

February 2017 – Central FL list of veteran, military and patriotic events

*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.

ASAP – A conference group coming to Orlando would like to do some community service in Orlando. They would like to perform home repairs for low-income veterans at NO COST to the veteran. The work will be done by skilled professionals and volunteers. If you, or someone you know, need some painting, roof repairs, bathroom adjustments, electrical work, etc., send an email to Tommie Maldonado, the Orange County Veteran Service Office Manager, at tommie.maldonado@ocfl.net Include the name, point of contact, address and what needs to be done in the email. Put "Veterans home repair" in the subject line. Mr. Maldonado will forward the request to the appropriate person of this great group.

February is Black History Month. Review some of the historical contributions made by Buffalo Riders, Tuskegee Airmen, Montford Point Marines, and others. (See event on Sat. Feb 18)

Community Wellness Fair - Sat. Feb 4 - The public is invited to a community wellness fair 11am – 2pm at Cypress Grove Park, 290 Holden Ave., Orlando 32839. There will be vendors, FREE health screenings, CPR demonstrations, gardening tips and more. Food, giveaways and kids activities. Info: 407-836-7335

Celebration of Heroes – Sat. Feb 4 – Grateful recognition of the First Responders and military in the community. All invited with FREE admission at the Waterfront Park in Clermont. 2 bands, add'l entertainment, food, games for kids, raffles, prizes, etc.! 11am – 6pm No traffic - straight shot! 408 West to FL Turnpike North to 50 West, a little more than an hour from Orlando. The Never Forgotten Memorial Team takes the stage at 12:40, presenting the 5 Military Branch performance and thanking local Vietnam veterans with the 50th Anniv. lapel pin, Presidential Proclamation. Also Sam Elliott's Vietnam era Veteran Tribute to those who served, worldwide, from Nov. 15, 1955 - May 15, 1975. Info: www.celebrationofheroes.org or Susan at celebratetheheroes@gmail.com 321-229-9109.

Four Chaplains Commemorative Ceremony - Sun. Feb 5 – The Orlando Devil Dogs unit of the Young Marines present this WW2 remembrance. **11am – 12noon** at Azalea Park United Methodist Church, 50 Willow Dr, Orlando, 32807. Four chaplains from several religions and denominations assisted military personnel and civilians before their ship, USAT Dorchester, sank in the Atlantic Ocean on Feb. 3, 1943. The chaplains gave up their life jackets and helped persons onto life boats. They joined arms, prayed and sang hymns before they died together. Free and open to the public. The Young Marines are boys and girls, ages 8 – 18yrs, from

different schools and come together to learn patriotism, responsibility, and more. Come support good kids who don't usually get the media attention they deserve. Info: sgtmajna@earthlink.net

Four Chaplains Commemorative Ceremony - Sun. Feb 5 – The American Legion Post 112 at 2pm is the site of a remembrance that honors the memory of the Four Chaplains in WW2. Sea Cadets and Scouts will participate under the guidance of Vice Commander Jerry Dress, a Korean War vet, has worked very hard to coordinate this event each year. When the USAT Dorchester was hit with torpedoes from a Nazi submarine, four chaplains of different faiths assisted others and gave up their own life jackets. They were last seen with their arms joined and singing hymns. Come support good kids with your attendance! Amer. Legion Post 112, 4490 North Goldenrod Road, Winter Park, 32792. Info: Cmdr Billy Dover 407-383-9455.

