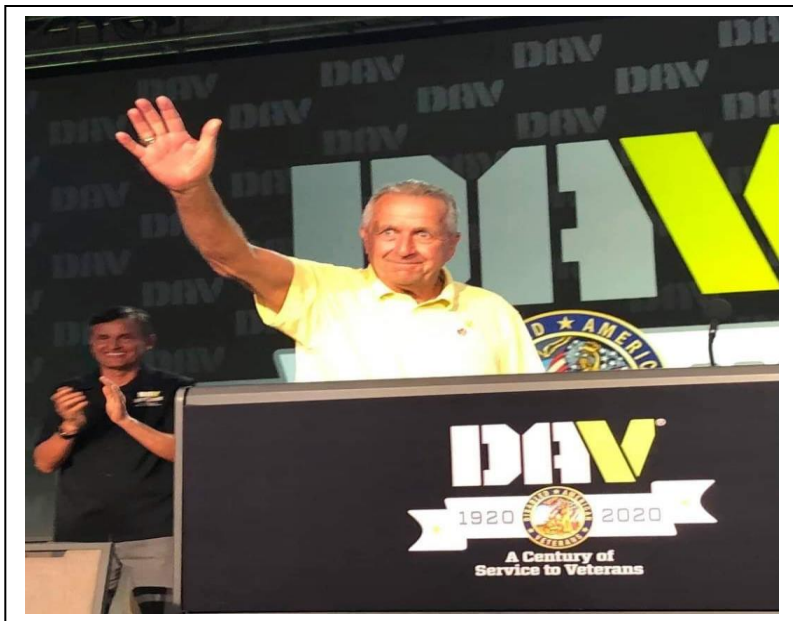


Department of Florida July 2021 Newsletter



Top Left Chapter 150 Membership Meeting July 12, 2021
Top right SVC AJ Bacon presents 75 Year Charter Plaque to Chapter 17 Membership
Bottom Left Newly elected National Commander Marshall waves to crowd at National Convention
Bottom right

Department Commander John Raber



I just want to thank everyone for their support again. Also, I would like to congratulate my good friend Andy Marshal on becoming our National Commander a job well deserved for a man who has dedicated more than 40 years of his life to our mission. I thank you Susan, our first lady, for letting us borrow him from you. We will take good care of him.

My month started out on the 2nd of July. I was asked to give a speech at the Florida American legion Convention. I was humbled by their kindness and their promise to work with us this year to keep our promise to Veterans and their families.

I want to remind Chapters that a Bylaw was passed that no Chapter may have a Debit Card or Credit Card in the name of the Chapter or Connected to any DAV Accounts. Also, I have heard that Chapters are paying Custodial workers and other workers by Check if this is happening after 600.00 by law these people must be given a 10-99 at the end of the year. No exception you will be fined if audited by IRS.

We also had our annual Officers training in Gainesville. I am happy to be working with such a remarkable line of Officers who are willing to visit your Chapter upon request. Now for our National Convention, I went to several seminars which can be looked up on line for training purposes on the DAV.org Website. The IG Seminal was pretty explicit in that the DAV is not authorized to give money to the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts or the Junior JROTC program. And the Answer when asked why was simple, it doesn't follow the mission statement of the DAV. But you are thinking JROTC are young adults wanting to join the military. This may be true, but they are not Veterans yet, let alone Disabled Veterans.

Also any Chapter that wants to buy a brick for the DAV Headquarters walk can do so online at the DAV web-site. The Chapter can purchase or individuals may purchase the brick. They can be in memory or donated by name just form for instance the Rabers.

These bricks are a fundraiser to fulfill the mission of the DAV.

Now I would like to bring up Burn Pits. The Secretary of the VA has promised in the near future, they will be approving some presumptive disabilities for veterans exposed to Burn Pits. They will not be waiting for Congressional approval. The President also said he would approve anything that came across his desk on this matter. Also, they are trying to get hypertension approved as presumptive for exposure to herbicides.

Another approval is that a veterans spouse may remarry at 55 and still keep her DIC, this is a positive move since before they had to wait till they were 70.

