# COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT



# COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE DIVISION

***March 2018 Monthly Veterans’ Newsletter***

*This Veterans Newsletter is compiled and provided by the Seminole County Veteran’s Services Office.  Its intent is to keep Seminole County Veterans informed about their rights, benefits, and news of interest.  It is non-political and, except where noted, all articles are excerpted from outside sources.  Local events honoring/supporting Veterans will be included as made available.  You are encouraged to provide feedback and recommendations, as this is your Newsletter.  Together with my small Team, I hope you find it both valuable and interesting.*

*Ed Burford, Seminole County Veterans Services Officer*

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28. **Veteran of the Month, March 2018,** *Ed Sends -* On March 13, 2018, Staff Sergeant Dennis McClellanUnited States Air Force, was recognized by the Seminole County Board of County Commission (BCC) as the March 2018 Veteran of the Month. A Resolution, signed by the Chairman of the Board, was presented to Staff Sergeant McClellan. He served in the United States Air Force from October 1962 until May 1966 as a Ground Radar Operator. He served in Vietnam in 1965 until he was seriously wounded, causing him to spend almost a year in hospitals. Staff Sergeant McClellan went to college using the GI Bill graduating with both a Bachelors and Masters. He became a teacher for over 7 years and later became the State of Pennsylvania Archeologist for Valley Forge. As he left teaching he opened his own publishing house; he is an active volunteer with IDignity and as a mentor for the Seminole County Veterans Court. Today he has a small business in Seminole County. Staff Sergeant McClellan,we honor you.
29. **National Vietnam War Veterans Day in the USA March 29, 2018,** *Ed Sends,* National Vietnam War Veterans Day is an annual United States holiday observed on March 29. It was inaugurated on March 29, 2017 by President Donald Trump who signed the Vietnam War Veterans Recognition Act of 2017. [Read more.](https://www.awarenessdays.com/us/awareness-days-calendar/national-vietnam-war-veterans-day-in-the-usa-2018/)
30. **Court Determines Military Burn Pits Caused Lung Disease in Troops** Military.com via Fox News 15 Feb 2018. The thousands of U.S. military personnel and private contractors whose health was compromised by the dense black smoke of burn pits -- and who were then denied proper treatment -- may finally be vindicated by a recent court ruling. [Read more.](https://www.military.com/daily-news/2018/02/15/court-determines-military-burn-pits-caused-lung-disease-troops.html)
31. **Veterans with Mental Illnesses Sue Navy over Discharges** Military.com Week of March 05, 2018, Navy and Marine Corps veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan with mental health problems were unfairly given less-than-honorable discharges by the Navy, preventing them from getting Veterans Affairs benefits and other support, according to a lawsuit filed Friday. The lawsuit filed in federal court in Connecticut seeks class-action status for thousands of Navy and Marine Corps veterans. [Read more.](https://www.military.com/military-report/veterans-mental-illnesses-sue-navy-over-discharges.html?ESRC=mr_180305.nl)
32. **Red Cross Officials Warn of New Scam**, Military.com Week of March 05, 2018, Military families in Maine have been targeted by scammers pretending to be with the Red Cross. The scammers claim families must give them hundreds of dollars for deployed troops’ items to be shipped home. [Read more.](https://www.military.com/military-report/red-cross-officials-warn-new-scam.html?ESRC=mr_180305.nl)
33. **Why Did Tricare for Life Prescription Co-Pays Go Up?** Military.com Week of March 05, 2018, Tricare for Life users were not exempt from the pharmacy cost increases that hit Feb. 1. Congress approved that price hike last year as a way to pay for a fix to a problem known as the “widow’s tax.” [Read more.](https://www.military.com/military-report/why-did-tricare-life-prescription-co-pays-go.html?ESRC=mr_180305.nl)
34. **Basic-Training Study Concludes Unit Cohesion Unaffected by Women** Military.com via Stars and Stripes 14 Mar 2018, Men in boot camp units that include women are just as likely to be satisfied with their training and esprit de corps as those serving in all-male contingents, says a new Norwegian study. The researchers said that they found "no evidence that integrating women into squads hurt male recruits' satisfaction with boot camp or their plans to continue in the military." [Read more.](https://www.military.com/daily-news/2018/03/14/basic-training-study-concludes-unit-cohesion-unaffected-women.html?ESRC=army-a_180314.nl)
