



At Your Service

A Newsletter from the Wethersfield Veterans Commission

Spring, 2022

Welcome to the Spring 2022 issue of **At Your Service!** This issue includes new and updated articles for Veterans' services and contact information within Wethersfield, surrounding communities and State and Federal agencies.

The Wethersfield Veterans Commission traditionally meets from 6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month, except for July and August. The public is welcome to all meetings! You can contact the Wethersfield Veterans Commission through one of the Town staff liaisons listed below, or visit our webpage at <https://wethersfieldct.gov/social/veterans>. You can also email us at veterans.commission@wethersfieldct.gov.

Interested in serving on the Veterans Commission? We have an alternate position available.

Please email veterans.commission@wethersfieldct.gov to request more information.

Important Dates:

- **The Memorial Day Parade is being held on Saturday, May 28, 9am.** "Celebrating 101 years of the DAV"
Our guest speaker for the ceremony following the parade is Staff Sergeant Juliet Taylor. SSG Taylor served in the US Army 2002-2014, both stateside and overseas, including tours in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II and Operation Enduring Freedom. Go to the Town of Wethersfield website for future announcements.
- **Coming Soon - Wethersfield Veterans Information Briefing** - stay tuned for details in the next newsletter

Commission Members

Laura Bloomquist, Alternate
Tricia Giscombe
Jennifer Glick
Rick Newell, Vice Chair
Sandra Rhodes, Secretary
Mark Rudewicz
Frank Sena
Doug Shipman, Chair

Town Staff Liaisons

Mary Thibeault, Assistant Director, Parks and Recreation
860-721-2891 or email: mary.thibeault@wethersfieldct.gov
Chris Taylor, Veterans Services Contact, Social & Youth Services
860-721-2977 or email: chris.taylor@wethersfieldct.gov
Ryan Biggs, Town Council Liaison; ryan.biggs@wethersfieldct.gov
**Mail Address: Wethersfield Town Hall, 505 Silas Deane Hwy,
Wethersfield, CT 06109**

Hartford Veterans Center

For Wethersfield Veterans, the **Hartford Veteran Center**, located in Rocky Hill (25 Elm Street, Suite A), is available for services such as individual and group counseling for veterans, service members, and their families,

military sexual trauma, substance abuse assessment and referral, and employment referral. Please call 860-563-8800 for more information as other services may also be available. Open Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 4.30pm and on Saturday, 7:00 a.m. - 3.30 p.m.

TRICARE Members: Medicare and TRICARE Pharmacy Network

Members with TRICARE coverage are eligible for Medicare when they reach age 65. Beneficiaries must enroll for Medicare parts A and B *before they turn 65* even if they currently have TRICARE or some other insurance coverage. Otherwise, they will have to pay penalties or higher rates when they do enroll. Medicare-enrolled TRICARE beneficiaries are automatically enrolled in TRICARE for Life, a no-cost wrap-around insurance package which pays for some things Medicare does not cover. TRICARE for Life also provides the option to continue to use the TRICARE's pharmacy program.

Effective December 15, 2021, Walmart and Sam's Club are no longer part of the TRICARE pharmacy network. However, CVS is included among the list of network retail pharmacies where prescriptions can be filled.

National Guard and Reserve Members and Veterans

All National Guard and Reserve members qualify for some VA benefits. Different VA benefits may consider different factors to determine eligibility, such as length of service, type of service (such as under Title 10 or Title 32), wartime service, and/or service-related disability. There are two websites for further information:

www.ebenefits.va.gov or
www.benefits.va.gov/guardreserve.

Veteran-Owned Small Business Support

There are many veteran-owned businesses across New England and the country. Service members, veterans, and military spouses make great entrepreneurs. And they don't have to enter their mission of entrepreneurship alone. The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) is available for help. For local veterans, there is the CT SBA District Office located at 280 Trumbull Street (2nd floor), Hartford, CT and can be reached at 860.240.4700 or <https://www.sba.gov/offices/district/ct/hartford>. Additionally, there is the Veterans Business Outreach Center of New England located in Providence, R.I. (www.VBOCNewEngland.org) The Center can be reached at 844.404.2172 or at info.VBOC@cweonline.org.

Veterans Crisis Line: Free Confidential Support 24/7

If you are a veteran or concerned about a veteran, the Veterans Crisis Line is a free, confidential resource available to anyone, even if you're not registered with VA or enrolled in VA health care. Call the Veterans Crisis Line 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1; or Text 838255; or have a confidential chat at www.veteranscrisisline.net

Connecticut Law Related to State Veterans Benefits

The CT State Department of veterans Affairs recently established the Eligibility Qualifying Review Board for the purpose of restoring eligibility for State Veterans Benefits to veterans who have an Other-Than-Honorable characterization of discharge primarily caused by post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), or military sexual trauma (MST), or was based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. Specific information related to Filing Instructions and Application can be found at

<https://portal.ct.gov/DVA/Pages/Eligibility-Qualifying-Review-Board>

PTSD & Mobility Service Dogs for Veterans

Service dogs are trained to assist veterans with PTSD disabilities and/or mobility disabilities. Further information can be obtained at 860-490-2170 or info@foreverinmyheartfoundation.org.

