



At Your Service

A Newsletter from the Wethersfield Veterans Commission

Fall, 2021

Welcome to the Fall issue of **At Your Service!** Based on your comments and suggestions to our Spring, 2021 Newsletter, this issue includes new and updated articles for Veterans' services and contact information within Wethersfield, surrounding communities and State and Federal agencies.

The Wethersfield Veterans Commission traditionally meets from 6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month, except for July and August. The public is welcome to all meetings! You can contact the Wethersfield Veterans Commission through one of the Town staff liaisons listed below, or visit our webpage at <https://wethersfieldct.gov/social/veterans>

You can also email us at veterans.commission@wethersfieldct.gov

Commission Members

Tricia Giscombe
Jennifer Glick
Rick Newell, Vice Chair
Sandra Rhodes, Secretary
Mark Rudewicz
Frank Sena
Doug Shipman, Chair
Laura Bloomquist, Alternate

Town Staff Liaisons

Mary Thibeault, Assistant Director, Parks and Recreation
860-721-2891 or email: mary.thibeault@wethersfieldct.gov
Chris Taylor, Veterans Services Contact, Social & Youth Services
860-721-2977 or email: chris.taylor@wethersfieldct.gov
Dan O'Connor, Town Council Liaison; dan.oconnor@wethersfield.gov

**Mail Address: Wethersfield Town Hall, 505 Silas Deane Hwy,
Wethersfield, CT 06109**

Veteran Scams

According to an AARP survey, Veterans are twice as likely to fall victim to scams as the population at large. Veterans who receive compensation benefits are sought after targets for identity theft, on-line phishing schemes, and investment deceit. Some scammers offer Veterans the opportunity to refinance VA loans at very low rates. Others will pose as government agencies to access personal information, or offer lump-sum payments in exchange for signing over all their future monthly

benefit checks. There have been instances where fake charities target Veterans. In CT, the most common scams targeting Veterans involve credit cards, tech support or IRS tax, and charities. The U.S. Postal Inspection Service and AARP have created **Operation Protect Veterans**. **To report veteran scamming, call 877.908.3360.** Considerable information on scams can be found at www.AARP.org/fraudwatchnetwork.

Support Services for Veterans Who Served in Afghanistan

Currently, Veterans from all eras are reacting to the events in Afghanistan, particularly the U.S. withdrawal. Veterans may question the meaning of their service or whether it was worth the sacrifices they made. The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs website (<https://www.dvnf.org>) covers a range of resources to assist Veterans in managing the distress they may be experiencing. Here is a brief summary of some services:

Veterans Crisis Line: If you have thoughts of suicide, call **1-800-273-8255**, then PRESS 1 or visit <http://www.veteranscrisisline.net/> For emergency mental health care, go directly to your local VA Medical Center 24/7 regardless of your discharge status or enrollment in other VA health care.

Hartford Veterans Center: 25 Elm Street, Suite A, Rocky Hill CT 06067: The Center can be reached at **860-563-8800** and is open Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. and Saturday, 7:00 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. The Center offers a range of services, including individual and group counseling, family counseling for military-related issues, substance abuse assessment and referral, employment referral, and military sexual trauma counseling and referral.

VA Women Veterans Call Center: call or text **855-829-6636**, Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., Saturday 8:00 a.m. to 6.30 p.m., Eastern Time.

Rally Point: Talk to other Veterans online and discuss your feelings and concerns. Go to: www.rallypoint.com/answers/what-are-your-feelings-as-the-taliban-reclaim-afghanistan-after-20-years-of-us-involvement.

**For information not listed above call:
1-800-698-2411**

Connecticut Elder Justice Hotline

Older adults in general, some of whom are Veterans, are at risk for political campaign funding scams which can be considered financial abuse or exploitation. In CT, the Attorney General's office and the Coalition for Elder Justice in CT have partnered to establish a resource for information, assistance, and justice for older adults who have experienced financial abuse or exploitation, or others forms of abuse and neglect. The **Elder Justice Hotline at 1-860-808-5555** is available Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. for agencies such as the CT Department of Social Services, Elderly Protective Services Unit. After hours, weekends, and state holidays, **call Infoline at 211.**

Eastern CT Veterans Community Center

The Eastern CT Veterans Community Center, 1320 Main Street, Suite 27, Willimantic, CT 06226 supports and advocates for Veterans and military families while providing a safe, positive environment to meet, learn and grow. Every Wednesday from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., the Center conducts a Coffee House that not only provides a social support network, but also weekly guests to talk about topics such as VA benefits, retirement options, health issues, PTSD, military history and personal experiences as Veterans. For additional information go to: www.EasternCTVeteransCommunityCenter.com or contact the Center by email at: www.easternveteranscommunitycenter@gmail.com or by calling **860-423-9949**.

