running from the barn minutes before it was hit to the unlikely reunion with my brother. Somehow the universe had contrived for us to meet, circumventing the laws of nature, the military and everything else to bring us together.

I'd like to say that our 1944 meeting helped build a bond that grew over time,



but it didn't.

Leo and I were opposites. Leo was a

fighter; I wasn't. Over the years, he gambled, drank, and raised hell. He joined the Air Force and was stationed overseas. We built separate lives at opposite ends of the country.

Leo and I never got together or reminisced about that Christmas. But I'm sure that nothing about that special day was ever forgotten. We just didn't talk about it. That was just our way.

Leo died years ago, a lonely man crippled with arthritis caring for a wife with Alzheimer's.

A reunion, Leo might say, just wasn't in the cards. But what were his feelings about Christmas 1944?

A born gambler, Leo did admit on one rare occasion, "Twelve-million-to-one odds. Pretty steep. But we beat 'em, Ed. We beat 'em."

Cadets honor America's fallen



The Brig. Gen. William C. Doyle Veterans Memorial Cemetery was one of 13 sites in New Jersey for the 5th Annual Wreaths Across America ceremony on Dec. 11, 2010. Cadet 1st Sgt. Daniel Zackowski, left to right, Cadet Bryan Park and Cadet

Brian Camp all of the Jimmy Stewart Composite Squadron stand at ease after placing wreaths at three of the nearly 100 veterans in the Cemetery's 'D' section. Other Civil Air Patrol squadrons represented were Twin Pines Composite Pineland Com-

posite and the Allentown Composite. The Veterans Memorial Home in Vineland was another site for the nationwide event that saw more than 100,000 volunteers place 161,000 wreaths last year. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kryn P. Westhoven, JFHQ-PA.

NEW FACES ON FINAL FAREWELL TEAM

Story and photo by Sgt. Wayne Woolley, DMAVA Public Affairs

Some of the names have changed, but the mission for the men and women who are the public face of the nation's busiest state-run veterans' cemetery has not.

"We try to give the veteran the dignity they deserve," said Dennis Macomber, a retired Air Force Master Sergeant who assumed the duties of Honor Guard Coordinator at Brig. Gen. William C. Doyle Memorial Veterans Cemetery

in February, replacing Patrick Looney, a former Chief Warrant Officer who retired.

Joining Looney in retirement were two other Doyle honor guard mainstays, Sgt. 1st Class Anthony Bokeko and Senior Chief Petty Officer Kenneth McAfee.

The newest full-timers on the honor guard are: Spc. Cesar Rodriguez, Petty Officer 1st Class Jermaine Smith and Army Master Sgt. Francis Adams.

"We're all working hard, making sure we hit the ground running," Smith said.

They better. The cemetery is busier than it has ever been since opening 15 years ago, and is on pace this year to break the annual interment record of 2,944 set last year. On one recent day, the Doyle staff handled 26 memorial services, another record.

The new crew has some help with the blistering pace. Air Force Master Sgt. Darlene Sparks remains the sentinel at the cemetery entrance, greeting funeral entourages as they arrive and ensuring they reach the chapel in time.



The new full-time members of the Brig. Gen. William C. Doyle Veterans Memorial Cemetery Honor Guard, from left, Air Force Master Sgt. Dennis Macomber, Army Master Sgt. Francis Adams, Petty Officer 1st Class Jermaine Smith and Spc. Cesar Rodriguez.

Twila Pritchett is another familiar face in the chapel office, handling the crush of phone calls and paperwork and generally making sure the trains run on time.

Keeping things on schedule in the chapel is a duty that also falls to Doug Fish and Pierre Lamereaux, two other longtime cemetery employees.

When a hearse arrives outside the chapel, Macomber and his team begin assisting family members to their seats and handing final paperwork while Fish and Lamereaux scramble behind the scenes, readying the chapel, moving the casket into place and making sure the grounds outside the chapel are tidy.

Although Fish has other duties at the cemetery, he considers the memorial services to be the most important. He makes it a point to never leave the grounds during his lunch break. He wants to make sure no debris blows into the parking lot is still on the ground when a family arrives.

"These are important days for these families," he said.