Veterans at Risk for Homelessness

The ongoing concern with homeless Veterans is well-documented. If you know of a homeless Veteran or a Veteran who is at risk for homelessness, let them know that they may be eligible for the following services:

- Affordable Housing and Supportive Services
- Home Loan Guaranty Service
- Prevention Services (rental assistance, child care, employment training and referrals, etc.)
- Job Training, Employment, and Income Benefits
- Education Benefits
- Medical and Health Treatment Services, including mental health, substance use treatment, dental care, etc.

For additional support, call Chris Taylor 860-721-2977.

CT Veteran's Directed Care Program (VDC)

With extended life spans, the need for robust geriatric care increases. For veterans enrolled in VA health care, there is a range of geriatric services, from the VA-run nursing homes, such as the CT Rocky Hill Veterans Home, to hospital-based services to home care services.

In CT, if you are an older veteran in need of home care services, the VDC may be an excellent resource for you. The program is statewide and is consumer-directed, providing veterans services in their home from the caregiver of their choice. The VDC is a partnership between the State Unit on Aging (located within the CT Department of Aging and Disability Services), the VA CT Healthcare system, and the five CT Area Agencies on Aging. Entry into the program begins with a referral and pre-screen by the Veteran's Administration Medical Center. If appropriate for the program, the Area Agency on Aging located closest to the veteran becomes involved in arranging services. For Wethersfield veterans, that would be the North Central CT Area Agency on Aging in Hartford (860.724.6443). Veterans already connected with the VA health care system can talk to their VA health care provider or VA Case Manager about a referral. If not connected, the veteran's first step is to register with the VA health care system by calling 203.932.5711, ext. 3131. A copy of the veteran's DD-214 is needed to register. The VDC Program Liaison, Patricia Richardson, can be reached at 860.424.5698, or at patricia.richardson@ct.gov. A full description of the program can be found at:

<https://portal.ct.gov/AgingandDisability/Content-Pages/Programs/Connecticut-Veterans-Directed-Home-Community-Based-Services-Program>

Disabled American Veterans (DAV)

Service-connected disability compensation is a tax-free benefit paid to Veterans for a disability or disabilities that either: 1. arose during service; 2. was worsened or aggravated by service; or 3. is presumed by VA to be related to military service. If you believe that you may be eligible, please contact:

National Service Office
Newington VA Medical Center
555 Willard Avenue
P.O. Box 310909
Newington, CT 06111
Phone: 860-594-6612 Fax: 860-667-1238

Women Veterans in CT and VA Health Services

About 13,500 women veterans live in CT and 30% of them are enrolled at VA Connecticut, with 8% receiving care at VA Connecticut. For female veterans, there is a program under Women's Health Services, which includes Primary Care (which also includes gender-specific primary care), preventive services and screenings, mental health services, coordination of care, and maternity coordination. The Women Program Manager, Tiesha Maddix, may be reached at 203-932-5711, ext. 5402.

Update on Eastern CT Veterans Community Center

Until more affordable rent and utilities can be obtained, the Eastern CT Veterans Community Center has re-located to the Chamber of Commerce, 1010 Main Street, Willimantic, CT. All services provided to veterans and their families will continue from the new location. However, the Veterans Coffee House, which meets every Wednesday from 9:00 a.m. -11:00 a.m. will gather at Hops 44, 625 Middle Turnpike, Storrs, CT.

Toxic Exposure During Military Service

For Vietnam Veterans, exposure to Agent Orange is well-known for being linked to serious health conditions and treatment is provided through the VA. Now, for Iraq-Afghanistan Veterans, health conditions, particularly respiratory issues, are linked to open-burn pit exposure. However, there have been difficulties in obtaining treatment for these conditions from the VA. Recently, the U.S. Congress passed the *Health Care for Burn Pit Veterans Act* (S.3541). The Act offers post-9/11 combat veterans who are experiencing health conditions caused by exposure to burn pits and other toxins *immediate and life-long* access to health care under the VA. This is one of the largest expansions of health care eligibility in the VA's history. And let's give a shout-out to the U.S. House Representatives from CT who co-sponsored the Act: Jahana Hayes of the 5th District and Joe Courtney of the 2nd District. The Act is now expected to be signed into law by President Biden. For more local information, a point-of-contact is TondaLoa Ivery at 203-932-5711, ext. 7887.

Honoring the memory of the fallen of Ukraine

The members of the Veterans Commission wish to express their support for the people of Ukraine and for the many Veterans of this conflict.

A Haiku,

by Commissioner Jennifer Glick

Much sky

Over undulating sunflowers

Merciful whispers for peace

