



THE VETERANS MEMORIAL CENTER

# COUNCIL COURIER

JULY 2022



A Publication of the Brevard Veterans Council & Veterans Memorial Center



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Honoring our veterans with compassion for their families at services. – page 14

## JOIN THE VMC TO CELEBRATE AMERICA!

## Fourth of July at the VMC: Honor and Excitement

*The VMC is excited to once again celebrate Independence Day as it should be.*

*Join us for the Merritt Island Parade and follow up with a fun block party at Park, with plenty of time to make the fireworks displays later in the day.*

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JULY 2022

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The Courier is a monthly publication prepared and distributed in both print and electronic forms by the VMC/BVC. It reports the ongoing projects by the many committees and departments.

Articles for submission must be sent to the address listed below. The deadline is the third Wednesday of each month. Those submissions received after that date will not be published.

Please send submissions to:  
[brevardvmc@gmail.com](mailto:brevardvmc@gmail.com)

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## Our Organization

As of 20 April 2022:

[List of Board Members 2021-2022](#)

As of 20 April 2022:

[Committee Department Assignment 2021-2022](#)

As of 20 April 2022:

[BVC VMC Org Chart 2021-2022](#)



## Mission Statement

**Brevard Veterans Council:** The Brevard Veterans Council (BVC) is a 501(c)19 veterans organization.

BVC's mission is to work in conjunction with area veterans, local government, and other veterans' organizations to support and promote the interests and welfare of Brevard County veterans and their families.

**Veterans Memorial Center:** The Veterans Memorial Center (VMC) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. VMC's mission is to maintain and operate a premier facility to educate the public and provide a vibrant memorial to the service and sacrifice of all military veterans and their families through a museum, memorial plaza, library, and veterans park.

**Brevard Veterans Council, Inc. & Veterans Memorial Center, Inc.**  
 400 South Sykes Creek Parkway  
 Merritt Island, FL 32952-3547  
 Office 321-453-1776  
 DAV Service Office 321-452-1774

# VMC President's Report

LCDR Dean Schaaf, USN (Ret)



*Happy 4th of July. It is our country's 246th birthday this year!*

June was another busy month with many events at the center and elsewhere. One of the biggest events was Dancing with the Space Coast held at Florida Tech. Sponsored by the Brevard County Sheriff's Office (BCSO), the event raised over \$400,000 for four charities; the VMC is one of these charities. **Our dancer, LTC Tim Thomas, won the competition with his professional partner.**

Of course, another big event was the premier of the new Top Gun movie. It is a must see, depicting the absolute best of Naval Aviation and is required training for our Air Force aviators.

We had an unfortunate incident of a vehicle running into our park going south on Sykes Creek Parkway. The driver impacted a concrete light pole at a high rate of speed and was stopped

from entering our plaza. The driver fled and abandoned the vehicle. The Florida Traffic Crash Report of the accident says the driver contacted the FHP 8 hours after the incident and claimed to have fallen asleep at the wheel. The incident is still under investigation and charges are pending.

Our scholarship deadline is July 5th and we have received twelve applications to date. The selections will be made during the month of July and awarded at the August general meeting on the 10th.

The Submarine Veterans and the Naval Ordnance Test Unit (NOTU) used the VMC to hold a family day picnic on June 25th. The event was a big hit with the NOTU family with free paddle boarding and kayaking, a bounce house for the kids and a catered lunch by Woody's BBQ. We continue to have a great partnership with our NOTU shipmates.

Thank you to all who continue to volunteer, especially our MOD's, Docents, and Librarians. We could not do it without your tireless work.

Remember, the July 13th general meeting will have the swearing in of our officers by a very special Marine Corps veteran and Mayor of Palm Bay, the Honorable Rob Medina!

## VMC/BVC CONTACTS

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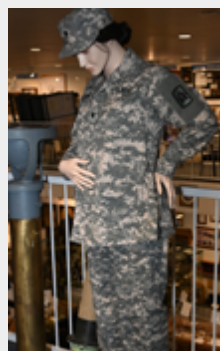
[WEBSITE](#)

[YOUTUBE](#)



## Highlights from the VMC Museum

Uniforms from all of our military service branches can be found at the museum. This maternity uniform for the US Army was donated by SP4 Irizzary.



## Organizational Meeting Schedule

The VMC is home base for a number of Brevard County Veterans Organizations. These organizations meet at the VMC on a monthly basis; see the [Events & Meetings page online](#) for a full listing of times our hosted organizations meet.



# Council Chairman's Report

by **Donn Weaver**  
Captain, U.S. Army (Fmr)

## Elections and Plans

Thanks to our great nominating committee - Rich Tomasso (Chair), Paul Julian, Dave Boyd and Ted Schmid - new board members were located and a full slate of 2022-23 officers were presented in May. Thanks to Dorothy Walsh for by-law review.

## Remember Our Past

Most of us veterans and VMC members love history, our museum, our history and legacy wall in the foyer, library records, etc. As we prepare to have Palm Bay Mayor and Rep Bill Posey's Veteran Liaison Officer, Marine Vet Rob Medina swear in our 2022-23 Officers and Board, I thought a look back at the BVC and VMC history would be a good way to fill this space.

The Brevard Veterans Council was created as an act by the Brevard County Commission in mid-1978. For the next 11 years, the BVC would grow from six original members to more than 300. The County agreed to provide a park based facility in 1989, and the first building was completed in 1990.

In 1991, the County and State agreed, with a home base in place, to create the Brevard Veterans Memorial Center, as a 501(c)3 with the BVC staying on as a 501(c)19.

So, as we gather on 13 July 2022 and raise our right hands another time, we will become the 43rd BVC/VMC Board and Leadership team.

## Our Legacy

Since 1978, regardless of the issues of the day or the facilities we have had to work with and care for, we are serving as part of a very long line of veterans and supporters of veterans. For over four decades we and our predecessors have volunteered to take on the challenges and satisfaction of operating (and always improving) what is now the biggest and best Veterans Memorial Center and park in Florida. Awesome.

We have many volumes of BVC/VMC history, press

releases and *Council Couriers* you can look at in our library. You can also talk to Lou Rossi or Ray Norman, both of whom served more than three decades with us, to get a sense of where we have been.

Now, strap in as this next year promises to offer great potential in how far we might proceed into the future and take our places in that long line of amazing VMC/BVC volunteers and leaders.