Student Veterans Resource Fair – Mon. Feb 6 – Local organizations and services are showcased at UCF to assist student veterans. 11am – 2pm at the Student Union Room 316, 12715 Pegasus Dr, Orlando, 32816. Veterans Academic Resource Center (VARC) offices provide access to student mentors, scholarship possibilities, work-study information, food pantry, and reinforcement with others thru SVA (Student Veterans of America.) Info: VARC at 407-823-2707 or 407-823-5874 or joshua.johnson@ucf.edu

Veterans VA Town Hall Meeting – Mon. Feb 6 –The Orlando VA Medical Center wants share what's new at the site thru quarterly Town Hall Meetings. In addition, they want to hear about your thoughts (positive and negative) and your concerns. 2pm – 3:30pm in the Lake Nona facility's Auditorium A at 13800 Veteran's Way, Orlando, 32827. Spend some time with the Director, Mr. Liezert, for an "Ask the Director" session. You will also have an opportunity to speak to the Veteran Benefits Administration (VBA) experts about your service connected benefits. Other resources available. Info: Annie Artis, ellamay.artis@va.gov 407-646-5500 x27246

HBI (Home Builders Institute) Classes – Mon. Feb 6th – March 3 – HBI offers 3 certifications in 4 Weeks and job placement at No Cost to Military Members, Past or Present. OSHA 10, First Aid/CPR/AED, Pre-Apprenticeship Certificate, Training, and Job Placement Promotion Class. 9am – 2:30pm - Mon-Thurs. 9200 Southpark Center Loop, Orlando FL 32819 (Inside Everest University off John Young Parkway.) Info or to secure your seat: Jamacan Penney-Vassey 407-259-5069 jvassey@hbi.org

Marine Corps League Orlando - Tues, Feb 7- Cpl. Larry E. Smedley, Detachment 064 Monthly Meeting, 7pm – 8pm at the at American Legion Florida Department bldg., 1912A Lee Road, Orlando, FL 32810. Info: mclcfl@gmail.com or mcl.orlando.commandant@gmail.com (Cpl. Larry Smedley was an Orange County resident and enlisted in the Marine Corps. He was killed in Vietnam on December 21, 1967 after heroic actions were seen in battle. He earned the Medal of Honor, awarded posthumously; he was 18 yrs old.)

Univ. of Central FL Business Incubation Program for Entrepreneurs – Assistance with the many aspects of starting or advancing businesses, including veteran owned businesses. Expert advice, mentoring, and classes available – See incubator.ucf.edu/ for more information and enrollment. Upcoming classes:

Feb 7 (Winter Spgs site) Search Engine Optimization;

Feb 8 (Kissimmee site) Influence Others: Understand the Roles Positional Power;
Feb 14 (Winter Spgs site) Social Media & Reputation Management;
Feb 21 (Winter Spgs site) Search Engine Marketing;
Feb 28 (Winter Spgs site) Email Marketing.

Classes vary and are held in Apopka, Winter Springs and Kissimmee.

Central Florida Navy League luncheon and meeting – Wed. Feb 8 – All persons who support the sea services, whether civilian or military, are welcomed to attend this gathering on the 2nd Wed. of each month. 11:30 – 1pm at the Holiday Inn – UCF, 1724 N. Alafaya Trail, Orlando, 32826. Interesting speakers and networking potential includes the simulation technology businesses. \$20 with credit card payment on website (cfnavyleague .org) or \$25 at the door. 3rd largest Navy League in FL with diverse membership including nearby technology industries. Contact Bob K. (Membership Chair.) at navleaguecenfl@juno .com 407-977-7575
(**NEW!** The Navy League offers national E-Membership for only \$25 per year! Prior military service is NOT required. Support the sea services – Navy, Marines, Coast Guard and Merchant Marines – with membership.)

City of Orlando Mayors’ Veterans Advisory Council – Thurs. Feb 9 – Usually on the first Thurs. of each month, this one, only, will be on the 2nd Thurs. 1:30pm Monthly meeting of numerous organizations and individuals for the benefit of local veterans and active duty personnel. Planning of functions (ie: Veterans Day parade) and awareness of events is shared. Designated representatives allow groups to coordinate efforts. If your Orlando area vet/military associated group isn’t attending, it should plan to get involved. Networking before and after the meeting. See website at cityoforlando.net, Office of the Mayor, Mayor’s Committees, Veterans. Contact Chairman Michael Waldrop for attendance and location information. mwaldrop@blue-cord .com or Emily Bonvini emily.bonvini@cityoforlando .net 407.246.2728