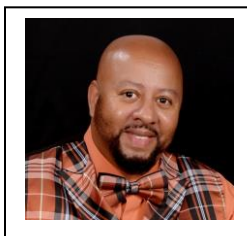
Please if anyone is having trouble with their Chapter give me a call. I am here to help the best that I can. If I can't help you, I will find an answer. I want us to be the best we can be. Thank you and again remember our mission and keep up the great work you are doing.

The newly elected National Officers are:

National Commander	Andy Marshall, Florida
National Senior Vice Commander	Joe Parsetich, Montana
National 1 st Junior Vice Commander	Nancy Espinosa, Utah
National 2 nd Junior Vice Commander	Daniel Contreras, CA
National 3 rd Junior Vice Commander	Coleman Nee, MA
National 4 th Junior Vice Commander	John Donovan, AR
National Chaplain	Debra Varner, AL
National Judge Advocate	Mike Dobmeier, ND
National 7 th District NEC	Frank Chicollo
National 7 th District Alternate	Maryann Keckler
Board of Directors	Frank Chicollo

Congratulations to all newly elected National Officers and Frank Chicollo for being elected to DAV Board of Directors.





DEPARTMENT SENIOR VICE COMMANDER A J BACON, SR.

It has been an exciting first month as your Senior Vice Commander. I participated in the Line Officer Training at our Gainesville Headquarters this month. The training was extremely informative and inspired plenty of positive dialogue. We also experienced a productive time bonding to maintain cohesiveness.

I also had the pleasure of reaching out to several Chapters in the panhandle. I had a vibrant discussion with Chapter 125 (Milton, FL), Chapter 112 (Niceville, FL) as well as Chapter 22 (Marinna, FL). I also had the distinct honor and pleasure of presenting Chapter 17 (Panama City) with their 75th anniversary plaque. It was indeed stellar as they reflected on their overall resiliency throughout the years. It was heartfelt to witness their joy on such a historic moment. I look forward to reaching out to many more Chapters to hear success stories as well as the challenges that inspire working together to find a successful outcome

Unfortunately; many of our Chapters are still dealing with the challenges of COVID-19 to include the Delta variant and other illnesses. These infirmities are impacting Chapter leadership and membership. We ask that you continue to keep everyone in prayer as they seek to overcome these setbacks. Our Department and Chapters have proven to be very visionary. We must continue to explore more effective ways to improvise, adapt and overcome. We have an excellent opportunity to get up to speed on creative ways to communicate, recruit and meet our obligations in an effort to maintain viability.

I look forward to attending the 2021 DAV National Convention in Tampa. It will be another historic moment as we applauded one of our very own (Andy Marshall) as he prepares to accept the gravel and is bestowed the legendary honor of being our next DAV National Commander. Let's all stay team focused as we continue to keep the Department of Florida shining bright in the "Sunshine State" and the nation.

Those of you who attended our recent National Convention in Tampa, don't forget to count your LVAP hours for attending the various training sessions, i.e., Inspector General, Membership, Service/Legislative, VAVS, Chaplain, etc.

The next Chapter Service Officers Certification Training will be at the Lake Mary Marriott January 4-7, 2022. Chief Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims has already accepted our invitation to address the CSO's. In addition, the VISN Director and all Hospital Directors in the VISN will be invited to participate in a round-table discussion following their updates on their particular facility. In addition, the VA Regional Officer Director will be invited as will the Manager from the Pension Maintenance Center in Philadelphia where they process NSC Pension and Death Claims and DIC claims. This training session will be more in-depth training than the June Training we just had at the Lake Mary Marriott.

The Department Mid-Winter Conference will begin at 10:30 am on Friday, January 7, 2022. It is not too early to make your reservations to attend both events. Contact the Lake Mary Marriott and ask for the DAV rate. As you may know, we always have members who wait too late to book their rooms and the room block fills quickly and stay in over-flow hotels. Chapter Adjutant/Treasurer and Chaplain training will be conducted. That is a good time to learn about the duties of these offices. In addition, legislative updates are provided by the Department Legislative Chairman/ Benefits Protection Leader PNC Joseph Johnston.



