



The Guardian

The Newsletter of the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services

www.nmdvs.org

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Veterans, Active Duty Personnel Honored on Military & Veterans Day at the Legislature



New Mexico's military community was honored on *Military & Veterans Day at the Legislature* on February 23 at the state Capitol in Santa Fe.

The annual day during the Legislature is sponsored by the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services and the New Mexico Department of Military Affairs/New Mexico National Guard to honor and thank all current and former members of the United States military.

Lieutenant Governor John Sanchez delivered the opening remarks at a noon ceremony in the Rotunda filled with veterans, active-duty/guard/reserve

personnel, and supporters of the military community. *(left photo)*

In his remarks, the Lt. Governor thanked those who have served or are currently serving in the military for their selfless sacrifice and willingness to put themselves in harm's way for the good of our country.

"Of all the groups and organizations honored during the legislative session, I cannot think of a more deserving group to honor and thank than the men and women who have sworn to serve and defend our country as members of the United States Armed Forces," said the Lt. Governor. "For it is because of the service by our military personnel that Americans enjoy the freedom and way of life that is guaranteed by the United States Constitution. Thank you. Thank You for protecting me...and my family. Thank you for protecting all New Mexicans. Thank You for serving and protecting all Americans."

The theme for this year's ceremony was *Women In the Military and Beyond* to highlight the service of what is now the fastest-growing segment in the active-duty and veteran population. There are more than 17,000 women veterans in New Mexico—about 10% of the overall veteran population (nearly 170,000) in the state.

(continued)



ABOVE PHOTO, FROM L to R BEHIND TABLE: NMDVS Veterans Business Outreach Center Director Rich Coffel, Veterans Service Officer Jeff George, Rural Veterans Coordination Program/NE Region Coordinator Sarah Bustos-Cantu, and RVCP Director Ed Mendez were among the representatives from more than two dozen service agencies with informational tables at *Military & Veterans Day at the Legislature* on February 23.

“Unlike in the past, women in the military today are not simply relegated to hospital, desk, or administrative jobs,” said the Lt. Governor. “Women today are serving as pilots, captains of ships, leaders of units, senior-ranking officers—and other positions which were traditionally only filled by males.”

This was echoed by U.S. Army LTC Alissa McKaig, *(right photo)* Commander of the U.S. Army ROTC Program at the University of New Mexico—where she is also a Professor of Military Science.

“Most would say that when the bullets start flying, you don't have time to worry 'is this a female Soldier or a male Soldier at your 6 o'clock.' You must look out for each other,” said LTC McKaig, who as a UH60 helicopter pilot served in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom. “Women are now in the combat zones. When it comes to service to our nation, we are equals. We are brothers and sisters who work together towards a common goal.”



NMDVS Secretary Jack Fox presented U.S. Army LTC Alissa McKaig with a “Veterans Coin” shortly before she gave the Keynote Address at the February 23 Military and Veterans Day at the Legislature ceremony.



Lieutenant Governor John Sanchez chats after the ceremony with American Gold Star Mothers, Inc. member Becky Christmas (2nd from left), American Gold Star Mothers, Inc. member Joyce Montoya (right), and Joyce’s mother Cecelia Montoya (in black shirt).



LEFT PHOTO: *NMDVS Secretary Jack Fox (far right) was joined at the ceremony by (L to R) former NMDVS Secretary John Garcia, New Mexico Deputy Adjutant General BG Ken Nava, and former NMDVS Secretary Tim Hale.*

American Gold Star Mothers is a service organization of mothers who have lost a son or daughter in the service of our country. Ms. Christmas’ son, U.S. Army CPT Todd Christmas, was killed in a November 29, 2004 helicopter crash outside of Ft. Bliss, TX. Ms. Joyce Montoya’s son, U.S. Army Green Beret SFC Matthew McClintock, was killed during a January 5, 2016 gun battle in Afghanistan.

New Mexico State Legislators Who Have Served in the United States Armed Forces

<u>House (13 Representatives)</u>	<u>Home County(ies)</u>	<u>Service Branch</u>
Eliseo Alcon	D-Cibola & McKinley	Air Force
David Adkins	R-Bernalillo	Bernalillo
Sharon Chahchischilliage	R-San Juan	U.S. Public Health Service
Randal Crowder	R-Curry	Army
George Dodge	D-Curry DeBaca, Guadalupe, Roosevelt, San Miguel	Navy
Harry Garcia	D-Bernalillo, Cibola, McKinley, San Juan, Valencia	Marine Corps
Jimmie Hall	R-Bernalillo	Army
Larry Larañaga	R-Bernalillo	Air Force
Rudy Martinez	D-Doña Ana, Grant, Sierra	Air Force
Nick Salazar	D-Colfax, Mora, Rio Arriba San Miguel	Air Force
Debra Sariñana	D-Bernalillo	Air Force
Jim Trujillo	D-Santa Fe	Army
Bob Wooley	R-Chaves, Lea, & Roosevelt	Army
<u>Senate (6 Senators)</u>		
Greg Baca	R-Bernalillo, Valencia	Navy
Craig Brandt	R-Sandoval	Air Force
William Payne	R-Bernalillo	Navy
John Pinto	D-McKinley, San Juan	Marine Corps
William Sharer	R-San Juan	Army
James White	R-Bernalillo, Sandoval, Santa Fe, Torrance	Air Force

The 2017 New Mexico Legislature

The 2017 New Mexico Legislature convened at noon on January 17 at the State Capitol in Santa Fe.

The 112 legislators (42 state senators, 70 state representatives) have until noon on Saturday, March 18, to act on the 1,388 pieces of legislation (bills, memorials, join memorials, and joint resolutions) which have been introduced in this sixty-day session.

