



November2023

Mission: Becoming Visible

## Women Veterans Unite: Making their presence known



Parade walkers, including WVU “mascot” and DeAnnah’s service dog, Moose!



On the float

On the sidelines  
Audrey takes a time out from walking to greet Betty Smith.



First time for parade, flyover!  
One of the HUEY's piloted by  
Captain Jones (female)



Walking with other groups  
Celia Suluki with 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry  
Regiment United States Colored  
Troops Living History Assoc.

This parade turnout for Women Veterans Unite was impressive. Almost 40 women came to be present in some way at the parade. Some walked, some rode on the float, some rode with other floats and groups and some stayed on the sidelines cheering. The crowds roared when Tiffany Hill would yell out, "Let's hear it for the women veterans."

We have come a long way since 2019 when the question was asked, "Where are the women in the Veterans Day parade?" There was no organized, unified presence at that time. In 2020, though the parade was cancelled 12 women veterans walked along the sidewalk of the parade route from the corner of Monroe and Tennessee to the Vietnam Memorial. In 2021, the parade theme was: women in the military and women veterans. We had a grand marshal spot, with women riding in jeeps at the forefront of the parade and women riding on the float. In 2022, about 30 women came out to walk, ride and cheer from the sidelines. Special thanks to Val Frailey, former Legion Commander for driving the float.

**The message is clear. Women Veterans Unite is here to stay.**



Nancy Gentry (USAF), center, representing WVU in  
St. George Island

## Decorating the float Thursday November 9, 2023



Special thanks to Clarence Alexander for the use of his truck and trailer. As Debra Mann said in her briefing, "It takes a village." The decorating team did a great job. DeAnnah Boettcher, Jerrie Del Vecchio, Vernon Hawes, Audra Mason, Althea Yount, Susan Baddett, Thandi Williams, Cindy Bennett, Paula Hubert, and project co-chairs: Debra Mann and Muriel Kweyama (Clarence (USMC) is Muriel's brother).

### Other Veterans Day activities



Betty Tapp, Karen Bauer and Kathrinne Helms placed flags at Tallahassee National Cemetery.

### Mission BBQ Nov 11



Sharon Brooks, Althea Yount, Susan Baggett and Paula Hubert sharing WVU information with veterans and their families coming to Mission BBQ for the festivities and free sandwich!

**Sharon Brooks (USAF) and Kimberly Homer(USMC), PIO at the First Missionary Baptist Church, Thomasville, GA**





Kimberly delivered a powerful speech about how women's service in the military comes with its own unique issues, including Military Sexual Trauma. The public needs to know all the factors that women veterans face when they take the step to join the military. Other women veterans in the audience thanked Kimberly for not sugar coating the issues and standing firm for women veterans.

### **Bethel Missionary Baptist Church, Tallahassee, FL**



Donna Washington, above, outlining the luncheon program



Tiffany Hill talks about the Veteran Outreach Program

On Sunday, November 12, 2023 The veterans ministry at the Bethel Missionary Baptist Church on North Martin Luther King Blvd. hosted at "Boots on the Ground," program to show their appreciation to

veterans. The Reverend Dr. RB Holmes led the energetic service theme of "Praise over pressure." The Marching 100 from FAMU treated the audience to military theme songs and other tunes. After the service, the church hosted a luncheon and a short program during which members of various veterans' groups provided information about their services. These included Tallahassee National Cemetery, VA Suicide Prevention program, DAV, FDVA and Tiffany Hill from the Veteran Outreach Center. Women Veterans Unite members: Donna Washington, Donna Mobley, Betty Smith, Christine Bethea and Faith Walker are part of the church's veterans' ministry. The ministry is a grass roots group that plans to continue the dialogue started on Sunday to find the best ways to connect veterans to services and benefits.

**Kimberly C Homer  
Public Information  
Officer**



Kimberly enlisted in the USMC in 1989 and served until 1993.

She has a degree from Valdosta State University in criminal justice. Before retiring, she worked at the US Dept. of Justice, Federal Bureau of Prisons as a Correctional Treatment Specialist.

