



THE VETERANS MEMORIAL CENTER

COUNCIL COURIER

JANUARY 2023



A Publication of the Brevard Veterans Council & Veterans Memorial Center



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JANUARY 2023

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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 Those submissions received after that date will not be published.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

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Our Organization

As of 12 Sept 2022:

[List of Board Members 2022-2023](#)

As of 9 August 2022:

[Committee Department Assignment 2022-2023](#)

As of 1 November 2022:

[BVC VMC Org Chart 2022-2023](#)



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 new Year! We just closed out a fantastic year at the Veterans Memorial Center and we are anticipating another great year. Our connections with the veterans organizations and community partners only continue to grow with generous donations coming in.

Nothing like a fresh coat of paint!

We are starting the new year with a much improved look in our Plaza with freshly painted helicopters, tank, military truck and water wagon. A big thank you to the efforts of our Preservation Committee and to Stevens and Strain Painting of Titusville. The Library has a new look that will be complete with matching frames, new chairs and audio visual upgrades. The Library staff is reaching out to Brevard County library resources that should put us on the books as the top Military History library in the county. BZ to the Library staff.

Stand Down to Stand Up

Our next big event is the Stand Down

to Stand Up on the 21st of January with set up on Friday the 20th. Thanks for all the work already done and to all the volunteers required to have a great outreach to challenged and deserving Veterans.

Amphitheater Update

On January 11th we will be going before a board which will include County and State officials to request additional funding for our Park Amphitheater project. Our Chairman, Donn Weaver, has completed an outstanding application with the assistance of MIRA and State officials.

I am drafting this input from Allen (Dallas), TX where it was 17 degrees (minus 7 wind chill) yesterday with snow flurries! My granddaughters have graciously let me use their homework cubical to work at. It has been a very Merry Christmas and an immensely enjoyable time with family and friends.

Dean Schaaf

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[FACEBOOK](#)
[WEBSITE](#)
[YOUTUBE](#)



Operations Report

**Robert W. Doyle,
Operations Manager**

As we are now at the end of the year this is a reminder for all tenant groups to come and fill out a new point of contact

contract for your respective group. This last week we have been able to work in the kitchen, mop closet and pantry and do some major restructuring. Soon they will start working in the park area with water, power and landscaping prior to the stage being built.

We currently have one of the largest playgrounds for a park and it is being well used. Soon they will add some exercise sites for the walkers. The second week of January the DAV will be back from school and then business as usual. Hope all stay safe and see you in the New Year.



Council Chairman's Report

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

Optimism as 2023 Begins

Hope you all had a very special Christmas and holidays with family and friends. As we seem to always do as individuals and families, the VMC team can truly look toward the new year of 2023 with hope and confidence.

The year will likely bring us more events, visitors, bookings, and satisfaction that the hours we spend as volunteers at the VMC, and veteran community, are truly worth spending. How can I say so? Just look at the past. Every year since our 2016 major expansion when we added the Museum and Veterans Memorial Park has shown growth, more engagement, more revenue and more fun.

Yes, we were somewhat slowed by Covid for parts of 2020, but we were undaunted and to this day we are proud the VMC was the only place in Brevard County to host Memorial Day Ceremonies in May 2020.

When you read the Plaza and Park report and see the Veterans Memorial Park final expansion and amphitheater plan solidified in 2023 by the County, or when you look at the calendar

through July of many unique and major events planned for this year, anyone will be buoyed.

Early in the new year, we will be taking pictures and reporting to the County the major projects we are working on through the \$70,000 plus received from the BCSO Dancing with the Space Coast and other donations. Major upgrades in the library, store, plaza artifacts, museum, signage, computer networks and much more will make us proud, and visitors amazed.

I for one, have never been good at making resolutions every new year. At the VMC they are not needed. Because we have so many determined and dedicated volunteers, your VMC will no doubt experience, like each year in the recent past, the best year ever.

Sincere hopes, when December of 2023 rolls around, our country, our county and our center will regard 2023 as the best year yet and the best place to log all those volunteer hours.

Happy New Year,
Donn

Toys for Tots Big Success at VMC This Year

If you came to the VMC any day from late November until 22 December you probably saw at least two big Toys for Tots boxes full of unwrapped, donated toys meant for needy kids on the Space Coast. In fact, it appeared many understood with the current economic pressures most families are going through, buying toys this season might be low on the priority list.

