

This Veterans Newsletter is compiled and provided by the Seminole County Veteran's Services Office. Its intent is to keep Seminole County Veterans informed about their rights, benefits, and news of interest. It is non-political and, except where noted, all articles are excerpted from outside sources. Local events honoring/supporting Veterans will be included as made available. You are encouraged to provide feedback and recommendations, as this is your Newsletter. Together with my small Team, I hope you find it both valuable and interesting.

Ed Burford, Seminole County Veterans Services Officer

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1. Vietnam Traveling Wall coming to Sanford, Ed sends - The Vietnam Traveling Wall will make its last stop for this year in Sanford. Sponsored by Sanford and Seminole County, the Wall will arrive in Sanford on November 7th and be set up the same day at Fort Mellon Park, 600 E. 1st Street. Opening ceremonies will be held on Friday November 8th. The Wall will remain in Sanford through Veterans Day, Monday, November 11th, departing on Tuesday November 12th. More information will be provided when published. If you would like to volunteer to assist or to assist by becoming a sponsor, call Angela Adkins at 407-688-5163 or email at angela.adkins@sanfordfl.gov, for more information contact Eric Griffin at Eric.griffin@sanfordfl.gov or call 407-688-5120.

2. Homeless Veteran Stand Down, 2019 - Ed Sends - The Seminole County Homeless Veteran Stand Down for 2019 was held on Saturday October 26th at the Florida Health Department in Seminole County on Airport Boulevard. It was a very successful event serving 71 Veterans who were homeless or precariously housed, almost a third more than last year. Three of the most desperate were successfully sheltered that day and VA referrals were given to others. Numerous teeth were pulled that day, including 13 from one Veteran. Eighteen haircuts and showers were provided. Everyone enjoyed a delicious Bar B Que from Chef Sennet. A full array of services was provided by the VA, the Health Department and other community service providers including legal services VA service officers, suicide prevention, PTSD counselors, Women Veteran counselors, medical evaluation and treatment, flu shots and more. The exact number of truly homeless and those precariously housed will not be known until the Orlando VA can fully evaluate the registrations. A big thank you to all involved, from the providers to the Battle Buddies. It would not have been successful without you.

3. Free Veterans Day Luncheon - Ed Sends -The 1st United Methodist Church of Oviedo is planning its annual free Veterans Day Luncheon on Sunday, November 10. The event will be held in the church gymnasium at 12:30 p.m. As part of the patriotic program, the guest speaker will be retired Rear Admiral Bret Muilenberg, former commander of the U.S. Naval Facilities Engineering Command and the Navy's Chief Civil Engineer. The luncheon will be catered by Mission Barbecue and is open to all local military veterans and active duty service members, their families and friends. Please RSVP online at <https://fumcoviedo.com/> or telephone Dianne Holland at 615-584-8906.

4. Vietnam War Commemoration Pinning - *Ed Sends* -The Office of Congresswoman Stephanie Murphy will be holding a pinning ceremony to honor veterans of the Vietnam Era on **November 6th, 2019** at VFW Post 5405 in Winter Springs as part of the [50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War Commemoration](#). This event is for any veteran who served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces at any time during the period of November 1, 1955 to May 15, 1975, regardless of duty location. Interested Vietnam Era Veterans and their families should RSVP at www.murphy.house.gov/ThankAVeteran. 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War Commemoration Wednesday, November 6, 2019 - 11AM, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 5405, 420 N Edgemon Ave, Winter Springs, FL 32708.

5. Seminole County Veteran of the Month, October 2019, On October 8th, 2019, Specialist 4 Adonis A. Murillo, was name the Seminole County Veteran of the Month for October 2019. He entered the U.S. Army in August, 1988 and was Honorably discharged in August, 1996, he served eight years as a 57E20, Laundry and Bath Specialist, providing preventive maintenance of laundry, shower, delousing equipment, and personnel and clothing decontamination. He served throughout the United States and the world including Fort Totten, New York, Fort Lee, Virginia, Turkey and over six months in Saudi Arabia supporting Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm. Specialist 4 Adonis A. Murillo awards and decorations include the National Defense Service Medal, the Southwest Asia Service Medal, the Kuwait Liberation Medal from Saudi Arabia, the Kuwait Liberation Medal from Kuwait, and the Good Conduct Medal. Upon leaving the military, he immediately went to work for the Children Law Services in New York utilizing his bilingual skills as he conducted needs assessments of children who were the subject of

custody battles or had been abused, since coming to Florida thirteen years ago, he is the Facility Manager for the Florida Health Department in Seminole County. Specialist 4 Adonis A. Murillo, we honor you.