Regards,  
Donn



## Save the Date - August 12<sup>th</sup> 2022 National Veterans Homeless Support 7th Annual Dinner Fundraiser

Hosted by Brevard's Constitutional Officers

Property Appraiser Dana Blickley

Sheriff Wayne Ivey

Clerk of Court Rachel Sadoff

Tax Collector Lisa Cullen

Supervisor of Elections Lori Scott

State Attorney Phil Archer

Public Defender Blaise Trettis

**Friday, August 12<sup>th</sup>**

**Radisson Resort at the Port**

**8701 Astronaut Blvd. Cape Canaveral**

**5:30pm Cocktails 6:15pm Dinner**

**Platinum Sponsorship: \$25,000**

**Gold Star Sponsorship: \$10,000**

**Silver Star Sponsorship: \$5,000**

**Bronze Star Sponsorship: \$1,000**

Dinner: \$100 per person or \$1,000 per table of 10

Program ads: Full page - \$250 or Half page - \$150

For advance reservations or to place camera-ready ads in the program, reach out to us:

[www.nvhs.org/events](http://www.nvhs.org/events)

or email [events@nvhs.org](mailto:events@nvhs.org)

or call the NVHS Office at 321-208-7562





## VMC/BVC Secretary's Report

CPT Kristi Blanchard,  
USA (Fmr)

**Happy Independence Day!** Hopefully we have beautiful weather for our celebration on July 4th at the Independence Day parade in Merritt Island. This year, the parade is co-sponsored by the VMC and the Brevard County Sheriff's department. We really hope you can attend.

### Volunteer Recognition

Beginning last year, we moved the VMC Volunteer Recognition Ceremony to July to coincide with the changing of the Board of Directors. I'm happy to announce that this year we're recognizing our volunteers at the July 13, 2022 General Membership Meeting. Our volunteers have been amazing this year and have truly shown their commitment to service to their veteran community.

Eighty-seven volunteers served more than 18,700 hours – 40% came from the Board of Directors and 60% from other volunteers. The ceremony is a small but meaningful gesture meant to thank all the committed volunteers who keep our organization vibrant!



"WE CAN FIND MEANING AND REWARD BY SERVING SOME HIGHER PURPOSE THAN OURSELVES, A SHINING PURPOSE, THE ILLUMINATION OF A THOUSAND POINTS OF LIGHT... WE ALL HAVE SOMETHING TO GIVE."

- President George H.W. Bush  
Founder of Points of Light

Once again, we're giving the President's Volunteer Service Points of Light certificate and pin to 39 volunteers who served more than 100 hours between May 31, 2021 and June 1, 2022. The Bronze Award is designated to volunteers at 100-249 hours; the Silver Award at 250-499 hours and the Gold Award at 500+ hours. Four volunteers served more than 1,000 hours!

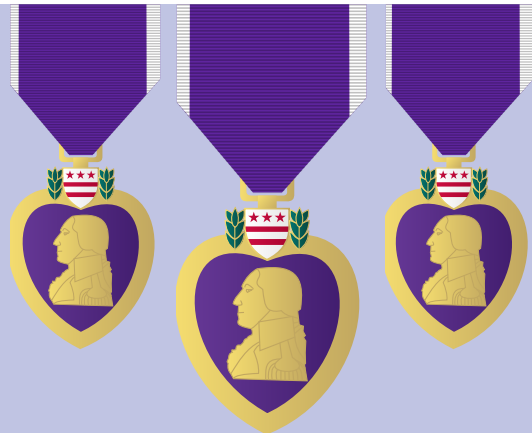
## 247th MARINE CORPS BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION



Saturday 12 November 2022  
6:00-9:00 PM  
Radisson Resort at the Port  
8701 Astronaut Boulevard  
Cape Canaveral, FL 32920

Hosted by:  
Brevard County Detachment 513  
Marine Corps League

\$34.00 Per Person  
(Cash, check or PayPal®)  
For more information contact  
MCLBrevard513@gmail.com



### ATTENTION!

If you have been awarded one of these,  
DID YOU KNOW . . .  
There is a MOPH Chapter  
at the Veteran Center on Merritt Island?

Call 321-480-3669  
We want to know you!

# Fourth of July Celebrations 2022: Brevard Will Host Many in Many Forms

*Independence Day 2020 had few celebrations in the midst of initial pandemic restrictions. July 4th in 2021 saw many more, but still they seemed muted and were fewer in number than we in Brevard have come to enjoy and expect. No such worries on Monday, July 4th of 2022 as Independence Day Celebrations are back in Brevard. Big time.*

At least three major Fourth of July parades are planned in Melbourne, Merritt Island and Titusville this year along with numerous concerts and over a dozen fireworks displays at initial count. Not to mention the thousands of beach parties, family picnics and other celebrations that will be going on.

As of early June, a number of entries for the Merritt Island parade were already signed up, including: a trailer containing members of the Sons, Daughters and Children of the American Revolution in period costume; American Legion and Aux units; the VMC led by President Dean Schaaf and a WWII era Jeep; Cape Canaveral Chapter of MOAA units; numerous special BCSO and BCFD units and many more. It should be great.

## A Reason to Celebrate!

As the fourth approaches, check for the events near you and CELEBRATE. While many worry about the current economic or political situation in our country, the United States of America is like no other and worthy of coming together and actively celebrating that we live here anytime, especially on the Fourth of July.

## VMC Sponsors the Merritt Island Parade

One event has a special focus in recognizing and honoring our First Responders, Active Duty Military and Veterans: The Fourth annual **Merritt Island BCSO/VMC Independence Day Parade**. The last two years the MI Parade was static along Route 520 in from off the Merritt Island Mall. Many cars passed by in two hours with passengers waving flags and blowing horns, but there is nothing more American than watching a Fourth of July Parade pass by in review.

This year the Parade will have BOTH: a Route of March from MIHS to Edgewood Jr/Sr HS along Courtney Boulevard moving south, and static displays of many of the entrants at the Veterans Memorial Center and Park.

The static display will be visible as the parade ends and the music, food, festivities and a giant VMC/BCSOP/MI Block Party begins — from 1100-1230. Catch the parade in the morning, and there is still plenty of time for family events and fireworks on that day!!

Check out all the VMC festivities or just celebrate anywhere as we pause and relish what being an American is all about.



SHERIFF WAYNE IVEY AND THE BREVARD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE CHARITY INVITE YOU TO THE




**4TH ANNUAL  
MERRITT ISLAND  
INDEPENDENCE DAY  
PARADE**

MONDAY  
**JULY 4, 2022**  
10:00 AM START

**PARADE ROUTE**  
Merritt Island High School, head South on Courtenay Parkway and then East on Merritt Avenue and end at Edgewood Jr/Sr High School.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL  
(321)264-7755**



**PARTICIPANT  
REGISTRATION**

Food trucks & celebration will be held at the Veterans Memorial Center after the parade!