Valentine’s Day Dinner and Dance – Sat. Feb 11 - The Knights of Columbus Council 11488 hosts this event that is also a fundraiser for various groups, including Home At Last Project, Inc. HAL builds specially adapted local mortgage-free homes for wounded warriors and is presently building its seventh house, starting construction on house number eight and looking for a building site for house number nine. \$30 pp at St. Patrick’s Hall, Holy Family Catholic Church, 5125 S. Apopka Vineland Road, Orlando, 32819. Reserved group tables available. Info: Jim McQuillan 407-491-9776 dad@mcquillanfamily .com)

February 14 - HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY! - Share appreciation with a veteran!

Veteran Infused Employment Workshops – Tues – Thurs, Feb 14 - 17 - Various free seminars offered to veterans that will assist in job searching. Lake Nona VA Hospital site, Conf. Rm 10 or 4th Flr, Rm 106, (aka: 4F106) 13800 Veterans Way, Orlando, 32827. Feb 14 – Creating your Job Search Plan; Feb 15 – Create a Marketable You; Feb 16 – Define your Resources; Feb 17 – Take Action and Mock Interviews. Seminars are 10am – 2pm, Lunch is NOT provided. Contact Annie Artis, ellamay.artis@va .gov 407-646-5500 x27246

Orange County Mayors’ Veterans Advisory Council –Wed. Feb 15– 1:30pm monthly meeting of numerous organizations and individuals for the benefit of Central FL veterans and active duty personnel. Planning of events and awareness is shared. Designated representatives

allow groups to coordinate efforts and unite for the common cause. If your Orange County /Central FL vet/military associated group isn't attending, it should plan to get involved. Mayor Teresa Jacobs is very supportive of a veteran-friendly community. Contact Chairman Col. Edwin Marrero for attendance and location information. emarrero81@cfl.rr.com

VA Art Show – Fri, Feb 17 – Veterans provide their hand work in a variety of Fine Arts, Applied Arts and Crafts in a competition. Items can be seen from 12noon to 3pm in the Orlando VA Medical Center at Lake Nona, Auditorium A on the 4th flr. Items are: paintings, drawings, leather drafting, woodworking, metalwork, pottery, etc. Info: Jenny Danieli at 407-631-7110 jenny.danieli@va.gov (Contact her about entering your hand work next year!)

Villagers for Veterans – Fri Feb 17 – Fundraiser Bingo with gift card prizes to The Villages best eateries. 7pm-9pm Doors open at 6pm. Lake Miona Recreation Center, Buena Vista Blvd, The Villages. BYOBeverage (no alcohol) and BYOSnacks. Tickets \$5 each. Call Marie at 516-220-5068 or Marguarite at 352-633-0882 villagersforveterans@gmail.com

Silver Spurs Rodeo – Fri – Sun Feb 17 – 19 – Is there anything more American than a rodeo?!? This is the 138th Silver Spurs Rodeo (twice a year), the largest one east of the Mississippi. Watch the seven traditional rodeo events - bull riding, bareback riding, saddle bronc riding, tie-down roping, barrel racing, steer wrestling, and team roping. In between these events, you'll also see acts throughout the night from our rodeo clown, Silver Spurs Quadrille Team, and your children (ages 6 – 10) will be able to participate in the Calf Scramble. Osceola Heritage Park/Silver Spurs Arena, 1875 Silver Spur Lane, Kissimmee, 34744. Advanced tickets available online and Boot Barn in Kissimmee and Byrd's Western Wear in Melbourne. Info and schedule: www.silverspursrodeo.com

