



At Your Service

Spring, 2023

Welcome to the Spring, 2023 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 attend the monthly meetings! You can contact the Wethersfield Veterans Commission through the Town staff liaisons listed below, or visit our webpage at wethersfieldct.gov/social/veterans

Commission Members

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

Student Representatives

Anthony Kaplun
Hamza Sasic

Town Liaisons

Rachael Mattioli
Assistant Director, Wethersfield Parks and Recreation
(860) 721-2891
rachael.mattioli@wethersfieldct.gov

Daniel Rosario
Elderly Services Coordinator, Wethersfield Social and Youth Services
(860) 721-2977
daniel.rosario@wethersfieldct.gov

Mailing Address:
Wethersfield Parks and Recreation
505 Silas Deane Highway
Wethersfield, CT 06109

Join us for the 2023 Memorial Day Parade in Old Wethersfield!

The Wethersfield Memorial Day Parade will take place Saturday, May 27, 2023 stepping off at 9:00 am, followed by a Memorial Day Ceremony at Village Cemetery immediately following the parade. For more information visit wethersfieldct.gov/recreation

We want to hear from YOU!

Please help us continually improve our Newsletter by answering a few short questions! This five-question survey should take only *two minutes* to complete. To begin the survey, visit surveymonkey.com/r/RHRQ3YJ OR scan this QR code with your cell phone QR scanner or iPhone camera.



Town of Wethersfield's New Elderly Services Coordinator

Hello Wethersfield Seniors! My name is Daniel Rosario and I am new to the town of Wethersfield. I work in the Social & Youth Services Department as your Elderly Services Coordinator and can help you and your family with supportive community-based and referral services, provide information on Town and outside agencies' programs and services including assistance for military veterans. Even if you do not need assistance, come by to say hi. I look forward to meeting you!

I can also be reached via email at daniel.rosario@wethersfieldct.gov or by phone 860.721.2977.

Best, Daniel Rosario

Assistance with Job Searches and Employment

Are you a Veteran looking for a job? And would like some help? There are two local resources you can call upon:

- 1) Veteran Representative, Ronald Catania, at the Hartford American Job Center is available for assistance. He can be reached at 860.256.3711 or via email at ronald.catania@ct.gov.
- 2) Easterseals Veterans Rally Point, 287 West Street, Rocky Hill, CT (on the campus of the CT Department of Veterans Affairs). Telephone: 860.859.4148 (ext 1). Website: www.easterseals.com/hartford. Provides free services for veterans and their families, including unemployment, psychological, emotional, physical, medical, and financial.

CT Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Advocacy and Assistance

Located within the CT Department of Veterans Affairs on 287 West Street, Rocky Hill CT, the Office of Advocacy and Assistance (and District Offices) provides assistance to Veterans, their eligible spouses and eligible dependents in obtaining veterans benefits under federal, state, and local laws. This includes the following:

- 1) Assisting in the establishment, preparation and presentation of claims pursuant to rights, benefits or privileges owed to veterans,
- 2) Representing veterans before the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) concerning claims, benefits,
- 3) Furnishing counsel to veterans concerning educational training, health, medical rehabilitation, housing facilities and services, and employment services, and
- 4) Canvassing nursing homes to determine if veterans and/or spouses are due benefits.

Contact Information:

portal.ct.gov/DVA/Pages/Office-of-Advocacy-and-Assistance

Office of Advocacy and Assistance
Manager: John S. Carragher 860.616.3683.

Hartford Area 1st District Office
555 Willard Avenue, Newington CT
860.594.6604 or 6606

- Officer: Dawn Waldron
- Officer: Devon Julien

VA MISSION Act of 2018 and the Veterans Community Care

Program:

WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU

Veterans who receive care in the VA Health Care System have had opportunities to receive care from community providers under the Veterans Choice Program. This program ended June 6, 2019 and was replaced by the Veterans Community Care Program established under the MISSION Act of 2018. This new program provides Veterans with more choices for care and better customer service when receiving community care. Veterans have expanded ability to schedule appointments that improve coordination between the VA and community providers. Additionally, this new benefit provides eligible Veterans with a convenient option to receive care for minor injuries and illnesses. Please note, that in most cases, Veterans must receive approval from the VA before receiving care from a community provider to avoid being billed for the care.

Key aspects of community care eligibility:

- Veterans must receive approval from the VA prior to obtaining care from a community provider in most circumstances. However, the urgent care/walk-in care benefit does not require that care be authorized in advance. (You must utilize a community urgent care/walk-in center that participates in the VA's community program.)
- Eligibility for community care is dependent upon a veteran's individual health care needs or circumstances.

Consult with your VA health care provider about your specific needs.

