

# Seminole County Veterans Newsletter



SEMINOLE COUNTY COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT | VETERAN SERVICES OFFICE

*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.*

*Rusty Keeling, Seminole County Veterans Services Officer*

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**1. New Veterans Services Manager - Rusty Sends** - I want to formally introduce myself as the new Veterans Services Manager here in Seminole County. It is a great honor to have been selected for this position. I want to personally thank Ed Burford for his service to Seminole County, I know that he will be missed by all. I am excited to start on this new journey and to join Cathy Shubert and Freddie Spano on the Veterans Services Team!

Rusty Keeling is a native of Sanford, FL. He joined the Navy in January 1991. He attended basic training at Great Lakes, IL and attended Submarine school in Groton, CT. He was designated as a Submarine Radioman and stationed onboard the fast attack submarine, USS Hyman G. Rickover (SSN-709) in Norfolk, VA from August 1992 through January 1997. He completed deployments to the Mediterranean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean. Upon completion of his sea tour, he volunteered for recruiting duty which at the time was a Chief of Naval Operations priority billet. Recruiting came naturally to him, so Rusty made the conversion to the Navy's Career Recruiting Force, where he spent the next 16 years. He served tours at 3 Navy Recruiting Districts and a tour at the Navy Recruiting Orientation Unit. He has held positions as Recruiter, Recruiter-in-Charge, Zone Supervisor, Senior Command Training Officer, Instructor, Trainer and Senior Trainer. He retired as a Senior Chief Petty Officer after serving 22 years on active duty. Rusty has been awarded (5) Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medals, (2) Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals, (7) Good Conduct Medals, and numerous other accolades including Zone Recruiter of the Year, Zone Supervisor of the Year, and Instructor of the Year. He retired in February 2013 and immediately started working with Veterans. He has worked for Volusia County Veteran Services as a Service Officer, The Department of Veterans Affairs as a Social Work Associate working with homeless Veterans, Embry Riddle Aeronautical University as Veterans College Officer and the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs where he worked as Service Officer and was selected as the State of Florida Veterans Claims Examiner of the Year. He has also served as the State Outreach Coordinator and Veterans Claims Examiner Supervisor for Central Florida. He started as the Veterans Service Manager for Seminole County on July 6, 2020. He is married and has three children.

**2. Seminole County Veterans Appreciation Luncheon** - We are still working on date and location; we are very close the nailing this down. I am very much looking forward to this event and meeting you all.

**3. Florida Department of Veterans Affairs - Rusty sends** - The FDVA Benefits Handbook for 2020 is now available online, hard copies have not yet been printed. I encourage you to review it and take a look at the section by Attorney General Ashley Moody, page 4, as it discussed the *Military and Veterans Assistance Program* and the efforts to combat scams targeting Military and Veterans. Read the Handbook online [here](#).

**4. Son of Legendary Soldier Alwyn Cashe Follows in His Father's Footsteps**, Military.com via Task and Purpose, June 11, 2020. On Oct. 17, 2005 during a route clearance operation in Iraq, Sgt. 1st Class Alwyn Cashe did the unthinkable: Amid an ambush, and drenched in fuel, Cashe walked through fire for his men. Not once, but three times. His heroism and selflessness ensured his soldiers made it out of the burning wreckage of their [Bradley Fighting Vehicle](#) alive, at the cost of his own life. Years later, his legacy of courage, sacrifice, and steadfast loyalty to his men endures: It's [there in a campaign to see his posthumous Silver Star upgraded to the Medal of Honor](#), the nation's highest award for battlefield bravery; it persists in the memories of his family and the stories told by those he served alongside; and is carried on by his son. *Special note, SFC Cashe was a resident of Seminole County where his family continues to live.* [Read more.](#)

**5. Air Force Teams Up with Lee Greenwood for Patriotic God Bless the USA Performance**, Military.com, 01 July 2020. The Air Force's "Singing Sergeants" band collaborated with Lee Greenwood and Home Free for a special performance of one of America's most iconic songs – just in time for the 4th of July. (Air Force Band) [Read more](#)