DEPARTMENT JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER BRENDA REED



July seemed to be a very “fast” month. I drove up to our Department Headquarters in Gainesville for a Department Line Officers meeting then the next week was the DAV National Convention in Tampa. Having lived in the Bay area for the past 11 years, I can honestly say the drive to Gainesville was much more pleasant. Being a beach city dweller, it’s easy to forget how agricultural our state is....and how green and beautiful.

Driving through rural Florida, it reminded me of where I grew up and just how important the Local Veterans Assistance Program (LVAP) can be to our fellow veterans who don’t have ready access to services they may need. We don’t talk about LVAP as much as we should so you may not even know what the program is or how you as a member of DAV can participate. Many of you are probably helping other veterans in your community and have no idea the hours you spend are actually Volunteer services that you could and should be reporting. Following is the description/definition of the LVAP program as outlined in the *Volunteer For Veterans Handbook* you can find in the Publication section under the Membership tab on the DAV.org website.

Local Veterans Assistance Program

The Local Veterans Assistance Program (LVAP) was established to facilitate and recognize volunteer initiatives that improve the lives of our nation’s ill and injured heroes. The program empowers individuals to find and develop new ways to use their skills and talents to support the service and sacrifice of our veterans and their families.

By providing resources, assistance or help with everyday needs, volunteers allow these veterans and their families to enjoy the best quality of life possible. volunteerforveterans.org 11 LVAP initiatives are managed by state-level DAV departments.

Individual volunteers and groups may report their time for a variety of activities to the assistant Department Adjutant Thomas Ayala. This should be done on a monthly basis.

Referenced below are just a few examples of how volunteers, DAV chapters, Auxiliary units and corporations can share their skills, talents, professional abilities and time in ways that benefit veterans.

- Work to support DAV departments and chapters.
- DAV-specific outreach efforts.
- Fundraising efforts (Forget-Me-Not and other approved fundraisers).
- Direct assistance to veterans, widows/widowers or families, such as yard work, home repairs, grocery shopping, respite care for caregivers, etc.
- Offering pro bono professional services or using a skill or trade to provide training or support to veterans, their families or DAV entities.
- Support activities for homeless veterans.
- Involvement in community activities that support and encourage veterans

Most of these are things we don’t even think about as being qualifying volunteer hours! We help out those in our communities because we want to. I’m just as guilty about not turning in these hours. I have done shopping for veterans during the pandemic, every fall when the new class of student veterans arrive at USF St. Pete I do a workshop for them about the jobs.dav.org website which enables them to find employers who are dedicated to hiring veterans, I have helped widows file for DIC, and many other things that we all consider to be just neighborly. DAV and the VA recognized the services we provide to our communities and developed the LVAP program to enable us to record and be recognized for the volunteer work we do. We are a large state with a large veteran population. Yet very few of our LVAP hours are reported because we are not taking the time to report them to our Chapters and Department Headquarters. I challenge all of you to show the rest of the country just how generous and giving we are by reporting your hours.





Department Chaplain Chip Hanson

This month I am going to pass along information about our National Cemeteries.

Burial is available to all Veterans with honorable discharges and for their spouses and dependents. The Veteran's name and personal information will be inscribed on the front of the headstone, and the spouse or dependents name and personal information will be inscribed on the back of the Veteran's headstone, or underneath the Veteran's name if in the columbarium, at no cost to the family. Eligible spouses and dependents may be buried, even if the predecease the veteran.

Burial benefits include a gravesite in any VA National Cemetery with available space. Opening and closing of the grave, perpetual care, a government headstone or marker, burial flag, and a Presidential Memorial Certificate are all included at no cost to the family. Some veterans may also be eligible for Burial Allowance from the VA. All Veterans are entitled to Military Honors. This includes folding and presentation of the American Flag to the family member and playing of Taps.

Cremated remains represent about 75% of interments in National Cemeteries and receive the same honors as casket remains. However, with cremated remains there are four separate ways of interment:

- They can be buried in the same manner as a casket, with the same headstone as a standard casket grave.
- The cremated remains can also be placed in the columbarium (a free-standing wall with areas for the urns;
- The ashes can be placed in the Ossuary

Memorial garden) and the name placed on the Memorial Wall;

- If the family chooses to spread the ashes in a manner that cannot be visited i.e., spreading them in the Ocean or a meadow or other ways the Veteran wished to be interned, the name of the Veteran may be placed on the Memorial Wall. The Ossuary and Memorial Walls are available in National Cemeteries completed after 2007.