- Meeting one of six eligibility criteria listed below is sufficient to be referred to a community provider:
 1. Veteran needs a service not available at a VA Medical Facility. (For example, female veterans who need maternity care as that type of care is not provided at any VA Medical Facility.)
 2. Veteran lives in a U.S. State or Territory without a full-service VA Medical Facility.
 3. Veteran qualifies under the "grandfather" provision related to distance eligibility (40-mile criterion) under the previous Veterans Choice Program and the Veteran continues to reside in a location that qualifies them under that criterion.
 4. The VA cannot furnish care within certain designated access standards for average drive-time (30 minutes for primary care, mental health, and non-institutional extended care services including adult day health care; 60 minutes for specialty care) or appointment-wait times (20 days for primary care, mental health care, and non-institutional extended day services unless the Veteran agrees to a later date in consultation with their VA health care provider; 28 days for specialty care unless the Veteran agrees to a later date in consultation with their VA health care provider).

5. It is in the best medical interest of the Veteran to see a community provider.
6. A VA medical service does not meet certain quality standards.

Informative Fact Sheets on Veterans Community Care, including urgent care, emergency room treatment, scheduling appointments, and copayments and health insurance, can be found at www.va.gov/communitycare/pubs/factsheets.asp

Open Doors Outdoors Revisited

In the Fall 2022 *At Your Service* newsletter, Open Doors Outdoors, was briefly described as an organization that provides specially designed outdoor programs for veterans and their families, such as hiking, kayaking, and snowshoeing. A Glastonbury-based nonprofit, the program was initiated for military veterans transitioning back to civilian life. For many, this transition can be challenging due to physical injuries and mental health issues, like PTSD. The goal is for participants to experience adventure as well as build new connections with their surroundings, loved ones, and with themselves.

In January, 2023, the *Hartford Courant* published a front-page article on Open Doors Outdoors highlighting the program's impact on participants - essentially creating a community of veterans from all branches of service working together to complete tough hikes or overcoming physical challenges.

SFC (ret.) Jim Woodworth, the Stewardship Chair of the Great Meadows Conservation Trust, Inc. (GMCT) was impressed by this article and reached out to the Open Doors Outdoors founder, Davey Edwards, with an idea. First, the GMCT is a Land Trust dedicated to preserving the Great Meadows of Glastonbury, Rocky Hill, and Wethersfield. And second, Mr. Woodworth's idea centers around helping physically-challenged veterans, especially those who are wheelchair-enabled, to gain access to nature, fresh air, and exercise. The GMCT has been working on the Wood parcel trail, located at the intersection of Middletown Avenue and Maple Street/Route 3 in Wethersfield, to bring it up to USDA Forest Service "accessibility standards," which makes it usable for individuals in wheelchairs. Mr. Woodworth invited veterans from Open Doors Outdoors to explore the trail and the work being done to improve accessibility. **NOTE:** An Earth Day Event is planned for April 22, 2023 to work on the Wood parcel and any interested veterans who would like to volunteer that day should contact Jim Woodworth at jwoodworth5@att.net.

Information on Open Doors Outdoors can be found at www.opendoorsoutdoors.com. All activities are 100% free for participants. And veterans with children should check out the Utility Terrain Vehicle Program. Information on GMCT, including the December 2022 newsletter article (page 3) on the Wood parcel work can be found at www.gmct.org.

Veterans Commission Updates

First Wethersfield Veterans Seminar Brings Veterans and Service Providers Together. The commission's first-ever veterans seminar, held in September 2022, attracted over 40 area veterans and 15 veterans service organizations to the Pitkin Community Center to share information about benefits and services. Look for the next seminar in fall 2023!



Thank you Troop 85! Special thanks to Boy Scout Troop 85 for their amazing fundraising campaign to benefit the Veterans Commission! In October and November the troop sold custom made lawn signs, pictured here, with proceeds to the commission. Thanks to their creativity and hard work the Commission received over \$1,000 in donations!

Salute to Dan Camilliere. With sadness we mark the recent passing of World War II veteran and former commission member Dan Camilliere, age 100. Dan lived a full life of service to his country, the state of Connecticut, and to his beloved town of Wethersfield where he served two terms as mayor among many other leadership roles. Special thanks to Dan's loving family for identifying the Wethersfield Veterans Commission as recipient of donations in Dan's memory.

Shipping Out. We are proud of former commission member, Wethersfield Town Councilor, and Navy Lieutenant Junior Grade Ryan Biggs, who will deploy later this year with the U.S. Navy. Mission unspoken, destination unknown, Biggs stepped down from his Town Council role to begin pre-deployment preparation, and is expected to ship out this summer. Godspeed LTJG Biggs!

Thank you to the Wethersfield Transition Academy!

The Veterans Commission offers its sincere thanks to the students of the Wethersfield Public Schools (WPS) Transition Academy for their important role in mailing the Newsletter to over 900 Town Veterans. Visit wps.wethersfield.me/schools/wethersfield-transition-academy for more information.