



COUNTY OF ROCKLAND
VETERANS SERVICE
AGENCY NEWSLETTER

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FOUR CHAPLAINS SERVICE – FEBRUARY 2ND, 2014



At 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, February 2nd, the Four Chaplains Memorial Service will be held at the Park Evangelical Free Church at 4 Roosevelt Place, New City, NY.

The Chaplains were the last to be seen by witnesses; they were standing arm-in-arm on the hull of the ship, each praying in his own way for the care of the men.

Almost 700 died, making it the third largest loss at sea of its kind for the United States during World War II. The Coast Guard Cutter Tampa was able to escort the other freighters to Greenland.

Meanwhile, the cutters Comanche and Escanaba, disobeying orders to continue the search for the German U-Boat, stopped to rescue 230 men from the frigid waters that night.

This year's memorial service is hosted by Wm. DeBevoise Post #1682 and all are welcome to attend the service.

Seventy-one years ago, a convoy of three ships and three escorting Coast Guard cutters passed through "torpedo alley" some 100 miles off the coast of Greenland at about 1:00 a.m. on February 3, 1943. The submarine U-223 fired three torpedoes, one of which hit the midsection of the Dorchester, a U.S. Army troopship with more than 900 men on board. Ammonia and oil were everywhere in the fast-sinking vessel and upon the freezing sea. The four Chaplains on board: two Protestant pastors, a Catholic priest and a Jewish rabbi, were among the first on deck, calming the men and handing out life jackets. The four Chaplains on board were Rabbi Alexander Goode, Reverend George Fox, Reverend Clark Polin, Father John Washington.

When they ran out, they took off their own [life jackets] and placed them on waiting soldiers without regard to faith or race. Approximately 18 minutes from the explosion, the ship went down.

UPCOMING EVENTS

VIETNAM VETERANS CHAPTER #333 FUNDRAISERS

- ❖ Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter #333 has initiated a gift donation program to assist combat injured disabled veterans. These donations are in the form of hand-cycles, which are used for rehabilitation and recreational use. Members of VVA #333's "Veterans Helping Veterans" committee, will be collecting donations for this purpose at the Palisades Center Mall – 3rd Floor – from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. on the following dates: January 25th, February 15th, and March 22nd, 2014.

FOUR CHAPLAINS MEMORIAL SERVICE – FEBRUARY 2ND

- ❖ At 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, February 2nd, the Four Chaplains Memorial Service will be held at the Park Evangelical Free Church at 4 Roosevelt Place, New City, NY. This year's memorial service is hosted by Wm. DeBevoise Post #1682 and all are welcome to attend.

MARINE CORPS IWO JIMA LUNCHEON – FEBRUARY 21ST

- ❖ In commemoration of the 69th anniversary of the flag-raising on Mt. Suribachi, the Marine Corps League is holding their annual Iwo Jima luncheon on Friday, February 21st at the Platzl Brau Haus, 127 Call Hollow Road, Pomona, NY 10970. Advance payment is \$35.00 (\$40.00 at the door.) The menu includes choice of Prime Rib, Tilapia (poached fish), or Chicken. You can send checks to Rockland County Detachment – Marine Corps League, Post Office Box 191, Haverstraw, NY 10927.

MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART CONVENTION - DINNER

- ❖ On Saturday, May 17th, 2014, the NYS Military Order of the Purple Heart will host their annual convention dinner. It will be held at 6:00 p.m., the Ramada Inn, 1289 Route 300, Newburgh, NY 12550. The dinner is \$50.00 per person, \$40.00 per active duty personnel. Reservations are required. The public is invited. For further information or to make reservations, please call (845) 947-1954 or e-mail: birdseed49@aol.com.