NMDVS Invited to Take Part in American Indian Day at the 2017 Legislature



LEFT PHOTO (L to R): New Mexico Department of Veterans Services State Benefits Director Dale Movius, Healthcare Coordination Director Mitchell Lawrence, Veterans Business Outreach Director Rich Coffel, Rural Veterans Coordination Program/Central Region Coordinator John Griego, and RVCP Director Ed Mendez staffed provided veterans' benefits outreach on American Indian Day at the Legislature on March 3.



RIGHT PHOTO: NMDVS Secretary Jack Fox spoke at the 10am ceremony in the Capitol Rotunda, urging Native American veterans to apply for their veterans' benefits. He said DVS will continue aggressively reaching out to the Native American veteran population..."which, compared to other segments of the veteran population, does not enroll with the VA in as high a percentage. We must ensure Native Americans veterans know about—and file for—these benefits they've earned through their military service."

NMDVS Secretary Fox Presented With Symbolic USS Los Alamos Cap

New Mexico Department of Veterans Services Secretary Jack Fox was presented with a symbolic *USS Los Alamos* cap at the Navy League of New Mexico's farewell dinner for the crew of the submarine *USS Albuquerque* (SSN-706), which was decommissioned on March 27 after a two-year dismantling process.

The cap was presented by Jim Nesmith, Chairman of the *USS Los Alamos* Naming Committee, which has been asking the U.S. Navy to name a submarine after the town of Los Alamos—citing its importance in the development of nuclear research. All of the navy's submarines and many of its surface ships are nuclear-powered. The committee thanked Secretary Fox for his support of their cause, and for writing a letter of support last year to then-Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus.



After Quitting High School to Serve Our Country, Korean War Veteran Finally Gets His High School Diploma



New Mexico Department of Veterans Services Secretary Jack Fox presented a high school diploma on behalf of the State of Virginia to Korean War veteran Johnny Washington at the American Legion/New Mexico Mid-Winter Conference on February 11 at American Legion Post 49 in Albuquerque.

The 82-year old long-time resident of Clovis dropped out of Bowling Green High School in his hometown of Bowling Green, VA, to enlist with the United States Air Force to serve our country in the Korean War—during which he was awarded a Korean Service Medal, United Nations Service Medal, National Defense Service Medal, and Good Conduct Medal.

“This really tells me that I did the right thing,” said Mr. Washington, a long-time American Legion member who was unaware he was being presented with the diploma. “It made dropping out of high school worth it. I served my country, and always wondered if I did the right thing by skipping school. But today, this tells me I did the right thing.”

After the cease-fire signing on July 27, 1953 which halted hostilities in Korea, Mr. Washington continued serving in the Air Force before his honorable discharge in 1956 as an Airman 2nd Class/Apprentice Cook.

NMDVS to Present Vietnam War 50th Anniversary Commemoration Ceremony in SE New Mexico

The 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War will be commemorated at an 11 a.m. ceremony on April 19 in southeast New Mexico at the Artesia Center, located at 612 North Eighth Street in the city of Artesia.

This will be the fourth ceremony presented by the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (NMDVS) as part of a nationwide initiative directed by the U.S. Department of Defense in 2008 to honor America's Vietnam War Veterans and the 50th anniversary of our country's involvement in the war. A 2012 Presidential Proclamation extended this commemoration effort through Veterans Day, 2025.



The City of Artesia, the New Mexico State Council of the Vietnam Veterans of America, the New Mexico VA Health Care System, and the Las Cruces Vet Center are teaming with the NMDVS to present the Artesia ceremony. A 50th Anniversary commemorative pin and a certificate of appreciation for their military service will be given to Vietnam War-era veterans and family members of deceased Vietnam War-era veterans. For more information, contact NMDVS Cemetery Program Division Event Coordinator Josetta Rodriguez at josetta.rodriguez@state.nm.us.

Thousands Expected for 28th Annual Bataan Memorial Death March



Las Year's Bataan Memorial Death March

Thousands of soldiers and civilians will converge at White Sands Missile Range on March 19 to hike through the rugged and mountainous terrain for 28th Annual Bataan Memorial Death March.

The year's march commemorates the 75th anniversary of the torturous "death march" to Japanese prison camps by more than 75,000 American and Allied soldiers in the Philippines. Among the troops were 1,800 men of the New Mexico National Guard who were in the middle of modernization training when Japan launched the surprise December 8, 1941 attack on that country—just hours after launching the attack on Pearl Harbor.

The Allied forces mounted a spirited defense against the much larger and modern Japanese attacking force,—eventually being pinned down in the Bataan Peninsula... fighting in malaria-infested areas, surviving on half- or quarter rations, with little or no medical care, outdated equipment, and virtually no air support. On April 9, 1942, the Allies were ordered to surrender by U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Edward King.

The men were then taken as Prisoners of War and forced to march sixty miles in the scorching heat through heavy jungle on their way to prison camps. Thousands were tortured, killed, or died along the way. Those who survived the march faced three-and-a-half years of equally brutal imprisonment, or were sent via "hell ships" to Japan for forced factory labor.

The 26.2-mile Bataan Memorial Death March is considered by many to be one of the toughest marathon-length events in the nation. Marchers compete in teams or individually. Some compete in the "heavy" division carrying 35-pound rucksacks. There is also a 14.2 mile non-competitive honorary route. Eleven Bataan Survivors are scheduled to attend as VIP guests.

Bataan Remembrance Day to Be Observed in Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and Las Cruces

The 75th anniversary of the fall of Bataan and the beginning of the Bataan Death March will be remembered at ceremonies next month in Santa Fe, Las Cruces, and Albuquerque.

On April 9, the New Mexico National Guard will host its annual Bataan Remembrance Day Ceremony at 10 a.m. at the Eternal Flame Monument in front of the Bataan Memorial Building. Later that afternoon in Las Cruces, the Remember Bataan Foundation of Las Cruces will host a 4 p.m. ceremony at Veterans Memorial Park, located at 1151 North Roadrunner Parkway.