Providing a helping hand to veterans

Volunteers give homeless veterans haircuts during Stand Down 2010 at the Army National Guard Armory in Cherry Hill on Sept. 25, 2010. Stand Downs are designed to provide homeless veterans and their family members with access to healthcare, medical screening, veterans' benefits counseling, substance abuse counseling, legal and employment services, social services, vocational rehabilitation services, a hot meal, a haircut, and winter clothing. A Stand Down was also held on Oct. 16, 2010 at the John F. Kennedy Pool and Recreation Center in Newark. Homeless Veterans or their families can call 1-888-8NJ VETS for information on entitlements. Photo by Kryn P. Westhoven, DMAVA Public Affairs.



Soldiers, Airmen visit homes

Paramus Veterans Memorial Home resident John Semoldoni, seated, poses with, left to right, Sgt. 1st Class John Figueroa, Spc. Deiree Morales and Tech. Sgt. Duy Nguyen on Nov. 9, 2010. Each year the New Jersey Counterdrug Task Force visits the Menlo Park, Paramus and Vineland Veterans Memorial Homes to spend time with fellow veterans. U.S. Army photo by Master Sgt. Joseph P. Prieto.

VINELAND GETS PHANATICAL ABOUT BASEBALL



Bernard Errickson, left, watches the antics of the Phillie Phanatic, while Dolly Madkiff, above, gets a hug from Mike Trout. The Phanatic and Millville native Trout, the top Major League Baseball prospect visited the residents of the Vineland Veterans Memorial Home on Feb. 7. Photos by Mark C. Olsen, DMAVA Public Affairs.



Dig in

Over a decade in the talking and planning stages, the construction finally began for the multi-purpose room at the Paramus Veterans Memorial Home with the groundbreaking ceremony with, left to right, Roger Stine, Robert McCooberry, Carter Construction; Ray Zawacki, Deputy Commissioner for Veterans Affairs; Doris Nebart, Chief Executive Office, Paramus Veterans Memorial Home; U.S. Rep. Scott Garrett (R-5th Dist.) and Maj. Gen. Glenn K. Rieth, The Adjutant General of New Jersey on June 28, 2010. The Veterans Administration was able to provide \$1,754,255 to cover nearly a third of the construction costs with the state providing the balance to build the nearly 8,000 square foot addition. The room will be able to hold up to 700 people for dinners and other events, currently much smaller groups can be accommodated in the dining room when meals are not being served. The room is expected to be completed in April. Before the groundbreaking (photo below) Maj. Gen. Glenn K. Rieth, right, with U.S. Rep. Scott Garrett (R-5th Dist.), center, presented resident Richard Dion with several military awards to include the Vietnam Service medal and National Defense Service medal before a room full of his family and friends. Photos by Kryn P. Westhoven, DMAVA Public Affairs.



New benefits for veterans' caregivers

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is launching the first of a series of new and enhanced services supporting family caregivers of seriously ill and injured Veterans.

In May 2010, President Obama signed the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 legislation authorizing the VA to establish a wide range of new services to support certain caregivers of eligible Post 9/11 Veterans.

In addition to the new benefits and services for eligible veterans who were disabled in the line of duty since Sept. 11, 2001 (Post 9/11 Veterans), the VA will also begin providing enhanced benefits and services to include access to VA's toll-free Caregiver Support Line: 1-855-260-3274, expanded education and training on caring for veterans at home, other support services such as counseling and support groups and referral services; and an enhanced website for caregivers.

Each VA medical center has designated caregiver support coordinators who will assist eligible veterans and caregivers in understanding and applying for the new benefits. VA also has a Caregiver Support Web page, www.caregiver.va.gov, which will provide general information once final regulations are published.

Program expands support

The VA is expanding support nationally to caregivers of Veterans with Alzheimer's disease.

A pilot program of the REACH VA (Resources for Enhancing Alzheimer's Caregiver Health in VA) program showed great success in reducing stress on caregivers while improving care outcomes for the veterans.

REACH VA involved 127 caregivers connected to 24 VA medical centers. The median age for the caregiver was 72 and the majority of the participants were spouses.

Typical issues caregivers face when caring for veterans with Alzheimer's disease and dementia include memory problems, behavior problems and the need to provide basic attendance such as grooming assistance. Caregivers typically reported feeling overwhelmed, frustrated, cut off from family and friends, lonely, prone to bouts of crying and having worse physical health than the year before.

Local caregiver support coordinators are available to assist Veterans of all eras and their caregivers in understanding and applying for VA's many caregiver benefits. VA also features a website, www.caregiver.va.gov, with general information on REACH VA and other caregiver support programs available through VA and the community.

