

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.



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Union County Receives New Jersey Governor "We Value Our Veterans" Community Award

Union County has received the prestigious New Jersey "We Value Our Veterans" Governor's Award for 2020 for outstanding service and contributions to the Union County Veterans community. The County was recognized for its consistent support of Veterans projects, services, and events through its Office of Veteran Services, such as the annual POW/MIA Remembrance Day celebration pictured above. For more details, please read the article on page 2.



Union County Selected For Governor's "We Value Our Veterans" Community Award For 2020

Union County has been selected for the "We Value Our Veterans" Governor's Community Award, a program administered by the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. Governor Phil Murphy presented the award via video at the Board of County Commissioners meeting on May 20th.

Started in 2019, the awards are given annually to New Jersey communities and employers for making significant contributions in support of local veteran projects, social outreach programs, and annual veteran events. "The We Value Our Veterans" award designation is allowed to be displayed on the county's letterhead, website, flyers and banners for the coming year.

Union County is one of two New Jersey communities to receive the award for 2020, the other being Wall Township. Union County exceeded the minimum required total of 145 points on the award application for meeting goals and initiatives for Veterans, including community projects, providing support and outreach services, creating and upgrading Veteran memorials, holding public events and promoting Veteran owned businesses.

Among the goals the county met were providing parking spots for Veterans at county facilities and parks, honoring Veterans at annual POW/MIA Day and Gold Star Families Day events, hosting meet and greet social events with Veterans, supporting annual Memorial Day and Veterans Day ceremonies, offering education scholarships to students of Veteran and military families, providing discounts to Veterans and their families at local parks and establishments, and establishing a website for listing information about Veterans resources, support services, contacts and upcoming social events and ceremonies.





Union County Vietnam War Veterans Honored At Veterans Social Mixer



In recognition of the 50th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War, the Union County Board of County Commissioners and the Office of Veteran Services honored Union County Vietnam War servicemen at a Veteran social mixer on May 26th at the Ash Brook Golf Course in Scotch Plains. The award event recognized 26 Vietnam War Veterans who were nominated from municipalities across the county for their service and sacrifice during the war. A special resolution and an award certificate was presented to each Veteran by Union County Board of Commissioners Chairman Alex Mirabella and Office of Veterans Services Coordinator Janna Williams.

Cranford VFW Holds Stand Down Event To Support Homeless Veterans

The Union County Office of Veteran Services participated in the Veterans Homeless Stand Down event on May 4th at the Centennial Avenue Municipal Pool in Cranford. Over 100 Veterans, family members and Veteran service providers attended the event, which was sponsored by the Cranford Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 335, New Jersey Veterans Network and New Jersey American Legion.

The purpose of the Stand Down was to increase awareness of the problems of homeless and at risk veterans, and raising awareness about their needs for housing, employment, education, medical care and veterans claims benefits. In addition to assisting Veterans with their benefits, the Veteran Services Office distributed more than 30 boxes of packaged meals to homeless Veterans. Other groups represented included the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, American Red Cross and Community Hope.





New Agent Orange Disabilities Added for Vietnam Veterans

Three new conditions were recently added to the the list of Agent Orange presumptive illnesses under the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act passed by Congress in January. These conditions can now be claimed by Veterans who served on the ground in Vietnam, within 12 miles of the Vietnamese coastline, service members who served in specific units along the Korean demilitarized zone from 1967 to 1971, or Veterans who may have been exposed to Agent Orange during the Vietnam War at other sites. These conditions are:

- **Bladder cancer** - A type of cancer that develops when there is an overgrowth of cancerous cells in the bladder that ultimately form a malignant tumor. Symptoms include recurrent and/or painful urination, hematuria (blood in urine) and back pain.
- **Hypothyroidism** - A disorder in which the thyroid gland is underactive because it fails to produce adequate thyroid hormones. Symptoms include expanded thyroid gland, swollen, rigid, or painful joints, muscle pain, soreness, or stiffness, and fatigue.
- **Parkinson's-like symptoms** - Or Parkinsonism, is a collection of nerve disorders that triggers the movement disabilities seen in Parkinson's disease, a condition that is already on the Agent Orange presumptive list. Symptoms of Parkinsonism include delayed movement, impaired speech, tremors and muscle rigidity.

