

FY18 REPORT FOR VETERANS SERVICES

In FY18, The Dukes County Veterans Services Department handled 207 cases, including financial and medical assistance. The total amount expended on veteran's assistance was \$116,253.67. We expect 75% of this money to be reimbursed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This year \$86,895.74 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 \$1,470,205.56.

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 three parades this past fiscal year: Memorial Day, Fourth of July, and Veteran's Day. Our guest speaker for Memorial Day was Mr. Robert Sparks who taught American History at Northeastern University for 35 years. The Massachusetts Department of Veterans Services along with the Governor's Office sent out a Proclamation to be read on Memorial Day. Tisbury Selectman Tristan Isreal read the Proclamation. All towns on the Island received a Proclamation. This is the 8th year that we have been recognized by the Veterans Administration as a National Site for Veterans Day. We also visited Windemere to honor the veterans residing there.

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.

May 27th saw island veterans, active duty military and first responders marched 26.2 miles for our 5rd annual March for Hero's. We stepped off at 9 am from VFW Post 9261 in Oak Bluffs: marched around East Chop, then around Oak Bluffs Harbor to the Beach Road and on to Edgartown. We stopped at the Edgartown Fire Station for a break, then on to the bike path around Katama and back to the Fire Station for lunch. After lunch we headed out of town to the Edgartown/Vineyard Haven Road, on to County Road and back to the VFW for refreshments. Money raised by this event was donated to VFW Post 9261, American Legion Post 257 and the Matthew Pucino Foundation.

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 25 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. This year due to extreme cold weather the ceremony was held at American Legion Post 257 home.

Dr. Monte VanBeber from the VA Clinic in Hyannis is still coming to the island to see veterans once a month. The last figures were that we had 200 veterans registered for VA Health Care.

It has been three years since I became a SHINE Counselor. I feel that this has been a help to my clients and the community. SHINE stands for Serving the Health Insurance needs of everyone.

I also work with M.V. Community Services Veterans Program. This past year we held a dinner to honor and thank Vietnam Veterans for their service. Pins and certificates were given out to veterans and their spouses. This was possible by American Legion Post 257 and M.V. Community Services becoming a Commemorative Partner for the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War.

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.

I continue to write every month on veterans benefits for the 55 Plus Times, go to veterans organizational meetings, attend training with the Department of Veterans Services. As of this date we don't have any 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