



Eastern Essex District Department of Veterans' Services

Newsletter March 2021, Issue 3

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Message from the District Director Karen Tyler

Through these challenging times, it has afforded 2 gentlemen to step up, take charge, and make a difference.

A Triton High School Student, Douglas Aylward, wanted to make a difference for Homeless Veterans. He set up a sock drive and it was hugely successful. He collected 1,324 pairs of socks and over 40 toiletries. We donated them to Veterans Northeast Outreach Center in Haverhill.

Jacob Greenberg, Air National Guard, brought in over 50 boxes of shampoo body wash, each box containing 100 individual packets. We donated these items to Operation Troop Support in Danvers. Operation Troop Support will be sending these items in care packages to deployed troops.



Contact Information

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We Provide Services to Seven Towns:

- **Essex**
- **Georgetown**
- **Ipswich**
- **Newbury**
- **Rowley**
- **Wenham**
- **West Newbury**

VA Announces Extension On Existing Moratoriums On Evictions and Foreclosures and Extends Loan Forbearance

The Department of Veterans Affairs is extending debt relief for Veterans thorough September 30, 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. VA will suspend collection of all Veteran benefit overpayments incurred between April 6, 2020 and September 30, 2021.

No adverse actions or collection attempts will occur during this suspension time.

Veteran medical care and prescription charges incurred from April 6, 2020 through September 30, 2021 will be cancelled and any payments for this time period will be refunded.

What will happen next:

With regards to benefit overpayments, Veterans will receive a letter from the VA Debt Management Center (DMC) showing current debt amount as well as available options.

VA will resume mailing patient statements for medical care and prescriptions received prior to April 6, 2020 once all charges for medical care and prescriptions on and/or after April 6, 2020 are cancelled. No payments are required until at least October 2021.

Veterans and beneficiaries with questions regarding benefit overpayments can call: (800)-827-0648.

For health care and co-payment debt, should call the Health Resource Center at: (866)-400-1238. There is a new debt landing page for Veteran debt management. This new online tool is available to view debt letters, history and repayment options. Veterans can access this tool at:

<https://www.va.gov/manage-va-debt/>

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts



A Proclamation

Whereas, Today we recognize the more than three million Americans who served in the Vietnam War and the nearly 58,000 men and women who died or were lost during the war; and

Whereas, Throughout our country's history thousands of Massachusetts citizens have fought in wars and conflicts to defend our safety and way of life; and

Whereas, Their legacy of patriotism and dedication to country is an inspiration to all Americans; and

Whereas, It is appropriate that all Massachusetts citizens remember the bravery of those who gave their lives, so that their sacrifices serve as a reminder of the cost of our freedom,

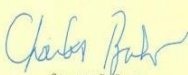
Now, Therefore, I, Charles D. Baker, Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, do hereby proclaim March 29th, 2021, to be,

VIETNAM WAR VETERANS DAY

And urge all the citizens of the Commonwealth to take cognizance of this event and participate fittingly in its observance.

Given at the Executive Chamber in Boston, this twenty-ninth day of March, in the year two thousand and twenty-one, and of the Independence of the United States of America, the two hundred and forty-fourth.

BY HIS EXCELLENCY


CHARLES D. BAKER
GOVERNOR OF THE COMMONWEALTH


MARY E. POLITO
LT. GOVERNOR OF THE COMMONWEALTH


WILLIAM FRANCIS GALVIN
SECRETARY OF THE COMMONWEALTH

COVID VACCINE UPDATE

For the first time, the Bedford Vaccination Clinic will have no age restriction for all eligible Veterans who register through the Bedford VA Healthcare System.

If you would like to register or schedule an appointment, please log-on to:

<https://www.bedford.va.gov/services/covid-19-vaccines.asp>. Or call (781) 687-4000.

As more updates on vaccines are made available we will update our website with the information.

Farmers to Military Families' Food Distribution

The Farmer's to families' food boxes contain 32 pounds of perishable and nonperishable food. These items include fresh fruit, vegetables, and dairy and meat products.

You must register at www.mmsfl.org, and choose your location. You will need to provide your DD214.

DD-214, VA Healthcare ID, Veteran Endorsement on Driver's License, Retired Military ID, Active Military ID, or Military Orders

(photos uploaded from smartphones are acceptable forms of verification)

PLEASE BLACK OUT YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

Vietnam Veterans A Time To Honor

March 29th is Vietnam War Veterans Day. This day we recognize the more than three million Americans who served in the Vietnam War and the nearly 58,000 men and women who died or were lost during the war.

Attached is a link to The Journey Home, which is a DVD of individual stories that gives us a glimpse of what the war was like. A ground-level personal perspective.

The Journey Home



Women Veterans' Retreat

Attention ALL Women Veterans!

Please join us for a weekend of fellowship, camaraderie, and informational workshops by, for, and about women veterans—and the issues that matter and impact them directly.

Taniki Richard is an 11-year USMC Retired Veteran. Taniki's company book, *Principles for Change: 3 Keys to Overcome Trauma from His and Hers Perspectives*, supports Survivors of abuse in how to overpower trauma. Featured on the cover of *Homeland Veterans Magazine*, and her success story of healing and mental wellness headlined on *Yahoo News*, the 2020 Virginia Women Veterans Trailblazer of the Year Awardee, and recipient of several community awards, Taniki never takes a day for granted. Focused on uplifting others.