“Warrior Ride” Bike Run – Sat. Feb 18 - Orlando Rocks Benefit, Inc. will be holding this fundraiser for Sgt. Kirstie Ennis, USMC . The ride will start at American Legion Post 183 in Fern Park, with 4 stops (1) Fleet Reserve 3040 SR 46, Sanford (Breakfast sandwich available) (2) DAV-3512 S. Orlando Dr, Sanford (3) VFW 5405-420 N Edgemon Ave, Winter Springs (4) VFW 8207 1520 North Highway 427, Longwood and then back to Post 183 for a Luau. \$20 for rider and \$10 for passenger, but motorcycles are NOT required. Kickstands up at 10:30; 50/50 raffle; (flyer available) (Kirstie, originally from Pensacola and now living in San Diego, served 6 years until her second deployment when she lost her left leg following a 2012 helicopter crash in Afghanistan, had more than 40 surgeries and a battle with MRSA. She was the “cover girl” and a highlighted story in “PTSD Journal” for Fall/Winter 2016 and is prepping for the 2018 Paralympics.) Info: orlandorocksbenefit@gmail.com or Mary at 407-607-9527, or Vic at 407-901-0685.

Operation Love Letters – Sat. Feb 18 – 5th annual Valentine letter writing by military family members who are grieving their personal losses, whether the servicemen or women died in combat or not. Letters are attached to balloons and released. 11am – 2:30pm at VFW Post # 2093, 4444 Edgewater Dr., Orlando, 32804. Please let other grieving military families know about this event – they move in and out of our communities and may want an opportunity to connect with others who understand. Survivor Outreach Services (SOS) who offers long term assistance at no charge to all surviving military families, regardless of branch, in a large section of Cent. FL. Contact Gwendolyn Hannah, 407-240-5939 X 1746, gwendolyn.c.hannah.ctr@mail.mil (Assistance after hours, contact the Army Reserve Family Programs Fort Family

Support and Outreach Center - 1-866-345-8248. Serving Soldiers and Families of all branches 24/7/365.

Tea and Fashion Show – Sat. Feb 18 – Zonta Club in The Villages hosts this event with a portion of the proceeds designated to benefit Women Veterans through the Villagers for Veterans group. 1pm at SeaBreeze Recreation Center, 2384 Buena Vista Blvd, The Villages, 32162. Tickets \$25. To reserve tickets or a table, contact Marie Bogdonoff at villagersforveterans@gmail.com 516.220-5068

Commander’s Call at the Museum - Black History Month Recognition – Sat. Feb 18 – Museum of Military History 10am – 2pm. 5210 West Irlo Bronson Hwy, Kissimmee, 34746. Commander’s Call on Sat. Feb 18 - Listen first hand as living history treasure, Tuskegee Airman Daniel Keel, shares his experiences of serving in the Army Air Corps during World War Two. He also describes his love of flying as a B-25 Mitchell Bomber pilot during the war. Another living history treasure, LCOL (ret.) and Tuskegee Airman George Hardy speaks about his 28 year military service, 21 combat missions over Germany in a P-51 Mustang, 45 combat missions as a co-pilot B-29 Superfortress in the Korean War and 70 missions in an AC-119 Stinger during the Vietnam War. The Tuskegee Airmen were the first African American unit consisting of aviators, navigators and bombardiers.

Finally, speak with members of the Buffalo Soldiers Motorcycle Club as they showcase their educational presentation. Their mission is to remember the legacy of the first African American military units following the Civil War, the 9th and 10th Cavalry and 24th and 25th Infantry Regiments. These African American units were named Buffalo Soldiers by the Native American who saw the fierce brave fighting style of these soldiers and reminded them of the way wild buffalo fought. Children 5 and under and all active members of the armed forces will receive free admission for this event. Children 10 and under can soar through the air in our F-16 A flight simulator. Food and drinks will be available for purchase. Office: 407-507-3894

Florida Association of Veteran Owned Businesses mtg (FAVOB) – Tues Feb 21 - 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@favob.org or marketing@favob.org