**6. Pentagon Begins Testing Troops for COVID-19 Antibodies, Despite CDC Warnings**, Military.com, 31 May 2020. The military has begun testing troops for COVID-19

antibodies and might soon ask them to "stick your arm out" to draw blood for possible use as a novel coronavirus therapy, Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Mark Milley said Thursday. [Read more.](#)

**7. Soldier Makes History as First Woman to Join the Green Berets**, Military.com, 9 July 2020. An [Army National Guard](#) soldier marked a new milestone in the U.S. military Thursday by graduating from the grueling [Special Forces](#) Qualification Course (Q Course) to become the first woman to join the [Green Berets](#). [Read more](#)

**8. Pentagon to Retirees: Plan Now for Tricare Select Enrollment Fees in 2021**, Military.com, 24 June 2020. "Working age" military retirees -- those under age 65 -- who use [Tricare Select](#) for their health care will start paying enrollment fees beginning next year, Defense Department officials announced Tuesday. [Read more](#)

**9. Know Your NDAA: What's In, What's Out, What's Next as Critical Bill Moves Forward**, MOAA, June 24, 2020. The FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) is working through the House and Senate – the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) released its full text early June 24, and MOAA's government relations team has been poring over its 1,000-plus pages. The early text and summaries from both chambers give us a glimpse at what we can expect the priorities to be for Congress and the administration in the new fiscal year. They also point to several MOAA-backed initiatives that will be part of NDAA negotiations going forward – we will need support from MOAA members and the wider military community to ensure these provisions reach the finish line. [Read more.](#)

**10. Military Child Education Coalition: free resources for Veteran families**, VAntage Point. The summer months have always been a productive time to catch up on reading and resources in preparation for the upcoming school year. This year, in particular, when so many of our lives have been upended, using the summer months to reset plans and expectations is vital, particularly for military and Veteran families. [Read more](#)

**11. DoD Knew K2 Troops Were Exposed to Cancer-Causing Toxins; VA Continues to Deny Care**, Stars and Stripes, 10 Jul 2020. Recently declassified Defense Department documents show the Pentagon knew troops were exposed to multiple toxins and hazards that have led to hundreds of cancer cases and dozens of dead veterans after deploying to Uzbekistan in the early days of the War on Terror. The Department of Veterans Affairs is denying most of them care and disability. [Read more](#)

**12. [Military's Top Appeals Court to Consider Whether Retirees Can Be Court-Martialed](#)**, Military.com, 9 July 2020. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces is the last stop before military appeals battles make it to the Supreme Court. [Read more](#)

**13. Esper Bans Use of Promotion Board Photos, Orders Review of Hair and Grooming Standards**, Military.com, 15 Jul 2020. Defense Secretary Mark Esper put out a military-wide directive Wednesday barring the use of photos in promotion boards and ordering the development of new hair and grooming standards devoid of racial bias. [Read more](#)

**14. VA Teams Up with Nonprofit to Provide COVID-19 Quarantine Kits to Veterans**, Military.com, 10 July 2020. The [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) has teamed up with the nonprofit group [Help Heal Veterans](#) to help create quarantine kits for vets who are confined to their residences as a result of a positive COVID-19 test. [Read more](#)

**15. The VA Is Now Offering Remote Hearing Aid Adjustments**, Military.com, 24 June 2020. The [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) has developed a smartphone application that allows veterans to receive remote hearing aid orientation and adjustments from the privacy and safety of their homes. [Read more](#)

**16. Guilty plea in poisoning deaths of VA patients still leaves lawsuits, lingering questions**, Militarytimes.com. Tuesday's guilty plea by a [former Veterans Affairs nursing assistant](#) to seven counts of murder effectively closed the criminal investigation into a [string of patients deaths](#) at a West Virginia medical center in recent years, but the case is far from over. [Read more](#)