The Veterans Memorial Center (VMC) is home base for The Brevard Marine Corps League Detachment. USMC Reserve units spearhead the annual Toys for Tots program throughout the country. That makes for a great match.

On 10 December toys collected up to that date at VMC were taken over to Merritt Island Airport for a traditional fly-in to contribute annual event.



Pictured: Notice the Bear on the Propeller casing as well as Vinnie Howard and Bob Doyle on the right!!

Honor-Remember-Teach Wreaths Across America Ceremony 2023



Pictured: Escort preparing to leave Veterans Memorial Center to escort wreaths to Pinecrest Cemetery



Pictured: Brevard County Marine Corps League Honor Guard



Wreath presenters, L to R: Army (Kristi Blanchard & Bill Wagner) USMC (Mark Blais) Navy (Walter Marshall) US Air Force (Dena Armstrong) US Space Force (Donald Ahlin) US Coast Guard (Tommy Vargas) US Merchant Marines (Ellen Harris) and POW-MIA (Cindy Flowers)

Wreaths Across America (WAA) Day was Saturday, 17 December all around our country. In Brevard County, more than 13,000 wreaths were placed with honor at veteran grave sites from Scottsmoor to Micco.

But on Sunday, December 18, 2022, with permission from the National Wreaths Across America Headquarters, **a special ceremony was held to honor a very special Brevard County hero, PFC Emory Bennett** who was killed in 1951 during the Korean War at age 21. He died after heroic action to slow down the enemy soldier attack with his automatic while most of his unit escaped to better-defended areas. For these actions, he was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor on February 1, 1952. In Brevard County, a bridge and causeway are named in his honor and his statue is found at Cocoa Riverfront Park.

Brevard County Honors Veterans (BCHV), a WAA group founded by Dorothy Walsh and Don Pearsall to honor all veterans laid to rest in Brevard County cemeteries, began the annual tradition of recognizing this hero during the annual Wreaths Across America Day on December 14, 2019. This year, BCHV and the VMC joined together to make an even stronger remembrance of this hero. We were joined by Marine Corps League Honor Guard, Viera Elks & Antler Lodge members, Rolling Thunder FL Chapter 1, Blue Knights, Born To Ride for 45, Veterans Connections, Their Voice of Hope, and many individuals who came out to honor our veterans. Donn Weaver, Chairman of the Brevard Veterans Council, told PFC Bennett's story of courage and sacrifice while the young members of the Antlers laid wreaths on his and his family's graves.

Steve Wilson of Space Coast Daily was there and filmed the entire ceremony live. [Here's the link so you can see it yourself.](#)

It was truly a blessing to have such a strong show of support for our veterans – but the most heartwarming of all was the number of youth who showed up to honor our heroes – thank you to the parents who are raising our future leaders and teaching them to Remember – Honor – Teach.

Merry Christmas, Happy Hannukah, and a blessed, healthy happy, and safe New Year.

God Bless America

Dorothy Walsh

Chairman, BVC/VMC Cemetery Support Committee



Chaplain's Corner

by Chaplain Chip Hanson
USMC (Fmr)

It is time to wipe the slate clean. 2022 is now in the past and 2023 is here, and 2023 is already shaping up to be a great year.

The PACT Act

Finally, we have a new tool to help aid and assist Veterans and their families! The PACT Act is a new law that expands VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic substances.

The PACT Act adds to the list of health conditions that we assume (or "presume") are caused by exposure to these substances. This law helps us provide generations of Veterans—and their survivors—with the care and benefits they've earned and deserve.

VA Loans and Veteran Housing

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers home loans and grants. These programs help service members, veterans, and surviving spouses to buy, refinance, or modify their homes. The VA guarantees part of the loan, meaning they will cover a portion of the loan if you default. Doing this allows lenders, such as banks and mortgage companies, to offer you more favorable terms. Veterans with certain service-connected or aging-related disabilities can get housing help. You may qualify for special housing grants from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

HUD-VASH is a joint program of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Its goal is to provide permanent housing and supportive services to veterans who are experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness and their families. VASH (Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing) refers to the program within the VA that supports veterans in obtaining and maintaining housing.

The HUD-VASH program combines the HUD's Rental Assistance Demonstration Program with the VA's Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program to provide rental assistance and case-management services to eligible veterans and their families. HUD provides rental assistance through project-based Section 8 contracts, while the VA offers case-management services.