On April 8, in deference to the National Guard's ceremony in Santa Fe, the Filipino-American Foundation of New Mexico will host its annual Bataan Remembrance Day Ceremony in Albuquerque at 1 p.m. at Bataan Memorial Park, located at 3439 Lomas Blvd. NE. (Lomas & Carlisle Blvds.)

NMDVS, CNM to Host *New Mexico Veterans Resource Center Summit 2017*



Colleges and universities from throughout New Mexico will be represented at the *New Mexico Veterans Resource Center Summit 2017* hosted by Central New Mexico Community College (CNM), the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (NMDVS), and the NMDVS Rural Veterans Coordination Program (RVCP) on April 6 in Albuquerque.

The summit is from 9am-4pm at the CNM Workforce Training Center, located at 5600 Eagle Rock Avenue NE.

New Mexico Student Veteran Summit 2017 is an opportunity for our state's 31 colleges or universities to discuss how these centers are helping student veterans—and to learn about new ways the centers can improve their service.

For colleges and universities which do not have such a center, representatives from these institutions can get feedback on how a center can help their student veterans, and how to go about establishing one on their campus.

Student Veteran Center Concept

Student veteran centers provide academic and social support for military veterans pursuing a college or university degree.

Staff members--many who are veterans and/or former student-veterans themselves--can help with GI Bill issues, lining up academic counseling or tutoring, available emergency financial assistance, housing/food/transportation/child care assistance, or with any other issue a veteran may face while pursuing his or her degree. The centers also help ease the transition for a veteran from military to academic life by providing a quiet, safe place for veterans to unwind between classes, or simply a place to socialize with other student-veterans.

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), close to 4,000 military veterans are enrolled in New Mexico's colleges and universities. Most are utilizing their GI Education Benefit Bill which can pay the full cost of tuition, lodging, and books.

For more information about the *New Mexico Student Veteran Summit 2017*, please contact CNM Veterans Resource Center Administrative Coordinator David Walker at (505) 224-3078, NMDVS Rural Veterans Coordination Program/Central Region Coordinator John Griego at (505) 383-2408, or NMDVS Rural Veterans Coordination Program Administrative Assistant Kymm Saunier at (505) 383-2416..

Free eBenefits Training Workshops Offered in Gallup & Farmington

Military veterans can learn how to access information online about their VA benefits by attending free eBenefits web portal training sessions in Gallup on March 14 and in Farmington on April 7.



The March 14 sessions in Gallup are at UNM-Gallup/Calvin Hall, room CH 152, located at 705 Gurley Avenue. The April 7 sessions in Farmington are at San Juan College in room 7127 of the Information Technology Bldg., located at 4601 College Blvd.

The training sessions are presented through a collaborative effort by the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services, the VA Albuquerque Regional Office, the Farmington Vet Center, and UNM-Gallup. There are two sessions at each location—with a morning session from 8:30am-11:30am, and an identical afternoon session from 12:30pm-3:30pm. Attendees will learn, using the eBenefits portal, how to:

- Apply for VA benefits online
- Check Post 9/11 GI Bill enrollment status
- Transfer eligible education benefits to a dependent
- Generate a VA Home loan certificate of eligibility
- Check the status of compensation and pension claims
- Update direct deposit and contact information
- View VA payment history
- Obtain a replacement DD Form 214 separation papers
- Check health benefits eligibility
- Access TRICARE information
- and many other tasks or inquires relating to your VA benefits.

According to the VA, more than 2.8 million veterans and active-duty service members are using the eBenefits portal. The VA and DoD is encouraging more veterans and service members to use it to help them be aware or learn more about their VA benefits.

Pre-registration is required for both events. To register for the March 14 Gallup sessions, please contact Robertson Yazzie at Robertson.yazzie@va.gov or (505) 327-9684. Pre-registration for the April 7 Farmington sessions can be done by contacting Brad Maxwell at maxwellb@sanjuancollege.edu or (505) 566-3967.

The eBenefits Web Portal

eBenefits is a joint VA/DoD web portal that provides resources and self-service capabilities to veterans, active duty service members, and their families to research, access and manage their VA and military benefits and personal information. You can find go to this portal at <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/homepage>.

NMDVS Staff to Host or Co-Host Numerous Veterans Benefits Outreach Visits Statewide

Staff members from the Health Care division, Women Veterans Program, and the Rural Veterans Coordination Program of the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services will be hosting or co-hosting benefits and resources outreach visits and fairs throughout the state this spring.

The outreaches listed below are part of an ongoing effort by the NMDVS to inform rural area veterans about their eligible VA and state veterans' benefits. For more information about the events listed below, please contact NMDVS Public Information Officer Ray Seva at ray.seva@state.nm.us or (505) 827-6352.

<u>Date</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>Venue</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Time</u>
Mar. 9	Farmington	Henderson Fine Arts Center	Community Job & Veterans Benefits Awareness Fair	10am-2pm
Mar. 10	Cuba	Cuba Senior Center	Benefits/Resources Outreach	11am-2m
Mar. 24	Silver City	Western NM University Student Memorial Bldg.	Veterans Benefits Fair	10am-2pm
Mar. 30	Deming	Western NM University Mimbres Valley Learning Center	Operation We Care	9am-1pm
Apr. 14	Placitas	Placitas Community Center	Benefits/Resources Outreach	11am-2pm
Apr. 20	Albuquerque	Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Government Center	Benefits/Resources Outreach	11am-3pm
May--12	Bernalillo	Rotary Park	Health Fair	10am-2pm
May--13	Los Lunas	Los Lunas Sports Complex	Valencia County Metro Public Safety Day	10am-2pm
Jun. 9	Jemez Pueblo	Jemez Community Center	Benefits/Resources Outreach	11am-2pm

NMDVS Field Office Busy Hosting Regularly-Scheduled Outreach Visits

The sixteen Veterans Service Officers and five Rural Veterans Coordination Project Coordinators of the New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services are continuing their regularly-scheduled outreach visits to communities near their assigned offices.

