

December 2016 – veterans, military and patriotic events in Central Florida

*Send me your events – people cannot attend an event if they don't know about it! *Please share this information and events with your friends and interested others and attend. Post where appropriate.

*Event information is concentrated mostly on the Central Florida counties served by the new VA Hospital at Lake Nona – Orange, Osceola, Seminole, Brevard, Lake and Volusia. Other events elsewhere are considered based upon uniqueness and groups best served.

*Every effort is made to put a space into email addresses and websites – firewalls and spam filters don't like direct links, website and email addresses. If you use 'Copy and Paste' to make contact or get additional information, please keep this in mind.

*If you wish to be removed from the email list, just let me know.

Instead of purchasing gifts, please consider donations to groups that assist our veterans, military, and their families.

Short term notice – Greeters needed for two events!

Orlando Devil Dogs of the Young Marines are returning from participating in the 75th anniversary of Pearl Harbor commemorations. These young men and women (ages 8 – 18yrs) represented the Greater Orlando area in ceremonies, the big parade, and met many of the Pearl Harbor survivors. They participated in a memorial wreath presentation at the Punch Bowl burial grounds. Welcome these active young ones home at Orlando Int'l Airport tomorrow (Fri. Dec 9)! Free parking has been arranged with the airport. Arrival time is supposed to be 4:35pm but check online for possible delays. United Airlines #261. Contact me for parking instructions: chaynes11629@ yahoo .com 407-239-8468 (Good kids don't usually get the media attention they deserve – come give them some positive recognition!)

Greetings on Mon. December 12 – There are 91 combat wounded & disabled Post 9/11 veteran families (nearly 400 people and 10 service dogs) are arriving in Orlando for the 9th Road to Recovery Conference. This is the 6th time that Orlando has been chosen by this Conference that focuses on mental health, family counseling, career transition help, resume & interview preparation & benefits assistance from the VA. There are Arrivals from 10:30am - 4:30. A large majority will using Southwest Airlines, arriving in Terminal B (the hotel end of airport.) There are arrivals at 8:30am, 9:55am, 11:20 & 11:35 (lots). Some of these former warriors arrived home unconscious and horizontal – they never had a "Welcome Home" gathering to remember. FREE parking has been arranged with the Airport but only for the Economy Parking (North Lot) – the garages are FULL, don't waste your time. But you MUST take a paper ticket upon entering the Economy Parking Lot – DO NOT use your EPass/SunPass transponders. You will be given vouchers in the Terminal. Add'l info about this group: 15 attendees are combat-wounded females, 20 veterans from Florida, 29 states represented, 21 Purple Heart Recipients. (Note: Some former warriors may be badly wounded.) Contact: chaynes11629@ yahoo .com 407-239-8468

Wounded warrior receives home – Fri. Dec 9 – Join the City of Palm Bay Homes for Warriors program, in partnership with the Space Coast Paratroopers Association, for a home ribbon cutting ceremony – And it's a secret! Florida Power & Light Company has stepped in to transform the house into an energy-efficient winter wonderland with more than 1,000 energy-

efficient LED holiday lights. Sgt. Robert Busch served in both the U.S. Navy and Army, and was deployed for multiple tours in Afghanistan. During his service, he suffered a traumatic brain injury and is now fully retired. While the family DOES know they are receiving a home, they have no idea that it will be decked out for the holidays, making this event extra special for Busch, his wife and their three-year-old daughter. Sneak peek inside the house at 3:30pm and the arrival of the family at 5:15pm at 373 Butler Avenue NE in Palm Bay, Fla., 32907. What better way is there to celebrate the holidays? Info: karyn.barber@pbfl.org 321-474-4510

Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall – Thurs Dec. 8 – Sun Dec. 11 - Hosted by the City of Groveland, “The Wall that Heals” will be at 200 Crittenden St., Groveland, 34736. It is a half-scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The trailer that transports the exhibit opens up to become a mobile Education Center that displays photos of service members whose names are on The Wall, along with letters and other memorabilia left at The Wall in Washington, D.C.

SP5 Ronald Gaffney from Groveland, made the ultimate sacrifice in Vietnam in 1965. At the time of his death, he was on his third tour of Vietnam and was a Special Forces Green Beret Combat Engineer. On February 19, 1965, at 21 years of age he died a hero at the Vung Ro Bay incident and was awarded the Bronze Star for meritorious services while on duty with First Special Forces Group.