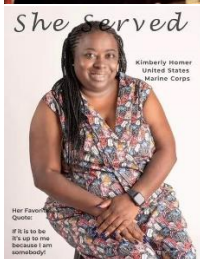
Kimberly is involved in numerous community organizations: Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., National Assoc. of Blacks in Criminal Justice, African American Read In, Second Harvest of the Big Bend and Farm Share to name a few.

Kim serves as the judge advocate for the James E. Hicks American Legion Post

519 in Thomasville, GA and the historian for the American Legion Department of GA 2<sup>nd</sup> District.

When she's not busy volunteering she enjoys doing crossword puzzles, assembling jigsaw puzzles, attending sports events, and traveling. She likes spending time with friends and family, reading, listening to audiobooks, walking, and exercising.

Kim is responsible for the information that gets shared with the WVU group about various community events and resources. She updates the Facebook page continually.



**Sharon Brooks,**



Sharon enlisted in the Air Force in 1984 with a guaranteed job as a Pharmacy technician. After her pharmacy certification in Wichita Falls, TX she was stationed at US Air Force Hospital in Chanute, IL. In April 1988 Sharon transferred to the Air Force Reserves. She cross trained an Air Cargo Specialist of the 514<sup>th</sup> Military Airlift Command at McGuire AFB, NJ. This unit served as one of the major aerial ports of embarkation for Operations Desert Shield/Storm.

After her honorable discharge Sharon attended FAMU where she achieved a BS in Agribusiness. She works as an administrative assistant with the

Officer of International Agriculture at FAMU.

Sharon is the mother of three adult sons: Ahmed, Alexander, and CPT Aaron Judson DVM of US Army Veterinary Corps.



**Sharon Brooks** currently serves as one of the 10 regional advisors of **The Florida Department of Veterans Affairs (FDVA) Women Veterans' Advisory Council (FWVAC)**. The mission of this council is to provide an avenue in which all women veterans will be informed of and encouraged to utilize their benefits to improve their quality of life, education,

healthcare, employment, and training for Florida's Women Veterans and their families. The Florida Women Veterans Program serves to educate and inform women veterans of their benefits and services, and advocate on their behalf by:

- \* Creating public awareness
- \* Recognizing and honoring women veterans
- \* Identifying needs and making legislative recommendations
- \* Providing assistances to women who served in the United States Armed Forces or in forces incorporated as part of the United States Armed Forces, and who are discharged under conditions other than dishonorable.

Sharon is serving the Apalachee region which consists of Jackson, Calhoun, Gulf, Gadsen, Leon, Wakulla, Franklin, Jefferson, and Liberty counties.

## **About the Women Veterans Advisory Council**

In May 2022, a Fact-Finding Committee on Women Veteran Benefits and Communications presented a formal report to the executive director of the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA). The committee had been created to assess the needs of Women Veterans in Florida to ensure the availability of earned veterans' benefits, and that outreach is tailored correctly to provide optimal results for the 164,000 Women Veterans who call Florida home.

**The Florida State Women Veterans Council under FDVA was formed because of that report.** You'll find the report at <https://www.floridavets.org/ourveterans/women-veterans/>. FDVA State Women Veterans Coordinator Vanessa Thomas was elected vice president of the National Association of State Women Veterans

Coordinators during their 2022 annual conference. The association advocates for women veterans, identifies barriers to successful transition of women veterans and military women to the civilian community, and recommends solutions through legislative, programmatic and outreach activities.

#### **Community Outreach**

#### **GLOW program for young women... (Go Light Our World)**

Nancy Gentry lives on St. George Island and is a member of the St. George Island Methodist Church. One of their community outreach committees sponsors a program called GLOW, to provide middle and high school girls information about self-care, career choice options and more.

The next scheduled date for the GLOW program is **Jan. 13, 2024.** The committee is looking for women

veterans to discuss serving in the military as a career choice. Please contact Nancy Gentry if you are interested in speaking to the group. It's a great opportunity for interfacing with young women who have limited resources. The event is on St. George Island.

