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THE VETERAN'S BULLETIN

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

The Veteran's Bulletin is the official newsletter of the Union County Office of Veteran's Services. Our goal is to keep our Veterans and their families informed about current programs, services and events affecting Union County Veterans and active military residents.



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Veterans Stand Down Assists Local Veterans At Union VFW Post 2433

A Veterans Stand Down to help County Veterans was held on October 20, 2022 at the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 2433 in Union. More than a dozen Veterans Service Organizations and state agencies, including the Union County Office of Veteran's Services, assisted Veterans with filing VA disability claims, obtaining DD214s, and providing housing, employment, clothing, medical and family counseling services. Thank you to all the state and local service representatives, and the Union County American Legion and VFW members who turned out to support our Veterans.





Union County Honors County Workers at Annual Veterans Day Breakfast



Union County held its annual Veterans Appreciation breakfast for County employees on December 12, 2022 at the Warinanco Sports Center. Commissioners Alexander Mirabella, Sergio Granados, Kimberly Palmieri-MouDED, and Lourdes Leon thanked all the Veterans attending for their military service and recognized their contributions as county workers to the community. "We hope that events like this can help raise awareness about the many ways in which Veterans contribute to the running of County services, to the social and economic fabric of our community, and to the ability of our community to pull together in times of emergency," said Commissioner Mirabella.

Among those County employees recognized were Sgt. Javier Vazquez (Royal Navy), Sgt. Kenneth Gerhart (Marine Corps), Lt. Patrick Hyland, (Army), from the Union County Sheriff Department, Raymond Gora (Marine Corps), Keira Davis (Army), Pedro Ruiz (Army) and Sandra Cayuga-Valdez (Army National Guard) from Union County Social Services, and Ed O'Malley (Army) from Union County Economic Development.

Equine Therapy Sessions Help Veterans Affected by PTSD



Our Veteran Service Coordinator, Geoff Smith, participated in a new Union County initiative called the Foundation Horsemanship for Veterans. The 6 week equine therapy program is designed for Veterans who are dealing with PTSD issues, and was held at the Watchung Stable in Mountainside from August 15 to October 1, 2022. The program is run by Gregg Foster, a certified equine therapy specialist with 20 years experience. Gregg took Geoff and Jennifer Everett, a former Air Force Veteran, through each class with a horse named Elroy. Each session teaches Veterans how to cope with their PTSD symptoms by using therapy techniques such as grooming, walking, and relating to the horses. The weekly sessions are 60 minutes and the program is free. Union County Veterans interested in participating in this program should contact Geoff Smith at W.Geoff.Smith@ucnj.org.

Camp Lejeune Veterans Entitled To Expanded Presumptive Disabilities Under PACT Act

The PACT Act of 2022 was signed into law by President Biden in August, and is perhaps the largest health care and benefit expansion in the history of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Its full name is The Sergeant First Class (SFC) Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act. If you're a Veteran or surviving dependent, you can file disability claims now to apply for PACT Act-related benefits. The VA will begin processing claims filed under the law on January 1, 2023.

The PACT Act will bring these changes:

- Expands and extends eligibility for VA health care for Veterans with toxic exposures and Veterans of the Vietnam War, Gulf War, and post-9/11 eras
- Adds more than 20 new presumptive conditions for burn pits and other toxic exposures
- Adds more presumptive-exposure locations for Agent Orange and radiation
- Requires VA to provide a toxic exposure screening to every Veteran enrolled in VA health care
- Helps the VA to improve research, staff education, and treatment related to toxic exposures
- Expands disability benefits for Veterans and families affected by contaminated water at Camp Lejeune, N.C. who were stationed there for at least 30 days between August 1, 1953 and December 31, 1987

In addition, the following disabilities are recognized for Camp Lejeune Veterans and their families. Veterans and family members applying must have proof that they were stationed at Camp Lejeune during the above time period, and medical evidence that they are currently disabled from any of these conditions.

These illnesses are now presumptive for Camp Lejeune disabled Veterans and dependents under the 2022 PACT Act:

- Bladder cancer
- Breast cancer
- Esophageal cancer
- Female infertility
- Hepatic steatosis
- Kidney cancer
- Leukemia
- Lung cancer
- Miscarriage
- Multiple myeloma
- Myelodysplastic syndromes
- Neurobehavioral effects
- Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
- Renal toxicity
- Scleroderma



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

The Union County Office of Veteran's Services

The Union County Office of Veteran's 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. The Office of Veteran's 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 **by appointment only** at our office in the Union County Administration Complex in Elizabeth. For more information, please contact our county Veteran Service Coordinator/VSO, W. Geoff Smith, at 908-527-4918 or our VSO Ken Glick at 908-527-4719 or go to our website at <https://ucnj.org/veteran>.

Here are some of the many services offered by the Office of Veteran's 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's Services Directory



For questions or information regarding veterans benefits and services, please contact our Veteran Services staff:

- **W. Geoff Smith – Veteran Service Coordinator/VSO**
Phone: 908-527-4918 Email: W.Geoff.Smith@ucnj.org
- **Kenneth Glick – Accredited Veteran Service Officer**
Phone: 908-527-4719 Email: Kenneth.Glick@ucnj.org

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

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

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