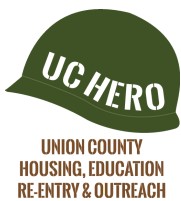
Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary Denis R. McDonough announced in February that the agency is in the process of updating VA regulations to cover these new conditions. Mr. McDonough also stated that the VA is considering two more conditions, hypertension and stroke, to add to the Agent Orange disability list based on new medical studies in the future. The VA did not propose adding the disabilities to the Agent Orange presumptive list, but by law must now address them. The new changes could give about 34,000 Vietnam veterans a faster path to receiving disability benefits.

Any Veteran who was previously denied for bladder cancer, hypothyroidism or Parkinson's disease symptoms, or Veterans who are currently diagnosed with any of these conditions, should consider filing a VA disability claim. To read more about Agent Orange related disabilities, please visit the VA website at <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/>.

VA.Gov Site Becomes Central Login for Veterans Accessing Benefits

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced on April 30 that Veterans and their families may begin accessing their VA benefits and services through a single website at VA.gov. Users will now be able to access their information about VA benefits through a single site rather than through multiple locations. All VA benefits-related features previously located in the eBenefits web portal, which is being removed, will be available on VA.gov. Veterans are encouraged to start logging into the new site at <https://www.va.gov/> using their current Digital Service (DS) Logon, or creating a new account using ID.me.

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.



Upcoming Events For County Veterans

PGA HOPE Golf Lessons for Veterans:

The Union County Office of Veteran Services is partnering with the New Jersey Golf Foundation to offer free golf clinics to County Veterans under the PGA HOPE (Helping Our Patriots Everywhere) program. The clinics are facilitated by golf professionals trained in adaptive golf and military cultural competencies, and will be conducted over a 6 week period beginning on June 7th and ending on July 12th from 4 p.m. to 5p.m. PGA HOPE is designed to introduce golf to Veterans with disabilities, in order to enhance their physical, mental, social and emotional well-being. The cost is free and golf equipment will be provided to Veterans. Information on how to sign up for the PGA HOPE golf clinics for Veterans is on the UC-Hero website at <https://ucnj.org/uc-hero>.

Memorial Day Flag Ceremonies for Veterans Groups:

The Union County Office of Veteran Services distributed American flags this month to American Legion and VFW posts, and other volunteer groups for their annual placement on Veterans graves for Memorial Day, May 31st. The Veteran Service Office received over 30,000 American flags this year in support of Memorial Day weekend flag laying ceremonies.

June is LGBTQ Pride Month:

In recognition of LGBTQ pride month during June, the Union County Veteran Service Office is available to provide continued support for all LGBTQ Veterans. If you are an LGBTQ Veteran or military resident who needs help with disability claims, military discharge upgrades, medical benefits, educational assistance or housing issues, please contact our office at 908-527-4819 or 908-527-4719, Monday to Friday, from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. A full list of our Veteran Services can be found at our UC-Hero website at <https://ucnj.org/uc-hero>.



May Is Military Appreciation Month

May, marked officially as Military Appreciation Month, is a special month for both those in and out of the military. Not only do we pause on Memorial Day to remember the sacrifice and service of those who gave all, but the month also holds several other military anniversaries and events, including Military Spouse Appreciation Day (May 12th), Armed Forces Day (May 20th) and Memorial Day (May 31st). In honor of Military Appreciation Month, the Union County Office of Veteran Services and Union County Board of County Commissioners want to thank all our Veterans for their service and dedication to our country.

"This year, it is with renewed appreciation and respect that we visit the final resting places of our military veterans, who gave their lives to ensure the peace, safety, and security of our nation," said Union County Board of Commissioners Chairman Alexander Mirabella. "May we all honor their sacrifice by doing our best to ensure that the light of democracy continues to shine throughout the world."

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
- 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 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

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