Details on the HUD-VASH program can be found online at the VA website.

<https://www.va.gov/homeless/hud-vash.asp>

"A hero is someone who understands the responsibility that comes with his freedom."
—Bob Dylan

GOD BLESS AMERICA
JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER CHIP HANSON



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Veterans Making a Difference in Brevard Classrooms

by Donn Weaver

The Brevard County Vets back to Class Program, in conjunction with the Joe Foss Institute at Arizona State University, has been sending veteran volunteers to speak in classrooms at every level for over eight years. The Program is county wide and sponsored by the Veterans Memorial Center and the Cape Canaveral Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAACC). With an average of 15 volunteers, they've supported thousands of students on a yearly basis. 2018 saw a peak of over 6,200 students impacted from 29 schools.

As an update, here is the REPORT CARD for the program for the first semester of the current school year:

A. NUMBERS: We had 7 volunteers speak at 7 schools (several repeats) to 1100 students. We lost 800 students we planned to speak with due to the hurricanes.

B. VBC ONLINE Classes: Our 19 modules developed during Covid years continue to be used but we cannot measure their impact. They may well have, ironically, reduced the number of in person requests.

C. NEW BPS VBC Focal Point: Thanks to Jennifer Jolley, who began full time as Social Studies BPS district wide coordinator, for sending out blasts on VBC, reminding about on line and supporting our productive teacher workshop in August. Know she will try again in late January.

D. AUGUST Workshop: We had the largest group of teachers ever sign up for 04 August In Service class on the VBC program — over 30 teachers from 20 schools. We also briefed 30 JROTC instructors from all 15 JROTC High Schools and several came through with classes for us, especially Heritage and Cocoa Beach.

E. VMC MUSEUM TRAVELING TRUNK: Used in three instances which helped reinforce the lesson by passing around items from a combat era.

F. MUSEUM VISITS: Part of our August mission was to invite teachers to send field trip students to the VMC Museum. A record 7 such trips took place this fall.

G. NEW PROGRAM FOR ACADEMIES/ROTC: Related to VBC, we staged the first ever Brevard County seminar for juniors and seniors to learn about getting into the Military academies, receiving college ROTC scholarships and other special enlistment and education military programs. The program will continue each year in late August. This year 90 students from 11 schools, including home schooling and non JROTC schools attended. That happened because Jennifer Jolley hooked us up with school Guidance counselors.

H. SUPPORT FROM JFI/ASU: Thanks to Dylan Dalzotto, we had many pocket Constitutions, handheld flags and poster size copies of the Constitution which we passed out to students and in the latter case to members of the Daughters of the American Revolution who are having them framed and handed out to all 17 High Schools.

I. LOOKING FOR NEW VBC VOLUNTEERS: Please help me keep a lookout for potential new VBC recruits during 2023. In 2022 we gained two, but lost five. Thanks

So, while not bad, it will be tough to catch our record for the best year ever by June.

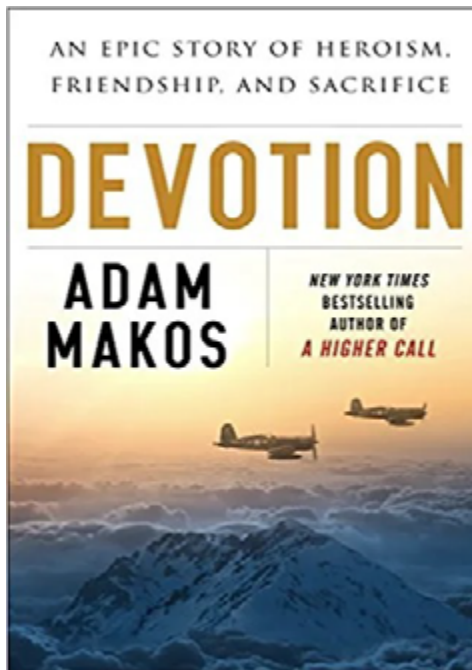
Contact Program Coordinator Donn Weaver, 757-871-6576, for more information or to join as a volunteer.



Caption: High school students attend the first seminar to educate students on the paths to military academies and ROTC scholarships for college.

Book Report: "Devotion" by Adam Makos

Catalog #Korea-69



Devotion was presented at the library staff meeting as an outstanding read about heroes in the "Forgotten War" (Korea). As a staff member who served in the Army in Korea 15 years after the "hot" war, I accepted the challenge to read and report on it.