© SCRUGGS

## Captain Ed Lanni: Saga of a WWII Merchant Mariner

Five years ago, at a VMC Veterans Day Ceremony, CAPT Ed Lanni was honored. He served before and during WWII in the Merchant Marine Force and fought in 6 other conflicts, spending 43 years commanding the Range Sentinel and other Space Program support vessels.

At the May 2022 VMC Memorial Day Ceremony, Congressman Bill Posey presented the newly authorized Congressional Gold Medal for the first time in Brevard County to Captain Lanni, now 97 years old, to a standing ovation and lots of media coverage.

As happens often these days, supply chain issues prevented Captain Lanni from receiving the actual medal so a temporary substitute was located and "awarded."

On 11 June, with the real medal in hand, Captain Lanni got the treasured recognition at his home in Cocoa and the fill-in medal was returned to its owner.

In between the two ceremonies, his story reached a film producer tasked with a project undertaken by the American Merchant Marine Veterans of the US. He is Ross Rowlinson, himself a former Merchant Mariner based in Vero Beach.

Rowlinson came to Brevard to visit the VMC, talk about Captain Lanni and the earlier story with VMC and see the actual award. He interviewed BVC Council Chairman Donn Weaver at the Center and Captain Lanni and Weaver at Lanni's residence. The production should be completed by early July and posted on YouTube for access by many. It will then be highlighted in The Council Courier.



Congress finally acted in 2020-21 to award Veteran Status to members of the Merchant Marine and the CGM to AMM Veterans who served in WWII. More than 8,000 Merchant Mariners were killed in that war which saw over 700 American ships sunk.

The US Merchant Marine Service in WWII suffered the highest percentage of casualties of any branch of service. Thus, the recognition is both deserved and overdue. The Inaugural Gold Medal for the Service itself rests at the Merchant Marine Academy in Kings Point, New York.

As CAPT Ed Lanni noted, it is up to him and only a few other WWII Merchant Mariners to hold the Medal for those who perished or died before it was struck.





# Island Direct Primary Care

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321-335-4290      www.islanddpc.com  
380 N Courtenay Pkwy, Merritt Island, FL 32953



## Advertise in the Courier

We appreciate having our corporate sponsors and veteran friendly businesses support us and hope they will consider advertising in the 2022 Courier. Please contact Donn Weaver (757.872.6576) if you might be interested or have questions.



### RATES

**Business Card:** \$50 per year

**Quarter Page Color:** \$150 per year

**Half Page Color:** \$250 per year

Our emailed newsletter reaches hundreds, including veteran organizations, government officials, 400 VMC members and more. Ads are in support of the VMC, a 501(c)3 organization, and may be tax deductible. Funds will be used to improve the Courier and expand circulation in 2022 and beyond.



# FRIDAY NIGHT Dances

PROUDLY PRESENTED  
BY THE VMC

**JULY  
1 AND 15  
2022**

TICKETS \$7.50 PER PERSON. BYOB.

**DOORS OPEN AT 6:30PM**

**DANCES TO BE HELD THE 1ST AND 3RD FRIDAYS OF EVERY MONTH**

The funds collected are donated to the VMC/BVC fund after paying for the cost of set up, take down and clean up. Each year the VMC awards scholarships for college bound or continuing college students from Brevard County who meet the BVC-VMC criteria.





## Operations Report

**CPL Robert W. Doyle, USMC (Fmr)**

Many of you already know that we had another traffic accident at the front gate area. A car ran the stop sign and jumped the curb into the light post, demolishing the pole and his vehicle. The driver fled the scene by time the sheriff's office arrived at 0500. Therefore, work will be going on in the front area for a while as it is repaired.

We are now out of water completely and we need to restock. This is a request to all tenant agencies to please donate at least 5 flats of water to the facility for the many events being held.

Security problems are still an issue in the park area. We've had several issues with the bathrooms being trashed by unknown visitors. Also, we've had incidents of groups of younger kids loitering in and around the bathrooms in the afternoon hours. BCSO Deputies stepped up their patrols to watch our areas.

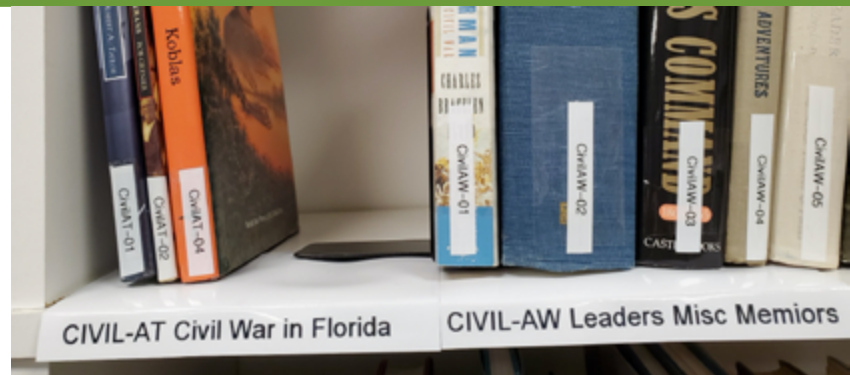
Gates are locked by staff at night and opened by staff in the morning. As soon as we get power to the park area we will be placing cameras in the area to try to stop some of the issues we are having.

The fishermen are having a lot of luck off the deck area catching a wide variety of fish. Numerous people are fishing the reservoirs and having a lot of luck also. Bookings are steadily coming and we expect to stay busy all summer. Anyone willing to help out please sign up as a volunteer and be on call to assist the organization.



## Library Notes

**SGT Joe Davie, USAF (Fmr)  
VMC Librarian**



VMC Library has been working with interns and additional summer help.

**Joel Freeland**, AP high school student and JROTC cadet, worked in the library during June and completed a scanning project consisting of nine Vietnam era *Stars and Stripes* magazines. Joel was able to digitize the July 22, 1969, edition titled *On the Moon 1*, which documented the first moon landing by Neil Armstrong and his crew mate Edwin Aldrin. Photos of the moon back then were grainy compared to today's NASA photos of other planetary explorations.

**Athena Pietrzak**, Brevard County AP school teacher, gave the library a week of her summertime away from classes to learn admin work for the Veterans History Project. She was able to update our online spreadsheet of veteran interviews and prepare the required forms for submission to the Library of Congress. She is planning to give the library more volunteer time on Saturdays when her students go back to class in September.

