

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 publication is intended to keep our Veterans and their families informed about programs, services and events for Union County Veterans and active military residents.

In this Issue:

Union County Veterans
Parking Placards - 1,2
LGBTQ Veteran News - 2
New VA Secretary -3
Veterans Programs - 3
Black History Month - 3
COVID-19 Vaccine Center
opens in Union County - 4
Secondary Disability
Claims for Veterans - 5
Veteran Resources and
Directory Services - 6

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UNION COUNTY
We're Connected to You!



County Designates New Parking Sites For Union County Veterans

Union County Commissioner Chairman Alexander Mirabella joined officials from the Union County Office of Veterans Services, and the Office of the Union County Prosecutor on November 10, 2020 at the Ash Brook Golf Course in Scotch Plains to introduce new designated parking spaces for Veterans at nine county facilities. The free parking is available to any county Veteran who applies for a parking placard through the Union County Office of Veterans Services. For more information on how to apply and receive the parking placard, please read the article on page 2.



County Designates Parking Sites For Veterans

In honor of Veterans Day, the Union County Board of County Commissioners approved new parking spaces at nine county facilities for military veterans. The parking spaces feature signs noting their veteran designation, and may be used by any Veteran with a car displaying a special placard provided by the Office of the Union County Prosecutor. “We hope this demonstration of appreciation helps raise awareness of the many contributions that military veterans and their families make to the Union County community, and of their dedication to serve our nation,” said Commissioner Chairman Alexander Mirabella.

The designated veterans' parking spaces will be located at the following Union County facilities:

- Union County Administration Building – 10 Elizabethtown Plaza, Elizabeth
- Colleen Frasier Building – 300 North Avenue East, Westfield
- Rahway River Park (Memorial Grove Area) – St. Georges Avenue, Rahway
- Ash Brook Golf Course – 1210 Raritan Road, Scotch Plains
- Galloping Hill Golf Course – 3 Golf Drive, Kenilworth
- Warinanco Sports Center – 1 Park Drive, Roselle
- Archery Range at Oak Ridge Park – 136 Oak Ridge Road, Clark
- Trailside Nature and Science Center – 452 New Providence Road, Mountainside
- Echo Lake (9/11 Memorial) – 1028 Springfield Ave., Mountainside

To apply for a parking placard, Veterans can contact our Veteran Services Coordinator Janna Williams at 908-527-4918, or Veteran Service Officer Kenneth Glick at 908-527-4719. Or, Veterans may go online to the Union County Office of Veterans Services website at <https://ucnj.org/uc-hero> to submit an application by following the link to the Veterans Placard Application page.



Veteran Services for LGBTQ Veterans

The Union County Office of Veteran Services is continuing its partnership with the Union County Office of LGBTQ Affairs to offer support services for LGBTQ Veterans. These services include filing VA disability claims, assistance in upgrading other than honorable discharges, obtaining VA medical benefits, and applying for federal housing and educational services under the GI bill.

As part of the 2021 Union County Rising Initiatives program, the Veteran Service Office is also supporting employment and training programs for LGBTQ Veterans in coordination with the Office of LGBTQ Affairs and the Union County Economic Development Corporation (UCEDC). The goal is to develop a virtual job fair for all county residents, including Veterans, that value LGBTQ diversity in the workplace and offer affirming working environments.

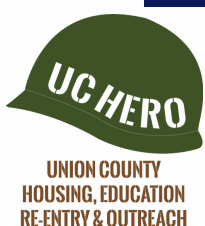
The Office of LGBTQ Affairs offers a platform for leadership and collaboration to support equality, and serves as a catalyst for advocacy, awareness and action on current and emerging issues that impact the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals.

If you are a Union County LGBTQ Veteran or active military resident who needs help with VA disability issues, military discharge upgrades, medical benefits, educational and housing assistance, and employment and training resources, please contact the Union County Office of Veteran Services at 908-527-4918, or 908-527-4719. A full list of our Veteran Services can be found at our UC-Hero website at <https://ucnj.org/uc-hero>.

President Appoints New VA Secretary

Denis R. McDonough was sworn in as the 11th Secretary to head the Department of Veterans Affairs on February 9, 2021, following his nomination by President Joseph Biden and confirmation by the U.S. Senate. Mr. McDonough, who served as White House Chief of Staff and Deputy National Security Advisor under President Barack Obama, stated that his top priority will be getting veterans all the vital services they need during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. McDonough said that as VA Secretary, he is committed to tackling additional priorities, such as reducing veterans' suicides and homelessness, improving services for transitioning service members and veteran caregivers, and "ensuring that the VA welcomes all our veterans, including women veterans, veterans of color and LGBTQ veterans." He added that the VA will redouble its efforts to provide needed care and services for veterans who were sexually assaulted while serving in the military.