35. **VA’s Center for Women Veterans to highlight, connect and inform women Veterans through outreach and social media,** VAntage Point – Official Blog of the VA, February 28, 2018, The women Veteran population is growing and VA is stepping up to meet the need through innovative programming and services specifically designed to serve women. But, once the programs are deployed, how do we get the word out? How do we ensure that women Veterans self-identify and take advantage of the benefits they’ve earned and deserve? And, how do we capture the sentiment and reality of what women Veterans are experiencing so we can raise those voices to drive effective policy? [Read more.](https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/45692/vas-center-women-veterans-highlight-connect-inform-women-veterans-outreach-social-media/)
36. **VA Honors Vietnam War Veterans** Military.com Week of March 05, 2018. In 2017, President Trump [signed the Vietnam War Veterans Recognition Act](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trump-signs-s-305-law/) designating [March 29 of each year as National Vietnam War Veterans Day](https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/36530/u-s-honors-veterans-on-first-official-national-vietnam-war-veterans-day/). As a commemorative partner, VA joins nearly 10,000 organizations across the nation supporting the Department of Defense in this mission to honor and thank our Vietnam Veterans. [Read more.](https://www.military.com/military-report/va-honors-vietnam-war-veterans.html?ESRC=mr_180305.nl)
37. **MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY,** VA Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War, February 27, 2018, In 2017, President Trump signed the Vietnam War Veterans Recognition Act designating March 29 of each year as National Vietnam War Veterans Day.  Our Nation’s Vietnam War Commemoration is an opportunity for all Americans to recognize, honor, and thank our Vietnam Veterans and their families for their service and sacrifice during one of the longest wars in our country’s history. As a commemorative partner, VA joins nearly 10,000 organizations across the Nation supporting the Department of Defense in this mission to honor and thank our Vietnam Veterans.  I encourage all VA leaders to either host ceremonies or participate in community events during the period March 25 – 29, 2018, to express our tremendous gratitude to this generation of warriors and their families. The commemoration recognizes all men and women who served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces during the United States’ involvement in Vietnam—November 1, 1955 – May 7, 1975.  Nine million Americans, approximately 7.2 million living today, served during that period.  The commemoration makes no distinction between Veterans who served in-country, in-theater, or were stationed elsewhere during those 20 years.  All answered the call to duty.   Please visit [www.vietnamwar50th.com](http://www.vietnamwar50th.com) to learn how your organization or facility can become a commemorative partner and participate in this commemoration.  VA currently sustains more than 400 commemorative partnerships, and I am so proud of their contributions to honor and thank our Vietnam Veterans.  Importantly, a partnership provides historical media and the ability to request beautifully struck lapel pins and other recognition items for presentation to Vietnam Veterans. Thank you for your continued service to VA and America’s Veterans. **David J. Shulkin, M.D.**
38. **VA Offers Veterans ‘Welcome Kit’** Military.com Week of February 19, 2018, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently released a Welcome Kit that can guide Veterans to which benefits they may qualify for. The guidance is based on the Veteran’s stage of life. [Read more.](https://www.military.com/military-report/va-offers-veterans-welcome-kit.html?ESRC=mr_180219.nl)
39. **VA Promises Action to Protect Veterans from Predatory Lenders** Military.com via Stars and Stripes 11 Jan 2018, WASHINGTON -- The [Department of Veterans Affairs](http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-benefits) will soon propose rule changes to its home loan guarantee program that aim to stop lenders from aggressively targeting and pressuring veterans to refinance their home loans, a VA official told congressmen Wednesday. [Read more.](https://www.military.com/daily-news/2018/01/11/va-promises-action-protect-veterans-predatory-lenders.html)