Taniki supported many of her brothers and sisters in arms as the command Suicide Prevention Facilitator and Sexual Assault Advocate. She was medically retired after suffering Post-Traumatic Stress from a combination of military sexual assault and combat in Iraq. After her military service, Taniki reinvented herself.

Due to the Extreme Popularity of this event, Registrations are accepted on a First Come, First Served Basis. This event fills extremely quickly! We are unable to reserve rooms / beds, even if you noted a roommate preference. It is suggested attendees submit their registrations together to ensure roommate choice.

Meals, Workshops and Wellness Clinic at:
Clear Path for Veterans New England
84 Antietam St
Devens, MA 01434



A \$50 fee/person, \$100/couple will be required at registration, and will be fully refunded at the completion of the retreat. Our retreats are 100% drug and alcohol free. All lodging, meals and activities are provided to Veterans free of charge. Transportation to or from retreat not included.

REGISTER FOR THIS RETREAT TODAY

www.ProjectNewHopeMA.org/Retreats

Project New Hope | 70 James Street, Suite 157 Worcester, MA 01603 | P: (774) 243-7859 | www.projectnewhopema.org



September 24 - 26, 2021

Hilton Garden Inn
59 Andrews Parkway
Devens, MA

Presenter:
Taniki Richard
USMC Retired Veteran

Rooms are Double Occupancy.
Free Wi-Fi, Swimming Pool, Internet Access,
Fitness Center
Check-in: 3:00pm Friday
Check-out: 11:00am Sunday

A detailed agenda will be provided upon check in

Celebrating Women's History Month

"During Women's History Month, I want to honor some of our nation's heroes, who have too often gone unsung, uncelebrated: Our proud women Veterans.

Women have been a part of our military history from the beginning. From women who disguised themselves as men in order to serve, like Deborah Sampson during the Revolution, Sarah Emma Edmonds during the Civil War, and Cathay Williams who joined Buffalo Soldiers—to the incredible women generals I nominated earlier this month to serve as the second and third combatant commanders in history: Gen. Jacqueline Van Ovost and Lt. Gen. Laura Richardson—the women who have worn the uniform of the United States military served our country with bravery and honor.

They faced the same dangers and made the same sacrifices to serve. And they are entitled to the same benefits and respect as every other Veteran.

As I've often said, we as a nation have many obligations, but we only have one truly sacred obligation: To properly prepare and equip the women and men we send into harm's way, and to care for them and their families, both while deployed and when they return.

Every single Veteran deserves world-class health care and the support that they have earned — no matter their gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, or anything else. We owe you. It's as simple as that.

Today, as women make up a larger and larger proportion of Veterans, we have to continually improve our ability to meet the unique health needs and care challenges women Veterans face.

We have to keep working to ensure that all women feel respected and are safe from sexual assault and harassment—in our military and in the VA system.

Nothing should stand between our women Veterans and the support and services they have earned.

To all our women Veterans, you represent the best of America. Service. Duty. Honor. Country. It's who you are.

And on behalf of all Americans, thank you. We can never fully repay you, but I promise that my Administration will always have your back. Thank you, and may God protect our troops."

- President Joseph R. Biden



Interview: Kathy Collins, Army Veteran

Assistant to Director, Eastern Essex Veteran Services

Kathleen Collins, E-4, Army Construction Surveyor, 82 Bravo with the 84th Engineers, Stationed at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii (1986-1989). Battalion consisted of 850 Army soldiers with only four females. As part of the 84th Engineers and being the fourth female in the Battalion, there was never a moment without a challenge, or constantly trying to establish myself as a soldier first and foremost. Whether training in the field or being a Squad Leader. There was always the consistent push back because "women should not be in the Army serving with the Engineers".

The continual competition from athleticism to academics, which I thrived on and this is what drove me forward. There were also many times of alienation due to decisions to maintain the directives I was given as a Squad Leader and the challenges of giving instructions/orders to men on a daily basis.

I could not be part of this tight knit group of men, and was only included when necessary. I recall one time working with a soldier he stated to me "Collins you are not so bad". My reply "well I am glad you feel that way because we have been digging trenches and foxholes together for the past year".

ARE YOU A WOMAN WHO SERVED ?



**JOIN THE MASSACHUSETTS
WOMEN VETERANS' NETWORK**



My love and respect for all military and their families runs deep. I am humbled, astonished and committed daily by what I hear and see from these silent giant heroes that walk amongst us. May we as a Nation always stand for those that have and are giving everything for our right as Americans.

Duties included: Squad Leader of 6 surveyors, plotting and construction of helicopter landing pads, roads and base camps. Civic duty of re-establishing roads that were taken out by volcanic eruptions to aid the community in re-establishing their lives. Worked with film makers to plot out camps/encampments for filming of movies and military training. Worked with Australian scientists in setting up blasting areas for the testing of explosive materials.

In the past six plus years, I had the honor of working with Homeless Veterans and their Families (SSVF). Currently I have the privilege of working for Eastern Essex Veterans' Services.