

OCTOBER 2020 | ISSUE 3

# THE VETERAN'S BULLETIN

*The Official Newsletter of the Union County  
Office of Veteran Services*

**Welcome to The Veteran's Bulletin, the official newsletter of the Union County Office of Veteran Services. This quarterly publication is intended to keep our veterans and their families informed about programs, services, events and celebrations honoring Union County Veterans and Active Military residents.**



## POW/MIA Day Celebration

On September 18, 2020 the annual POW/MIA Remembrance Day honoring prisoners of war and service members missing in action was held on the steps of the Union County Courthouse in Elizabeth. Union County Freeholders Christopher Hudak and Bette Jane Kowalski joined Union County Sheriff Peter Corvelli, Berkeley Heights Mayor Angie Devanney, Union County Manager Ed Oatman, Deputy County Manager Amy Wagner, Veterans Services Coordinator Janna Williams, and over 30 members of local county veterans groups for the memorial. Brigadier General Edward Chrystal from the New Jersey Army National Guard was the guest speaker at the ceremony. The annual event is sponsored by the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders. The National POW/MIA Recognition Day is observed each year on the third Friday of September.

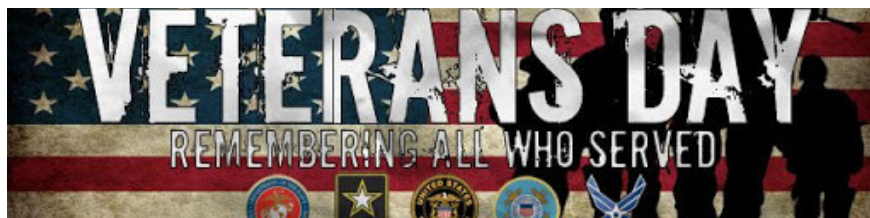
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## Union County Women Veterans Honored with "SHERO" Award at Veteran Social Mixer



Union County Freeholder Chairman Alexander Mirabella, Freeholder Angela Garretson and Freeholder Andrea Staten congratulate five Union County women veterans on receiving the "SHERO" award at the Union County Military Networking Mixer in Kenilworth on September 29, 2020. The SHERO award program was initiated this year to recognize local women veterans for their outstanding military service, community work and volunteer activities. The women veterans honored were Debbie Skeete-Bernard of Union, Lt. Colonel, Retired United States Air Force Reserve; Delia Ware-Tibbs of Roselle, Lt. Colonel Retired, United States Army Reserves; Theresa Hilton of Elizabeth, Major, United States Air Force Reserve; Sandra Cagua-Valdez of Elizabeth, E-4 Specialist, Army National Guard and Quelcia Olea of Plainfield, Sergeant, United States Army. They were joined by Union County Acting Prosecutor Lyndsay Ruotolo, Union County Deputy Manager Amy Wagner, Division of Community Services Director Brandon T. Givens, Office of Veteran Services Coordinator Janna Williams and Kenneth Glick of the Veteran Service Office. The networking mixer was coordinated by the Union County Office of Veteran Services UC-HERO program.

## CARES Act 2020 Guidance for Borrowers with VA-Guaranteed Home Loans

On March 27, 2020, the President signed into law the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, Public Law 116-136. The CARES Act protects borrowers with Federally-backed mortgage loans who are experiencing financial hardship due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) national emergency. This law provides a suite of mortgage payment forbearance options for all borrowers who, either directly or indirectly, suffer a financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A forbearance is a temporary postponement or reduction of mortgage payments. It is not payment forgiveness. Under the CARES Act, borrowers are entitled to an initial forbearance period of up to 180 days upon a request. A borrower at any time can choose to shorten the forbearance period and resume repayment of the loan. Servicers of VA loans cannot require borrowers to make a lump sum payment immediately after a borrower exits a CARES Act forbearance.

For more information, please visit the VA website <http://www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans/index.asp> where you can find a list of frequently asked CARES Act questions. In addition, you may call toll free at (877) 827-3702 to contact a VA Regional Loan Center.

## Stride To Ride Relay Team Honored at Echo Lake Park 9/11 Memorial



The Union County Office of Veteran Services presented a resolution from the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders honoring the Stride to Ride Relay Team from Boston, MA at the 9/11 Memorial at Echo Lake Park, Mountainside on October 5, 2020. Accepting the resolution is Heather Viveiros of Newton, MA, founder of the Give2Those organization which sponsors the annual 911 mile ride. Standing from left to right are riders Joe Leaston of Boston, MA, Margaret Zervins of Natick, MA, Sean Carnell of Boston, MA, Heather Viveiros, Janna Williams, Union County Office of Veteran Services Coordinator, Susan Doherty of Canton, MA, Kenneth Glick, Veteran Service Officer, Brandon Givens, Director, Union County Division of Community Services and John Roman. Other riders not pictured were Doug Pickel of Trufant, MI, Ray Regan of Winchester, MA and Bill Fisher of Boston, MA.

