

FY15 REPORT FOR VETERANS SERVICES

In FY15, The Dukes County Veterans Services Department handled 163 cases, including financial and medical assistance. The total amount expended on veteran's assistance was \$105,211.49. We expect 75% of this money to be reimbursed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This year \$92,265.13 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 \$1,441,378.00

We lost 12 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 four parades this past fiscal year: Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Holy Ghost Society Parade, and Veterans Day. Our guest speaker for Memorial Day was Commander Paul J. Brawley, U.S. Navy Reserve and National Service Officer for the Massachusetts Department of Veterans Services. Commander Brawley is currently assigned to the Navy Office of Community Outreach.

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.

Veterans participated in the Wreaths Across America Program sponsored by Worcester Wreath Company, which has been decorating wreaths on graves at Arlington National Cemetery for 22 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.

Dr. Monte Vanbeber from VA Clinic in Hyannis is still coming to the island to see veterans once a month. The last figures were that we had 175 veterans registered for VA Health Care.

In order to be of more help to my clients I have taken and passed the course to become a SHINE Counselor. SHINE stands for Serving the Health Insurance needs of everyone. I hope to be of help to my clients and their dependants with Medicare and other insurance needs.

This has been an exciting year for me as I was named the Veterans Service Officer of the year by the Massachusetts Department of Veterans Services. I also received a Citation

from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts House of Representatives in recognition of my award. Also the National Commander Michael Helm of the American Legion presented me with a Citation for Meritorious Service to the Legion's Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Programs.

I would like to 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, be involved with the Dukes County Health Council, go to all veterans organizational meetings, go to training with the Department of Veterans Services. As of this date we have no island soldiers serving in Afghanistan but have 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