The author takes the reader in the following ways through the eyes and experiences of combatants:

The US Marines

fighting on the ground in the North Korean mountains in minus 20-degree weather against two Communist Chinese Armies that have surrounded the 1st Marine Division in an area in the Northeast called the Chosin Reservoir.

The lives and times of two Naval aviators that, with others, saved the Marines from destruction by close-in fighter bomber support in Naval Corsair planes flying off the aircraft carrier "Leyte".

Lastly, the human-interest story contrasting backgrounds of White and Black (the first) pilots in a racially segregated world in the US and in the military recently desegregated.

The book is gripping. The reader "feels" the experience of desperate fighting in the air and on land in unbelievable weather conditions (I remember). This was a horrible war in a place, where, to this day there is no peace (we still maintain 25,000 US troops in South Korea).

Doug Bisset VMC Library Staff Member

Book Report: "The Kicking Mules" by Phil Eschbach



The Kicking Mules (188 pages: self-published, copyright 2004) is a book by a local author.... USA (USAF) WWII Philip Innes Eschbach Jr. who was born in Melbourne, Fla., on Aug. 19, 1923. He was a tenth-generation Southerner and a fourth-generation Floridian. After high school he enlisted in the US Army (USAF). He attained first lieutenant. He was a pilot flying the B-26 Martin Marauder twin engine bomber.

Eschbach's initial European tour was in Sardinia during the 1944

Italian campaign. He finished his tour in France in 1945 near Dijon. He had over 50 missions of dangerous combat. Just a guess at his 56 combat missions at roughly 10-12 hours per mission suggests that he spent one year in the air- briefing, mission over enemy territory and debrief.

After the war he obtained his BA and MA (with honors) at the University of Florida and became an English professor and retired in 1981 from Brevard Community College (EFSCU). I was teaching an engineering class in the evening at BCC. Perhaps we ran into each other?? If you are interested in this book, it is available in the BVC Museum store for \$10. Also, if you read this book start with the last two pages (187-188). One can correlate the missions that Eschbach flew with the Mules. Finally, there is a scholarship in his name at EFSCU.

Ray Norman



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FRIDAY NIGHT Dances

PROUDLY PRESENTED
BY THE VMC

JANUARY 6 AND 20 2023

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.



Library Notes

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

Happy New Year from all the library volunteers. We are looking forward to a productive year ahead.

A generous donation to the center from the Brevard County Sheriff's dept has given us funds for making upgrades to the library. Under Kristi Blanchard's leadership, we have painted a deep blue background above the library bookshelves to prepare for framed artwork above the books. Bill Wilkening, Joe Davie, Doug Bisset, and Kristi pitched in to do the patching and sanding prep work. Kristi, Dean, and Paul came in on a Sunday to do the painting. Jeannie Weaver has accepted the leadership to begin work on the selection and framing of the artwork

Brevard County Sons of the American Revolution makes Donation to VMC Library

Selected from the Journal of the American Revolution "100 Best American Revolution Books of All Time", the Brevard Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution



Pictured L to R: Donn Weaver; Joe Davie, Librarian; Joel Edgerton, President of the SAR Chapter; Doug Bisset, SAR Historian; Dean Schaaf.

donated 14 new books to the VMC library on 12/14. The new books greatly enhance the American Revolution Section in the Library. Pictured at the ceremony along with VMC personnel was Joel Edgerton, President of the SAR Chapter. Please come to the library and check out the new collection.

Submitted by Doug Bisset

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Learn
Travel

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Create
Share
Garden
Cook
Enjoy life...

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Also read it at www.seniorscenemag.com

Pick up your FREE copy at the places you visit most!

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.