Drop-in visits are welcome at most outreach locations, but veterans are advised to make an appointment to avoid long wait times due to scheduled appointments which are given priority (contact information is provided below). Veterans can also make appointments with NMDV Veterans Service Officers in their main offices listed on the back pages of this newsletter.

<u>City</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Venue</u>	<u>Hours</u>
Albuquerque	Apr. 20	BernCo. Gov't Center	11am-3pm
Albuquerque PD	Mar. 21	Foothill Command	2-4pm
Albuquerque PD	Apr. 18	Northeast Command	2-4pm
Albuquerque PD	Apr. 25	Northwest Command	2-4pm
Albuquerque PD	May 22	Southeast Command	2-4pm
Anthony	Mar. 3, Apr. 7 May 5 Jun. 2	City Hall	9am-2pm
Artesia	Mar. 2 Apr. 6 May 5 Jun. 1	United Veterans Bldg.	9am-3:30pm
Belen	Mar. 22 Apr. 26 May 24	State DVR Dept. Bldg.	9am-4pm
Bernalillo	Mar. 3 Apr. 7 May 5 Jun. 2	Sandoval County Administration Bldg.	1-4pm
Chaparral	Mar. 10 Apr. 14 May 12 Jun. 9	First Baptist Church	9am-2pm
Clayton	Mar. 10, 24 Apr. 14, 28 May 12, 26	VFW Post 3271	10am-2pm
Cuba	Mar. 10	Cuba Senior Center	11am-2pm

NMDVS Field Office Busy Hosting Regularly-Scheduled Outreach Visits *(continued)*

<u>City</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Venue</u>	<u>Hours</u>
Deming	Mar. 2 Apr. 6 May 4 Jun. 1	Deming Senior Center	9am-4pm
Española	Mar. 9, 23 Apr. 6, 27 May 4, 24 Jun. 7, 28	Española Workforce Solutions Office	9:30am-3pm
Ft. Bayard	Mar. 9 Apr. 13 May 11 Jun. 8	Ft. Bayard Hospital	1pm-3pm
Gallup	Mar. 1, 14, 15, 28, 29	Ford Canyon Senior Center	8am-4:30pm
Isleta Pueblo	Mar. 8 Apr. 12 May 10	Tribal Admin. Bldg.	9am-4pm
Jemez Pueblo	Jun. 9	Jemez Community Ctr.	11am-2pm
Kewa Pueblo	Mar. 9 Apr. 13 May 11 Jun. 8	Kewa Wellness Center <i><u>By appt. only.</u></i> <i><u>Call (505) 465-2733 to make an appointment</u></i>	
Las Vegas	Mar. 7, 14, 15, 28 Mar. 21 Apr. 4, 11, 18, 25 Apr. 19 May 2, 9, 16, 17, 23 May 17 Jun. 6, 13, 20, 27 Jun. 21	Luna Community College Veterans Resource Center	9am-2pm 1pm-4pm 9am-2pm 1pm-4pm 9am-2pm 1pm-4pm 9am-2pm 1pm-4pm
Los Lunas	Mar. 2 Apr. 6 May 4	Los Lunas State Campus Foster Grandparents Bldg.	9am-4pm
Lordsburg	Mar. 23 Apr. 27 May 23 Jun. 22	Lordsburg City Hall	9am-4pm

NMDVS Field Office Busy Hosting Regularly-Scheduled Outreach Visits *(continued)*

<u>City</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Venue</u>	<u>Hours</u>
Los Alamos	Mar. 22 Apr. 26 May 24 Jun. 28	LANL Ombuds Office <u>Call (505) 988-6562 to make an appointment</u>	<u>By appt. only.</u>
Mescalero	Mar. 16 May 18	Mescalero Education Ctr.	1-3:30pm
Placitas	Apr. 14	Placitas Community Ctr.	11am-1pm
Quemado	Mar. 16 Apr. 20 May 19 Jun. 15	Catron County Veterans Center	5-7pm
Reserve	Mar. 16 Apr. 20 May 19 Jun. 15	Catron County Wellness Center	10am-3pm
Ruidoso	Mar. 14 Apr. 11 May 9 Jun. 13	Ruidoso Community Center	10am-3pm
Santa Rosa	Mar. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 Apr. 5, 12, 19, 26 May 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 Jun. 7, 14, 21, 28	Guadalupe County Veterans Center	10am-3pm
Socorro	Mar. 17 Apr. 21 May 19	NM Workforce Connection Office	10am-1pm
Sunland Park	Mar. 17 Apr. 21 May 19 Jun. 16	City Hall	9am-2pm
TorC	Mar. 15 Apr. 19 May 17 Jun. 21	State Veterans Home	10am-3pm
White Horse	Mar. 8	Chapter House	1pm-4pm

Veterans Urged to Apply for State Wildland Firefighter Positions



The Returning Heroes Wildland Firefighter Program is now accepting applications for emergency hire wildland fire crewmembers for the 2017 season. Applications are available through the program's office in Santa Fe. The program is offering several types of wildland fire training—including beginning wildland fire courses for new applicants.

Information about the courses are available at <http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/SFD/FireMgt/documents/RHPTraining2016-2017.pdf>

The Returning Heroes Wildland Firefighter Program was created by the State Forestry Division of the Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department to provide military veterans with training and work opportunities to fight wildland fires.