There is never any charges for any interment in a National Cemetery.

Ecclesiastes 3;8 a time to love, and a time to hate, a time of war, and a time of peace.

Looking forward to seeing everyone at our National Convention in Tampa.





John Markiewicz Department Judge Advocate

As we all know, the new fiscal year started on July 1st and our annual Financial Report for the past fiscal year is due by the end of September, two months from now. Hopefully, you are already working on preparing the report or sending it to your bookkeeper or CPA if you choose to have it professionally completed. It is appropriate that we review the Year End Requirements, which are laid out in the Chapter Officer Guide. If you cannot locate the Chapter Officer Guide, it is available online at www.dav.org. The Chapter Officer Guide also provides sample forms for your Treasurer's monthly financial report, which, if used, will make completion of the Annual Financial Report much quicker and easier to complete. Chapter Commanders and Treasurers should keep in mind that the quickest way to lose your Charter or have it suspended is due to financial irregularities and/or failure to file your Annual Financial Report correctly and on time.

YEAR-END REQUIREMENTS

At the end of each year, which shall be the membership year commencing July 1 and ending June 30, the treasurer will total all 12 monthly chapter financial reports and prepare the DAV Annual Financial Report. The completion of the appropriate IRS Form 990 must also be filed with the Internal Revenue Service to ensure the chapter retains its tax exemption. The treasurer must comply with standards established by the National Bylaws and National Executive Committee for audits of chapter establishments, organizations, programs, activities and functions.

These standards require chapters to be responsible for providing adequate audit coverage of their programs as an aid in determining whether funds have been applied efficiently, economically, effectively and consistently with program objectives and underlying agreements.

KEEPING RECORDS

The treasurer shall maintain a file that will contain your monthly bank statements and bank reconciliations for record-keeping purposes. The treasurer shall also maintain a folder containing all monthly vouchers and invoices paid. Each disbursement should be supported by a voucher or invoice indicating the date paid and check number, as well as the amount paid, if not paid in full.

BANK RECONCILIATION

At the end of each month, the treasurer will prepare a bank reconciliation. When reconciling bank statements, the treasurer shall perform the following tasks:

1. Compare the deposits listed on the bank statement with the deposits shown in chapter accounting records. Any deposit in transit should be added to the bank statement. (Any deposits in transit from last month still not listed on the bank statement should be immediately investigated.)
2. Review the bank statement in numerical order and compare entries with the records of checks issued. List any outstanding checks not shown on the bank statement. (Be sure to include any checks still outstanding from last month.) Deduct outstanding checks from the bank balance.
3. Add to the balance any interest earned, per the chapter books.
4. Deduct from the balance, per chapter books, any debit memoranda issued by the bank, such as non-sufficient fund checks and service charges that are not yet recorded on the chapter books.
5. Adjust for any deposits that were incorrectly recorded in the chapter books.

NOTE: If returned checks are included with the bank statement, the treasurer should trace the checks to the statement from chapter records, making sure that all checks were issued by the chapter, properly charged to the chapter's account and properly signed. **Two signatures are required on all checks and Debit/Credit Cards are not allowed to be used by the Chapter.**





Andy Marshall Department Adjutant

New Helpful DFAS status notifications start this year!

The Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) is excited to announce one of the latest improvements that will soon be available to Retired Soldiers and their SBP annuitants. Over the coming year, DFAS is rolling out the use of status notifications to keep you informed as your submissions are processed through the retired pay or annuitant pay processing cycles.

How do status notifications work?

Status notifications are a three-step process that will alert you when DFAS receives forms or documents you mail or fax for processing. You will receive separate status notifications when your form or document is:

- Received and queued in the DFAS work system.
- Assigned to be worked.
- Completed-either a notification that the processing is complete or a notification that DFAS is sending you a request for additional information.

The implementation of these status notifications will give you peace of mind that DFAS received your form or request. Status notifications will also provide you with the timeframe when DFAS completed your request or notify you if additional information is required. If DFAS needs additional information, you will know to watch for mail from DFAS, with specific information about what DFAS needs to complete your request.

