

**EASTERN ESSEX DISTRICT
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' SERVICES**

This department is charged under Chapter 115 Massachusetts General Laws with providing services to veterans, their survivors and dependents. Principal workload under state law includes the administration of aid to veterans and dependents. Communities fund this program, which is subsequently 75% reimbursed the following fiscal year by the Commonwealth. This is a need based program and the department is required to conduct periodic comprehensive review of the cases to insure no substantive facts have changed, while working with the veteran to identify alternative or long-term solutions to individual circumstances. During the calendar year four Essex veterans/widows were on this program. The Commonwealth made dramatic administrative changes to the program in 2010 requiring all submissions and authorizations to be paperless and submitted via the Health and Human Services computer and supporting documents also electronically transmitted. This required an upgrade in the Department's electronic equipment. Also under state law the department assists qualified veterans to obtain bonuses, and qualified veterans, widows and parents to obtain state annuities, property tax abatements, and other benefits.

The Veterans' Services program also mandates extensive interaction within the federal community, principally with the Department of Veterans' Affairs. The Veterans' Service Officer (VSO) assists veterans and their dependents in filing for pensions, service connected injury/illness compensation, dependency indemnity compensation for survivors, VA healthcare enrollment, insurance claims, decedent claims, and many other issues. Federal benefits processed by this department are paid directly to those eligible to receive the assistance or entitlement. The VA sent approximately \$260,000 to eligible recipients in Essex, of which the current staff is responsible for approximately \$181,000 dollars paid to or saved by those assisted in Essex.

Additionally, the department interacts within the federal community to correct military records, obtain needed documentation and insure veterans/dependents receive awards and recognition to which entitled. The VSO provided information, advice or assistance to 19 of the town's 291 *identified* veterans and 3 of the 59 *identified* veterans' widows during 2010. We also provide support and information assistance for National Guard and Reserves called up for service in Iraq or Afghanistan and their families.

The Director and the Assistant to the Director, Georgia Gadbois, advocate for veterans on issues at the local, state and federal level, interact with elected and appointed officials on issues, and work with local organizations in serving the community. The department also provided information, assistance and guidance for citizens in determining their needs for Medical insurance.

The Eastern Essex District is composed of the Towns of Essex, Georgetown, Hamilton, Ipswich, Rowley, Wenham and West Newbury. A Board of Directors consisting of one selectman (or designee) from each town maintains oversight. Mr. A. Raymond Randall is the Essex member and Chairman of the Board of Directors.

During the winter of 2010 the District also provided veterans' services assistance to the City of Gloucester as requested/authorized by the Board of Directors and the Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services.

Terrance P. Hart
District Director