VETERANS HONORED ACROSS THE STATE ON NOV. 11



New Jersey Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno, right, and Maj. Gen. Glenn K. Rieth, left, The Adjutant General of New Jersey, listen to Betty Franck, seated in wheel chair and Kay Franck, holding the wheel chair; both Independence Unit Menlo Park Veterans Memorial Home residents, following the Veterans Day ceremony held at the Home on Nov. 11. The Lieutenant Governor and the Major General were joined by Raymond L. Zawacki, Deputy Commissioner for Veterans Affairs and Joe Brandspiegel, CEO, Menlo Park Veterans Memorial Home in honoring the services of the nearly 300 veterans who live at the Home. U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen, 177FW/PA.



Congressman-elect Jon Runyan, 3rd district, left, joins Brig. Gen. James Grant, Director of the Joint Staff, and Deputy Commissioner Ray Zawacki as they place the ashes of 3,103 U.S. flags that were buried during the state Veterans Day ceremony at Brig. Gen. William C. Doyle Veterans Cemetery in Wrightstown. Photo by Kryn P. Westhoven, DMAVA Public Affairs.

Exhibit highlights NJ first for Black History Month

By Sgt. Wayne Woolley, DMAVA Public Affairs

In 1948, the New Jersey Army National Guard went where no military force had ever gone before. And it was done without deploying a single Soldier.

With the stroke of a pen, Gov. Alfred Driscoll racially integrated the state's military forces on Feb. 12, 1948 – five months before President Truman ended segregation for the rest of the active and reserve components.

Although Driscoll acted because a new state Constitution adopted in 1947 prohibited discrimination based on race, 1st Lt. Vincent Solomeno, Historian of the New Jersey National Guard, said the governor had another reason for taking the bold step.

This watershed moment in the history of New Jersey and the National Guard was the cornerstone of the Black History Month Exhibit “Leading the Charge: African-Americans in the New Jersey National Guard” at the National Guard Militia Museum of New Jersey in Sea Girt. The exhibit featured the recently-unearthed correspondence

between Driscoll, National Guard officers in New Jersey and top Pentagon officials.

Almost immediately after the new constitution was adopted, Driscoll ordered National Guard officers to prepare to disregard a standing order that “mixed units were not authorized.” He followed that with a letter to Defense Secretary James Forrestal explaining the circumstances created by the adoption of the new constitution and asking for permission to begin full integration as soon as possible.

The reply came from Army Secretary Kenneth C. Royall who told Driscoll that while he did not believe integration “is in the interest of National Defense,” he would make an exception for New Jersey. Shortly after, Driscoll directed New Jersey's Adjutant General to issue General Order No. 2, which read in part: “No qualified person shall be segregated from any militia because of religious principles, race, color, ancestry or national origin.”

Burlington VSO success story

By Kryn P. Westhoven, DMAVA Public Affairs

The hallmarks of the 14 Veterans Services Officers of the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs are knowledge, perseverance, and patience. Using all three traits added up to a huge \$371,205 retroactive payment for a Burlington County veteran.

Beside the lump sum payment, the home-bound veteran was granted total service-connected disability and will receive nearly three-thousand dollars a month for the rest of his life.

This combat Vietnam veteran was already receiving a Veterans Administration non-service-connected pension since 1996 when he came into Charles Piscopo's office in Mount Holly. "The VA granted his pension claim at that time without considering all of his multiple service-connected disabilities for compensation," said Piscopo.

A thorough and detailed review of the veteran's military record, his VA claim record, and the applicable rules warranted a request to reopened claim for service-connected compensation.

"During a training session for our VSO, we talked about

the VA's decision last year to revise the Agent Orange presumptions and service in Vietnam," said Chris Kulkosky, VSO Training Officer.

If veteran's claims were approved under these new VA regulations, the United States District Court orders in *Nehmer v. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs* would provide back payments to 1993.