FALLUJA'S FALL STUNS MARINES WHO FOUGHT THERE

The bloody mission to wrest Falluja from insurgents in November 2004 meant more to the Marines than almost any other battle in the 12 years of war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Adam Banotai was a 21-year-old sergeant and squad leader in the Marine Corps during the 2004 invasion of Falluja, a restive insurgent-held city in Iraq. His unit — which had seven of 17 men wounded by shrapnel or bullets in the first days of the invasion — seized control of the government center early in the campaign. So when Sunni insurgents, some with allegiances to [Al Qaeda](#), retook the city this month and raised their black insurgent flag over buildings where he and his men fought, he was transfixed, disbelieving and appalled. "I texted a couple of friends," said Mr. Banotai, now a firefighter and registered nurse in Pennsylvania. "Everyone was in disbelief." "I don't think anyone had the grand illusion that Falluja or Ramadi was going to turn into Disneyland, but none of us thought it was going to fall back to a jihadist insurgency," he said. "It made me sick to my stomach to have that thrown in our face, everything we fought for so blatantly taken away."

Read more →

<http://nyti.ms/KGclWY>

TAX EXEMPTIONS – FILE BEFORE MARCH 1ST, 2014

War veterans may be eligible for a tax break on their residential property. Local deadlines for filing are March 1st. You will need to bring your DD214 to your town tax assessor's office. If you have any questions about what you are entitled to receive, give us a call at the office (845) 638-5244.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS

As we noted in the earlier January edition of the newsletter, a new state law allows school districts to grant property-tax exemptions to eligible veterans, who until now have only been able to get breaks on municipal tax bills. School districts have to hold a public hearing and adopt a resolution before they can provide the exemptions. They can also adopt a local law to include Gold Star parents — those who lost a child who was serving in the military — as qualified homeowners, provided the property is their primary residence.

Since this has to be approved by the school districts, we, as veterans, need to have a coordinated effort to show our support of this school tax exemption. We need to show how it will help out people in the local community — their neighbors — who can benefit from a tax break as they're retiring. Also, a tax break for our younger veterans coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan — we want to get them any break we can give them. These are the people who are and will be our volunteers for things such as our fire departments. It's better for us if they can get a break on their taxes and stay in the county where they grew up, so they will be able to support our fire departments, etc. If we ever have the need to move to a paid fire-fighting force, our taxes will be tremendously increased. So it is in our best interest now to get whatever discounts we can for our young and not-so-young veterans.

We have been in touch with our elected officials, asking them to contact the school boards and encourage them to look favorably on this tax exemption for veterans. They have agreed to do this. Also, we are contacting veterans groups in Clarkstown, Haverstraw, Orangetown, Ramapo, and Stony Point, asking that they have their members show up en masse, as a group, on whichever night the school boards have a scheduled meeting, so we can have our voices heard. We're asking for one veteran from each group to be a point man to help coordinate this effort easily. We will find out when the various meetings will take place and will keep you posted as to any further information.

COUNTY EXECUTIVE ED DAY

On Friday, February 7th, the monthly RockVets Radio Show will air on WRRCR 1300 AM dial starting just after the 10:00 a.m. newsbreak. You can also listen to the show live online at www.wrccr.com. Barring any unforeseen circumstances, this month's guest will be Rockland's recently elected County Executive, Ed Day. If you have questions you'd like to ask our new County Executive or have other news to share with the veteran or military community, please call in to the show. The call-in number is (845) 362-0013.

TRIATHLON TRAINING TIPS

Pat Curran is a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, Class of 1997 as well as Founder/Team Leader at American Business Strategies, Inc. in Rockland County. Pat would like to help other veterans who crave a little motivation and want to get into shape. He has offered to help train veterans through his "Freedom's Light" newsletters. You can view his newsletters on his website: <http://www.freedomslight.org> - click on "Pat's Journal" area on the left side of the page, to read his newsletters. You can also view Pat's professional webpage at <http://www.abinsights.com>.

R.C. MARINE CORPS LEAGUE AUXILIARY PET RESCUE PROJECT

Marty Erickson, Past President, Current Secretary Rockland County Marine Corps League Auxiliary has advised us of the Auxiliary's current project for veterans, which is Pet Rescue.

Soldiers and Marines deployed to Afghanistan found special comfort and family away from home: a pet! When the veteran flies home, the pet must be abandoned and is tortured and killed, as is customary in that part of the world. US airmen formed a volunteer rescue group to fly pets home, when space allows. Private volunteer fliers pick pets up at a base and fly them to an airport near their owners, where the owner welcomes them. These happy reunions can be seen online. This program does NOT bring stray animals to the US; It IS to reunite pets (primarily dogs) with their owners.