Central FL Army Aviation Association of America December Social– Fri. Dec 9 – Bring a toy for Toys for Tots and get in free! 4:30–7:30pm at Froggers Grill & Bar, 27 Alafaya Woods Blvd, Oviedo, 32765. Network and bring a smile to some children. Items for infants and teens (ages 13-18yrs) are especially appreciated. Info: Sean at sean.c.osmond@gmail.com

Operation Renewed Hope – Fri & Sat Dec 9 & 10 – This national organization continues their effort to end Veteran Homelessness. Celebrity Meet-n-Greet Pairings Party Reception Friday night from 7-9p and a Shotgun Start Golf Tournament the following morning at 9a. Both events are at Orange Lake Resort, 8505 W. Irlo Bronson Hwy (192), Kissimmee, 34747 at the Legend's Grill & Legend's Golf course. The cost of this 2-day event is only \$100. Former or current Military personnel pay only \$75. Info: Charlie Haje: 850-259-6334 Charliehaje@earthlink.net or Marisa Izzo: 352-598-5241 mizzo@integritygolfco.com

PNC Father/Son Challenge Golf Tournament – Thurs – Sun Dec 8 - 11 – This notable Golf Tournament offers free admission for all active military, reservists, retirees and their families. Complimentary Lunch for military attendees and their families will be provided on Saturday and Sunday by Rocco's Tacos. Ritz-Carlton resort at 4040 Central Florida Parkway, Orlando, 32837 (South Orlando) *Don't forget to bring your military ID on the day of the event*. Go to www.pncfatheronchallenge.com/tickets and enter “Hero” on checkout to reserve yours. Info: 844-434-3925

Call to Arms...and Hands – Assistance is very much needed to help the Marine Corps Reserve sort Toys for Tots items. Orange / Osceola / Seminole county T4T warehouse is in South Orlando (OBT near Southchase area, just north of the 417/Greenway.) Volunteer anytime, any day from today thru Dec. 16. Contact sean.c.osmond@gmail.com

ALSO: Volunteers requested for Volusia County Toys for Tots! Contact Volusia leader Chad, directly at 305.338.3929.

Toys for Tots – Central Florida is honored to have the presence of the Marine Corps and Marine Corps Reserve in our communities. For many years they have sponsored Toys for Tots which

provides some Christmas gifts for economically challenged families. Please drop off new, unwrapped toys, books, or other gifts at the numerous drop off boxes before Monday, Dec 12. For locations, to donate monies, or additional information, go to www.toysfortots.org

Army-Navy Football Game – Sat. Dec 10 –The Midshipmen of the US Naval Academy meet the Cadets of West Point’s U.S. Military Academy. 3pm at Baltimore on your local CBS TV channel to watch this big rivalry!

Ormond Beach’s HHome for the HOLIDAYS Parade – Sat. Dec 10 – Veterans groups are participating in this happy event that starts at 6:30pm. Ormond MainStreet will have a “Tree Lighting” immediately before the parade at 6pm. This will be the 13th time the parade has been held in the evening. With nearly 100 parade entries, there will be festive floats, bands, decorated vehicles and walkers who will begin the 1.5 mile route at Yonge Street (US1) and Division Avenue. They will move north to Granada Boulevard (SR40) and then turn east to South Beach Street. Info: Department of Leisure Services Sonja.Johnson@ormondbeach.org (386)676-3257

Florida Association of Veteran Owned Businesses mtg (FAVOB) – Tues Dec 13 - Meeting at 10am, a “Chamber of Commerce” of sorts open to all veteran owned businesses, at American Legion Florida Department bldg., 1912A Lee Road, Orlando, FL 32810. 19 states offer contract preferences to veteran owned businesses. Florida is NOT one of them. Our goal is to change that in big business, and with our state, our cities, and counties too. See FAVOB Facebook site. Info: Chairman Michael Waldrop mwaldrop@blue-cord.com

Home Builders Institute (HBI) – Wed, Thurs. Dec 14, 15 – Classes for OSHA 10 - Job Safety Certification is offered for free to veterans/military members. Employers prefer or require such certifications. 9am – 3:30 each day at 9200 Southpark Center Loop, Orlando FL 32819 (Inside Everest University South Campus – Southwest Orlando just off John Young Parkway, north of the Beachline/528) call Jamaican Penney-Vassey to sign up 407-259-5069, jvassey@hbi.org