40. **President Seeks Increase in 2019 VA Budget** Military.com Week of February 19, 2018, In the fiscal year (FY) 2019 budget, President Trump is proposing a total of $198.6 billion for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). This request is an increase of $12.1 billion over 2018. [Read more.](https://www.military.com/military-report/president-seeks-increase-2019-va-budget.html?ESRC=mr_180219.nl)
41. **Vets Groups Push To Save Shulkin's Job In Bid Against VA 'Privatization'** Military.com 20 Feb 2018, Veterans service organizations (VSOs) rallied behind [embattled VA Secretary David Shulkin](https://www.military.com/daily-news/2018/02/16/shulkins-chief-staff-resigns-over-travel-expense-scandal.html) Tuesday to save his job and keep him in place as a hedge against what they view as Trump administration attempts to "privatize" the health care mission of the [Department of Veterans Affairs](http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-benefits). [Read more.](https://www.military.com/daily-news/2018/02/20/vets-groups-push-save-shulkins-job-bid-against-va-privatization.html)
42. **Kelly Meets at White House with Vets Groups on VA Chaos,** Military.com 26 Feb 2018, with White House Chief of Staff John Kelly met with veterans groups Monday on the status of VA Secretary Dr. David Shulkin and the ongoing turmoil at the agency over Shulkin's charges that he was being [undermined by Trump administration political appointees](https://www.military.com/daily-news/2018/02/21/shulkin-claims-mandate-white-house-purge-plotters-va.html). [Read more.](https://www.military.com/daily-news/2018/02/26/kelly-meets-white-house-vets-groups-va-chaos.html)
43. **VA continues to study and improve care for Gulf War Veterans,** VAntage Point – Official Blog of the VA, February 28, 2018; the end of February 2018 marks the 27th anniversary of the end of combat operations of the first Gulf War, which includes the buildup of Operation Desert Shield and combat in Operation Desert Storm. Nearly 700,000 men and women served in the Persian Gulf during Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Since then, [VA researchers](https://www.research.va.gov/topics/gulfwar.cfm) have studied conditions affecting Gulf War Veterans and are identifying the best ways to diagnose and treat them. Their efforts are guided by a [strategic plan](https://www.research.va.gov/Resources/pubs/docs/GWResearch-StrategicPlan.pdf) for Gulf War research developed with input from leading scientists and researchers, physicians and Veterans themselves. [Read more.](https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/45710/va-continues-study-improve-care-gulf-war-veterans/)
44. **MOAA Presses Congress to Pass Veterans Health Care Reform** MOAA, March 15, 2018, MOAA urged lawmakers to strike a bipartisan deal to replace VA Choice and consolidate existing community-care programs during a Wednesday joint House-Senate hearing on Capitol Hill. A year has passed [without an agreement](http://www.moaa.org/Content/Take-Action/Top-Issues/Retirees/Veterans-Health-Care-on-Life-Support.aspx) in Congress to replace the VA Choice program, which allows some veterans to seek care closer to home. Competing bills addressing reform have languished on the Hill - one in the House and one in the Senate - and veterans are ready to see resolution, said Cmdr. René Campos, USN (Ret), MOAA's senior director of Government Relations for veterans and wounded warrior care.  [Read more.](https://www.moaa.org/Content/Publications-and-Media/News-Articles/2018-News-Articles/MOAA-Presses-Congress-to-Pass-Veterans-Health-Care-Reform.aspx)
45. **Veterans benefit from Intermediate Care Technician program** Vantage Point – Official Blog of the VA, February 9, 2018, Thousands of Veterans across the VA health care system are benefiting from the Intermediate Care Technician (ICT) program, which employs military-trained medics and corpsmen as VA health care clinical providers to deliver health care services to those with whom they have a shared background in military service. [Read more.](https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/45203/veterans-benefit-intermediate-care-technician-program/)
46. **Congress May Expand ‘Caregiver’ Benefits** Military.com Week of February 26, 2018, VA Secretary David Shulkin told the House Veterans Affairs Committee that he supports extending caregiver benefits — which includes a monthly stipend, access to health care insurance, caregiver training, stress counseling and a period of paid respite away from caregiver responsibilities — to persons caring for veterans catastrophically injured in wars back to World War II. [Read more.](http://military.prod.acquia-sites.com/military-report/congress-may-expand-caregiver-benefits.html?ESRC=mr_180226.nl)
47. **Exposed to burn pits?,** Veterans Health Administration update: Military exposures, March 15, 2018, Here’s three things you should know about the Burn Pit Registry:

Registry participants can get a free medical evaluation to discuss their concerns and completed questionnaire with a knowledgeable VA provider. Call a local [Environmental Health Coordinator](http://links.govdelivery.com:80/track?type=click&enid=ZWFzPTEmbXNpZD0mYXVpZD0mbWFpbGluZ2lkPTIwMTgwMzA5Ljg2NzA1NTAxJm1lc3NhZ2VpZD1NREItUFJELUJVTC0yMDE4MDMwOS44NjcwNTUwMSZkYXRhYmFzZWlkPTEwMDEmc2VyaWFsPTE4MjU0NDQwJmVtYWlsaWQ9cmJ1cmZvcmRAc2VtaW5vbGVjb3VudHlmbC5nb3YmdXNlcmlkPXJidXJmb3JkQHNlbWlub2xlY291bnR5ZmwuZ292JnRhcmdldGlkPSZmbD0mZXh0cmE9TXVsdGl2YXJpYXRlSWQ9JiYm&&&100&&&https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/coordinators.asp) today to schedule your evaluation.

Joining the registry is faster than ever. We’ve updated the eligibility verification process—greatly shortening or eliminating previous delays resulting from manual eligibility checks.

The registry is not just for Post-9/11 Veterans. Many #Veterans who deployed after 1990 qualify.

Check your eligibility and sign up: [http://go.usa.gov/xnH8J](http://links.govdelivery.com:80/track?type=click&enid=ZWFzPTEmbXNpZD0mYXVpZD0mbWFpbGluZ2lkPTIwMTgwMzA5Ljg2NzA1NTAxJm1lc3NhZ2VpZD1NREItUFJELUJVTC0yMDE4MDMwOS44NjcwNTUwMSZkYXRhYmFzZWlkPTEwMDEmc2VyaWFsPTE4MjU0NDQwJmVtYWlsaWQ9cmJ1cmZvcmRAc2VtaW5vbGVjb3VudHlmbC5nb3YmdXNlcmlkPXJidXJmb3JkQHNlbWlub2xlY291bnR5ZmwuZ292JnRhcmdldGlkPSZmbD0mZXh0cmE9TXVsdGl2YXJpYXRlSWQ9JiYm&&&101&&&http://go.usa.gov/xnH8J)