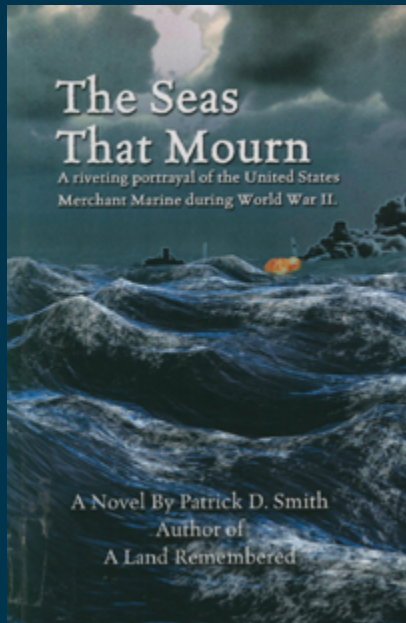
**Eleanor Fadok** has been with us as a librarian for more than 10 years. With her help we were able to re-organize the Biography section shelves and include many titles from the Civil War section that needed to be moved to biographies.

This enabled Joe to reorganize our Civil War collection and place call number and subject ID cards on the shelves that organize the collection so that visitors can better find books. As a result of the re-organization, we now have more room for new Civil War books.

**Bill Ellis** has been working on scanning Bill Howard's collections and papers from his tours in Army Intelligence during the Vietnam War. John's collections include interesting propaganda pamphlets produced by both sides in the battle for the population's hearts and minds.



## Book Report: "The Seas That Mourn" by Patrick D. Smith



Patrick Smith was a local author that passed away on January 26, 2014. He served as Public Relations Director for Brevard Community College for many years.

Smith uncannily breathed life into historical depictions and gave a brilliant sense of time and place in his books. He is best-known for *A Land Remembered*, which traces three family generations living in Florida beginning with the civil war era along the St. Johns River basin and ending during the Real Estate Booms of the 50's in Miami.

In *The Seas that Mourn*, 17-year-old Jimmy Kendall leaves his small Mississippi Town to join the Merchant Marines in 1942. That year, German

U-boats sank almost four million gross registered tons of allied ships in convoys that delivered war material and supplies to England and North Africa.

Jimmy serves as an Able Seaman aboard a cargo ship that crosses the Atlantic in large convoy of cargo ships, despite being followed and attacked by German U-Boats going over and coming back. Jimmy learns the skills of his station from an old Seaman aboard whom he bonds with. We learn that the sea has an allure that captivates its seaman both on board and at liberty ashore as Jimmy becomes one of them.

- Report by Joe Davie

*The Seas that Mourn* is found in our Fiction section Catalog # Fic-Smith-01

The Space Coast Jazz Society presents:  
**Monthly**  
**LIVE JAZZ Concerts**  
 by a variety of professional bands

at Veterans Memorial Center, Gray Hall  
 400 S. Sykes Creek Pkwy, Merritt Island

**\$5 discount for members of  
 the Veterans Memorial Center**

**Open to the Public**

Schedule & details at:  
[SpaceCoastJazzSociety.org](http://SpaceCoastJazzSociety.org)



## In Remembrance and Appreciation

Thank you to Dottie Jelinek for the generous donation to the Veterans Memorial Center in memory of LTC Robert LaForest. These funds will be used to support our museum educational programs with many aimed at our youth.

Thanks also to Ken and Dottie Ports for your kind donation in Memory of USAF Veteran David Simonson.

The VMC depends on the community to move forward and we truly appreciate those who remember our organization in their estates.

# Gifts from a Generous Community

*The Veterans Memorial Center operates on a volunteer basis with no admission charges. To make up the shortfall, we must rely on donations by visitors in many forms, including museum store sales, facility rentals and in kind support.*

Sometimes, the VMC gets gifts from unexpected sources in the community. These donations help our budget and operating expenses out immensely. In April, the Courier included the story of the Glenn Sandler family who arranged thousands of dollars in goods that are still being sold in our store or in use elsewhere. These goods were donated in memory of Glenn Sandler, the owner of GI Tax and a long time supporter of the VMC who died suddenly early this year. There are many local businesses that we are grateful for - they are some of our favorite supporters.

We are happy to report we recently recieved three wonderful gifts and we are delighted to share them with Courier readers. All of these generous donations came in the past month.

The first donation was over \$1,000 from the estate of WWII Veteran LTC Robert LaForest presented in his memory from his caregiver, Dottie Jelenik, trustee. We are honored your family keeps us in their thoughts.

Next there was an amazing \$10,000 gift from Georgiana United Methodist Church on top of their \$4,900 donation made last year. The church raises funds for good causes all year long and have adopted the VMC as one of their recipients. Thank you!!!

Finally, Mike Erdman Motors organized a Memorial Day Ceremony on 27 May announcing they would contribute \$100 for every vehicle sold during that weekend to select veteran organizations, including the VMC. On 10 June, after extending their sale a week, Erdman Motors donated a total of \$10,000, or \$2,500 each to the VMC and three other veterans organizations. We are working with Erdman Motors to post a major supporter grantor plaque on our Memorial Plaza Wall for their generous contributions over the years.



**Pictured (top):** Ms. Jelenik presents Dean Schaaf a check while Donn Weaver looks on.

**Pictured (middle):** Donn Weaver and Robert Doyle accepts the Georgiana UMC check from a parishioner during a surprise stop at VMC on 02 June.

**Pictured (bottom):** After the ceremony, speakers line up for a photo with CEO Mike Erdman. (L-r). Dr. Michael A. Cadore, Church Deacon; RADM Wayne Justice, USCG Ret, Port Commissioner and MOAACC Good Deeds Foundation Treasurer; Mr. Erdman; LTC Tim Thomas, USA, Ret JROTC Viera Instructor, representing all JROTC units in Brevard; JJ Justice, Past President of Rolling Thunder; and Donn Weaver, BVC Chairman and Good Deeds President.





**Pictured:** Cadet Color Guard at 30 May VMC Memorial Day Ceremony.



**Pictured:** Cadet Color Guard at their June awards ceremony.



**Pictured:** VMC and MOAACC members with LCDR Waddel (l) Heather Owen (Center) and SCCD boat training master (third from right) to present the cash. From l-r are VMC President Dean Schaaf (also presented check from Navy League and was keynote speaker); BVC Chairman Donn Weaver, GDF Chair; Dan McIntyre GDF and MOAACC Student Liaison; Joe Tichich (also for VFW 10131) and Pat Keane, also for MOPH 453.

## Sea Cadets at VMC: Worthy of Award

The US Naval Sea Cadets of Courageous Division (SCCD) based at the Veterans Memorial Center (VMC) held their 2022 Annual Awards Ceremony on 04 June. Under the command of Heather Owen with a number of other key adult leaders, including Paul Julian of VMC, many cadets were honored and new cadets welcomed with gifts and challenges to stick with the program.

The unit was down to less than 10 during much of the pandemic, but has come back with 16 members and more recruiting plans for the summer. The VMC is delighted to host and support SCCD in many ways and is grateful for their support at many VMC events and programs.