Wildland crewmembers of the Returning Heroes Program are administratively determined firefighters (ADs). This means they are only called upon or hired during an actual wildland emergency. During the fire season (typically early spring through early fall), ADs may be sent throughout New Mexico, or even out of state, to assist on wildland fire emergencies.



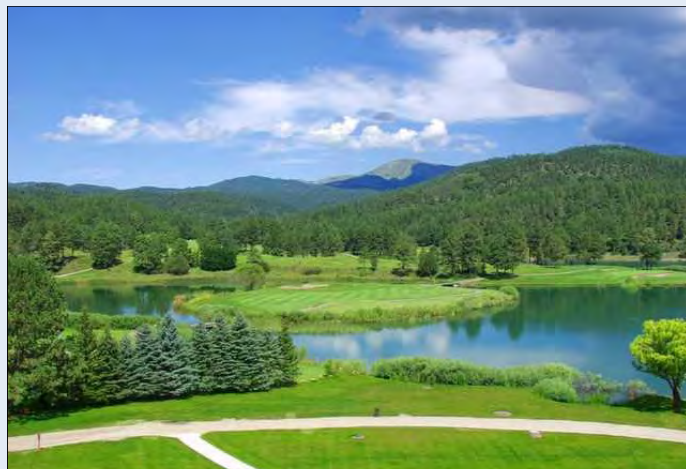
More information can be found at <http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/SFD/> and clicking on the "Fire Management" tab...and then scrolling to the "Wildland Firefighters and Returning Heroes Program" link at the bottom.

American Legion Post 48 in Mescalero Hosting Benefit Golf Tournament

American Legion Post 48 in Mescalero is hosting a benefit golf tournament on April 22 at the Inn of the Mountain Gods Championship Golf Course.

The tax-deductible entry fee is \$75 per player. Golfers can enter their own four-person team or be assigned to a team on the day of the tournament, which begins with a shotgun start at 1pm.

The tournament is open to the public. All proceeds go towards the American Legion Post 48 general fund. For more information or to pre-register, call the Pro Shop at (575) 464-7941.



Inn of the Mountain Gods Championship Golf Course

Unique Transformational Papermaking Project Offered for Women Veterans

Off Center Arts, the Museum of the American Military Family, and the College of Santa Fe are collaborating to present a special papermaking workshop for women veterans. *From Fatigues to Flags* is a transformational papermaking workshop in which combat fatigues are shredded into small strips and then, through a papermaking process, are transformed into paper. The end result are beautiful "Prayer Flags" which will be displayed during the month of April at Off Center Arts. (808 Park Avenue SW, Albuquerque, NM 87102).



No artistic background is necessary. Women veterans are encouraged to bring cotton fatigues and T-shirts worn during their military service. Lunch, papermaking equipment, and all other materials will be provided. Workshops consist of three Sunday sessions, and it is important for participants to attend all three sessions, which will be held at Off Center Arts on the following dates: March 19, 26, and April 2... from 10:30am-4:30pm.

Instructor Claire Lissance has a counseling background and has been a hand papermaker since 1986. Registration will be through the instructor. For more information, contact Ms. Lissance at (505) 450-1357 or cdlune@aol.com. This program is made possible through a grant from the National Endowment of the Arts and the New Mexico Arts Commission.

Veterans Wellness Center to Open in Taos



Not Forgotten Outreach is pleased to announce the Ribbon Cutting and Grand Opening of the Not Forgotten Outreach Wellness Center at 428 Theodora Lane in Taos on March 18 at 11:30am.

The wellness center will provide free complementary and alternative medicine therapies to help reduce pain, Post-Traumatic Stress symptoms and improve overall post-military service quality of life by delivering non-narcotic, complementary care services as an adjunct to standard medical care. The center has three treatment rooms for massage, acupuncture, cranial sacral therapy, and myofascial therapy. In addition, there will be yoga space and an area for mindfulness & relaxation/meditation training—as well as space for regular visits by the Santa

Fe-based VA Mobile Vet Center. Like community-based Vet Centers, the mobile unit offers counseling services for veterans needing help transitioning from military to civilian life.

For more information about the grand opening ceremony, please contact Don Peters at don@notforgottenoutreach.org or (575) 224-1503.

About Not Forgotten Outreach, Inc.

Not Forgotten Outreach, Inc. is a 501(c)(3), non-profit foundation dedicated to motivating military members, veterans, their families, and Gold Star families of fallen heroes to participate in recreational and/or therapeutic activities in order to facilitate the healing process. NFO provides opportunities to improve relationships, build comradeship, and at the same time enhance "Mindfulness" and personal well-being.

Study Shows Military Service May be a Bridge to Better Pay For Some Women

Minority women who traditionally earn less than their white and Asian counterparts can earn just as much money, if not more, after serving in the military, according to a new Florida State University study.

FSU's Distinguished Professor of Sociology Irene Padavic found that women veterans earned more than non-veteran women in the civilian labor work force. She also found that disadvantaged racial and ethnic minority women showed the greatest gains in the civilian labor market after their military service.

"Military life is changing dramatically for women," Padavic said. "Last year, the Defense Department began opening all military positions to women. In an era when many women depend solely on their earnings and when the number of women veterans is rising, we need to know more about how they fare."

The study, *Aiming High: Explaining the Earnings Advantage for Female Veterans*, was recently published online and will be available in the interdisciplinary journal, *Armed Forces & Society* in April. To conduct their research, Padavic pooled data from the 2008, 2009 and 2010 censuses. They found women veterans in the prime working ages of 18 to 55 out earn nonveterans by about 8 percent. She said a key reason for these higher earnings is that women veterans are more likely to be in higher paying occupations such as professional-managerial positions or nurses and less likely to be in the lowest paying jobs.

"They likely gained skills in the military that transfer to these higher paying occupations," Padavic said.