Cans & bottles, that can be recycled for cash, can be brought to Kearsing Edwards American Legion Post 1600, Pomona, NY. They are collected by ARC Pet Rescue volunteers and recycled. Contributions are welcome! The funds pay for food and water to sustain pets on their journey home; transportation is free. For information contact Chairman Dale Fisher 845-304-3595.

The RCMCLA welcomes wives, mothers and relatives of Marines, or Navy Chaplains and Corpsmen who served on active duty with a USMC unit. Associate membership is open to anyone interested in supporting the USA, US veterans, and USMC. Membership Chairman: Heidi Erickson, Suffern, New York.

VA LINKS FIVE MORE MEDICAL CONDITIONS TO TBI

From the [KEENE SENTINEL](#) on Jan 6:

The Department of Veterans Affairs has added five illnesses to service-connected traumatic brain injuries (TBI). What this means is veterans who have those illnesses as well as TBI will have an easier time getting additional disability benefits. The VA based its decision on a report by the National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine that found "sufficient evidence" to link moderate to severe TBI with five secondary conditions: Parkinson's disease; certain types of dementia; depression; unprovoked seizures; and certain diseases of the hypothalamus and pituitary glands. These secondary illnesses will be considered service-connected and won't require medical opinions to establish whether there is correlation to TBI.

There's a time period for three of the five illnesses, however. Parkinson's disease or unprovoked seizures don't have a time frame:

- Dementia, if it manifests within 15 years with moderate or severe TBI.
- Depression, if it manifests within three years with moderate or severe TBI, or within 12 months with mild TBI.
- Diseases of hormone deficiency from hypothalamo-pituitary changes, if they manifest within 12 months of moderate or severe TBI.

VA LINKS FIVE MORE MEDICAL CONDITIONS TO TBI - CONTINUED

Even if you don't meet the guidelines for severity of TBI or length of time between TBI and the onset of the secondary illness, file your claim anyway.

To see the whole final determination (the comment section is informative) go online to www.regulations.gov and type this in the search box: VA-2012-VBA-0029-0212.

If you'd like to file a claim, we strongly suggest you file it with our office – Veterans Service Agency, 20 Squadron Blvd., Suite 480, New City, NY 10956. Call for information or an appointment: 845.638.5244.

VA REGIONAL OFFICE IN PUERTO RICO CONTACT INFORMATION

Following is information on the VA Office and Medical Center in Puerto Rico:

VA Regional Office
50 Carretera 165, (adjacent to El Nuevo Dia Building)
San Juan, Puerto Rico 00968-8024

VA Medical Center
10 Casi Street
San Juan, Puerto Rico 00921-3201
(787) 641-7482

SUICIDE RATE SPIKES AMONG YOUNG VETERANS – BUT STATISTICS SHOW THAT NUMBER HAS DECREASED AMONG VETERANS GETTING HELP

January 9th, 2014 - Stars and Stripes (www.stripes.com) Leo Shane

WASHINGTON -- The number of young veterans committing suicide jumped dramatically from 2009 to 2011, a worrying trend that Veterans Affairs officials hope can be reversed with more treatment and intervention.

New suicide data released by the department on Thursday [January 9, 2014] showed that the rate of veterans suicide remained largely unchanged over that three-year period, the latest for which statistics are available. About 22 veterans a day take their own life, according to department estimates.

But while older veterans saw a slight decrease in suicides, male veterans under 30 saw a 44 percent increase in the rate of suicides. That's roughly two young veterans a day who take their own life, most just a few years after leaving the service. "Their rates are astronomically high and climbing," said Jan Kemp, VA's National Mental Health Director for Suicide Prevention. "That's concerning to us."

Reasons for the increase are unclear, but Kemp said the pressures of leaving military careers, readjusting to civilian life and combat injuries like post-traumatic stress disorder all play a role in the problems facing young male vets. Female veterans saw an 11 percent increase in their suicide rate over the same span. Overall, suicide rates for all veterans remain significantly above their civilian counterparts.