Part of the Ceremony was devoted to presentations of medals and support funding by a number of veteran organizations. One was the Good Deeds Foundation of the Cape Canaveral Chapter of MOAACC.

The SCCD is participating in a boating and lagoon restoration program this year which faces higher costs for boat fuel, rentals, etc. GDF provided \$1,000 to support that program the rest of this year and will further assist SCCD and all other Cadet Units, including 15 JROTC groups, with major funding support for regular operations in August, as has been done for many years.



**Pictured:** New cadets with their gifts from Commander Heather Owen.



# Record Night for BCSO Dancing for the Space Coast

*Months of hard work, practice and record breaking fundraising culminated in an evening of glamour and charity and the final performance of the contestants at FIT.*

On 04 June at the FIT Clemente Center, the BCSO Charities and Sheriff Ivey hosted the fifth annual "Dancing for the Space Coast" fundraiser, dance competition, dinner and auction.

At the end of the evening the dollar tally broke all records and the profits (after expenses) will be shared with four Brevard County 501(c)3 organizations: BCSO Charities, House of Hope, Family Promise and the Veterans Memorial Center. All of these organizations support veterans as well as many others in the county.

The VMC was represented by LTC Tim Thomas, USA, Ret. Tim is the senior instructor for the Viera HS JROTC and a member of the Melbourne Council. He is well known to the VMC. **He and his partner WON the competition and were in the top three of eight contestants in terms of dedicated funding by sponsors.**



**Pictured:** Vet Table with Dave Clayton, seated and Rob Medina with friend at next table.

VMC and MOAACC were well represented at the "Veterans Table" or by funds sent in by those who could not attend. Special thanks to Brian Whalen (MOAACC and VMC), Tim and Cynthia Pishdad (MOAACC), Dave Clayton (VMC), Dean and Susan Schaaf (MOAACC and VMC,) Wayne and Barbara Justice (MOAACC and VMC) and Donn and Jeanne Weaver (MOAACC and VMC) for their support.

Dave, Dean, Wayne and Donn also served as the on stage backdrop when LTC Thomas danced to "God Bless the USA."



**Pictured:** A full event!



**Pictured:** Dean Schaaf and Dave.



## Our Heartfelt Thanks to LTC Thomas and the BCSO

Over the course of three months, our dance representative LTC Thomas practiced many MANY hours with a professional dancer. All the contestants put in an equal amount of hard work, including another friend of veterans and the VMC, Rob Medina, Rep Bill Posey's veteran liaison officer and Mayor of Palm Bay.

The minimum amount selected charities received in the past was around \$45,000 each. Suspense will build as expenses are totaled and the final amounts presented by BCSO Charities at a ceremony in August. Thanks BCSO and Tim for a wonderful evening and for being such huge support to veterans!

V



# Always There: The Cape Canaveral Ladies

In 2015, the Veterans Memorial Center hosted the first meeting of an amazing group of women who serve as volunteers for the Cape Canaveral Ladies (CCL). Though they only meet 2-3 times per year at VMC, they work every day at the VA Cape Canaveral National Cemetery (CCNC) to make sure no veteran is ever buried alone and that the families of veterans who are interred there have a special person to turn to.

The Founder and President of CCL for many years was Cozette Merritt. Her husband, LTC Les Merritt, USA, Ret, was accorded full military honors when he was laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery in April of 2014. He had been active for many years in MOAACC on the Scholarship Board. In the Army he was an Airborne Ranger and even before MOAA he developed the slogan "Never Stop Serving." He and Cozette were doing just that with Cozette finding her unique, new mission by 2016.

At that Arlington Ceremony, Cozette was approached and comforted by a member of the Arlington Ladies, who have attended every burial ceremony at ANC in all kinds of weather to support families and make sure no veteran is ever buried alone. As far as we know, the CCL, the Arlington Ladies and one other Texas organization are the only such support groups operating in the entire country.

After nearly 18 months of VA/NCA pandemic restrictions where they could not be present at funerals, the CCL is back to full time duty and needed some replenishment funds as they try to grow their volunteer roster under new President LaRue Fleming.

The Good Deeds Foundation helped the CCL in their early years to provide funds for tri-folds, envelopes and cards, postage and even a golf cart (which no longer operates) at CCNC. With a new trifold needed and the need for many more supplies, the most recent GDF donation was well timed.

Please contact Cozette or LaRue for any information about joining the CCL or supporting them in their special mission at <https://capecanaveralladies.org/index.html>. They are indeed, in 2022, Always There.



**Pictured:** GDF President Donn Weaver presents a \$1,000 check for the CCL to former President Merritt and new President Fleming before their VMC meeting.

**Brevard County  
Property Appraiser**  
will be onsite at the  
**Veterans Memorial Center**  
answering questions and taking  
applications for homestead  
exemptions.

**August 1, 2022  
9am-2pm**

**Veterans Memorial Center Library  
400 S. Sykes Creek Pkwy.  
Merritt Island, FL 32952**

- > **Veterans will need a copy of award letter and DD214**
- > **Seniors (65 yrs. of age or older) will need tax return to confirm qualification for limited income exemption**
- > **All applicants will need drivers licenses/ID card, social security number, deed/title to home, vehicle registration and/or voter ID (if registered)**





## Memorial Day Pledge Made and Exceeded

*Erdman Automotive's generous support to four veteran related organizations.*

Several years ago, when Mike Erdman Toyota and Nissan moved their facilities to West Cocoa near I-95 on Rte 520, they invited select veteran organizations to assist in raising the new, giant American flag at the complex. Years earlier they began to support a number of veteran missions, including the MOAACC Good Deeds Foundation (GDF) Annual Golf Tournament and special projects at the Veterans Memorial Center (VMC).

With the Space Coast Daily Friday Night Locker Room video team of Steve Wilson and Orville Susong acting as producers and videographers, a great 2022 Memorial Day Ceremony was held at Erdman's on 27 May. Many Erdman employees, veterans and VMC's US Naval Sea Cadet Courageous Division participated in the event. The Cadets served as Color Guards, despite missing their first day of summer vacation!!!

At the end of the Ceremony, which may still be viewed on Space Coast Daily's web site, the Erdman team announced the four participating organizations would split the total amount of funds based on their donating \$100 for every vehicle sold over the Memorial Day Weekend. They decided to extend the time a bit and on 10 June, they donated a total of \$10,000 split the four ways between the GDF, VMC, Rolling Thunder FL-1 and Brevard JROTC Program.

Amazing generosity and support from the Erdman Automotive Family continues with sincere thanks from many veterans and JROTC cadets supported by the four groups.