**17. What You Should Know About Long-Term Care Assistance From the VA**, MOAA, June 17, 2020. Veterans seeking assistance with their caregiving situation – those who may not have long-term care insurance or enough individual assets – the only programs available are through the VA. The federal VA programs are called Aid and Attendance (A&A) and Housebound. Each state also manages state VA facilities that may be accepting new residents. The A&A and Housebound programs pay an additional amount on top of established VA pension compensation to help cover the extra costs of long-term care expenses. [Read more.](#)

**18. The VA Is Finally Moving Its Travel Reimbursement System Online**, Military.com, 29 June 2020. The [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) is making it easier for veterans and eligible beneficiaries to submit travel claims for traveling to receive medical care. [Read more](#)

**19. VA Plans Expansion of Women's Health Transition Training**, MOAA, June 24, 2020. A program designed to help women veterans navigate the VA's system and make them aware of available services will expand by the end of next year to reach every woman preparing to leave service. The [Women's Health Transition Training program](#) – a collaboration between the VA and DoD – is offered during service-specific Transition Assistance Programs. [Read more.](#)

**20. [Lawmakers Try to Expand List of Diseases Eligible for Agent Orange Benefits](#)**, Military.com, Jul 15, 2020. Proposed amendments to the fiscal 2021 National Defense Authorization Act would add three diseases to the Department of Veterans Affairs' list of illnesses presumed to be linked to Agent Orange -- measures that, if approved, would provide health care and disability benefits to roughly 22,000 affected veterans. [Read more](#)

**21. White House Unveils Roadmap Aiming to End Veterans Suicide Crisis**, Military.com, 17 Jun 2020. President Donald Trump on Wednesday unveiled a long-awaited plan by a White House task force to address the problem of veterans' suicides -- a "roadmap" that includes suicide prevention training across professions, a public awareness campaign, community partnerships and promotion of safe storage of weapons for firearms owners. [Read more.](#)

**22. Tricare Prescriptions Would Be Free During Pandemic Under New Proposal**, Military.com, 18 Jun 2020. Two U.S. senators have introduced legislation that would let [Tricare](#) waive prescription drug copayments for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic or other national emergency. [Read more.](#)

**23. PA Man to Spend Up to 12 years in Prison for Stolen Valor, Theft Charges**, Military.com via The Times-Tribune, Scranton, PA, 21 May 2020. A West Scranton, Pennsylvania, man who lied about his military service as he stole nearly \$17,000 from an American Legion post will spend up to 12 years in prison. [Read more.](#)

**24. Comcast Offers 60 days of Free Internet for Low Income Families.** To help Veterans and others access important resources such as benefits, education, training and employment opportunities, Comcast is offering new eligible customers two months of free internet service and a discounted rate. Apply by December 31, 2020 for the Comcast Internet Essentials package. [Read more](#)

**25. Three Ways to Make Yourself More Employable in 2020**, Colorado State University. We must all come to terms with an unpleasant truth: Millions of Americans will lose their jobs this year. As

thousands of businesses closed in a nationwide effort to reduce the spread of the novel coronavirus, a record 3.3 million Americans applied for unemployment benefits during the third week of March -- the highest level of seasonally adjusted claims since 1982, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. [Read more.](#)

**26. When It Comes to Social Security Retirement Benefits, Timing Matters**, MOAA, June 22, 2020. For those of you born in 1954, congratulations! You made it to Social Security's Full Retirement Age (FRA) of 66 in 2020. After this year, FRA will increase for each birth year. People born in 1960 and later must wait until age 67 for FRA. The Social Security retirement benefit amount will increase based on your age until you reach 70. After age 70, COLAs will be the only increases to the benefit. [Read more.](#)

**27. What It Means to Be a 'Protected Veteran' on a Job Application**, Military.com. Applying for a job online allows for a lot more background questions than you might expect even after the resume is turned in -- and not all of them are directly related to your past employment. Included in that list might be something like this: "are you a protected veteran?" [Read more](#)