

FY19 REPORT FOR VETERANS SERVICES

In FY19, The Dukes County Veterans Services department handled 182 cases, including financial and medical assistance. The total amount expended on veteran's assistance was \$109,290.66. We expect 75% of this money to be reimbursed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This year \$77,447.07 was reimbursed to veterans and their dependents under the provisions of Massachusetts General Law Chapter 115, as amended for FY19's services. The amount received from Federal VA expenditures through pensions and compensations was \$1,484,907.62

We lost 19 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.

Our 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 I/S. Marine Veteran Jeff Spears, who fought in the battle of Khe Shan and received the Purple Heart. The Massachusetts Department of Veterans Services along with the Governor's Office sent out a proclamation to be read on Memorial Day. This year, Tisbury Selectman Melinda Loberg read the proclamation. All towns on the Island received a copy of the proclamation. This is the 9th year that we have been recognized by the Veterans Administration as a National Site for Veterans Day.

The Friday before Memorial Day island veterans gathered at the Oak Bluffs School for their community meeting honoring veterans. Island veterans also participated in the Tisbury School's "March To The Sea" event.

The 5th annual "March For Heroes" was a resounding success this year! Held on June 1st, the march began at the American Legion Post 257 in Tisbury and wound through Five Corners, Oak Bluffs, East Chop, Circuit Avenue, Beach Road, over to Edgartown, down North Water Street and Peases Point Way, and on to the Edgartown Fire Station where lunch was provided to the participants. Once lunch was over the march continued down Edgartown-Vineyard Haven Road, on to County Road and then finally back to the VFW for refreshments. All the money raised by this event was donated to the VFW Post 9261, the American Legion Post 257 and the Matthew Pucino Foundation.

Our veterans participated in the Wreaths Across America Program sponsored by the Worcester Wreath Company, which has been decorating wreaths on graves at

Arlington National Cemetery for 26 years. Seven ceremonial wreaths were placed to remember those who served, to honor their sacrifices, and to teach our younger generations about the high price of our freedoms. Custom wreaths were made for the Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, Merchant Marines, and POW/MIA, and 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 the Wreaths Across America Program sent me a certificate of appreciation, recognizing my 10 years of volunteering for this program.

Dr. Monte VanBeber from the VA Clinic in Hyannis is still coming to the island to see veterans twice a month. The last figures were that we had 225 veterans registered for VA Health Care.

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

I also work with the M.V. Community Services Veterans Program. This past year we held a cookout for veterans and their families. There was a guest speaker, Bob Sparks, who spoke about two of our deceased WWII veterans, Ted Morgan and Eugene De Felice, and what an honor it was to have known them both. We lost both Mr. Morgan and Mr. De Felice this year. This event was made possible by the American Legion Post 257 and M.V. Community Services.

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'd also like to thank them for the use of their hall for veteran activities.

I continue to write every month on veterans benefits for the 55 Plus Times, go to veterans' organizational meetings, and 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.

This is the last annual report that I will write as I'm retiring on October 1st. I want to thank all my veterans, their families, all the town treasurers, accountants, the Police and Fire Departments and anyone else who helped me do my job. A special thank you to Dukes County for hiring me and giving me a chance to help my fellow veterans. I couldn't have done it without you all! It has been an honor to know you

and work with you. I might not be in the office but I will still be involved in advocating for our veterans. Thank you!

Respectfully submitted,
Jo Ann Murphy
Director of Veterans Services