In contrast, the two lower paid areas of occupation — sales and service — have an underrepresentation of veterans, presumably because their military background "saved" them from some of the lowest paying jobs in the occupational hierarchy. Padavic also concluded that women with the poorest civilian labor market opportunities--namely disadvantaged racial minorities--gained the most economically from a military service background. What surprised the researchers was that veteran status raised earnings of disadvantaged racial minorities to be on par and, in some cases, even higher than nonveteran white women.

White women veterans earned about \$1,100 more than white women nonveterans, black women veterans earned about \$2,500 more, Hispanic veterans saw a premium of \$3,000 and Alaskan and Native American women saw almost a \$7,000 pay increase after serving in the military.

But Padavic said that's not a reason for every woman to head to their nearest recruitment center.

"White and Asian women, in contrast, face better civilian labor market options," Padavic said. "So their investment risk and opportunity cost for joining the military is high, which means the bridge to better paying civilian occupations serves those populations less well."

That principle applies more generally, as well.

"Women who choose to enlist may differ from other women in important and unmeasured ways, so we cannot claim that military service would enhance all women's employment prospects," she said.

Padavic also said now that women are in combat roles, future research could consider how combat experience affects future earnings and hiring desirability of women veterans.

Last of the Original Air Force “First Five” Women Ceremonial Guardsmen Retires



The last woman of the historic United States Air Force “First Five” Ceremonial Guardsmen retired on March 4 in a retirement ceremony at Kirtland Air Force Base.

Lt. Col. Cindi Feldwisch retired from the New Mexico Air National Guard after serving more than 34 years in the U.S. Air Force. Last March, she and her “First Five” colleagues were recognized with full honors by the USAF Honor Guard in Washington D.C. She also received a signed White House award and a framed Congressional Record given to her by New Mexico Congresswoman Michele Lujan Grisham.

In the spring of 1976, five enlisted women completed training and earned the title of Ceremonial Guardsmen--the first women to graduate and serve in what was then known as the United States Air Force Presidential Honor Guard. The Air Force was the first branch to allow women to serve in this capacity as Ceremonial Guardsmen.

Lt. Col. Feldwisch has served around the world and in every USAF component while working her way up through the enlisted ranks. Breaks in her active-duty service allowed her to attend college and earn a Bachelor's Degree in order to become an officer.

All-Expenses Paid Retreats Offered for OEF/OIF/GWOT Women Veterans

CenterPoint Retreats is once again offering six-day recovery retreats for women veterans who were deployed during OEF/OIF or the Global War on Terror (GWOT). These retreats are funded by the Readjustment Counseling Services division of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and are **free of charge, including airfare, for eligible women veterans**.

The retreats provide a peaceful and supportive natural environment for women veterans to reconnect with others, learn specific body-centered tools for recovery from PTSD or chronic stress, and re-orient towards a more fulfilling life. Eligible participants must be OEF/OIF/GWOT veterans who have completed at least three Vet Center counseling sessions in the past six months. Women veterans not currently in counseling but who would like to participate in the retreats can start the three-session requirement by contacting their local Vet Center. Retreats will be held at the following locations and on the following dates. Veterans are asked to attend the one closest to their home if possible.

June 4-9 (Maine)
 September 3-8 (Rocky Mountains, Colorado)
 Oct. 27- Nov. 1 (Coastal Mountains, Southern California)

For more information and an application packet, go to www.centerpointretreats.org. **To apply, give your completed Application Packet to your Vet Center counselor**, who will complete the Counselor Packet (also available online) and fax it in to the number included in that packet.

David Shulkin Confirmed as VA Secretary

Story Courtesy of The Army Times



**VA Secretary
David Shulkin**

**For more news from the VA
and for benefits
information, visit
www.va.gov**

**The VA has a regional
Benefits office in
Albuquerque.**

**For more Information:
[www.benefits.va.gov/
albuquerque](http://www.benefits.va.gov/albuquerque)**

**For information about VA
health care, visit the
website of the New
Mexico VA Health Care
System at:
www.albuquerque.va.gov**

The U.S. Senate confirmed Dr. David Shulkin on February 13 as the new Veterans Affairs Secretary--making him the first non-veteran ever to serve in the post.

Dr. Shulkin, who had been serving as the head of VA health programs, was approved by a vote of 100-0.

The 57-year-old physician was praised by lawmakers from both parties and by veterans advocates as a leader with inside knowledge of the veterans' bureaucracy and as someone possessing a critical perspective necessary for reforming the nation's largest health care system.

Both of Dr. Shulkin's parents served in the Army, and he was born on a military base in Illinois. In his confirmation hearing earlier this month, Dr. Shulkin said military and veterans care has played an important role in his life.

"As a young doctor, I trained in several VA hospitals," he said. "I view my service at the VA as a duty to give back to the men and women who secured the uniquely American freedoms and opportunities we all enjoy, because of sacrifices they made."

He also repeatedly promised not to "privatize" VA services, and told lawmakers he would not have accepted the President's nomination if it came with such a requirement.

"What I told him is that I am a strong advocate for the VA, that the services that are available in the VA are not available in the private sector," Shulkin told senators. "My view of where the VA needs to go is an integrated system of care, taking the best of the VA and the best in the community, and that's what I would work towards."

President Trump made VA reform a pillar of his presidential campaign, including releasing a 10-point plan which called for more mental health care professionals in the department, and a private White House hotline devoted to fielding complaints from veterans.

Dr. Shulkin is the only member of President Donald Trump's Cabinet to be held over from former President Barack Obama's administration.

"The solutions to the VA's problems should be based on common sense rather than partisanship or an extreme agenda, and I think Dr. Shulkin recognizes that," said Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., and ranking member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee.