Veterans Florida Entrepreneurship Program – Wed. Dec 14 – Deadline signup date for participating in this program. Once you apply you are encouraged to attend the Open House on December 15 at 5pm. We will provide more information about the program, discuss the program curriculum and answer any questions you may have. The program is broken down into two phases; Phase 1 will be the Educational Phase providing training both online and 8 on-campus training sessions beginning January 17, 2017 to May 6, 2017. Phase 2 will provide Ongoing Business Mentoring upon successful completion of the Educational Phase. The UCF Business Incubation Program was recently selected as a network partner by Veterans Florida to offer this statewide Veteran Florida Entrepreneurship Program and is funded through a \$1 Million appropriation from the State Legislature. The Veterans Florida Entrepreneurship Program offers a **tuition-free**, online, and on-campus instruction. It provides veterans with entrepreneurial guidance and education designed to accelerate their entrepreneurial success. We invite all interested Veterans in the community to participate in the program. Please share this invitation with any interested Info: www.veteransflorida.org

Hiring Heroes Career Fair – Thurs. Dec 15 – This Job Fair coincides with the Coalition to Salute America’s Heroes conference and is open to local veterans! No pre-registration needed. Free parking! Bring your resume and be prepared to meet one-on-one with over 25 national and

local companies (Northrup Grumman, Lockheed Martin, Hilton, NAVSEA/NAVAIR, General Dynamics and more!) 1pm – 3pm at Loews Sapphire Falls Resort, 6601 Adventure Way, Orlando, 32819. (Near Universal Studios in Southwest Orlando.)

Marine Corps Foundation Monthly Social – Fri. Dec 16 – Join the Central Florida MCF for Happy Hour at Buffalo Wild Wings from 4:30-7pm, 11400 University Dr., Orlando, 32817. Start the weekend with a grin and compare ideas of gifts to get the significant others! Join friends, network, and learn how you can serve in the community to make Central Florida a better place! USMC membership not required. Happy Hour Info: sean.c.osmond @ gmail. com

Wreaths Across America – Sat. Dec 17 - Each December on National Wreaths Across America Day, the mission to Remember, Honor and Teach is carried out by coordinating wreath-laying ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery, as well as over 1,100 additional locations in all 50 U.S. states, at sea, and abroad. Unfortunately, Arlington is coming up short with their wreath sponsorships, as are all the cemeteries. [www. wreathscrossamerica .org](http://www.wreathscrossamerica.org) The following are participating Central Florida cemeteries:

Greenwood Cemetery – 12noon ceremony at 1603 Greenwood St, Orlando, 32801 **Woodlawn**

Memorial Park – 10am ceremony at 400 Woodlawn Cemetery Rd, Gotha, 34734

Glen Haven Memorial Park – 11:30am ceremony at 2300 Temple Dr, Winter Park, 32789

All Faiths Memorial Park – 1pm ceremony at 1390 Park Dr, Casselberry, 32707 **Mount Peace**

Cemetery – 12noon ceremony at 755 East 10th St, Saint Cloud, 34769 **Cape Canaveral**

National Cemetery – 11:45 ceremony at 5525 Hwy 1, Mims, 32754 **Florida National**

Cemetery – 11am ceremony at 6502 SW 102nd Ave, Bushnell, 33513 (The only local cemetery that accepts grave specific requests)

143D Sustainment Command Annual Military Ball – Sat. Dec 17 – This Army Reserve unit located in Orlando would welcome sponsorships for this special event. What greater way to say "Thank You" than to sponsor a soldier for \$40 or a ten-person table for a soldier and his/her family for \$400 or just making a monetary donation of your choice by visiting the PayPal at [www. 143descdiningout.com](http://www.143descdiningout.com) Rosen Shingle Creek Hotel, 9939 Universal Boulevard, Orlando, 32819. Info: (800)221-9401 ext. 1130 [christopher.e.west.mil@ mail .mil](mailto:christopher.e.west.mil@mail.mil)

AutoNation Cure Bowl free tickets - Sat Dec 17 - The AutoNation Cure Bowl and Orlando Sports Foundation would like to honor all active duty Military and Veterans by offering a complimentary game ticket. Starting at 12pm on game day, tickets can be redeemed at a designated area by the North Box Office of Camping World Stadium. Participants can show an active or retired military ID to receive their free game ticket. Info: Justin Kane at 407-341-8524 [jkane@ curebowl .com](mailto:jkane@curebowl.com) or Matt Stover at 407-456-4796 [mstover@ curebowl .com](mailto:mstover@curebowl.com)