The Singing Sergeants concerts – Tues – Fri Feb 21 - 24 - The Singing Sergeants take Central Florida with concerts of choral music, including traditional, contemporary, and Americana selections. They are the official chorus of the United States Air Force, based in Washington DC. These concerts are FREE and open to the public. Reserved tickets are available at: usafband.eventbrite.com

Tues. Feb 21 – 7-8:30pm - North Lake Presbyterian Church, 975 Rolling Acres Rd, Lady Lake, 32159

Wed. Feb 22 – 3-4:30pm - Eisenhower Regional Recreational Center, 3560 Buena Vista Blvd, The Villages, FL 321631 - SOLD OUT. (inquire about ‘no-show’ people)

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Thurs. Feb 23 and Fri Feb 24 – Universal CityWalk, 6000 Universal Blvd, Orlando, 32819. Each night has three performances: **5pm, 6pm, 7pm** of 40s, 50s, and patriotic music at the

Universal CityWalk Lagoon Stage! All concerts are FREE and tickets are not required. Entry to CityWalk is FREE (pay-to-park). Parking is free for Florida residents after 6 pm.

Corporate SWAT Challenge 2017 – Sat. Feb 25 – Put a team together to challenge some of the best in Central FL! This will include tactical events that involve endurance activities and strategic thinking. While the goal is to have fun and benefit the Camaraderie Foundation, this event is for competitors who are committed to a team concept and want to challenge themselves in problem-solving atmosphere. Sponsorships and Teams are available!!! Starts at 7am, Orlando Police Department Training Facility. Challenge Requirements - 22 Teams (\$2000/team), 5 to 8 participants on each team (must include at least 1 female). Each team will have a SWAT Member Advisor. For more information, email Lt. Carter Gowen at: carter.gowen@cityoforlando.net

Managing Elder Medical Care – Sat. Feb 25 - AARP Florida is hosting a FREE half-day session to help caregivers learn how to help an elder manage their medical care. 8:30am – 12:30p at Orlando Science Center, 777 East Princeton Street, Orlando, 32803. Topics covered include patient rights and resources, how spirituality affects healthcare, patient helper ideas and tips to being a better helper or advocate. At the end, a legal expert shares more about preparing legal documents to help you be prepared. Info and to reserve a spot: 877-926-8300

Retiree Appreciation Day (RAD) – Sat. Feb 25 – Military retirees can enjoy a variety of speakers from the Department of the Army, Veterans Affairs, MOAA (Military Officers Association of America) and others. Special guest will be Army SMA Kenneth O. Preston (ret.) LOTS of Information provided, including DFAS, Tricare, Navy Exchange, etc. All service branch retirees and their families are invited. Registration starts at 8am; Event hours: 9am – 3pm at The Venue at UCF (University of Central Florida) at 12777 Gemini Blvd N., Orlando, 32816 located behind the CFE Arena. Sponsored by Fort Stewart, Retirement Services Office, but ALL branches are welcome to attend! Non-profit organizations: To reserve a table for sharing awareness, contact 912-767-3326 julie.k.lovelady.civ@mail.mil

Dedication of Afghanistan Memorial – Sat. Feb 25 - Marine Families announces the completion of the Afghanistan Memorial at the Veterans Park in Tampa. It is joining the Iraq Memorial that was erected in 2013. 3602 U.S. 301 N, Tampa, 33619. While founded by Marine Families, all branches, veterans and patriotic supporters are included providing support, networking and camaraderie; Donations appreciated. Marine Families Info@MarineFamilies.org P.O. Box 7915, Tampa, FL 33673 813-965-2682

Marine Sgt. Kirstie Ennis fundraiser – Sat. Feb 25 - Orlando Rocks Benefit, Inc., Booyah Bus Project and the City of Kissimmee host this beginning at 1pm. Sgt. Ennis Arrives abt 1:30, Booyah Bus Project will have its ribbon cutting at abt. 1:45, and entertainment and dinner event at abt. 3:30pm. Tickets are \$25. Kissimmee Civic Center, 201 E. Dakin Ave., Kissimmee, 34741. (Sgt. Kirstie Ennis, USMC, originally from Pensacola and now living in San Diego, served 6 years until her second deployment when she lost her left leg following a 2012 helicopter crash in Afghanistan, had more than 40 surgeries and a battle with MRSA. She was the “cover girl” and a highlighted story in “PTSD Journal” for Fall/Winter 2016 and is prepping for the 2018 Paralympics.) Sponsors and donations welcomed. Info: orlandorocksbenefit@gmail.com Mary at 407-607-9527, or Vic at 407-901-0685.