To be eligible to receive these status notifications, ensure your email address is available and updated in myPay. You will receive the notification via SmartDoc email, so you must have a valid email address in myPay. To add or ensure your email address is up-to-date, please visit <https://myPay.dfas.mil>.

Included in the first round of status notifications include submissions related to Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) Direct Deposit Standard Form 1199, and change of address requests, followed by requests related to federal or state (for retirees) tax changes and the designation of beneficiary for the Arrears of Pay (AOP).

Watch for more information on status notifications and other improvements from DFAS on the DFAS Retired & Annuitant Pay website: <https://dfas.mil/retiredmilitary>.

Armed Forces Retirement Home offers safe and secure residency opportunities for independent living veterans!

If you are considering a move to a safe and secure senior community that caters to independent living veterans, then the Armed forces Retirement Home (AFRH) may be just for you.

With over 98% of their residents fully vaccinated, AFRH continues to take extraordinary precautions against COVID-19 to ensure their health and well-being.

With locations in Washington, D.C., and Gulfport, MS, AFRH offers a vibrant and affordable independent-living lifestyle for retired veterans who spent the majority of their duty time as an enlisted member or warrant officer. Rooms are currently available at both locations with no waiting period, down payment or contract required. The monthly rates for independent living is just 46.7% of the residents gross monthly income or \$2, 050.00 whichever is less. All residents must be able to live independently upon moving to AFRH.

AFRH also provides advanced levels of care to their current residents as they age in place. AFRH also now includes retired reservists and National Guard Members.

For further information or request an application visit <https://afrh.gov/apply> or contact the Office of Public Affairs at admissions@afrh.gov or call 1-800 422-9988.

Chapters visited by Department Line Officers & Adjutant since June 30, 2021:

109, 150

Adjutant's Column Continued

H.R. 2724, the VA Peer Support Enhancement for MST Survivors Act would ensure that veterans who file claims related to military sexual assault would be assigned a peer support specialist throughout the duration of the claims process.

Filing claims for conditions related to military sexual trauma can, in itself, be retraumatizing for survivors. It is important for these individuals to have access to specialized services they need as they work to recover from the physical and emotional trauma they have endured.

Peer support specialists could help create a more welcoming and personalized claims experience for veterans in these circumstances. These individuals would be trained victim advocates who would provide support to the claimant, help to answer their VA claims-related questions, prepare them for next steps and provide clarity about the process.

DAV supports the VA Peer Support Enhancement for MST Survivors Act based on DAV Resolution 92, which calls for enhanced treatment for survivors of military sexual trauma.

We are calling on all DAV members and supporters to contact their Representatives and urge them to co-sponsor this legislation to provide better support for MST survivors.

S. 2102, the Supporting Expanded Review for Veterans in Combat Environments (SERVICE) Act of 2021 would revise the VA's standards for mammography screenings to include those veterans who have served in locations known to have been associated with toxic exposures.

The bill would expand eligibility for these life-saving screenings beyond the commonly-advised age and risk scope to encompass those who have served in specific locations and timeframes, including Iraq, Afghanistan, and areas of Southwest Asia, as well as other areas where U.S. military forces utilized burn pits. It also requires a report to Congress comparing the rates of breast cancer among troops deployed to areas with known exposures with service members not deployed to those locations and to the civilian population.

Defense Department research reports have indicated that women who have served in the military have an elevated risk for breast cancer compared to their non-veteran peers. Nearly half of the growing demographic of women veterans is under age 45, and after nearly two decades of war many will have had exposure to various airborne or other toxic hazards during service including a milieu of toxins associated with exposure to burn pits.

While VA historically outperforms the private sector in providing breast health screenings for women, this bill will bolster those efforts even further. Better screening and early detection, especially among those with known risk factors, can help save lives.

DAV believes it is imperative these veterans have access to early breast cancer detection services that align with their history of toxic exposures during military service. Therefore, we strongly support the SERVICE Act of 2021, in accordance with DAV Resolution No. 20, which calls for enhanced medical services for women veterans.

Please contact both Senators and ask for their support of this bill.

While service-connected disabled veterans rated higher than 50% do not incur costs for medications, those with lower ratings using VA for their health care are currently forced to pay out-of-pocket for many of the prescription drugs, preventative health medications and health screenings they require.