6. Military Pay Raise at Risk in Budget Impasse, Key Lawmaker Says Military.com, October 28, 2019, the 3.1% pay raise promised for the military could be at risk in the ongoing impasse over the defense budget and the political turmoil surrounding the impeachment inquiry, a top House Republican said Oct. 23. Rep. Mac Thornberry, R-Texas, the ranking Republican on the House Armed Services Committee, said various military specialty pays also must be approved in the now-stalled National Defense Authorization Act legislation and by several appropriations committees. The pay raise and other vital defense programs will remain at fiscal 2019 funding levels unless Congress can pass a fiscal 2020 NDAA by a Nov. 21 deadline, [Read more.](#)

7. Millions More Vets and Caregivers Are About to Get Commissary, Exchange Access Military.com, Week of September 23, 2019, The Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs are gearing up for what will be the largest expansion of patrons to the military commissary system and exchanges in 65 years, making sure that shoppers will be able to get on base and find the shelves fully stocked. Starting Jan. 1, Purple Heart recipients, former prisoners of war and all service-connected disabled veterans, regardless of rating, as well as caregivers enrolled in the VA's Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers program, will be able to shop at Defense Commissary Agency stores and military exchanges. [Read more.](#)

8. Open Enrollment: How to Choose a Dental Plan Military.com October 3, 2019, This year's open enrollment season for choosing a dental plan runs from Nov. 11, 2019, through midnight EST Dec. 9, 2019, for coverage effective Jan. 1, 2020. Retirees who are currently enrolled in a Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) plan will automatically continue enrollment into 2020. If you want to cancel or change your dental plan in any way, you must contact BENEFEDS during open enrollment. [Read more.](#)

9. Army's Future Battle Plan May Include Restructuring Guard

Forces Military.com, 24 Sep 2019, The deputy commander of Army Futures Command said Tuesday that the service may need more of the [National Guard](#)'s capabilities in the early days of a fight on future battlefields. Force posture is very important to multi-domain operations -- the concept the [Army](#) is developing to fight on land, sea and air, as well as in space and cyberspace -- and "the Guard will have to be available to be part of rotational forces, as they have for years now," [Read more.](#)

10. Tricare Drug Costs to Increase More Than 40% in

2020 Military.com, Week of October 07, 2019, Prescription drug costs for Tricare users are set to rise Jan. 1, some by as much as 42%. Effective Jan. 1, 2020, the price of all generic drugs, brand-name drugs and non-formulary drugs purchased through the mail-order pharmacy and through in-network retail pharmacies will increase. Costs at out-of-network pharmacies will also increase. Drugs received through on-base pharmacies will continue to be free. [Read more.](#)

11. DFAS Retiree Newsletter September 2019, September 26, 2019, The September 2019 Retiree Newsletter is now available online. It contains helpful information about getting ready for tax season, upcoming tools to make filling out required forms faster and easier, the importance of your Arrears of Pay designation, and how-to myPay videos on YouTube, as well as news about TRICARE and Federal Benefits open seasons. [Retiree Newsletter](#)

12. Here Is Your 2020 Military Retiree, VA, and Social Security

Pay Bump MOAA via Military.com, October 11, 2019, Military retirees, those who receive disability or other benefits from the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#), federal retirees and social security recipients will see a 1.6% increase in their monthly checks for 2020. The annual [Cost Of Living Allowance](#) (COLA) is smaller than the 2.8% increase from last year but in line with the historical increases seen over the last ten years. [Read more.](#)

