

Pennsylvania
State Council



The PASC Newsletter

January, 2020

Vietnam Veterans of America Pennsylvania State Council

A Congressionally Chartered Veterans Service Organization



A Message From Your President . . .

With the holiday season over we are all gearing up for the new year. The Executive Staff and the entire Board of Directors would like to take this time to thank each and every member for their collective effort in meeting the challenges and goals of VVA Pennsylvania State Council.

While there are still many challenges remaining in 2020, along with project goals for each chapter, we thank you for your support, dedication and collective determination. In addition, our best wishes go out to the families and loved ones for a healthy, happy and prosperous New Year.

Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act Claims Now Being Determined

The VA began deciding claims for the *Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019* on Jan. 1, 2020. The Act extends the presumption of herbicide exposure, that include toxins such as Agent Orange, to veterans who served in the offshore waters of the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam War. Signed into law Jun. 25, the law specifically affects Blue Water Navy veterans who served no more than 12 nautical miles offshore of the Republic of Vietnam between Jan. 6, 1962, and May 7, 1975, as well as veterans who served in the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between Jan. 1, 1967, and Aug. 31, 1971. These veterans can now apply for disability compensation and other benefits if they have since developed one of 14 conditions that are presumed to be related to exposure to herbicides. Veterans do not need to prove that they were exposed to herbicides. The specific conditions can be found by searching the term "Agent Orange" on www.va.gov.

As reported January 8 by Patricia Kime for Military.com, a new interactive map could help ill Vietnam veterans who served on U.S. ships during the war determine whether they could be eligible for Agent Orange-related benefits. A retired Navy chief radioman has teamed with a Florida-based law firm to make the map available to "blue water" Vietnam veterans, their widows, and anyone interested in seeing where Navy and Coast Guard vessels served offshore during the decade-long conflict.

Proposed Food Stamp Changes Didn't Take Veterans Into Account!

As reported January 9 by Abbie Bennett for Connectingvets.com, proposed changes to the federal food stamp program could harm veterans, and the federal government didn't take them into account when it came up with the changes, officials told Congress Thursday. In a House Veterans Affairs Committee hearing, members heard from the Department of Agriculture, Department of Veterans Affairs, and nonprofits that help address veteran food insecurity.



Welcome Home, Air Force Maj. Neal C. Ward

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced January 9 that Air Force Maj. Neal C. Ward, 23, of College Station, Texas, killed during the Vietnam War, has been accounted for. On June 13, 1969, Ward was piloting an A-1H aircraft as the lead in a flight of two on an armed reconnaissance mission in northern Laos. Both aircraft made four bombing runs on a target, after which Ward started a strafing run. His wingman followed but broke off when he could not complete his run without entering the clouds. During his recovery, the wingman saw automatic weapons muzzle flashes coming from the target area, followed immediately by a large fire and explosion. The wingman could not make contact with Ward and did not observe a parachute or hear any distress calls. The wingman made a pass over the target area and saw debris but was unable to identify it as aircraft wreckage. Because of hostile enemy activity, a ground search could not be conducted. On June 20, 1978, the Department of the Air Force changed Ward's status to deceased.-day



FREE SUICIDE INTERVENTION TRAINING MONTROSE AREA HIGH SCHOOL

“ASIST” is a two-day interactive workshop in Suicide first-aid. ASIST teaches participants to recognize when someone may be at risk of suicide and work with them to create a plan that will support their immediate safety!

**March 7th, 7:30 am and March 8th, 4 pm
Montrose Area High School 75 Meteor Way, Montrose, PA 18801**



Objects taken from the battlefields of Vietnam are more than souvenirs or war trophies. Maps, stories, after-action reports, pictures, military items may have a story that could result in finding the location of missing war dead. Can you help?

Contact the Veterans Initiative at:

**Veterans Initiative
Vietnam Veterans Of America
8719 Colesville Rd., Suite 100
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910**



Veterans find assistance, camaraderie at Vet Centers

Vet Centers are community-based counseling centers. They provide a wide range of social and psychological services, including professional readjustment counseling. Eligible Veterans, active duty service members, including National Guard and Reserve components and their families can use the services.

ON MAKE THE CONNECTION



An Army Infantryman's Journey to Recovery

"Hell on wheels — the type of stuff people write books about."

That's how Tony describes his first combat tour. As an infantryman in the U.S. Army, he experienced it all: Heavy fire. Loss of life. Close calls on his own life.

Tony couldn't shake the difficult memories during his service or even after he returned home. "I drank before service. I drank during service," he says. "But I *really* started to drink after my first tour. ... I used it as an escape."

Hear how Tony was able to overcome problems with alcohol and PTSD with the support of his wife, Kacie

Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association and VA partner for Final Salute: The Last Mile

It was a chance meeting between a Tampa VA Medical Center employee and a funeral director that led to a program that now honors deceased Veterans who have no one else to honor them as they transition to their final resting place.

Final Salute: The Last Mile provides a motorcycle escort to the Florida National Cemetery for Veterans who pass at Tampa and Bay Pines VA Medical Centers and who have no family to claim their remains.



Disabled Veterans eligible for free National Park Service Lifetime Access Pass

Veterans with a service connected disability rating are entering Federal recreation lands and national parks for free with an America the Beautiful-the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands lifetime Access Pass through an inter-agency partnership between the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Army Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation.



A Fisher House is “a home away from home” for families of patients receiving medical care at major military and VA medical centers. The homes are normally located within walking distance of the treatment facility or have transportation available. These homes offer free, temporary lodging to military and Veterans’ families, allowing them to be close to their loved one during a medical crisis. It also allows them to focus on what’s important—the healing process. *Discuss on Rally-Point:* [Have you used a Fisher House?](#)

Quilts of Valor: Reaching out and comforting a fellow human being

Quilts of Valor Foundation recognizes and acknowledges the “war demons” that plague soldiers from all wars. Thousands of quilters all over the US work daily to create quilts to cover warriors from all conflicts, including WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan.



Veterans need Veterans Health Identification Card (VHIC) to access bases for commissary/BX/MWR privileges

The Defense Department has announced expanded Commissary, Military Service Exchange and MWR access for Veterans on Jan. 1 and established a standard for physical access to military installations.