The Stride To Ride Relay occurs every October as a way for veterans, first responders and citizens to honor, remember and educate individuals about the importance of October 7, 2001, the day of the first deployment in the global war on terror. It consists of riding, running, cycling, motorcycle and rucking stages. The mission of Give2Those.org is to keep alive the memories of all who lost their lives not only on September 11, 2001, but in subsequent years due to 9/11 related illnesses, service related injuries, or the invisible wounds of war. The group also provides financial assistance and support for active duty members, veterans, first responders or their families who are experiencing hardship, distress or personal tragedy.

The relay began at Boston's Logan Airport 9/11 Memorial on October 3, 2020 and ended at the 9/11 Pentagon Memorial in Washington, D.C. on October 7, 2020, with multiple stops, including the Ground Zero Memorial in New York City, the Flight 93 Memorial in Stoystown, PA and various local memorials in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware.



Access Your VA  
& DoD Benefits  
24/7

[www.ebenefits.va.gov](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov)

## Gulf War VA Disability Benefits

The Department of Veterans Affairs is offering eligible Gulf War Veterans a free Gulf War Registry health exam to find possible long-term health problems related to Gulf War service. These Veterans and those who served in Afghanistan and Djibouti after September 19, 2001 may also be eligible to sign up for the VA Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry. If you are a Veteran who served on active duty in Southwest Asia during the Gulf War, which began on August 2, 1990 and continues to the present, including Operation Iraqi Freedom, you are eligible for a free examination. You do not need to be enrolled in the VA healthcare system to take part. This includes service in one of the following areas:

- Iraq
  - Afghanistan
  - Kuwait
  - Saudi Arabia
  - Djibouti
  - Oman
  - Bahrain
- The United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.)
  - Qatar
  - Gulf of Aden
  - Gulf of Oman
  - Waters of the Persian Gulf, Arabian Sea, and Red Sea
  - The neutral zone between Iraq and Saudi Arabia
  - The airspace above all these locations

The VA encourages any Veteran who thinks that they may be eligible for Gulf War disability benefits to contact an accredited Veterans Service Organization (VSO) to assist with the application process. Information and resources about the Gulf War disability benefits, health examinations, eligibility requirements and how to file an initial or a supplemental claim can be found online at <https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/hazardous-materials-exposure/gulf-war-illness>.

## List of Gulf War Presumptive Disabilities

Veterans who served in the Southwest Asia theater of military operations may suffer from presumptive illnesses or other conditions related to service in this region, and may be entitled to get disability compensation or benefits. These Veterans may be able to get disability benefits if they served in the Southwest Asia theater of military operations during the Gulf War period and didn't receive a dishonorable discharge. The claimed illness or condition must have started while Veteran was on active duty after August 2, 1990 or before December 31, 2021 and must also have a diagnosis, or show signs or symptoms of one or more of these conditions listed below:

1. Functional gastrointestinal disorders (including Irritable Bowl Syndrome or IBS)
2. Fibromyalgia
3. Chronic fatigue syndrome
4. Cardiovascular disease signs and symptoms
5. Neurological signs and symptoms
6. Upper and Lower respiratory symptoms
7. Skin symptoms
8. Muscle pains
9. Joint pains
10. Headaches
11. Menstrual disorder
12. Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)

Except for ALS, the presumed disability or disabilities must have appeared within 1 year of the date of the veteran's separation, caused the veteran to be ill for at least 6 months, must be at least 10% disabling and was caused only by service in the Southwest Asia theater of operations.

If you are a Union County Gulf War veteran who served in Southwest Asia, and have symptoms possibly related to Gulf War illnesses, and wish to file a disability claim, please contact the Union County Veteran Service office at 908-527-4918/4719 Monday to Friday, 8am to 4:30pm. We will keep your medical information confidential and schedule an appointment to file your claim.

## Infectious Diseases and Gulf War Veterans

The VA presumes that certain infectious diseases are related to military service in the Southwest Asia theater of operations during the Gulf War from August 2, 1990 to the present, and in Afghanistan or Djibouti on or after September 19, 2001. Veterans must have had any of these diseases within one year of the date of their separation from military service, and have a current disability as a result of that disease which is at least 10% disabling. Veterans with the following diagnosed diseases are eligible to qualify for disability compensation:

- Malaria - A disease caused by a parasite transmitted by mosquitoes. Symptoms include chills, fever and sweats.
- Brucellosis - A chronic bacterial disease with symptoms such as profuse sweating, joint and muscle pain.
- Campylobacter Jejuni - A bacterial disease whose symptoms include abdominal pain, diarrhea, nausea, headaches and fever.
- Coxiella Burnetii (Q Fever) - A bacterial disease characterized by fever, severe headache, nausea and diarrhea.
- Mycobacterium Tuberculosis - An illness that affects the lungs and causes symptoms such as chest pain, persistent cough, weight loss and fever.
- Nontyphoid Salmonella - A gastrointestinal condition usually caused by ingesting infected foodstuffs. Symptoms include nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.
- Shigella - An intestinal infection causing fever, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.
- Visceral Leishmaniasis - A parasitic disease characterized by symptoms such as fever, weight loss, enlargement of the spleen and liver, and anemia.
- West Nile Virus - A disease spread by mosquitoes characterized by symptoms such as fever, headache, muscle pain or weakness, nausea and vomiting.

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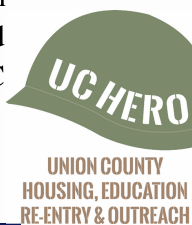
## VA Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry

In June 2014, the VA opened the "Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry for Veterans and Service members who deployed to the Southwest Asia theater of operations at any time on or after August 2, 1990, or Afghanistan or Djibouti on or after September 11, 2001. The use of burn pits was a common waste disposal practice at military sites outside the U.S. such as in Iraq and Afghanistan. Smoke and other emissions from these pits contained an unknown mixture of substances that may have short and long-term health effects on individuals who were exposed for long periods, or those with pre-existing conditions such as asthma or other lung conditions.

To date, over 214,000 Veterans have signed up for the registry, which will allow the VA to track their individual health conditions as research into the effects of burn pit exposure goes forward. To sign up, Veterans must complete an online questionnaire designed to give VA a broad picture of their health and current and past exposures. Veterans do not need to participate in the registry to submit a claim for disability compensation. To register and complete the questionnaire, please visit the VA website at <https://veteran.mobilehealth.va.gov/AHBurnPit> Registry.

## Union County Heroes Veteran Resources

The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders has sponsored the UC HERO program in honor of our veterans. The initiative offers services through various county agencies, including the Office of Veteran Services, the Division on Aging and Disability Resources, Division of Individual and Family Support Services, Workforce Development/American Job Center, and partnership with local veteran groups. UC HERO seeks to increase awareness of eligibility, entitlements, benefits programs, and services provided to veterans by various Government agencies. Veterans and residents can find the UC HERO website at [www.ucnj.org/uchero](http://www.ucnj.org/uchero).



# The Union County Office of Veteran Services

The Union County Office of Veteran Services is a vital link between men and women who served their country and the services available from Federal, State, County and Municipal levels of government as well as the private sector. Veteran Services provides advocacy, information and referrals for veterans and their families on a wide variety of financial, health and quality-of-life issues related to VA benefits and services.

Service is available on our toll-free hotline 866-640-7115 and at our office in the Union County Administration Complex in Elizabeth. For more information, please contact our county Veteran Service Coordinator, Janna Williams, at 908-527-4918 or go to our website at [www.ucnj.org/uchero](http://www.ucnj.org/uchero).



## Here are some of the many services offered by the Office of Veterans services for FREE to Union County Veterans and their family members!

- Provides eligibility criteria for all veteran benefits and entitlements
- Assists in securing copies of lost military documents, such as the DD-214 (military separation document)
- Guides applications to the VA for service-connected compensation and pension claims
- Helps veteran’s widow/widower and children apply for benefits
- Helps with appeals for denied benefit applications
- Provides death and burial benefit information
- Coordinates annual placement of flags on veteran graves in Union County during Memorial Day weekend
- Provides contact and referral information for housing, mental health, education, job training and placement, financial and medical/nursing home services
- Facilitates transportation to VA Healthcare System at Lyons and East Orange through the Union County Paratransit system

## Union County Office of Veteran Services Directory



For questions or information regarding veterans benefits and services, please contact any of the following members of our Veteran Services staff:

- **Janna Williams – Accredited Veteran Service Coordinator**  
Phone: 908-527-4918 Email: [jwilliams@ucnj.org](mailto:jwilliams@ucnj.org)
- **Kenneth Glick – Veteran Service Officer**  
Phone: 908-527-4719 Email: [Kenneth.Glick@ucnj.org](mailto:Kenneth.Glick@ucnj.org)

LOCATION OF OFFICE OF VETERAN SERVICES:  
 UNION COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING  
 10 ELIZABETHTOWN PLAZA  
 ELIZABETH NJ 07203

HOURS OF OPERATION:  
 MONDAY—FRIDAY 8:00 AM—4:30 PM  
 TELEPHONE: 908-527-4918/4719  
 CLOSED SATURDAY AND SUNDAY  
 WEBSITE:  
[WWW.UCNJ.ORG/UCHERO](http://WWW.UCNJ.ORG/UCHERO)

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