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Committee chairman Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., called him “the right man for the veterans administration” and hailed the vote as a rare moment of bipartisanship in the increasingly divided chamber.

“Dr. Shulkin is committed to our nation's veterans above all. Through the conversations I've had with him over the last year and a half, I think he understands the challenges that are ahead of us in the VA. Dr. Shulkin is on top of it.”

Dr. Shulkin is the ninth permanent secretary confirmed by the Senate since the Department of Veterans Affairs was reorganized in 1989. Each of other eight were also approved without opposition, either through unanimous or voice votes.

Statement From New VA Secretary David Shulkin



**VA Secretary
David Shulkin**

I am grateful to President Trump and to Members of Congress for entrusting me with the privilege of serving veterans and the dedicated employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs as your Secretary. It is my highest professional honor.

Together, we'll ensure our Nation's obligation to provide care and benefits to those “who shall have borne the battle” and fulfill our institutional I-CARE Values: *Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence*.

That obligation and those values are sacred to me, first, as an American - a beneficiary of the service and sacrifices of veterans and their families who defend our uniquely American freedoms and opportunities. They're also sacred to me because my father served the Nation as an Army psychiatrist, and both my grandfathers were Army veterans. My paternal grandfather served as Chief Pharmacist at the VA hospital in Madison, Wisconsin, and

as a young doctor, I trained in VA hospitals. So, serving the nation and serving veterans is a family tradition.

It was a privilege to serve as the VA's Under Secretary for Health over the past year and a half. Now, I look forward to continuing our collective efforts across the department and our country to deliver the care and services our veterans need and deserve. Among many critical efforts already underway, we will continue building on significant progress increasing access for veterans, preventing suicide, addressing unique needs of women veterans, supporting veterans' families and caregivers, continuing to drive down the disability backlog and veteran homelessness, and pursuing necessary legislation to reform the outdated appeals process and for other critical legislative priorities.

With the support of the President, Congress, veterans, their service organizations, and the American people, we - the dedicated employees of the VA - will continue to fulfill President Lincoln's promise.

There is no nobler mission. There is no higher calling for any American. I am humbled and proud to serve with you.

David Shulkin, MD

NMDVS Health/Safety Tip: The Bataan Memorial Death March—and Future Hikes



More than 7,000 people are expected to take part in the 28th Annual Bataan Memorial Death March later this month in the rugged terrain on the White Sands Missile Range (see page 6 for story).

If you are one of the 7,000 planning on doing this march/hike, below are some tips which can help make this—or any other hike you may do in the future—a more safe and comfortable experience. These are courtesy of the Bataan Memorial March website (<http://bataanmarch.com/marcher-info/tips-info/>).

There are 12 water points along the route — make sure you drink plenty of liquids. The greatest danger to marchers is dehydration because of the dry desert climate. DO NOT drink alcoholic beverages the night prior to the march.

Hydrate---but don't overdo it! We encourage you to alternate between water and sports drinks that will be available at water points. A condition called hyponatremia can be induced by over hydration with water exclusively. This lowers sodium levels in the bloodstream and can lead to seizure and convulsion activity.

Marchers can avoid this condition by taking sports drinks containing essential electrolytes such as potassium, chloride, and magnesium.

Watch your step. Be aware of loose rocks, drop-offs, and rattlesnakes. The route crosses many arroyos, which are intermittent streambeds. In the event of heavy rains, do not attempt to cross the arroyos. Also, be aware of “smaller” problems such as tarantulas, scorpions, and bees. If you are allergic to bee stings, carry your bee sting kit with you.

A small flashlight is suggested for early morning and if you are on the route later in the evening to deter local wildlife that may be out. Anyone who becomes injured should remain on the route until medical attention arrives from the nearest water point to avoid further injury.

Anyone who witnesses an unsafe act or an injured marcher needs to immediately report the situation to the nearest water point or roving patrol.

Historically, about 25 percent of marchers become casualties during the Bataan Memorial Death March. Over half of these casualties are foot or ankle injuries. Wear quality footwear and ensure that they are thoroughly broken in before the day of the march.

Keeping your feet clean and dry throughout the march will help avoid blisters. Change sweaty socks during the march and consider using a quality foot powder or even antiperspirant on your feet to help control sweating. Above all, don't try anything new (e.g., new shoes, new type of socks, new insoles or flexible orthotics) on the day of the march. If you have not trained with it, do not use it.

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Listen to your body! See a medic if you are not feeling well.

Listen to your feet! Take care of hot spots before they turn into nasty blisters.

Use sunscreen. At White Sands' elevation, sunburn can occur within 10-15 minutes.

Watch your step. Beware of rough terrain.

Be respectful of wildlife along the route. You may see critters ranging from those native to the area, such as rabbits and snakes, to the exotic Oryx — an African antelope which was imported to New Mexico.

White Sands Missile Range has been a site for defense testing, to include various munitions, for more than 50 years. Do not touch, pick up or kick anything along the route. Report anything suspicious to missile range officials.

If you see a marcher who needs aid, help them. Report injured or ill marchers to race officials



If you have a medical condition such as diabetes, asthma, or heart disease; if you are on regular medications or if you have medication allergies, please legibly write down this information, place it in a ziplock bag and pin the bag to your marching outfit. That way if you pass out on the route, the medics will have a better idea of how to care for you.

Since the march begins before sunup, the temperature will be cool at the start of the day. By 9 a.m., it will begin getting warmer and be relatively hot by noon. Light, layered clothing is a good idea. We highly recommend wearing a hat which provides shade to your head and neck, such as a "boonie" hat.

Bring and use sunscreen. Your face, neck and shoulders are especially vulnerable. Sweating will wash the sunscreen off, so reapply it frequently.

Plan for the possibility of high winds with blowing dust. Include a bandana and eye protection in your pack.