Revised

25th Annual Central Brevard Stand Down to Stand Up

Free Services

Transportation
 Medical
 Dental
 Legal
 Hearing and Eye
 Hair Cuts
 Clothing
 Supplies
 Employers Hiring
 VA Benefits
 Outdoor Pet Services
 Women Vet Services
 Housing Information
 Showers
 Breakfast & Lunch
 Vet Support Groups

21 January 2023
0700 - 1400

For Homeless or Distressed
 Veterans
 and Families

Location

Cocoa Armory
 308 North Fiske Blvd
 Cocoa

SPONSORED BY
Veterans Memorial Ctr
and many other Veteran
Related Organizations

To Volunteer
 Contact Jill Rippon
jillvmc@gmail.com

For Questions
 Contact Donn Weaver
donnweaver2020@gmail.com
 757-871-6576

Meetings / Training

10 Jan: 1700 - 1800
 VMC Library

17 Jan: 1700 - 1800
 VMC Gray Hall

19 Jan: 1100 - 1300
 Committee Chairs
 Cocoa Armory

20 Jan: 1200 - 1700
 Set Up
 Cocoa Armory

21 Jan: 0700 -1400
 Event

Transport Contact

Kevin McGarry
 321-795-2034
kmcgarry@cfl.rr.com



Notes

Escorts Needed/ TNG Req

Help us spread the word on
 the change and getting new
 volunteers

Thank you!





Real Winners: State Champion Cocoa Beach HS Lady Raider Challenge Team

For many years MOAACC's Good Deeds Foundation (GDF) and the Veterans Memorial Center have supported all 15 Brevard County JROTC programs as well as five other cadet programs. That help has been in the form of use of the Veterans Memorial Park and facilities and funding for all trophies in all 9 meet events in Raider Challenge, and for Drill and Air Rifle competitions (at Palm Bay and Rockledge High Schools). While the GDF, VMC and others encourage and support the over 2900 JROTC and other Cadets in Brevard, credit goes solely to them and their instructors/trainers when they finish regardless at what level. Sometimes, that finish brings success--which is amazing.

During the weekend of 2-4 December, the Raider Challenge Teams from Cocoa Beach Jr/Sr High School were crowned State Champions (female) and Third Place (male). *Below is reported by JROTC Instructor LTC Jim DesJardin, USA, Ret.:*

This past weekend our Cocoa Beach JROTC Raiders competed at the Florida JROTC Raider Championships and our Lady Raiders finished once again as State Champions (State Champions in 2021) and our male team placed third overall in a very competitive division (tier). Florida has 172 JROTC programs, with 78 competing at the State Championship. The Florida Raider Championship divided the 72 schools into tiers based on the JROTC student and school population. Cocoa Beach Raiders competed in Tier 2.

Although one of the smallest high schools by population, our CBHS Raiders dominated nearly every school in the competition. Our Female team bested every female team at the state championship regardless of tier placing, 25 teams in total. Our Raiders compete

in the toughest competition in high school beginning the competition with a team 5KM and within four hours finishing a 100-meter team 400-pound tire flip, constructing a 60-foot rope bridge, running a 1-mile cross-country course with weighted equipment, and completing a fitness challenge (individually moving four 30 pound kettlebells 50 meters).

Alessandra Lane and Ella Walker led our Lady Raiders with team members Reagan Fish, Sophia Ricks, Ever Sills, Ally Tuggle, Katlyn Staddie, Vittoria Lane, Valerie Pruna, Olivia Espenschied, Elena Widick, and Elisabeth Wolverton.

(continued on next page)



Pictured: Congratulations to the Lady Rader Challenge Team!

UHaul Comes Through for Veterans

For almost four years the Veterans Memorial Center has had a special partnership with UHaul of Central Florida. Cal Conner, a veteran himself, and UHaul senior official for the region, worked with the VMC and County to build a unique veteran themed UHaul Self Storage Facility adjacent to the VMC near the Merritt Square Mall.

During those years UHaul also loaned VMC forklifts and cranes to move things like aircraft bomb racks, a nuclear submarine periscope and a revolutionary war cannon. They also provided five storage lockers in the new facility gratis for the first year and at a good discount thereafter.

It is truly a great partnership between the private sector and the Veteran community.

Turns out, however, that UHaul takes it a step further during the holidays. Some months ago, Mr. Connor requested VMC help to identify a veteran family homeowner in real need of home improvements. Turning to Keith Van Buren, a decorated veteran of the Global War on Terrorism who now works as vet liaison official in Rep Bill Posey's Office, a great candidate was selected. While too modest to be named or photographed, the veteran served in the Korean War and has current health problems that prevent him from keeping up his south Melbourne home and garden.

On 14 December, Mr. Conner led a team of 35 UHaul employees from all over Central Florida to the address and the results are amazing. The yard /garden was completely redone, the home fully painted and many roof molding pieces and other wooden items outside the home were replaced and painted.

With the current economic stress many veterans feel, having a company that supports both a major veteran facility and an individual veteran and his family is remarkable. Thanks, UHaul!!



