

FY14 REPORT FOR VETERANS SERVICES

In FY14, The Dukes County Veterans Services Department handled 163 cases, including financial and medical assistance. The total amount expended on veteran's assistance was \$94,805.15. We expect 75% of this money to be reimbursed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This year \$68,026.64 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 14 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 five parades this past fiscal year: Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Holy Ghost Society Parade, Flag Day Parade and Rededication and Veterans Day. Our guest speaker for Memorial Day was Senior Chief Jason Olsen from Coast Guard Station Menemsha.

This year was the 50th Anniversary of American Legion Post 257 in Vineyard Haven turning over the deed to War Veterans Memorial Park to the Town of Tisbury. A committee was formed by the Legion and Edson Rodgers, Retired Navy Chief was the Chair. He invited the Northeast Navy Band to participate in the Ceremony and they agreed to also do a free concert for the island. Past Commander Fred Thifault presented the Town with a Congressional Record of the Rededication. We thank Congressman William Keating for providing the Congressional Record for the Ceremony.

The Friday before Memorial Day saw island veterans at the Oak Bluffs School for their community meeting honoring veterans. Island veterans also participated in the Tisbury School March to Sea.

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.

The contract between the Department of Veterans Affairs and M.V. Hospital was renewed in October. Dr. Monte Vanbeber from VA Clinic in Hyannis has been coming to the island to see veterans once a month. The last figures were that we had 175 veterans registered for VA Health Care.

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. We also thank them for the use of their hall for veteran's activities.

This year the Secretary of Massachusetts Department of Veterans Services came to talk with island veterans. Secretary Coleman Nee spoke with island veterans about any concerns that they might have. Secretary Nee also met with M.V. Community Services and other interested parties regarding services for veterans.

I continue to write every month on veterans benefits for the 55 Plus Times, being involved with the Dukes County Health Council, go to all veterans organizational meetings and 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 are 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