Jerry Dugan Memorial Charity Golf Tournament – Mon. Feb 27 - 3rd Annual Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) Central Florida at The Legacy Club at Alaqu Lakes, 1700 Alaqu Lakes Blvd, Longwood, 32779. Registration: \$125 per golfer, Veterans: \$100, Foursomes: \$400. Club will allow special golf carts for disabled players on the course. Registration 9am, Shot Gun Start 10am. Buffet Dinner, unlimited drinks before & during play (beer, soda & water), Goody Bag and Special Gift for each player. Various Sponsorships available but must be received no later than Feb. 15 (Flyer available) info: 407-328-7041 or email joannep@pvaacf.org (PVA assists vets with spinal injury and neurological diseases like Multiple Sclerosis (MS) and ALS also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease. There are 27 known veterans with ALS in Central FL. They receive and distribute unwanted medical equipment to vets and civilians.)

Central Florida Veterans Inc. mtg – Tues Feb 28 – Meeting of veterans and groups in the Central Florida area. Meeting includes a guest speaker and sharing of information that is important to veterans. This group meets on the LAST Tuesday of every other month. (Even numbered months) in the Orlando VA Medical Center at Lake Baldwin in the Cafeteria at **5:30pm**. 5201 Raymond Street, Orlando, 32803. Info: Greg Smith at 901-438-7734 farside53@gmail.com

Meat Bingo – Tues. Feb 28 – The Casselberry Veterans Inc. Auxiliary has this unique Bingo Game. 200 Concord Dr, Casselberry, 32707. You have 22 chances to win! Plus a “Money Round” and the winner gets the entire amount collected. (Meats are purchased from Petty's Meats. The January meats included stuffed pork chops, special pork chops stuffed with crabmeat, New York strip steaks, fish, clams, chicken breasts, flank steaks, pork ribs, and spaghetti pie. All are fresh cut and top quality.) Cost is only \$7, plus the money round, to play one hand all evening. Option to purchase more hands. Games start at 6pm. Info: 407-260-1404 news@cassvets.org Web Page: cassvets.org

Rebuilding For Heroes Golf Tournament – Fri. Mar 3 - 2nd Annual Charity Golf Tournament to benefit veterans and our "Every Day" Heroes. 8:30 start time at Dubsdread Golf Course & Taproom, 549 W. Par St, Orlando, 32804. Proceeds to benefit the renovation and repairs needed to the homes of very-low income families, seniors and veterans. www.rtorlando.org Info: Alaina at 407-898-3777 ext. 3 or alaina@rtorlando.org

Fundraiser for CPO Sharona Young - Sat. March 4 – VFW Post 4387, VFW Auxiliary and Semper Fidelis America sponsor this event at VFW Post 4387, 3500 S. Goldenrod Rd, Orlando, 32822. Entertainment and dinner starts at 3pm. \$25 advance ticket, \$30 at the door. Sponsors and donations welcomed. CPO Sharona Young (ret.) USN, an Orlando resident, was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis and medically retired from the Navy Reserve in 2014. She volunteers as Secretary for PVA (Paralyzed Veterans of America) Central Florida in Sanford. (PVA assists vets with spinal injury and neurological diseases like Multiple Sclerosis (MS) and ALS also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease. They receive and distribute unwanted medical equipment to vets and civilians.) Event info: VFW Post – 407-273-6581.