**Pictured:** After the Ceremony the speakers join Mike Erdman to celebrate the event. From l-r, Dr. Michael Cadore, Church Deacon; RADM Wayne Justice USCG, Ret Port Commissioner and GDF Treasurer; Mr. Erdman; LTC Tim Thomas USA, Ret JROTC Brevard Rep and Melbourne City Council; SFC JJ Justice USA, Ret and Past President of Rolling Thunder FL-1; and CPT Donn Weaver, USA, Former, GDF President and VMC Council Chairman.

## Play Ball: Space Coast Stadium and USSSA Pride Go to Bat for the VMC

The rains held off as 3,000 fans from all over the country kicked off a 138 team womens softball tournament.

The local team, the Pride, narrowly lost to the Rochester, NY Vipers 3-2, but it was a great night to be a veteran. Stories of each service were shared between veterans and an online and in person two week signed jersey raffle kicked off. The proceeds of that raffle will go to the VMC!!

Last year a similar event was held in support of Ranger Mike support fund and \$1500 was raised.



**Pictured:** Sea Cadets standing tall in front of a crowd of 3,000.



**Pictured:** BVC Chairman Donn Weaver speaking to the teams and fans about veterans and thanking them for support.



**Pictured:** Lou Rossi fires a strike with Jarrett Mitchell (center) ready to go next.

## Throwing the First Pitch

With only a few days to organize Veterans Appreciation Night at Space Coast Stadium on 26 June, VMC and other veterans came to enjoy the evening which included the the VMC based Courageous Division Sea Cadets in the Color Guard role.

In addition, VMC leader and former board member Lou Rossi threw one of two first pitches. The story of 97 year old CAPT Ed Lanni was shared with the audience. Lanni received the

Congressional Gold Medal for WWII Merchant Marine Service.

Unfortunately, CAPT Ed Lanni was not feeling well and could not be there to throw out his "first pitch" but Jerrett Mitchell, a USMC veteran of Afghanistan who received a Purple Heart in 2009, fired one for a different generation of veterans. He lives in South Carolina and is the brother of one of the USSSA Pride Professional Women's Fast Pitch Softball Team.



### New Veterans History Project Interview: Navy Chaplain Elmer Everett

Navy Chaplain Rev. Elmer Everett Bosserman served aboard Naval Vessels during during World War II. He tells his story including encounters with enemy ships.

[Click to see the Elmer's full Veterans History Project interview.](#)



**The Veterans History Project** conducted over 200 interviews with Brevard County Veterans who served in war time. [The Center's YouTube channel](#) includes some of these fascinating interviews, making them accessible to everyone.



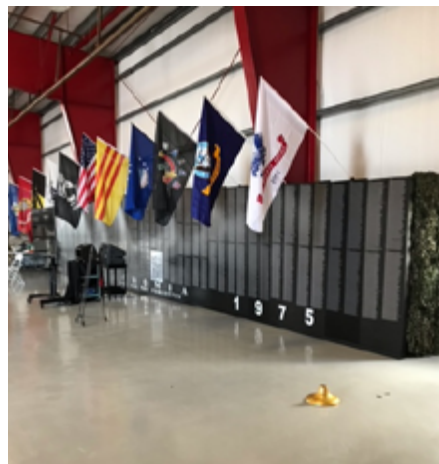
## A Permanent Home for a Moving Wall

*Vietnam War memorial wall finds forever home at the War Bird Museum.*

Florida's Patriot Guard Riders (PGR) gifted their former Vietnam Moving Wall earlier this year to the Valiant Air Command War Bird Museum. The same wall was positioned at the VMC Memorial Day Weekend of 2021 and was seen by hundreds during Ride for Freedom and Memorial Day events.

The PGR first offered the wall replica to the VMC but we did not have the appropriate space for it. VMC President Dean Schaaf suggested the War Bird Museum and linked the PGR and War Bird leaders together.

On 11 June 2022 the Wall was re-dedicated in the perfect setting after all — the inside Vietnam Hanger where it will be seen with reverence all year round. Dean represented VMC at the ceremony and took these great shots of the event.



## DAR Cares

The VMC receives support from many directions, including Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), which has five Chapters in Brevard. Last month, you read about the DAR chapter that created the butterfly garden outside the VMC museum.

On 17 June, the Phillip Perry Chapter, led by Angel Keller, donated boxes full of new underclothes, toiletries and non perishable food for homeless and at risk veterans.



**Pictured:** Chapter member Karin Mann presents the gifts to BVC Chairman Donn Weaver.



## Veterans Sales Store

by Jalaine Spears

Sales have been good from our Memorial Day Service and we will be reordering new stock.

New purchasing equipment has been installed for credit card purchases, which now can process tap cards.

Attendance has increased with summer vacations in full swing. Thanks for your continued support.

Stay safe while having fun!







# Unofficial Brevard VMC Vets Calendar June 2022 and Beyond

Contact VMC for any additions or other information.

NOTE: Some events change in between our monthly mailing of the VMC Calendar. Keep up to date with those changes using our web link: <https://veteransmemorialcenter.org/other-veterans-events/>

## JUNE

**30 Jun — Office of Sen. Marco Rubio monthly office hours for veterans to report issues and questions to the senator.**

**NOTE:** Due to Senate Election Year Rules, Sen Rubio's Team must suspend VMC Office Hours until November. Call Mr. Tom Self at 497-254-3753 directly if you have questions during the gap in office hours directly as needed.

## JULY

**04 Jul — Fourth annual VMC/BCSO Merritt Island Independence Day Parade 0900-1100.** Staging starts at 0830 at Merritt Island High School on North Courtney with kick off at 1000 hrs. Route is South on Cortney and Left (East) on Merritt to Edgewood HS. Movement suspends but all are encouraged to continue to the VMC for Music, plenty of BBQ food and drinks and states displays of the parade vehicles as well as booths from many veteran organizations and partners. Contact 321-264-7755 (BCSO) and 321-453-1776 (VMC) for more information and see the Poster to scan to register. Veteran organizations must register but are free this year, though donations to BCSO for shirts and much more are welcome.

## AUGUST

**07 Aug — Fourth Annual Military Order of Purple Heart Brick Honoring Ceremony (1400-1600)** VMC Gray Hall which will recognize and learn the stories of 10 Purple Heart Recipients then inducted into the MOPH VMC Plaza Monument Walkway.

**12 Aug — 2022 National Veterans Homeless Support 7th Annual Dinner Fundraiser 1730- 2100** Radisson Resort at Cape Canaveral. Sponsorships available and tables at \$1000 or seats at \$100. Call 321-208-7562 or email [events@nvhs.org](mailto:events@nvhs.org).

## SEPTEMBER

**10 Sep — Remembering 9/11, 21 Years Later: Honoring the Fallen on that Day** and those who fell later as a result of those attacks, as well as those who went to the fight for over 20 years thereafter. VMC Center, Outdoor Ceremony 1700-1900.