Commander's Call - Sun Dec 18 - The Museum of Military History cordially invite the public to participate in this festive event for museum visitors from 12 noon to 4pm. Children can play in the FROZEN Bounce House. Enjoy pictures with Olaf from 1pm to 3pm. Soar through the air in our F-16A flight stimulator. Explore exhibits that recognize the sacrifice of our service members throughout military history. Tour guides will be available to enhance your museum experience. Admission for all visitors will be reduced to \$5 during this event. Children 5 and under and all active members of the armed forces will receive free admission. Food and drinks will be available for purchase. 5210 W. Irlo Bronson Hwy (192), Kissimmee. 407-507-3894.

VFW Band Christmas Concert and Pot Luck – Sun. Dec 18 - The VFW Post #2093 Band led by Smitty will provide an hour of traditional Christmas Music. The concert starts at 3:00 and will be followed by a Pot Luck meal. The band will supply the meat and is asking for guests to bring sides. If you have not heard this concert, you need to come and listen to them! VFW Post 2093, 4444 Edgewater Drive, Orlando, 32804.

MISCELLANEOUS INFO

Traveling thru airports during the upcoming holidays? TSA Cares provides travelers with disabilities, medical conditions and other special circumstances additional assistance during the security screening process. Call the national number 855-787-2227 to make the arrangements, preferably 72 hours before traveling, and your request will be relayed. A Passenger Support Specialist will be provided at no cost. If one is not available for you, ask for a Supervisory TSA Officer at the security checkpoint. Also, consider getting a TSA Notification card that provides TSA with information and has the TSA Cares phone number for easy reference. The card reduces the possibility of publicly and audibly declaring the medical challenges. (Security screening may be stressful for autistic, senior travelers or others with brain injuries.) See: www.tsa.gov

Special Notes:

- Adult passengers 18 and over must show valid identification at the airport checkpoint in order to travel. Usually this is in the form of Driver's Licenses or State ID cards. However, some states and territories have non-compliant forms of ID and according to the REAL ID Act will no longer be valid after January 17, 2017. These states include: Kentucky, Maine, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Washington. (Some other states will have non-valid ID's later in 2017. While Florida has compliant ID's, maybe your Snow Bird friends and family do not. This might become a problem for their traveling, especially in case of emergency traveling, later in the new year....
- Not all airlines allow the use of portable oxygen concentrators. Check with your airline before flying. Also check with the manufacturer to determine whether the oxygen concentrator is approved for in-flight use.
- Traveling with a Service Dog? Dogs are not at OIA unless they are either working dogs, or they are in a carrier approved for traveling onboard an aircraft. Service Animal Relief Areas are available on Level 2 of both terminals. The "A" side area is located at the far East end of the building (to the right as you exit the building; completely opposite end from the USO, and one floor up). The "B" side area is located at the far West end of the building (to the right as you exit the building).

Fretting about parking at the airport? FastPark and Relax, an off-site airport parking facility, has been VERY generous and courteous for the local people who welcome Honor Flights at Orlando Int'l Airport. Honor Flights take WW2 and Korean War veterans to Washington DC to visit the war memorials at no cost to the veteran. These senior vets return to a gathering of people who thank them and welcome them home – some of whom never received such gratitude in their earlier decades. Courtesy is extended to all persons – not just veterans and active military - who use FastPark and Relax at 7870 N Frontage Rd, Orlando, 32812. Secure, covered parking with pick-up/return directly to your car at a very reasonable cost!

Orlando USO Welcome Center is OPEN at the Orlando Int'l Airport! It is located in Terminal A, Level 1 and open from 6am – 10pm, 7 days a week. It is available to active duty military and their families, but also available to retirees and veterans on space available basis! Not all USO sites allow that! The USO's receive no government or national monies – they operate on local donations and use volunteer staffing. Please be generous by donating at the Orlando Welcome Center or at www.usocentralflorida.org

Shopping consideration – As we are preparing for the upcoming holidays, please consider buying items that are made in this country. Buying “Made in U.S.A.” allows employment for more persons in this country and some of those workers may be veterans, reservists, or guardsmen/women. UPC barcodes do not always indicate the country of manufacture. Look for the “Made in U.S.A.” labeling.