Those with a history of reactive airway disease or pulmonary dysfunction should consult their physician before this event. Blowing dust may, in some cases, trigger acute respiratory events.

Make sure to keep any prescribed medications needed in case of such an attack with you during the march. It's a good idea to wear sunglasses.

It is also a good idea to bring a pair of flip flops for after the event as you may not be able to put your shoes back on.

NMDVS FIELD OFFICES

There New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services field offices throughout the state to assist veterans and their eligible dependents with filing for VA and state veterans' benefits. Each office is managed by a nationally-certified Veterans' Service Officer who is committed to helping fellow veterans with filing for their VA and state veterans' benefits.

Below are the NMDVS field offices (LISTED IN ALL CAPITAL LETTER HEADINGS) and outreach locations (shown in lower-case italicized headings with an asterisk*). Please contact your nearest office to set up an appointment. For additional information, you can also contact NMDVS Field Services Director Ken Adair at (505) 346-3986 or kennethR.adair@state.nm.us.

ALAMOGORDO	ALBUQUERQUE #1	ALBUQUERQUE #2
Tony Woodards 411 10th Street # 107 (575) 437-4635 anthony.woodards@state.nm.us	Theresa Zuni 500 Gold Ave. SW (505) 346-4810 theresa.zuni@state.nm.us	Gordon Schei 5201 Eagle Rock Ave. NE (505) 383-2404 gordon.schei@state.nm.us
<i>Anthony*</i>	<i>Artesia*</i>	<i>Aztec*</i>
<i>(Las Cruces Office Outreach)</i> George Vargas (575) 524-6124 george.vargas@state.nm.us	<i>(Carlsbad Office Outreach)</i> Dagmar Youngberg (575) 885-4939 dagmar.youngberg@state.nm.us	<i>(Farmington Office Outreach)</i> Beverly Charley (505) 327-2861 beverly.charley@state.nm.us
CARLSBAD	<i>Clayton*</i>	CLOVIS
Dagmar Youngberg 101 N. Halagueno (575) 885-4939 dagmar.youngberg@state.nm.us	<i>(Raton Office Outreach)</i> Gary Fresquez (575) 445-8282 gary.fresquez@state.nm.us	Matthew Barela 904 W. 6th Street (575) 762-6185 matthew.barela@state.nm.us
<i>Cuba*</i>	<i>Deming*</i>	<i>Española*</i>
<i>(Albuquerque Office Outreach)</i> Gordon Schei (505) 383-2409 gordon.schei@state.nm.us	<i>(Silver City Office Outreach)</i> Bradley Brock (575) 538-2377 bradleya.brock@state.nm.us	<i>(Taos Office Outreach)</i> Michael Pacheco (575) 758-9624 michael.pacheco1@state.nm.us
FARMINGTON	GALLUP	GRANTS
Beverly Charley 101 West Animas/Room 104 (505) 327-2861 beverly.charley@state.nm.us	(vacant)	Tyrre Saavedra 515 East High St.. (505) 287-8387 tyrre.saavedra@state.nm.us
HOBBS	<i>Holloman AFB*</i>	LAS CRUCES #1
Dalton Boyd 2120 N. Alto Street (575) 397-5290 dalton.boyd@state.nm.us	<i>(Alamogordo Office Outreach)</i> Tony Woodards (575) 437-4635 anthony.woodards@state.nm.us	J.R. Turner 2024 E. Griggs Ave. (575) 524-6220 jr.turner@state.nm.us

LAS CRUCES #2	LAS VEGAS	Lordsburg*
George Vargas 2024 E. Griggs Ave. (575) 524-6124 george.vargas@state.nm.us	Karen Abeyta 917 Douglas Avenue (505) 454-0068 karen.abeyta@state.nm.us	(Silver City Office Outreach) Bradley Brock (575) 538-2377 bradleya.brock@state.nm.us
Los Lunas*	Mora*	Quemado*
(Albuquerque #1 Office Outreach) Theresa Zuni (505) 346-4810 theresa.zuni@state.nm.us	(Las Vegas, NM Office Outreach) Karen Abeyta (505) 454-0068 karen.abeyta@state.nm.us	(Silver City Office Outreach) Bradley Brock (575) 538-2377 bradleya.brock@state.nm.us
RATON	Reserve*	ROSWELL
Gary Fresquez 200 N. 3rd St. (575) 445-8282 gary.fresquez@state.nm.us	(Silver City Office Outreach) Bradley Brock (575) 538-2377 bradleya.brock@state.nm.us	Richard Moncrief 1600 SE Main St. (575) 624-6086 richard.moncrief@state.nm.us
Ruidoso*	SANTA FE	Santa Rosa*
(Alamogordo Office Outreach) Tony Woodards (575) 437-4635 anthony.woodards@state.nm.us	Jeff George 301 W. De Vargas St./2nd Floor (505) 827-7492 jeff.george@state.nm.us	(Las Vegas, NM Office Outreach) Karen Abeyta (505) 454-0068 karen.abeyta@state.nm.us
SILVER CITY	Socorro*	Sunland Park*
Bradley Brock 1211 North Hudson St. (575) 538-2377 bradleya.brock@state.nm.us	(ABQ #1 Office Outreach) Theresa Zuni (505) 841-5346 theresa.zuni@state.nm.us	(Las Cruces Office Outreach) George Vargas (575) 524-6124 george.vargas@state.nm.us
TAOS	Truth or Consequences*	Tucumcari*
Michael Pacheco 120 Civic Plaza (575) 758-9624 michael.pacheco1@state.nm.us	(Las Cruces Office Outreach) JR Turner (575) 524-6220 jr.turner@state.nm.us	(Las Vegas, NM Office Outreach) Karen Abeyta (505) 454-0068 karen.abeyta@state.nm.us