VA Pension Benefits Awareness Program

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is launching an awareness campaign to inform older wartime Veterans and their families of their lesser-known pension, funeral, burial and survivor benefits. There's a long list of benefits listed in the news release of August 17, 2021. https://benefits.va.gov/FIDUCIARY/docs/va_Fiduciary-guide-Apr2020.pdf

Assistance with Job Searches and Employment

Are you a Veteran looking for a job? At the **Hartford American Job Center, Veterans Representative, Ronald Catania** is available for assistance in job searches, including job listings and website attachments that may interest you. Contact Mr. Catania at **860-256-3711** or via email at Ronald.catania@ct.gov.

Special Student Loan Relief For Veterans and Service Members

Veterans and service members with student loans may be eligible for special programs that forgive interest on their loans, or even cancel their entire loan liability in special circumstances. The Department of Education is working with other government agencies to provide these benefits automatically with no action necessary on the borrower's part.

The Department of Education said it is writing off the interest on student loans of more than 47,000 veterans and military members who received imminent danger or hostile fire pay during their military service.

The Department of Education initiated a data sharing agreement with the Defense Department, allowing the agency to determine automatically who is eligible for the interest waiver and forgive any interest erroneously charged to service members or veterans. The interest waiver is retroactive to 2008.

Total Forgiveness of Student Loans for Disabled Veterans

The Department of Education recently announced that it will be forgiving the student loans worth \$5.8 billion to more than 323,000 totally disabled borrowers. This includes veterans receiving disability benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs as well as those receiving disability benefits from the Social Security Administration.

The loan forgiveness should be automatically applied to all eligible loans. Contact your lender for more information.

Town Veteran's Day Ceremony

All Town residents are invited to attend our Veteran's Day ceremony on November 11 at 11:00 a.m. This year the ceremony will be held at Cottone Field behind Wethersfield High School. The featured speaker is Douglas Shipman, Chairperson of the Wethersfield Veteran's Commission. Although the ceremony will be outdoors, you are encouraged to wear a mask.

Disabled American Veterans (DAV)

The DAV has 17 Chapters located through Connecticut. If you are a Disabled Veteran who has not yet filed a claim, please contact:

National Service Office
Newington VA Medical Center
555 Willard Avenue
P.O. Box 310909
Newington, CT 06111

Phone: 860-594-6612 Fax: 860-667-1238

Miguel Cintron, NSO Supervisor

Ashley Crance, Associate NS

Veteran's Day

In the past, Veteran's Day was known as Remembrance Day. In honor of Veteran's Day we want to include this moving prose poem by Vietnam Veteran and Veterans Commission Vice-Chairman, Rick Newell, USMC.

A Good, Noble and Honorable Day at the Wall

By Rick Newell, USMC

Semper Fi. As I put this tee shirt on it reminds of the day you and I walked The Wall and we perform a wonderful task for an elderly woman. As we stood looking at the wall we heard a voice saying he is here someplace. She was holding a paper with a name and panel number. You said hi mom how can we help you? I think she handed me the paper with name and panel number. We found it and in one fell swoop you picked her up and she kissed her son's name. I did a rubbing of the name and gave it to her. You put her down she kissed us and disappeared in to the crowd. We never saw her again. The Corps stood 20 foot tall that day because two old Marines brought honor to it with an act of kindness. Marines have landed. Situation well in hand mission accomplished. We finished the walk speechless not thinking what we had done. From that day on evermore I think we both thought we brought joy to a Gold Star Mother. A good and great day at the Wall. Enjoy the tee shirt I think in your heart that it will leave you with a great memory. I Hope I got it right. I know the story to be true because I did this with my Marine Brother and fellow Vietnam Vet Joe Griggs in helping a Gold Star Mother. For over 30 years Joe ran bus trips to The Wall. Helping the Vietnam Vets to heal. I attended most of those trips. Our last trip was on the 30th anniversary of the Wall.

Joe, a job well done. Semper Fi, Semper Fi, Hoorah!!!!

Best in Life always,

Rick