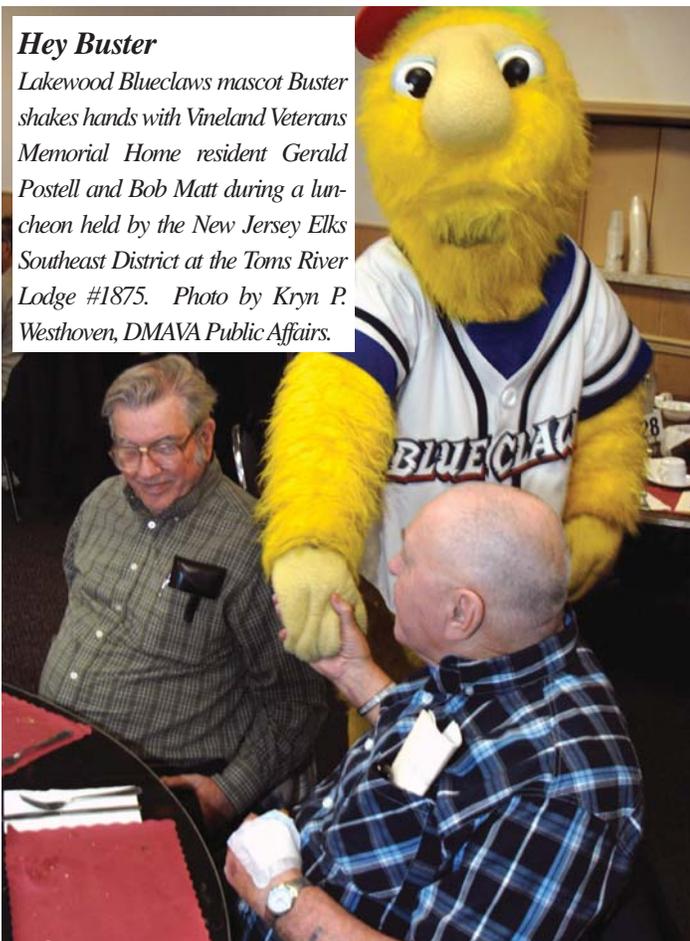
Over a period of several months, Piscopo worked with the Beverly resident to gather all the necessary medical, military and pension records to reopen the claim and to supersede the original claim.

"At the time of the old application for pension due to inability to work, the medical condition was not yet related to Agent Orange, and so at that time a Service Connected Disability could not be filed," noted Piscopo.

"Charles did a tremendous professional job in assistance to this veteran," added Kulkosky. Piscopo is currently the department's VSO at the Philadelphia VA hospital.

Hey Buster

Lakewood Blueclaws mascot Buster shakes hands with Vineland Veterans Memorial Home resident Gerald Postell and Bob Matt during a luncheon held by the New Jersey Elks Southeast District at the Toms River Lodge #1875. Photo by Kryn P. Westhoven, DMAVA Public Affairs.



Have an ice day

World War II Army veteran Leon Glowacki, a resident at The Vineland Veterans Memorial Home enthusiastically poses for a photo with Trenton Devils' mascot, Scorch, during the hockey game between the Devils and the Gwinnett Gladiators at the Sun National Bank Center on Feb. 26. Residents of NJ Veterans Memorial Home from three locations; Paramus, Menlo Park, and Vineland, were treated to the game in cooperation from the Department of NJ Jewish War Veterans of USA and the Trenton Devils. Photo by Staff Sgt. Armando Vasquez, DMAVA Public Affairs.

Bank Donates \$50,000 to Vet2Vet

Bank of America has donated \$50,000 to the Foundation of University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey-University (UMDNJ) for a program to help veterans returning from deployment and looking for work.

The grant will be used to expand the Vet2Vet program operated by the UMDNJ-University Behavioral HealthCare that assists the State's service men and women and their families with issues ranging from post traumatic stress syndrome and other behavioral health matters to marital and financial matters. With the additional Bank of America funding, NJ Vet2Vet will now assist veterans in learning about and pursuing employment and training opportunities as they reintegrate into society.

The primary point of entry for NJ Vet2Vet is a peer-operated helpline, 1-866-838-7654 (1-866-VETS-NJ4), which provides callers with immediate, direct contact to a fellow veteran counselor.

For more information about the Vet2Vet program, contact Christopher Kosseff at 732-253-5900 or at kosseff@umdnj.edu.



Congratulations graduate Minardi

Phillipsburg School Superintendent, Mark Miller, right, presents 92-year-old Dominick Minardi, a New Jersey World War II Navy veteran, with his high school diploma during the Veterans Tribute at the High School Gym at Phillipsburg, Pa., on Nov. 7, 2010. The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and the Department of Education jointly launched Operation Recognition, on Oct. 5, 2000 to honor New Jersey World War II veterans who left school to join the military and never received a high school diploma. Photo by Spc. Patrick Nogan, 444th MPAD.

FUNDING IS STILL NEEDED FOR THE NEW JERSEY WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL BRONZE RELIEFS



Make check payable to: "Treasurer, State of New Jersey" indicate on check NJ WWII Memorial and send to:

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