13. Alarming VA Report Totals Decade of Veteran Suicides

Military.com, 23 Sep 2019, The [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) released an alarming report Friday showing that at least 60,000 veterans died by suicide between 2008 and 2017, with

little sign that the crisis is abating despite suicide prevention being the VA's top priority. [Read more.](#)

14. VA.gov/eBenefits Transition Update, VA

Bulletin, 9/24/2019 Dear Veteran and Stakeholder, You're receiving this email as a registered user with eBenefits. To improve your experience with VA, we're consolidating and transitioning eBenefits to [VA.gov](#). This transition will be in phases, and has already begun for certain online transactions, such as disability benefits claim status, Post-9/11 GI Bill Statement of Benefits, and information on how to request your military service records. We are currently working on the migration of other features to include the ability to apply for VA Disability Compensation and updating direct deposit information for Compensation and Pension payments. [Read more.](#)

15. VA misses deadline, delays expansion of caregiver

benefits Stars and Stripes, September 25, 2019, – Caregivers for veterans of conflicts before the 9/11 terrorist attacks won't receive congressionally mandated benefits until summer 2020 at the earliest, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced Wednesday. The VA will miss its Oct. 1 deadline to establish the information technology needed to extend caregiver benefits to families of pre-9/11 veterans – a task that was to be completed last year. The missed deadline pushes back other target dates, delaying enrollment into the program until at least next summer. [Read more.](#)

16. VA Facilities Smoke-Free Starting Oct. 1 Military.com, Week of September 30, 2019, All [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) health care facilities will be completely smoke-free starting Oct. 1, with all forms of tobacco use, including e-cigarettes and vaping, banned from facility grounds. The policy change, first published by the Veterans Health Administration in early March, ends the use of designated smoking areas or shelters at VA hospitals. The change applies to everyone at VA facilities, including patients, visitors, volunteers, contractors, vendors and staff. [Read more.](#)

17. Veteran's benefits will see a cost-of-living bump this year, but how much? Military Times, September 30, 2019, Veterans will

see a cost-of-living increase in their benefits payouts later this year, but it likely won't be as big as [the last one they received](#). Last week, President Donald Trump signed into law the annual [Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act](#), which guarantees that a host of veteran's benefits will see the same annual boost as Social Security recipients. [Read more.](#)

18. Military Exposures & Your Health, Issue 1, October 2019, Information for Veterans who served during the Gulf War Era (1990 - Present) and their families. Military Exposures & Your Health is a new newsletter for Veterans with service from 1990 to the present. Topics include military environmental exposures, updates about health, benefits, and news for Veterans. This newsletter will be released online twice a year and replaces the Gulf War Newsletter and Post-9/11 Vet Newsletter. [Read it here.](#)

19. Here Is Your 2020 Military Retiree, VA, and Social Security Pay Bump, MOAA, October 11, 2019, Military retirees, those who receive disability or other benefits from the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#), federal retirees and social security recipients will see a 1.6% increase in their monthly checks for 2020. The annual [Cost Of Living Allowance](#) (COLA) is smaller than the 2.8% increase from last year but in line with the historical increases seen over the last ten years. [Read more.](#)

20. The VA Is Processing More Appeals, Decisions Thanks to New System Military.com, Week of October 28, 2019, The results are in: The Board of Veterans' Appeals processed 11% more decisions and held 38% more hearings in fiscal 2019 than 2018 thanks, in part, to a new congressionally-mandated appeals structure, officials reported this month. That new process, combined with hiring more staff, helped the board process 96,000 rating appeals, of which 35% were granted and 30% denied, BVA Chairman Cheryl Mason said. [Read more.](#)

21. VA's \$900 Million Caregiver Program Boggled Down by Bad Data, IT Issues, GAO Finds Military.com, Week of September 23, 2019, Inaccurate data kept by the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) on its staff for the Family Caregiver Program and delays in the technology infrastructure needed to expand the program are

hampering an effort to include the caregivers of injured veterans from World War II through Vietnam, a government watchdog agency has found. [Read more.](#)