Winter Park's St. Patrick's Day Parade – Sun. March 5 - 39th Annual St. Patrick's Day Parade & Celebration of Winter Park. Units line up at 1pm for 2pm start time. Last year included WW2 veterans as special guests along with military units and First Responder bagpipe and drum groups. Fun and frolic (all in good taste, of course) will be the order of the day as thousands of Winter Park residents and more line Park Avenue to watch you strut your stuff, as

is said these days. The celebration continues with Irish music and dance in Central Park afterward. Info: stpatsparade@outlook.com

Veterans Business Initiative (VBI) - Mon. March 6 - VBI will run for eight weeks through March and April. This is a no cost program for all Military Veterans and spouses who are seeking for employment, entrepreneurial and continuing education. The VBI will be held beginning at 8:30am at the CFDC located at the National Entrepreneur Center, Orlando Fashion Square, 3201 E Colonial Dr A20, Orlando, 32803. Info: Rogue Gallart rogue@nationalec.org or Jaime Quarnoccio at jquarnoccio@careersourcecf.com

Women Veterans honored – Mon. March 6 - American Legion Aux. Unit 347 will host a luncheon for the female veterans who reside in Lake, Marion and Sumter counties. 12noon at the Legion Post 347, located on the corner of Rolling Acres Rd. and CR-466 in The Villages. NO cost for the veterans, but any guests are asked to make a \$5 donation. Pre-registration ends on Feb. 26, and is needed for an accurate meal count. Bio's and photo are requested. Register and Info: Donna McGlone at 352-753-9688 donna244mcglone@gmail.com (please put "Women's Veterans Luncheon" in subject line)

ON THE HORIZON – Mark your calendars

Sun. March 26 - Poker run to benefit the Vietnam Moving Wall Tribute (April 27 – May 1 in Eustis) Poker Run is seeking sponsors, large auction items and several volunteers. Will be "open to all vehicles." Info:

Peggy S at veteransinfoandevents@gmail.com 407-484-2159

April 27th - May 1 - Vietnam Moving Wall at the City of Eustis. Volunteers, sponsors, vendors for this event are welcomed. Also yearly music Fest event April 28-30th. Info: Erin Bailey 352-483-5491

MISCELLANEOUS

Research Project - Active military, reservists, guardsmen and veterans needed – If you or someone you know has experience overseas, a research project is ongoing at the UCF RESTORES lab at the University of Central Florida. The project determines if smells influence their experience in virtual environments similar to those we use in the treatment of combat-related PTSD. Participation takes approximately one hour, and those who volunteer will be compensated for their time. You can help others who suffer from PTS by your participation. Call UCF RESTORES: 407-823-3910.

OIA USO - Volunteers and donations needed - USO at the Orlando International Airport averages over 100 guests daily and over 7500 guests since the opening in September. This USO is unique in that ALL veterans are welcomed, not just active duty and retired military. It is open from 6am to 10pm, 365 days a year. It is staffed by 400 volunteers (and parking is free for volunteers). There are no government monies received to operate the facility – it operates by our donations. For more information or to volunteer, contact Annamae at annamae@usocentralflorida.org or 407-825-8761.

“The Older Floridians Handbook: Laws and Programs Affecting Older Floridians” explains the laws and programs that affect elders living in Florida. This handbook covers numerous topics including public benefits, health care, wills and estate planning, advance directives, housing and taxation. A reference section is also included. Published by the Florida Justice Institute, in partnership with the Florida Department of Elder Affairs. (abt 140 pgs)
Available online: [www. floridajusticeinstitute.org /publications/](http://www.floridajusticeinstitute.org/publications/)

Various free offers for veterans –The following website that has information across the country about grants, tickets, outdoor activities and more that are offered to veterans at no cost. [https:// slickdeals.net/f/9612528- loads-of-freebies-for-veterans-non-food](https://slickdeals.net/f/9612528-loads-of-freebies-for-veterans-non-food) (Spaces inserted to fool the email spam filters.) Thank you for sharing, Karen Connors!
Also see: [www. military.com/ benefits/veteran-state-benefits /florida-state-veterans-benefits](http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-state-benefits/florida-state-veterans-benefits)

