

FY2013 REPORT FOR VETERANS SERVICES

In FY13, The Dukes County Veterans Services Department handled 167 cases, including financial and medical assistance. The total amount expended on veterans' assistance was \$106,668.56. We expect 75% of this money to be reimbursed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This year \$73,394.91 was reimbursed for last year's services to veterans and their dependents under the provisions of Massachusetts General Law Chapter 115, as amended. The amount received from Federal VA expenditures through pensions and compensations was \$1,412,977.23.

We lost 11 veterans this past fiscal year. All were buried with Military Honors and with a representative from the Veterans Services Office and the Veterans of Martha's Vineyard present. All veteran's graves were decorated with flags per MGL 108 CMR 13:03. Thank you to all town Veterans Graves Officers for their assistance.

Veterans participated in 4 parades this past fiscal year: Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Holy Ghost Society Parade and Veterans Day. Our guest speaker for Memorial Day was Lt. Col. David Berube, Chaplain with the Air National Guard, Chaplain for General George W. Goethals Post 257 of the American Legion and Oak Bluffs Police Officer. After Lt. Col. Berube's speech titled "Freedom isn't free", he presented Gold Star Ornaments to the four families who lost a son/brother/husband in the Vietnam War. Accepting the ornaments were Renee Ortiz, Jenny Painter, Mike Bettencourt and James Hagerty.

The Friday before Memorial Day saw island veterans at the Oak Bluffs School for their community meeting honoring veterans. The Tisbury School march to sea was held in the gym due to the weather, but veterans were present for this also. Jonathan Auerbach did his second concert for needy veterans at the M.V. Film Center. Mr. Auerbach along with Carole Charlin donated all their CD sales to the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund. I would like to thank Jonathan, Carole and Richard Paradise for their generosity and support of our veterans.

We also participated in the Wreaths Across America Program sponsored by Worcester Wreath Company, which has been decorating wreaths on graves at Arlington National Cemetery for 21 years. Seven ceremonial wreaths were placed to remember those who served, honor their sacrifices, and teach our younger generations about the high price of our freedoms. Specially made wreaths for Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, Merchant Marines and POW/MIA were placed on memorials during a unique ceremony. This year we had our ceremony a day early to include the students from the Tisbury School. American Legion Post 257 in Vineyard Haven conducts this ceremony at Oak Grove Cemetery at the Directory for the Avenue of Flags.

This year also saw island veterans fighting to get the contract between M.V. Hospital and the VA reinstated. It took 3 years but the contract was finally signed and representatives from the Veterans Administration came to the island and met with M.V. Hospital and island veterans at the American Legion in V.H. Since signing the contract in October Dr.

Monte Vanbeber from VA Clinic in Hyannis has been coming to the island to get veterans vested in the VA system.

We thank the membership of the American Legion Post 257 in Tisbury for the use of their space at Seamen's Bethel Annex for the satellite Veterans Office.

Last August I presented High School Diplomas to two WWII veterans. This is made possible through the Massachusetts Department of Veterans Services program called "Operation Recognition." The Welcome Home Bill signed on November 11, 2005, in Massachusetts allows high schools to award diplomas to World War II, Korea and Vietnam veterans who left school before graduation in order to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces and were honorably discharged. The two diplomas were given to Donald Mitchell, Class of 1944 and James Maciel, Class of 1943. Thank you to Neal Maciel, M.V.R.H.S. principal Steve Nixon, and Ruda Stone, his administrative assistant and to Dr. James Weiss, Superintendent of M.V. Public Schools for making this possible.

I continue to write every month on veterans benefits for the 55 Plus Times, be involved with the Dukes County Health Council, go to all veterans organizational meetings, go to training with the Department of Veterans Services. I am still sending care packages to island soldiers with the help and generosity of the people of Martha's Vineyard. Thank you to everyone who donated to our troops. As of this date we have only one island soldier serving in Afghanistan and numerous others serving in the U.S. and around the world. If you know of someone serving please call my office with the address.

Respectfully submitted,
Jo Ann Murphy
Director of Veterans Services