Upcoming Programs for Union County Veterans

Boot Camp to The Boardroom - Virtual Incubator Program:

The Union County Office of Veteran Services is partnering with the Union County Economic Development Corporation (UCEDC) to offer a free nine week training program for diverse business owners this spring. The Virtual Incubator Program (VIP) will include virtual training sessions, group, and one-on-one mentoring. Upon completing the program, participants will receive forgivable loans of up to \$10,000 at 0% interest. Veteran business owners can register by going online at <https://ucedc.com/ucedcs-virtual-incubator-program/>.

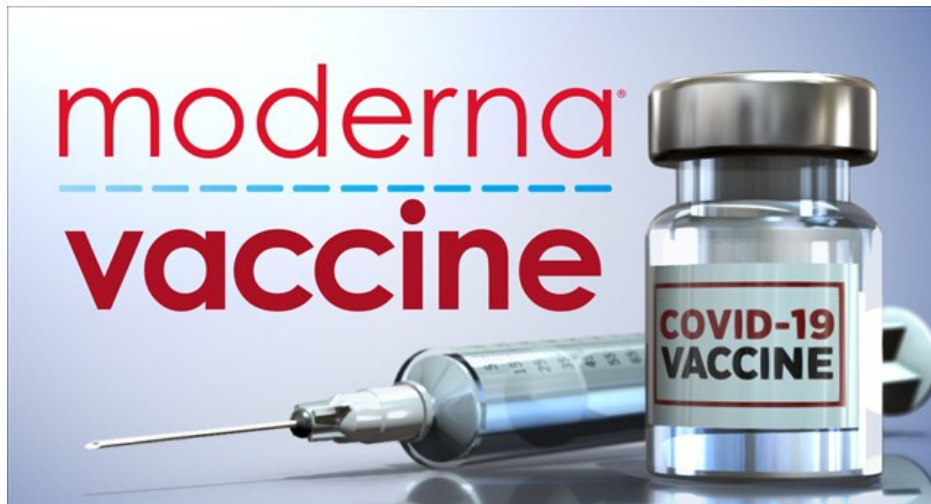
Memorial Day Flag Distribution for Veterans Groups:

The Union County Office of Veteran Services will be ordering American flags for distribution and placement on Veterans graves for this Memorial Day, May 31, 2021. American Legion and VFW posts, and other volunteer groups who participate in Memorial Day flag laying ceremonies will be contacted when flag distribution plans are finalized in April.



February is Black History Month Honoring Veterans Who Served:

In recognition of Black History Month, we honor Veterans who have served our country by remembering Master Sergeant Shade Meshack Lee of Elizabeth. Mr. Lee was one of the original Tuskegee Airmen in World War II, serving as an aircraft crew chief. After the war, he made recommendations which became a model for President Truman's 1948 Executive Order to integrate the military. Mr. Lee served 20 years in the Air Force, retiring in 1963, and had a long and successful career as an electrical engineer. In his later years, he became a public speaker, preserving the history of the Airman for younger generations. At the age of 90, he consulted on the role of the Tuskegee Airmen for the making of the 2012 movie, "Red Tails." Mr. Lee died in 2016 at the age of 95. For more information on the County's celebration of Black History Month, please visit the County website at <https://ucnj.org/black-history-month/>.



Union County Opens First COVID-19 Vaccination Center At Kean University

The Union County Board of County Commissioners announced in January that the County has opened its first COVID-19 vaccination clinic at Kean University after receiving initial supplies of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. Under the state's expanded COVID-19 Group 1A guidelines, groups of workers and residents currently eligible to receive the vaccination are health care workers, uniformed police officers, firefighters, residents ages 65 and older, and persons 18-64 with qualifying high-risk medical conditions. The COVID-19 vaccination clinic is located at Downs Hall at Kean University in Union.

Those groups who are eligible to receive the vaccine must make an appointment through the county's online registration system at www.ucnj.org/. Please be advised that appointments fill up rapidly and are contingent on the current availability of the vaccine. For more information about appointment availability and who qualifies for the vaccine please check for daily updates at www.ucnj.org/covid19/.

Union County Veterans who are not immediately eligible to receive the vaccine should continue to monitor their health condition. The County's COVID-19 drive-through testing is currently open at Kean University. Walk-up testing is also available at locations around the County. Testing is free and accessible to all county residents, whether or not they are experiencing symptoms. To register for the drive-through testing, or to find out about upcoming walk-up testing dates and locations, please go to www.ucnj.org/covid19/.