The good news, according to the report, is that officials have seen decreases in the suicide rates of veterans who seek care within the VA health system. Of the 22 deaths a day, only about five are patients in the health system. "What we're seeing is that getting help does matter," Kemp said. "Treatment does work."

Now, she said, the challenge is expanding that outreach. Persuading younger veterans to seek care remains particularly problematic, because of stigma associated with mental health problems. VA officials have boosted their mental health personnel and suicide hotline staff in recent years, but the outdated data doesn't reflect those changes. The report also notes that national rates of suicide have remained steady or increased slightly in recent years, indicating the issue is a larger national health problem, not simply a military and veterans issues.

BOB HOPE DIVISION HELPING VETS IN NURSING HOME

A group of Hudson Valley veterans known as the Bob Hope Division, will visit the VA Nursing Home on Saturday, February 22, 2014 at 1230hrs. During this event they will show Dean Martin Roast Shows to the patients. They need help bringing the patients who may be in wheelchairs, to the show. The nursing home is located at 2090 Albany Road, (Route 9) Montrose, NY 10548. For further information, or to volunteer for the event, contact Chip Hayes via e-mail: chip1440@verizon.net

VETS REP IN ROCKLAND

If you are in the market for employment possibilities or a career change, contact Natalie 845-356-5429, or via e-mail: Natalie.Hernandez@labor.ny.gov or on twitter at NatDOLVetRep.





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We would like to keep you up-to-date on events and matters of interest to veterans and will be sending these newsletters regularly. If at any time you no longer wish to receive them,

please send a note to info@rockvets.com. Your e-mail address will immediately be deleted from our newsletter mailing list. If you find any of this information useful, please pass it along to others.

ROCKVETS - ON THE INTERNET AND AIRWAVES

You can find information, useful links, and view our webpage at www.rockvets.com. Previous copies of our newsletters are also available on our website at: www.rockvets.com/newsletters. You can e-mail us at: info@rockvets.com or on our facebook page: www.facebook.com/rockvets.

On the first Friday of each month, just after the 10:00 a.m. news-break, RockVets has a live call-in talk show on Rockland County’s local radio station – WRCR 1300 AM. We encourage you to call-in and ask any questions you may have relating to veterans or the military. This is also a good opportunity to promote any upcoming events for your organization that would be of interest to the veteran/military community. The call-in number is 845.362.0013. The show is also live on the internet at: www.wrcr.com. So please listen in, and call if you have questions or information to share.

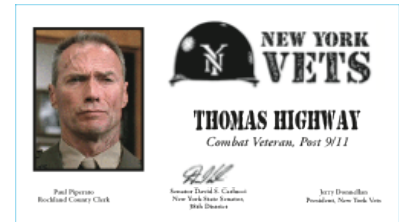
The next radio broadcast will be on Friday, February 7th, 2014 right after the 10:00 a.m. newsbreak. Once again we appreciate the support of the Marine Corps League - Rockland County Detachment.

So that we can keep you up to date on as much information as possible, we have included links to many articles so you may read further about those items. At the time the newsletter is sent to you, the links are all working well. If the links do not work for you, just cut and paste the address into your browser and that should bring you to the correct article, or you can do a search for the article on the web. Providing the information in this newsletter does not necessarily constitute our endorsement or opinion.

If you have information that can benefit the military and veteran community, or would like the community to know about an event your group is hosting, please send it to us so we can publish it in the next newsletter: info@rockvets.com.

[And coming soon...]

**NY Vets ID Card for Post 9/11
Combat Veterans**



**VETERANS SERVICE AGENCY
OF ROCKLAND**

If you plan to come to the Veterans Service Agency office, please call to make an appointment so we can give you the time you need - 845.638.5244.

**Jerry Donnellan, Director,
Veterans Service Agency of
Rockland, 20 Squadron Blvd.,
Suite 480, New City, NY 10956 -
Phone: 845.638.5244 - E-mail:
jerry@rockvets.com.**



**WE ARE HERE TO CARE FOR YOU
WHO HAVE WORN THE
UNIFORM – NO MATTER WHERE
OR WHEN YOU SERVED. THANK
YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE.**