22. A Million Veterans Have Looked Into Private Care Since Mission Act Rollout Military.com, Week of September 30, 2019, More than a million veterans have consulted with the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) about going to a private doctor since the Mission Act rolled out three months ago, but there has been no immediate rush away from the VA health care system, officials said Sept. 25. "The bottom line is that the Mission Act is a success," said Dr. Richard Stone, head of the Veterans Health Administration. He added that the number of veterans enrolling in VA health care, or choosing to stay in the system, has actually increased since the Mission Act went into effect June 6. The new enrollments include veterans over the age of 65, when they become eligible for Medicare, he said at a hearing of the House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Health. [Read more.](#)

23. Will VA Really Share Your Personal Medical Info Without Permission? Military.com, 30 Sep 2019, Late last week, several stories began popping up on websites and social media about veterans getting letters saying the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) (VA) would soon start sharing their medical records with civilian doctors. The letter says that the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) "may now communicate without your authorization your health information through health information exchanges (HIE) with non-VHA providers for them to treat you." [Read more.](#)

24. OPIOID Crisis – Get help now. Text "OPIOID" to 898-211. Standard text messaging rates may apply. For more information about the **Seminole Collaborative Opioid Response Effort (SCORE)**, view [SCORE.](#)

25. Tricare Moves Toward Chiropractic Coverage Military.com, Week of September 30, 2019 Chiropractic and acupuncture services could be covered by [Tricare](#) under a new policy set to be proposed in the next several months. Currently, Tricare does not

cover any chiropractic or acupuncture services for military family members or retirees. [Read more.](#)

26. Senate Scrambles to Stop Government Shutdown MOAA, October 23, 2019, If efforts fail, the next shutdown could be significantly more damaging than the last. [Read more.](#)

27. Arlington FAQs: What You Need to Know About Proposed Changes to Burial Eligibility, MOAA, October 23, 2019, On Sept. 25, then-Acting Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy [announced](#) the proposed eligibility changes for burial at Arlington National Cemetery. These draft revisions begin the first step of the [federal rule-making process](#), a minimum nine-month procedure. [Read more.](#)

28. Free Legal Advice Clinic for Veterans, Seminole County Bar Association, Legal Aid Society provides a Free Legal Advice Clinic for Veterans every 2nd Thursday of the Month from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm, at the Seminole County Public Library, 215 N Oxford Road, Casselberry. No appointment necessary. Questions concerning family law or a housing law matter? Come meet with the experienced staff and volunteer attorneys to get answers to your legal questions. For more information call Carolina Hernandez, Pro Bono Coordinator, Seminole County Legal Aid, Inc., 407-834-1660 ext. 113 or coordinator@scbalas.com.

29. It's Official: AMVETS Will Hold Memorial Day Rally in D.C. to Replace 'Rolling Thunder' Military.com, Week of September 23, 2019, AMVETS made it official Sept. 20: A "Rolling Thunder"-style motorcycle rally will take place next Memorial Day weekend in Washington, D.C., to honor the nation's veterans, POWs and missing-in-action. In a release and at a news conference, leaders of the veteran's service organization American Veterans, better known as AMVETS, said they would continue the tradition of the annual three-day rally of thousands of motorcyclists in the nation's capital for the 2020 Memorial Day. [Read more.](#)

30. Army Recommends Changes to Arlington Cemetery Burial Eligibility MOAA, September 25, 2019, The Army on Wednesday

announced its [recommendations for eligibility changes](#) at Arlington National Cemetery – changes which would reduce those eligible for below-ground burials but still offer above-ground inurnment of cremated remains for many veterans. In addition to preserving 1,000 gravesites for current and future Medal of Honor recipients, the proposed revised criteria for those who honorably serve the nation are as follows: [Read more.](#)

31. Fake website with Iranian ties targets US veterans, report says, Fox News, September 27, 2019, Researchers have unmasked a website masquerading as a job site for U.S. veterans that may have ties to Iran, according to media reports. Researchers from security firm Cisco Talos [reported](#) this week that the website, Hire Military Heroes, was distributing malware that allows [hackers](#) to gain control of the victim's computer, as reported by [Bleeping Computer](#). [Read more.](#)