Pictured: The work done, the UHaul Team poses with Brevard Veterans Council Chairman Donn Weaver (blue shirt) and Cal Conner (immediate right of Weaver) before heading home.



(continued from previous page)

Our Lady Raiders show determination, resilience, and toughness and are some of the best athletes and students at Cocoa Beach and I thought you would like to know and be able to highlight with your organizations what their hard work over the past five months has produced. Thank you again for your support!

Pictured: Lady Raiders building a 60-foot rope bridge during competition.



Special Presentation of the Annual VMC Distinguished Service Medals

At the VMC General Membership meeting on December 14th, VMC President Dean Schaaf presented several Distinguished Service Silver Medal awards to volunteers who support our mission all year long and go above and beyond to support the goals of the Memorial Center. There is a plaque in the lobby that lists all of the previous awardees.

This year's awardees (Garet McKimmie, Bill Pollock, Allen Spence, Bill Wilkening and Mike Wrazen) represent the museum, store, library, BOD, and various committees. Many thanks to them and all of our volunteers who keep the VMC operational.

After the awards were presented, the BVC / VMC membership celebrated the holidays along with our special partners from across Brevard County who help us help veterans and their families year around. Thank you to our membership for a wonderful 2022 and we look forward to continuing our mission in 2023.

Happy New Year!



Pictured: Rosemarie Hill, Aux Post 344, presents a certificate of appreciation to President Dean Schaaf



Pictured: Allen Spence and VMC President Dean Schaaf



Pictured: Bill Pollock and VMC President Dean Schaaf



Pictured: Bill Wilkening and VMC President Dean Schaaf



Pictured: Garet McKimmie and VMC President Dean Schaaf



Pictured: Mike Wrazen and VMC President Dean Schaaf

2022 Homeless Memorial: Veterans and Others Honored

The Brevard Homeless Coalition and many other agencies have begun a special program as the year ends— The Homeless Memorial Service. In three separate locations, these ceremonies remember and honor by name the citizens who died in Brevard “under homeless conditions,” several of whom were veterans. VMC was represented at the Cocoa Ceremony on 21 December, the longest night of the year chosen to be close to the holidays and to help others better understand the plight of the homeless in our community during many, many long nights.

During 2022 a staggering 125 men and women died while alone and homeless in Brevard. Causes ranged from illness, to overdose, to suicide, criminal attack and much more. One veteran of Vietnam died alone of illness in a public park because he refused to seek treatment and never complained to the Coalition, NVHS and others who had contact with and supported him. He was known as “Shadow.”

The Cocoa Ceremony was held at Matthews

Hope Church and attended by over 40 people from agencies who work to reduce homelessness in Brevard County. BVC Chairman Donn Weaver was among those who lit candles for each person as their names were called aloud. He saluted the veterans among them.

The ceremony reminds us to look out for those less fortunate and frames the challenges of our current economy and culture on very vulnerable members of our community. Let's hope next year the numbers are far fewer.



Veterans Store Report

Happy New Year! By now everyone is relaxing from busy holiday festivities. We had a lot of shoppers this month who enjoyed the puzzles and toys that we had in stock.

We still have plenty of warm car blankets, t-shirts and hats available for you to purchase with that Christmas cash you may have received. We also have winter jackets for the cooler weather. Come on in and check out the store after you have seen our great artifacts.

Jalaine Spears
Asst Store Manager



Pictured: Candles were lit for each homeless person who died this year on the streets.

Park and Plaza Report

by Donn Weaver

December saw lots of action related to our beautiful Memorial Plaza and its artifacts and the Park.

A. Strain Painting of Titusville completed the painting and much of the detailed work on our two helicopters, the tank, and our truck/water buffalo trailer. What a difference! They also repainted the Helicopter Nose at the museum entrance and noted the high-quality paint and techniques they used should be good for 8-10 years, despite being close to salt water. We are quaking on stencils with the help of Vietnam Helicopter guys like Rodger Pickett and Don Pearsall to finish the markings and stencil work.

B. While we only had 10 brick orders, three were completed in a few days to allow family here for the holidays to view them before returning.

C. The County completed Veterans Memorial Park Survey Work and approved a timeline for Phase III and Amphitheater construction in 2023. The bottom line after several years of waiting due to numerous issues is that Groundbreaking on the Amphitheater must take place by 06 Oct 2023. Much of the other work must be completed prior to that time.