Operation Homefront has a mortgage free home to give to a Veteran family in Florida. It is 3 bedroom home in Lake City. (Columbia County, between Tallahassee and Jacksonville in northern Florida.) Military families that do not currently own a home may apply by going to the following site: [www. homesonthehomefront .org](http://www.homesonthehomefront.org)

Suggested delayed New Year’s Resolutions for everyone: (V) – Specifically pertaining to veterans

- If you moved within/to Florida and bought a home, have you filed for your 2017 Homestead Property Tax Exemption? Deadline of March 1 at your county office or online.
- Review other Property Tax Exemptions on your county Property Appraiser’s website. There have been changes – ie: new senior citizen exemption (Amendment 5); (V) deployed military; service connected disabled, etc.
- (V) Enroll in the VA healthcare system, if not enrolled already. Benefits change over time. If a service related condition arises, then you will already be “in the system.” If you have private insurance, enrollment will empower you a choice of how/where to seek treatment.
- (V) Get a copy of your DD214 (aka: discharge papers), Service Medical Records, and Awards records. These may take several months to receive. Get them before you really need them. Make several copies and keep the original in a very safe place, with at least one copy NOT at your home.
- Join a military/veterans organization and pledge at least four or four additional hour a month in service to veterans in our communities. (USO volunteers at OIA provide four hours.)
- Get tested for Hepatitis C. If positive, get treated. (V) - The VA will test you, and treat you. Consult your primary care team. One in 10 Vietnam veterans, and one in 30 baby-boomers, will test positive for this liver problem “time-bomb.” Blood Banks already test for this – if Hep C negative, your blood will help save a life. (FYI – Hepatitis C was formerly known as Hepatitis Non-A, Non-B until the 1980’s.)
- (V) Get your Florida Driver’s license reprinted with the “Veteran” designation. Take your DD214 (discharge papers) to the Driver’s License Branch and it will be reprinted and laminated for a couple dollars. Restaurants and other businesses may offer discounts for veterans. Set aside those savings for a veteran’s charity donation.

Volunteering - Would you have liked to be able to help senior veterans, active military and veteran families after the hurricane? You still can, and it doesn't require damage from hurricanes.

- Hands On Orlando - Volunteer Central Florida - Brittany@ HandsOnOrlando .com 407.740.8652 (c) 407.375.9389
- The Mission Continues - Orlando 1st Platoon –Daniel Kalagian at dkalagian@ missioncontinues .org or Eric Weiss, 2nd Platoon Leader Orlando eweiss@ missioncontinues .org
- Team Red, White and Blue (RWB) – Sherrie LaBarre at sherrie.labarre@ gmail .com
- Rebuilding Together Orlando - rtorlando .org Alaina at alaina@ rtorlando .org

Mentors needed - Veteran Courts ARE succeeding! Longer term success is possible with community mentors and there are mentoring programs in Orange, Seminole and Osceola Counties. Be a “battle buddy” or “foxhole buddy” by assisting someone with life challenges. No proselytizing – just non-judgmental caring. Most of the offenders are DUI or possession, or PTS anger issues that are being rechanneled. If you have experienced substance abuse – although not required - and came thru it, you may be very helpful to someone else. If you are interested in participating as a mentor, know someone who is interested, or are a part of an organization where Mentors can be recruited, contact your local Veterans Court resource.

Life can be challenging...especially after the holidays when the bills come in....

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](http://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 in Central Florida provides resources for private and confidential Post Traumatic Stress (PTS) counseling for warriors and their families. And for First Responders. There are also have connections in other areas, other states.
It works. It HAS saved lives, marriages and families. [camaraderiefoundation.org](#) Contact 407-841-0071

Caring and sharing,

Cathy Haynes
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