## OCTOBER

**07-08 Oct — The Central Brevard "Veteran Stand Down to Stand Up"** (Formerly known as Stand Down) event will be held at the Cocoa Armory on 07 October (set up) and 08 October for the actual activity. This event, with a 25-year history, was postponed due to COVID 19 in 2020/21. As many as 200 homeless and at-risk veterans usually attend the event with more than that number of volunteers providing a wide range of services from the private sector, the VA, the Medical Community, charitable organizations, etc. The Veterans Memorial Center (VMC) is the primary organizer of the event, but partners with National Veterans Homeless Support (NVHS) and dozens of others to help the program support many veterans in need. Planning meetings begin in July 2022 at the VMC. This event will focus on homeless and at-risk veterans and their families, while matching the veterans with job options on the Space Coast. Contact BVC Council Chairman Donn Weaver 757-871-6576 for more information.

**27 Oct — BCSO Free Shredder Event** at the Veterans Memorial Park 0900 - 1100.

## NOVEMBER

**08 Nov — Election Day** including at VMC which is a polling station.

**11 Nov — VMC Veterans Day Ceremony 0930-1100** with lunch and refreshments.

For events beyond November, please visit the [VMC online event calendar](https://veteransmemorialcenter.org/other-veterans-events/).



# The Patriot Report

## Disabled American Veterans (DAV), Space Coast Chapter 123, Inc.

### Scams Targeting Veterans' Raise Worry Among VA Officials

**George Furis**  
Department Service Officer (Ret.)

The Department of Veterans Affairs officials are warning about an increase in scam attempts targeting Veterans'. Scams could result in serious financial problems for veterans.

Have you received a suspicious call from an organization claiming to represent or have affiliation with the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA)? Did the caller guarantee a lucrative payout for your disability compensation or pension claim for a "small fee"? If so, you may be a target of a scammer. Recently, VA has seen an increase of fraudsters and non-accredited representatives who are targeting the pension benefits of elderly veterans and their dependents and survivors. Scammers try to take advantage of people online, through the mail or in person.

In fact, veterans are twice as likely to unknowingly participate in a scam as the general population, according to a 2017 AARP survey. An estimated 16% of Veterans describe losing some money to fraud, while 78% report scams explicitly designed to exploit their military service. The VA is committed to defeating fraudsters by educating veterans, their families, and all partners about the types of fraudulent tactics being used including "Pension Poaching."

Pension Poaching is the financial exploitation by an advisor who profits by artificially qualifying a claimant for VA pension benefits. The scheme often involves financial maneuvers such as advising claimants to hide their assets in trusts or annuity products sometimes resulting in lost investments and huge fees paid to the advisor. Pension Poaching is rapidly evolving as a preferred method used by criminals. To avoid being a victim, here are some helpful tips to remember.

- Be suspicious if you are offered to shift your assets around to qualify for VA pension. You may be required to repay benefits to the government.
- NEVER share eBenefits, VA.GOV, or other VA login credentials with anyone.
- DO NOT deposit VA benefits directly into a third-party bank account



**If you suspect fraud or a scam, contact the Office of Inspector General or the Federal Trade Commission.**

unless the person is court appointed or a VA accredited fiduciary.

- Remember, VA does not charge for processing a claim or request a processing fee. Only use VA accredited organizations to help file your claim.
- The VA does not threaten or take adverse actions such as jail or lawsuits on claimants. If in doubt, call VA directly at 1-800-827-1000.

**To report suspected activity, please contact the VA Office of Inspector General (OIG) by calling 1-800-488-8244. You may also file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission by visiting [www.consumercomplaints.fcc.gov](http://www.consumercomplaints.fcc.gov).**

### Common Veteran Scams

Of the Veterans who did fall victim to fraud in 2019, the average amount lost was nearly \$900, almost three times as much as non-veterans. Criminals target veterans using several known and related scams including, identity theft, online phishing scams and investment deceit, to name a few.

Here are some common Veteran scams and what to do if you encounter them:

- **Phishing.** Fraudsters will often contact veterans by phone or email, claiming they are officials from the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) who need to update the veterans' records. The critical thing to remember is not to automatically accept the caller is who they claim to be. When contacted with potential scams, you should ask for their name, their title and confirm that information with the DVA independently. You can do this by calling 1-800-827-1000.

Do not take their word for who they say they are! Do not give them Social Security numbers,

bank account information or addresses until you can verify the caller is legitimate. It is okay to delay responding or ask for a call back number to give information at a later time once you have been able to authenticate the call or email.

- **Carefully scrutinizing the email or text could help protect you from scammers.**

Fraudsters come at ex-service members from many angles, employing vet-focused twists on identity theft, phishing, impostor scams, and investment and loan deceptions. The goal is often to manipulate or gain access to benefits the government provides to those who served.

### Red Flags to watch out for:

- Veterans are told they qualify for money from “secret” government programs but must first pay a fee or provide personal information.
- Scammers exploit Veterans in financial duress by offering cash upfront in exchange for (much higher) future disability or pension payments.
- Con artists attempt to charge veterans for access to their military records or government forms. Veterans can get this material for free from their local VA or the National Personal Records Center..
- Suspicious messages sent from public email domains. Every legitimate organization will have its own domain. It is exceedingly rare for an official email to come from a public domain such as “@gmail.com” or “@yahoo.com.” For example, legitimate emails from the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) will have an address ending in “@dav.org.” Veterans should also look for misspelled domain names or other misspellings.
- Poor spelling and grammar. Official correspondence is usually well proofread and spelling errors in the body of emails can be a tell-tale sign of fraud.
- Suspicious links and high-pressure requests. Criminals realize you're more likely to click on a phony link if you feel under pressure, so be wary of an email containing suspicious links or attachments that create a sense of urgency.
- Investment advice. According to AARP, some deceivers refer to themselves as veterans' advocates and claim their victims are entitled to additional veterans' benefits. If approached by someone in this manner, AARP recommends veterans confirm their state regulatory office credentials.
- Charging money for free records. In this scam, fraudsters convince veterans to pay them for documents that are already free. If you want copies of your VA or military records, you should contact the Department of Veterans Affairs, the National Personal Records Center, or the appropriate service branch.
- Requiring upfront payment. This is a common scam in which the fraudsters claim to have large amounts of money and they need help to get it to you. Some even go as far as to claim they are a military member overseas. Another version of this gift asks for money to start a business. It is best to safely guard your finances and banking information, particularly from people asking for money upfront in

exchange for more money or a stake in a business.

- Exclusive deals for veterans. Be mindful and skeptical of car purchases, loans, home rentals and other deals only for veterans. In many cases, the items are not discounted at all, and some may be for non-existent products and services. Of course, there are legitimate discounts available to Veterans, but it is best to check them out before buying anything and never send money to someone you do not know.