D. The County contractor completed the largest kids playground in Brevard Parks but also got funding to build a nearby exercise section for adults and parents watching their children to use.

We suspect to have much more to report by February once bids are approved and new construction in infrastructure begins.




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Taphophile Tales

by Ray Norman

You may have heard of a couple of VMC'ers that participate in the taphophile experiences aka veterans cemetery recognition effort.

Bill Dansbury and Ray Norman, etc. are in the dirt so to speak and recently recovered the metal grave marker of a Willie Hartwell Fowler in Indianola cemetery. Willie was born on May Day, 1907 and died in 1944. He lived in Orsino, a small community now lost in the Brevard County history. Willie was not a vet as research has revealed so far.

Our best clue was a book *Indianola Pioneer Cemetery* by Joel McPherson. Willie's marker was degenerating, but has been beautifully restored with a step stone base by Danbury.

If you know of any vet's location - or approximately - we will do our best to identify, mark and if necessary; recover the remains in accordance with Florida law and next of kin written agreement.



The Patriot Report

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

TRICARE Mail Order Refills Must be Reconfirmed Starting Jan. 1

Beginning in January 2023, TRICARE will require patients using its mail order pharmacy to confirm that they want their prescriptions refilled, rather than sending them automatically.

Express Scripts, TRICARE'S pharmacy benefits manager, began notifying patients last week of the pending change. According to the email, TRICARE Mail Order Pharmacy users will receive a notification via email or text when their prescription is up for a refill and must log in to confirm the request.

TRICARE Specialty Medications Changing to a New Pharmacy

TRICARE beneficiaries ordering specialty medications at retail pharmacies should begin moving those prescriptions to Accredo, a new pharmacy which will be the primary in-network pharmacy for specialty medications as of January 1, 2023. The TRICARE Home Delivery Program and military treatment facility (MTF) pharmacies will continue to be available for some specialty medications, but Accredo will be the only retail specialty pharmacy option for most specialty prescription drugs, which are used to treat chronic, complex conditions such as cancer, rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, and hepatitis C. They sometimes require clinical training to administer and may need special handling, storage, and patient monitoring.

For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/3VskRP> (shortened link)

VA Began Processing PACT Act Benefits Claims Immediately for Terminally Ill Veterans

WASHINGTON —The Department of Veterans Affairs announced it has begun processing PACT Act benefits claims for eligible terminally ill Veterans. While VA did not have the authorities or capabilities to begin fully processing PACT Act claims for all other Veterans until Jan. 1, 2023,

*Be aware of changes
to TRICARE health
benefits occurring in
January 2003!*

VA was able to expedite processing for terminally ill Veterans to Dec. 12. This ensures terminally ill Veterans will receive their earned benefits and health care on the earliest possible date.

"These Veterans have stepped up to serve our country in the times when we needed them most — and now it's our job to step up for them," said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. "It's the right thing to do to get these heroes the world-class health care and benefits they've earned as soon as possible, and that's exactly what we're going to do."

Dec. 12 is the earliest date VA could begin processing claims for terminally ill Veterans. Until Jan. 1, 2023, VA will only finalize decisions on PACT Act claims that result in a grant of benefits for terminally ill Veterans. Claims that cannot be granted immediately will be held for further evaluation after publication of sub-regulatory guidance implementing the PACT Act. When VA can begin processing all PACT claims Jan. 1, 2023, VA will continue to prioritize the processing of PACT Act claims for terminally ill Veterans. At that point, VA will also prioritize PACT Act claims filed by [Veterans with cancer](#), Veterans experiencing homelessness, Veterans older than 85 years old, Veterans experiencing financial hardship and Medal of Honor and Purple Heart recipients.

From the moment that the PACT Act was signed into law VA's priority has been getting Veterans the benefits they deserve as quickly as possible. VA sped up the timeline for Veterans to get their PACT Act benefits by several years by deciding not to phase in PACT Act benefits through 2026, as written into the legislation, and instead make all conditions in the PACT Act presumptive on Aug. 10, the date President Biden signed it into law.

Since President Biden signed the PACT Act into law on Aug. 10, more than 176,000 Veterans have applied for PACT Act-related benefits. VA is currently executing the largest Veteran outreach campaign in its history to inform Veterans, their families and survivors about the PACT Act and encourage them to apply for the health care and benefits they have earned. As a part of that effort, this week, VA is hosting more than [90 events across all 50 states](#), the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico as a part of a [PACT Act Week of Action](#).