H.R. 3452—the Veterans Preventative Health Coverage Fairness Act—would add preventative medications and services to the list of no-fee treatments that VA covers and eliminate copayments for such items and services.

Please ask your Congressional Representative to support H.R. 3452.

VA is now processing **disability claims** for asthma, rhinitis and sinusitis on a presumptive basis based on particulate matter exposures during military service in Southwest Asia and certain other areas – if these conditions manifested within 10 years of a qualifying period of military service.

This will expand benefits for Veterans who served in:

- **Afghanistan, Djibouti, Syria, and Uzbekistan during the Persian Gulf War, from September 19, 2001, to the present, or**
- **The Southwest Asia theater of operations from August 2, 1990, to the present**

If you have a pending claim for one or more of these conditions, you don't need to do anything. VA will send you a decision notice when we complete their review.

Calendar of Events

August 4, United States Coast Guard Birthday



August 6 Root Beer Float Day



July 29-August 3 DAV National Convention



August 7 Purple Heart Day



POW-MIA Vietnam Veterans Bracelet Memorial SB 416 substituted for HB 163 Enrolled Text (ER) Filed - Establishes POW-MIA Vietnam Veterans Bracelet Memorial in Tallahassee next to Vietnam Memorial Flag. Memorial has been paid for and maintained by Vietnam Veterans of Big Bend Chapter 96 Services for Veterans and Their Families

SB 260 substituted for HB 231 on Enrolled Text (ER) Filed Requires the Department of Veterans' Affairs to establish the Florida Veterans' Care Coordination Program to provide behavioral health care referral and care coordination services for veterans and their families. And to partner with Florida 211 Network participants to provide such services Veterans Employment and Training

SB 586 Substituted for HB 435 -Approved by Governor - Directs Florida Is For Veterans, Inc. (Veterans Florida), to serve as state's principal assistance organization under United States Department of Defense's SkillBridge program Veterans' Preference in Employment

HB 0541 Substituted for SB 922- Approved by Governor - authorizes state & political subdivisions to waive certain postsecondary educational requirements for employment for certain service members & veterans, requires each political subdivision to develop & implement veterans' recruitment plan and modifies point preferences given to veterans & their family members when numerically based selection process is used for hiring.

Veterans Treatment Courts SB 764 Substituted for HB 7023 Enrolled Text (ER) Filed
Creates uniform standards and procedures for VTCs. The proposed bill allows a court with criminal jurisdiction to create and administer a VTC, which may adjudicate felonies and misdemeanors, with the exception of the pretrial intervention of misdemeanor criminal traffic offenses. - To be eligible to participate in a VTC, a service member or veteran must: • Have a service-related mental health condition, traumatic brain injury, substance use disorder, or psychological problem; and • Show that his or her participation is in the interest of justice and to his or her benefit and the benefit of the community, as determined by the state attorney in consultation with the court.

HB 249 Substituted for SB 676 Ordered engrossed, The department shall develop an Honor Flight license plate as provided in this section and s. 320.08053. The plate must bear the colors and design approved by the department. The word "Florida" must appear at the top of the plate, and the words "Honor Flight" must appear at the bottom of the plate. The remaining fees shall be used to further the Honor Flight Network's mission of transporting military veterans to Washington, D.C., in order to visit the memorials dedicated to honoring those who have served and sacrificed for the United States.

Army of Occupation Medal License Plate • The owner or lessee of an automobile or truck for private use, a truck weighing not more than 7,999 pounds, or a recreational vehicle as specified in s. 320.08(9)(c) or (d) which is not used for hire or commercial use who is a resident of this state and a current or former member of the United States military who was permanently assigned to occupation forces in specific overseas locations during the Cold War between May 9, 1945, and October 2, 1990, upon application to the department accompanied by proof of active membership or former active duty status during this period at one of these locations and payment of the license tax for the vehicle as provided in s. 320.08, shall be issued a license plate as provided by s. 320.06 which, in lieu of the registration license number prescribed by s. 320.06, is stamped with the words "Army of Occupation" and a likeness of the subject medal, followed by the registration license number of the plate. Proof that the applicant was awarded the Army of Occupation Medal is sufficient to establish eligibility for the license plate.