If you or someone you know fell victim to a scam, you can file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission, either online or by dialing 877-382-4357. If the fraud came through the internet, like in an email, for example, you could also report it to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Internet Crime Complaint Center.

### Uptick in Fraudulent Calls to Seniors

“Fraudsters are getting smarter, more deliberate and more engaged. They're getting better,” said Charles Tapp II, chief financial officer for the Veterans Benefits Administration. “We are seeing a lot more instances where veterans — particularly seniors, are getting fraudulent calls, so we certainly are making our senior veterans more aware.”

*Earlier this year, the Federal Trade Commission reported that about 2.8 million Americans filed fraud complaints in 2021, the most on record. The agency estimated that consumers lost more than \$5.8 billion to scams last year.*

VA officials said older veterans with military pensions or other regular department payouts can be attractive targets for thieves. VA pension theft can occur when an outside party, a stranger or someone known to a veteran, such as a caregiver, convinces the veteran to shift their payouts to a new bank account or a separate financial product (annuities or trusts, for example), preventing them from accessing the money.

Tapp said when veterans' bank accounts are changed without explanation, it triggers an internal check within VA to ensure that fraud is not occurring. But other theft schemes are more difficult to detect and may only be corrected after months of malfeasance have already occurred.



In 2018 I received notice from Defense Self-Service Logon (DS Logon) that my password and Direct Deposit was changed on Saturday, March 10. They wanted to know if I had changed it. I was instructed to contact the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) Support Center at 800-477-8227. I suspected this to be a phishing scheme and did not respond (My Blunder!).

I received another call from the Department of Veterans Affairs. A message was left of my answering machine that my Direct Deposit had been changed and I needed to call them and confirm the change. I did not return home from working at the VA clinic in Viera until later that evening and I did not call that night. I called the VA the next morning and talked to an Agent named "Gary" and confirmed with him I had NOT changed my Direct Deposit information. He completed the forms to stop the unauthorized change of account and routing numbers. I couldn't thank him enough! Fortunately, it was caught in time.

I later learned several others at my chapter had the same experience. A hacker had entered our account through our DFAS login and changed the routing numbers on our account to some on-line bank. I thank the VA for being vigilant to catch the intrusion and stop it.

## The VA Does Not Charge to Apply for Benefits!

In a series of recent outreach efforts, department officials are reminding Veterans that VA does not charge to process applications for benefits and services, and it is against the law for an outside group or award you a benefit or service, not even someone who is VA accredited," a department fact sheet on pension poaching states. "Only the VA can determine eligibility and award benefits and services."

Tapp said if individuals are confused about available services or benefits, they can contact VA's National attorney to charge claimants for preparing benefits applications. "We want to make sure that veterans know that they are in control of their information, particularly when they're engaging with us." More information on potential scams is available at the Veterans Benefits Administration web site.

## Veterans are a Consistent Target for Scam Artists

A report from the Federal Trade Commission and Better Business Bureau states veterans have consistently been a target for scam artists, losing nearly \$405 million to fraudulent schemes since 2012.

According to J.D. Simkins (1) of the Observation Post Section of the Military Times, active-duty personnel and veterans of the U.S. Army were hardest hit, conned nearly 577,000 times since 2012 to the tune of over \$142 million. The Army is the largest service branch, and the rest of the service-specific scams were counted as:

- Navy – 143,718 scams totaling \$62,542,897
- Air Force – 110,448 scams totaling \$44,257,654
- Marine Corps – 57,204 scams totaling \$24,976,528
- Coast Guard – 10,817 scams totaling \$4,772,422

The most common schemes over the last seven years have been the

fraudulent employment variety, the report said, which generally targeted newly discharged veterans looking for that first job as a civilian.

In these scenarios scammers notify the target that they've been selected for employment, often with claims of having found the veteran on a popular job board, such as LinkedIn. Once "hired," the veteran is instructed to purchase work equipment through a website secretly operated by the fraudsters. The scammers then inform the veteran that they will be receiving a check to reimburse the amount spent on the nonexistent equipment. If they do get a check, it bounces.

Identity theft was another highlighted medium for scamming military personnel, (Nigerian princes be damned!)

A scamming group that labels itself, "Exchange Inc." has been attempting, with some success, to defraud service members into purchasing used vehicles online that don't actually exist, according to an August 2019 report by the Army and Air Force Exchange Service.

"For years, scammers have used the Exchange's trademarked logo and name without permission to purportedly sell vehicles in the United States," Steve Boyd, the Exchange's loss prevention vice president, said in the release. "Some military members have sent money thinking they're dealing with the Exchange, only to receive nothing in return" He added "Exchange stores on military installations, the only brick and mortar locations in which actual military exchanges operate, are not authorized to sell vehicles."

Additionally, the real Exchange never conducts private transactions or posts on resale websites. The report paints a grim picture of what fiscal responsibility looks like among active-duty military personnel and veterans.

*Observation Post is the Military Times one-stop shop for all things off-duty. Stories may reflect author observations.*





## Park and Plaza Report

by Donn Weaver

### Lots of Action in the Plaza and Park in June

Spurred on by Memorial Day, donations for bricks in the Plaza rose to more than 25 during June and included a beautiful new cement bench top in the Plaza honoring Harry Beaver's very patriotic military family. The bench is located in the Plaza entry way.

Sadly, in the early morning hours of 21 June a hit and run SUV vehicle accident took out a plaza light pole, which narrowly missed damaging our Law Enforcement and First Responders Monument. The driver was apprehended eight hours later after fleeing, but his vehicle and the light pole were totaled.

Improvements to major Plaza bricks and benches continued and the Central Plaza Pillar area was repainted as the Plaza continues to look great.

All five of our Memorial Benches for the Veterans Park were received and assembled by Kelly Martin and his team. They will be installed later at various locations and are the first of what we hope will be many Park Benches made to last forever with no maintenance. They come in four types with varying costs so help spread the word to others who may be interested in this beautiful project which supports the VMC and is a tax deductible gift.

The permit for building the Monument to America's Fallen Allies was obtained and construction begins in early July with the goal of dedication still possible for 17 September. Stay tuned.



**Pictured:** Hit and run totals car and light pole within the Park.



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Eliason, Sandra July, 2022	Sherman, Rheta Campbell Sept, 2022
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If you feel your name is missing and that you paid for Booster sponsorship this year, please contact the Treasurer. Thank you for your forbearance and understanding. Fill in your names and send to the BVC along with your check.

Please make your check payable to: Brevard Veterans Council (Boosters).

Single Name per year- \$10.00 / Double Names – \$20.00

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_