For more information about PACT Act and how to file a claim, [visit va.gov/PACT](https://va.gov/PACT). If Veterans, their families, caregivers or survivors have questions about PACT Act and wish to speak with someone to help, they may call 1-800-MyVA411 at any time.

George Furis
Department of Florida
Service Officer (Retired)
USAF SMSgt (Retired)



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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.

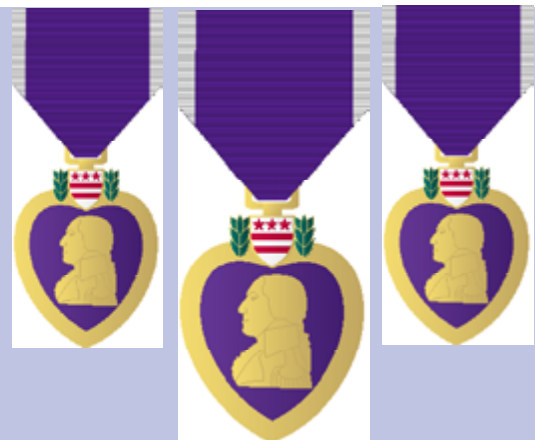
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Our emailed newsletter reaches hundreds, including vet organizations, government officials, 500 VMC members and more.

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.



ATTENTION!

If you have been awarded one of these,
DID YOU KNOW . . .
There is a MOPH Chapter
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Call 321-480-3669
We want to know you!



Unofficial Brevard VMC Vets Calendar January 2023 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/>

JANUARY

07 Jan — Frogman Outdoors all expenses paid Bass Fishing Day for wounded or ill veterans 0600-1500 on Headwaters Lake in Fellsmere. Call Missy on 757-348-1569 for more information and to sign up. 20 Spots available.

20 – 21 Jan — The Central Brevard “Veteran Stand Down to Stand Up” (Formerly known as Stand Down) event will be held at the Cocoa Armory on 20 Jan 2023 (set up) and 21 Jan for the actual activity. Earlier Date of 07-08 Oct had to be scrubbed since FLARNG Unit called up to assist Ian recovery in SW Florida. As many as 250 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), Volunteers of America, the Veterans Administration and dozens of others to help the program support many veterans in need. This event will focus on homeless and at risk veterans and their families, while also matching the veterans with job options on the Space Coast. Contact BVC Council Chairman Donn Weaver 757-871-6576 for more information.

FEBRUARY

04 Feb — JROTC Drill Meet in Veterans Memorial Park (0700-1230)

05 Feb — Immortal Four Chaplains Ceremony 1400-1600 VMC Plaza and Gray Hall.

18 Feb — JROTC Drill Meet in Veterans Memorial Park (0700-1300)

23 Feb — Liberty Bell Museum Patriot Awards Dinner 1800-2100 Grand Manor Catering 1450 Sarno Road, Melbourne.

Details follow to register and help honor local volunteers who support veterans in many ways.

25 Feb — Back Brevard Heroes Fundraiser in Veterans Memorial Park 0900-1700

MARCH

04 Mar — JROTC Drill Meet in Veterans Memorial Park District Championship (0700-1300)

18 Mar — Commemoration of the Last Naval Battle of the American Revolution 1000-1300 VMC Plaza, Museum and Gray Hall

APRIL

01 Apr — American Legion AUX 344 annual Easter Egg Hunt at Veterans Memorial Park 1300-1500

MAY

07 May — Back Brevard Heroes Festival to honor First Responders and Veterans, VMC Plaza, Gray Hall and Park 0930- 1400.

20 May — Space Coast Military and Family Appreciation Day and BBQ — On Armed Forces Day 2023, From 1500-1900 at the VMC and Park. Featuring CW Award winning singer Rocky Lynne!!!! “Heroes Come from Small Towns” and “Proud to Be a Soldier: Active duty unit displays, music, food, kids games, many special activities to honor our active duty forces and their families who eat free. Co sponsored by CBRCC MAC, VMC and Military Recruiters.

29 May — Memorial Day Remembrance VMC 0930-1030

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

BECOME A BOOSTER TODAY and help defray the cost of producing our newsletter.
Only \$10.00 per name, per year.



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