Union County recently opened a COVID-19 Vaccination Call Center to schedule vaccine appointments for seniors and residents who do not have internet access. The phone number is **908-613-7VAX (7829)**, and the hours of operation are Monday-Friday, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Operators at the Call Center will give tailored assistance to seniors over age 65, those in the 18-64 age range with qualifying medical conditions, residents who need assistance in Spanish, and residents who may need assistance with transportation to and from the vaccination sites.

The New Jersey VA Health Care System at Lyons, NJ also received the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine in December, 2020. VA care teams are currently reaching out to eligible Veterans to schedule vaccination appointments. Union County Veterans can learn more about the VA COVID-19 vaccination program by going online to the New Jersey VA Health Care webpage at www.newjersey.va.gov/.



Secondary Disabilities Veterans Overlook

Access Your VA
& DoD Benefits
24/7

www.ebenefits.va.gov

Many Veterans are unaware that they may be entitled to additional compensation from the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) by claiming secondary disabilities that were either caused or aggravated by their existing service-connected conditions. A recent survey showed there are ten common secondary disabilities which Veterans may overlook when filing a claim for disability benefits. These secondary service-connected conditions fall under one of two categories.

The first category includes Veterans who already have an existing service-connected disability, and then have a subsequent disability found to be caused by the existing condition. One example is peripheral neuropathy, as a secondary disability to Diabetes Mellitus, also called Diabetes Type 2.

The second category is where a Veteran develops a new non-service-connected disability that is aggravated or caused by an existing service-connected disability. An example is a sciatic nerve condition that affects a Veteran later in life as a result of an existing service-connected back injury. Veterans who believe they are suffering from symptoms related to the following ten secondary conditions, or other disabilities, should obtain a diagnosis and a medical opinion from their VA physician or private medical doctor before filing a new claim for VA disability benefits:

1. **Sciatic nerve damage** - Sciatica, or lumbar radiculopathy, refers to symptoms of scorching or electric jolt-like pain that discharges from the sciatic nerve of the lumbar spine and vibrates down through the backside of either leg. It can be due to degenerative disc disease or spinal stenosis.
2. **Erectile dysfunction** - A male sexually disabling condition whose service-connected causes may be due to the onset of Diabetes Type 2, ischemic heart disease or Post traumatic stress disorder.
3. **Median nerve damage** - A form of paralysis usually resulting from an injury to the elbow. A median nerve injury may cause tingling or stiffness in the forearm, wrist, thumb and adjacent fingers. This can be from a fracture or other traumatic injury, or from excess fluid build up.
4. **External popliteal nerve damage** - Also referred to as foot drop, this is a peripheral nerve injury that affects the ability to lift the foot at the ankle. While foot drop is a neuromuscular disorder, it can also be a symptom of a more serious injury, such as a nerve compression or a herniated disc.
5. **Peripheral neuropathy** - A nervous system condition that causes numbness, tingling, and motor weakness in the upper and/or lower extremities, most often associated with Diabetes Type 2.
6. **Arteriosclerosis obliterans** - Also called peripheral arterial disease, this is a manifestation of atherosclerotic disease in the arteries to the legs, linked to coronary or ischemic heart disease.
7. **Hypertensive vascular disease** - Hypertensive vascular disease is caused by damage to blood vessels due to the increased pressure within the arterial walls as a result of high blood pressure. Hypertension doubles the risk of cardiovascular diseases, including coronary or ischemic heart disease, and is also linked to Diabetes Type 2.
8. **Renal involvement in systemic diseases** - Renal impairment is common in cases of Agent Orange related multiple myeloma, and diabetic nephropathy, a progressive kidney disease related to Diabetes Type 2.
9. **Neuritis** - Neuritis is inflammation of a nerve or the general inflammation of the peripheral nervous system. It can be caused by a physical injury, such as to the hands, elbows, legs or feet, or can be a symptom of Diabetes Type 2, peripheral neuropathy or hypothyroidism.
10. **Degenerative arthritis of the spine** - This secondary condition can develop gradually as a result of an already service-connected neck or back injury.

If you are a Union County Veteran, and wish to file a disability claim, please contact the Union County Office of Veteran Services at 908-527-4918/4719, Monday to Friday, 8am to 4:30pm. We will keep your information confidential and schedule an appointment to file your claim.

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 <https://ucnj.org/uc-hero>.

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 on Memorial Day weekend
- Provides contact & referral information for housing, mental health, education, job training/placement, financial and medical/nursing home services
- Facilities 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 our Veteran Services staff:

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

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

HOURS OF OPERATION:
MONDAY—FRIDAY 8:00AM—4:30PM
TELEPHONE: 908-527-4918/4719
WEBSITE:
WWW.UCNJ.ORG/UCHERO

A Service of the Union County Board of County Commissioners



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