**Nancy Gentry  
(USAF)**

**850-570-2290**

**Veterans Legal Collaborative-FREE** legal information and help with disability or homeless issues meets every Thursday from 3 pm to 5 pm at the American Legion Hall Lake Ella Drive. Walk in encouraged.

If you have not voted for TVLC community grant competition **PLEASE** do so at the link below

This is the voting link: <http://www.giveth.com/>  
Click this link to vote! You can vote on your computer or your cell phone!

**DAV Debra Mann**

850-272-6170

Disability Claims

Disabled Veterans Outreach Program

**Brooklyn Enders**

443-621-0579

Job information and retraining



#### **FIND HELP FOR YOURSELF & OTHERS**

If you or someone you know is struggling upon returning home and needs immediate, professional help—call the Suicide and Crisis Hotline and press 1 for veteran support or visit the website to talk with a VA responder.

**Call 988 and press 1  
VeteranCrisisLine.net**

If you want to be a partner in the suicide solution the American Legion initiative, “**Be the One,**” needs help reaching out to at risk veterans. Contact

Rodney Keener

251-635-7663

[rbkeener22@gmail.com](mailto:rbkeener22@gmail.com)



**Host: Lynette Halter**

**1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of the  
month**

**December 7, 2023**

1515 NORTH Paul  
Russell Rd. #61 Near  
Apalachee Parkway  
(behind Goodwill)

Games based on  
strategy, luck,  
planning and  
cooperation

7 pm to 9 pm

Hostess provides wine  
and tea

Guests bring snacks

850-405-0246  
for more information



**Saturday,**

**Dec. 16, 2023**

**Wreaths Across  
America**

If you want to be a  
volunteer, come to the  
Tallahassee National  
Cemetery at 9 a.m. to  
help set up. The  
ceremony starts at  
noon. No RSVP needed.  
Just show up.

**American Legion  
Christmas Party Post 13**

**Lake Ella Drive**

**Saturday,**

**December 9, 2023**

Doors open at 3 pm Meal  
time 4:30 pm

Bring a dish to share  
the Post providing Turkey  
and Ham

No charge



**Women  
Veterans Unite**  
\$WVUnite

Membership \$25.00

Cash, check or cash  
app (see above)

Unite is a 501c3 non-  
profit. The mission is to  
provide a safe place for  
women veterans to  
connect and get  
resources they need.

Women Veterans Unite  
meet monthly (unless  
otherwise noted) on the  
3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the  
month at the American  
Legion Hall at Lake  
Ella at 6:30 pm.





Women Veterans Unite partnered with the Junior Women's Club of Midtown to collect non-perishable items to restock the pantry at Vet Village. Marie had a car load of goods when she left.

Marie Craig, President of the Junior Women's Club of Midtown spoke and informed the group of the mission of the Women's Club. The GFWC Junior Woman's Club of Midtown is a non-profit volunteer organization of young women in Tallahassee, FL. Through their volunteer service, they fulfill needs in the community. Their mission is to elevate people, enrich lives and connect our community by educating, outreaching, and volunteering.



Luis Sanchez and  
And Debra Mann



Cindi's cake



Heather and Donna



Thandi

The group celebrated November birthdays: Donna Washington and Heather Mitchell. Since Thandi Williams birthday is Oct 31 (close enough to November!) we celebrated her also.

Debra Mann presents deli manager at Community Co-Op Market, Luis Sanchez, with a Certificate of Appreciation for the dinner donation to the WVU monthly gathering. This is the second year Community Co-Op Market, 1235 Apalachee Parkway, has supported women veterans with their donation. Luis and his team prepared a delicious turkey dinner. Thanks for Community Co-Op Market for their ongoing support. The group delighted in Cindi Laskowski's amazing homemade apple cinnamon carrot cake.





Please RSVP to Muriel Kweyama at 850-274-1726 call/text or [mkweyama@aol.com](mailto:mkweyama@aol.com) by

**Dec. 13, 2023.**

We need a head count so please sign up early!!