1. **Veterans Legacy Program** VAntage Point – Official Blog of the VA, In partnership with the Veterans Legacy Program, students and faculty at University of Central Florida conducted research on over 100 Veterans buried at Florida National Cemetery. Their biographies are now shared with the public, and provide a unique perspective on American history. This partnership is part of the larger initiative to modernize the memorialization of Veterans. The Veterans Legacy Program launched in May 2016 to engage students, teachers, and the public with stories of Veterans buried at national cemeteries. For more information on the Veterans Legacy Program, please visit [Veterans Legacy Program - National Cemetery Administration](https://www.cem.va.gov/legacy/). [Read more.](https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/45284/veterans-legacy-program-william-kirlew/)
2. **Be Part of the ‘Mighty Endeavor’** Military.com, Week of February 26, 2018, The Mighty Endeavor is a collaborative effort to collect, preserve, and share the stories of those who served during World War II. The project will call upon individuals and groups to interview, research, and gather details of the men and women of the Greatest Generation. [Read more.](http://military.prod.acquia-sites.com/military-report/be-part-mighty-endeavor.html?ESRC=mr_180226.nl)
3. **Should You Get the New Veteran ID card?** MOAA February 22, 2018In case you haven't heard, the VA is offering veterans a [free ID card](https://www.military.com/daily-news/2018/01/29/new-va-id-card-reopens-most-vets.html) which can be used to prove your veteran status when needed at businesses and other locations. The [free ID card](https://www.vets.gov/veteran-id-card/), which originally rolled-out in late November, was ordered by Congress in 2015 as a way to give veterans proof of service at businesses without carrying a copy of their DD-214 forms. It is available for all honorably discharged veterans, regardless of era or time in service. [Read more.](https://www.moaa.org/Content/Publications-and-Media/News-Articles/2018-News-Articles/Should-You-Get-The-New-Veteran-ID-Card-.aspx)
4. **MOAA to Talk 2018 Goals at Congressional VA Hearing MOAA**, March 8, 2016, In January, MOAA outlined its [top 10 goals for 2018](http://www.moaa.org/2018Goals/). Next week, at a joint hearing of the Senate and House Veterans' Affairs Committees, MOAA will highlight Goals 6, 9, and 10.  [Read more.](https://www.moaa.org/Content/Take-Action/Top-Issues/Currently-Serving/MOAA-to-Talk-2018-Goals-at-Congressional-VA-Hearing.aspx)
5. **Enlisted and Medically Retired? Contact Us.** MOAA, March 15, 2018 Former service members who were medically retired with a disability rating of 30 percent or higher, before reaching 20 years of service, are referred to as Chapter 61 Retirees based on Title 10 U.S.C. Some served more than 19 years, others served less due to their service-connected injury or illness. Their status, regarding receipt of retirement and disability payments based on their service-connected rating, is different than those who retire with at least 20 years of service. Chapter 61 Retirees do not receive both payments. Their military retirement offsets the disability payment from the VA dollar for dollar. MOAA plans to tell Congress how wrong this is, but we need your help to do it. [Read more.](https://www.moaa.org/Content/Take-Action/Top-Issues/Retirees/Enlisted-and-Medically-Retired--Contact-Us-.aspx)
6. **Veterans Florida Entrepreneurship Program counts successes, kicks off third year and launches online program Veterans Florida News Release, February 27, 2018, More than 140 enterprising veterans soon to become Florida business owners,** TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – For the third year in a row, Veterans Florida has launched its successful statewide Entrepreneurship Program, which offers tuition-free instruction to help veterans open and operate their own businesses. Executive Director Bobby Carbonell lauded the program’s six collegiate partners for their role in empowering veterans and boosting Florida’s economy. With more than 1.5 million veterans, Florida is home to the third largest population of veterans in the nation after California and Texas, according to the Florida Department of Veteran Affairs. Since the inception of the Entrepreneurship Program in 2015, more than **800 veterans have participated** in one or more of the three tracks available. Of those, more than **160 new businesses have opened** in Florida, generating more than **$8 million in revenue annually** for the state.  [Read more.](http://www.veteransflorida.org/veterans/veterans-florida-entrepreneurship-program/)
7. **VA Promotes STEM Education With Benefits Expansion** MOAA, February 14, 2018, As a provision in the new [Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017](https://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/ForeverGIBill.asp) — more commonly known as the Forever GI Bill — the VA is extending education benefits for veteran students seeking science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) degrees, effective Aug. 1, 2019. The Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship is intended to encourage veterans to pursue fields that often require more resources than the 36 months of benefits the Post-9/11 GI Bill allocates. By granting greater financial assistance, the talent pool of student veterans in STEM concentrations can grow. Students who have used up or nearly depleted the entirety of their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits ( [learn more about GI bill eligibility and benefits](http://www.moaa.org/Content/Benefits-and-Discounts/Pay-and-Benefits/Military-Benefits/Post-9/11-GI-Bill.aspx)) will be able to apply to the VA for extended time and financial assistance. This extension will pay eligible students up to nine additional months of benefits or a maximum lump sum of $30,000.

**Newsletter from your local Seminole County Veterans’ Services Office Staff.**

**Thank you for your service to our Country!**

**It Takes the Strength of a Warrior to Ask for Help**

**The journey after military service can be a difficult one. If you are Veteran in crisis or know of one who is,** [**please call the VA’s 24/7 Suicide Prevention Line**](http://www.va.gov/ext_redirect.asp?url=http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/Veterans/Default.aspx) **at**

**1–800–273–TALK (8255)**

**to speak with a trained counselor,** [**or find a Crisis Center near you**](http://www.va.gov/ext_redirect.asp?url=http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/CrisisCenters/Locator.aspx)**.**