32. Troops, Vets Increasingly Targeted by Russian 'Troll Factories,' Report Finds Military.com, Week of September 30, 2019, The same Russian "troll factories" that sought to influence the 2016 elections have continued to target service members, veterans and their families online with "hateful and divisive messages," according to a two-year investigative report by Vietnam Veterans of America. "They're incredibly good at branding" and are seeking to "pit us against each other" in the military and veterans community, said Kristofer Goldsmith, VVA chief investigator and author of the 191-page report. [Read more.](#)

33. Vets in Congress Renew Medal of Honor Plea for Army 'Legend' Alwyn Cashe 17 Oct 2019 | Military.com, Fourteen years ago today, Army Sgt. 1st Class Alwyn Cashe likely could've walked away relatively unscathed after his Bradley Fighting Vehicle hit an improvised explosive device in Iraq. Instead, the soldier chose to head back into the burning vehicle to save his comrades. He did so even though they were still facing enemy gunfire and his uniform was soaked with fuel. Cashe risked his life and went beyond the call of duty, which is why he deserves the Medal of Honor, three members of Congress wrote in a letter to Defense Secretary Mark Esper and Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy on the 14th anniversary of the soldier's actions. Cashe has become "something of a legend in military circles," Reps. Dan Crenshaw, Michael Waltz and Stephanie Murphy wrote. The Silver

Star he received for his 2005 actions in Iraq, they added, should be upgraded to the Medal of Honor. [Read more.](#)

34. White House Hosts First Meeting with VSOs to End Veteran Suicides MOAA September 24, 2019, As the month of September comes to a close, many organizations and individuals across the nation have engaged in activities in observance of National Suicide Awareness Month. We all know one month a year won't solve this national crisis, and President Donald Trump has been keen on tackling the epidemic - starting with veterans. In March, the President signed an [executive order](#) creating a public health strategy to address the rising rates of suicides among veterans. The executive order, PREVENTS, which stands for the President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide, will serve as a national call to action aimed at improving veterans' quality of life and lowering the veteran suicide rate. [Read more.](#)

35. Do veterans lack social-emotional skills? A major study finds that many civilian employers believe they do. Military Times, September 27, 2019, just based off their resumes and cover letters, veterans' military service is working against them when they apply for jobs in certain fields, a new study says. The study - conducted by Duke University's Fuqua School of Business and released Sept. 24 - found employers believe veterans are less suited for jobs that involve social-emotional skills and interacting with people than their non-veteran counterparts. [Read more.](#)

36. 6 Unbeatable Benefits of VA Loans, Military.com, Created before the close of World War II, the VA home loan benefit has helped millions of veterans, service members and military families achieve the dream of homeownership. Today, in many ways, it's more important than ever. VA loan volume has soared in the wake of the Great Recession, driven in large part by historically low rates and increasingly tougher lending requirements. The VA program provides significant financial benefits that make home buying possible for score of veterans who might not otherwise qualify. Here's a look at six of the biggest benefits of these long-cherished home loans: [Read more.](#)

37. The Best Way to Honor Veterans Is to Hire One, Entrepreneur,

October 21, 2019, Opinions expressed by *Entrepreneur* contributors are their own. U.S. military [veterans](#), transitioning service members and their families represent an essential part of today's multi-generational workforce, and we are eternally grateful for their service and selflessness. Veterans add unique value to today's workforce because they embody disciplined leadership, maturity and unwavering loyalty to the pursuit of excellence in their personal and professional lives. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, each year, roughly [200,000 men and women transition out of the military](#) and face the challenges of translating their military experience into civilian careers. [Read more.](#)

Newsletter from your local Seminole County Veterans' Services Office Staff.

Thank you for your service to our Country!

It Takes the Strength of a Warrior to Ask for Help

The journey after military service can be a difficult one. If you are Veteran in crisis or know of one who is, [please call the VA's 24/7 Suicide Prevention Line](#) at

1-800-273-TALK (8255)

To speak with a trained counselor, [or find a Crisis Center near you.](#)