S.B. 429, Purple Star Campuses- Approved by Governor Students from military families experience academic and social-emotional challenges as they relocate to new schools due to a parent's change in duty station. In order to assist students from military families with this transition, the bill requires the Department of Education (DOE) to establish a Purple Star Campus Program (program) that identifies schools that support military-connected children, including public schools, charter schools, and schools participating in the Florida educational choice scholarship program. Under the program, schools will be recognized as Purple Star Campuses if they meet the following requirements: Designate a staff member as a military liaison;

- Maintain a webpage on the school's website which includes resources for military students and families;
- Maintain a student-led transition program to assist military students in transitioning into the school;
- Offer professional development training opportunities for staff members on issues relating to military students; and

Reserve at least five percent of open enrollment seats for military-connected students.

Purpose of the Governor's Challenge:

- Broadly – To help local leaders in community and state governments **work together to prevent suicide among Veterans**
- Specifically – To convene a state interagency military and civilian team of leaders to **develop an implementation plan** to prevent suicide among service members, Veterans, and their families that will advance the VA's **National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide** and incorporate evidence-based strategies from the **CDC's Preventing Suicide: A Technical Package of Policy, Programs, and Practices**

Adjutant's Column Continued

- This state-level initiative works in conjunction with the President's national PREVENTS Office and Task Force
- Each Governor's Challenge Team develops strategic action plans to implement Veteran suicide prevention efforts in a manner tailored to their state's unique needs and resources.

Florida has nine National Cemeteries (Barrancas National Cemetery in Pensacola, Bay Pines National Cemetery in St. Petersburg, Cape Canaveral National Cemetery in Mims, Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell, Jacksonville, Sarasota, South Florida National Cemetery in Lake Worth, St. Augustine and Tallahassee).

VET CENTERS

Vet Centers are community-based counseling centers that provide a wide range of social and psychological services, including professional readjustment counseling to eligible Veterans, active duty service members, including National Guard and Reserve components, and their families. Readjustment counseling is offered to make a successful transition from military to civilian life or after a traumatic event experienced in the military. Individual, group, marriage and family counseling is offered in addition to referral and connection to other VA or community benefits and services. Vet Center counselors and outreach staff, many of whom are Veterans themselves, are experienced and prepared to discuss the tragedies of war, loss, grief and transition after trauma.

Life isn't always easy after a deployment. That's where Vet Centers can help. Vet Centers across the country provide a broad range of counseling, outreach, and referral services to combat Veterans and their families. Vet Centers guide Veterans and their families through many of the major adjustments in lifestyle that often occur after a veteran returns from combat. Services for a Veteran may include individual and group counseling in areas such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), alcohol and drug assessment, and suicide prevention referrals. All services are free of cost and are strictly confidential.

All Veterans are encouraged to seek Vet Center services. Any Veterans and current Service members, including members of the National Guard and Reserve components, are eligible if any of the following applies:

- Have served on active military duty in any combat theater or area of hostility (see footnote)
- Experienced a military sexual trauma (regardless of gender or service era)
- Provided mortuary services or direct emergent medical care to treat the casualties of war while serving on active military duty
- Performed as a member of an unmanned aerial vehicle crew that provided direct support to operations in a combat theater or area of hostility
- Accessed care at a Vet Center prior to Jan. 2, 2013, as a Vietnam-Era Veteran
- Served on active military duty in response to a national emergency or major disaster declared by the president, or under orders of the governor or chief executive of a state in response to a disaster or civil disorder in that state, or
- Are a current or former member of the Coast Guard who participated in a drug interdiction operation, regardless of the location.

Vet Center services are also provided to family members of Veterans and Service members for military-related issues when they aid in the readjustment of those who have served. This includes bereavement counseling for families who experience an active duty death.

Service in combat theater or area of hostility to include but not limited to:

World War II (including American Merchant Marines) Korean War Vietnam War Lebanon Grenada Desert Storm/ Desert Shield Bosnia	Kosovo Operations in the former Yugoslavia area Global War on Terrorism Operation Enduring Freedom Operation Freedom's Sentinel Operation Iraqi Freedom Operation New Dawn
---	--