Ground mats for homeless vets - VFW Posts Auxiliary members and others have been making mats for homeless vets to sleep on. They use plastic shopping bags, cutting them into strips and crochet the strips into mats. One actual mat takes about seven hours to finish using 700 Plastic bags. The mats allow a homeless vet to sleep on a dry surface and insulation from the cold, direct ground. Please consider dropping off your plastic shopping bags at any participating VFW Post. (Post #2093 on Edgewater Drive in Orlando meets on Thursdays at 6:30pm in the game room. Volunteers are welcomed who can participate in cutting strips, winding strips into balls, or even crocheting, if you know how!)

Homeless vet sheltering – Despite the best efforts of organizations in our communities, some homeless veterans prefer not to use available provisions. There is a wide range of decisions for their choices. You can assist with other resources. Harbor Freight stores offer coupons in the newspaper, magazines and other sources for FREE tarps, LED lights, etc. with no purchase required. While tarps are always handy for your homes broken window, roof leaks, etc., they can also provide a wind break and/or rain protection for homeless vets.

VFW Website - Legislative Action Center Take Action: On Wednesday, the House unanimously passed H.R. 6416, the Jeff Miller and Richard Blumenthal Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2016 to research the health effects of toxic exposures, expand homeless veterans' benefits and restore education benefits for Guardsmen and Reservists who are called to serve on active duty. The House did its job, but now the Senate is stalling. Congress only has two days left before they go home. To tell your Senators that they must pass this important veterans' bill before they call it quits for the year.

Hope Helps, Inc. - A group of community and business leaders (Leadership Seminole 26) in Central Florida are supporting a non-profit group named Hope Helps, Inc. They help local families that need short-term housing assistance, unemployed Veterans, and feeding elderly home-bound. A \$26 tax-deductible donation can feed a family for about a week thru its secure website at www.hopehelps.org Look for the Leadership 26 tab on the left side of their homepage. Info: Col. David A. Smith, USMC (Ret) dasmith1776@gmail.com

Orlando Solar Bears – This fun hockey team would like to honor veterans and/or service members at their home games. This recognition would include tickets for the honoree and 3 guests to the assigned game, one free parking pass for the GEICO garage. For available dates

and information, contact Orlando City Veterans Council representative Vickie at vickieldg@bellsouth.net

Help for Veterans and their Families - Life isn't always easy after a deployment. With 71 percent of the staff members comprised of veterans, Vet centers are committed to assisting veterans and their families achieve successful adjustment in or near their communities. Vet Centers provide all readjustment counseling services at no charge. Those using vet centers are not required to enroll in the VA Health Care System or to have received a service connection for conditions caused by military service. Vet centers provide services regardless of the nature of a veteran's discharge. The vet center program also has a Veterans Call Center staffed with qualified counselors who will answer your calls after office hours at 1-877-927-8387. See www.va.gov

* **Clermont Vet Center** - 1655 East Highway 50, Suite 102, Clermont, FL 34711 Phone: 352-536-6701 Or 877-927-8387

* **Daytona Beach Vet Center** - 1620 Mason Ave., Suite C, Daytona Beach, FL 32117 Phone: 386-366-6600 Or 877-927-8387

* **Melbourne Vet Center** - 2098 Sarno Road, Melbourne, FL 32935 Phone: 321-254-3410 Or 877-927-8387

* **Orlando Vet Center** - 5575 S. Semoran Blvd., Suite #30, Orlando, FL 32822 Phone: 407-857-2800 Or 877-927-8387

Veterans in crisis – For you or someone you know. The holidays can be especially stressful. **Suicide** is a medical emergency. If you are experiencing thoughts of suicide, know that you are not alone and care should be sought immediately by calling 911. Free, confidential resources are instantly available through the Military Crisis Line to aid you if you are in crisis.

Call 800-273-8255 and press 1,

OR chat online now for 24/7 access to trained counselors who understand what service members and military families are coping with. Website at veteranscrisisline

OR: text 838255 for 24/7 confidential assistance. They are there because they care....

Camaraderie Foundation – provides counseling to Post 9/11 veterans and their families. 200 units were assisted by September, the number projected and budgeted for the entire year – but there are 39 on a waiting list, some being assisted pro-bono. Save a marriage, save a family, save a life. It works. Contact 407-841-0071 camaraderiefoundation.org

Wishing you and those you love some happy and peaceful holiday!

Caring and sharing,

Cathy Haynes

Member/supporter of numerous veteran and military organizations in Central FL 407-239-8468
chaynes11629@yahoo.com