



WOMEN VETERANS' NETWORK

Nominate and Celebrate Outstanding Women Veterans at Sixth Annual Event

Do you know an outstanding woman veteran? If you think others should know about her extraordinary military and community service, please nominate her to be this year's Outstanding Woman Veteran. The Women Veterans' Network will be celebrating the service of all Massachusetts women veterans at the State House in Boston on Thursday, November 4th at 11 AM.

Outstanding Woman Veteran Award nominees must currently or previously have served active component, National Guard, or Reserve. Nominations must include: an overview of military service and awards; a summary of contributions to the military; and any personal sacrifices or hardships the woman endured in order to serve in the military. For an official nomination form, please visit www.mass.gov/veterans or call 617-210-5778.

Nominations are due no later than Friday, October 15th. Submit nominations by mail (Women Veterans' Network, 600 Washington St., Suite 1100, Boston, MA 02111), fax (617-210-5755), or email (dvswomen@vet.state.ma.us).

Conference for Women Veterans a Big Success

On Saturday, June 19, 2010, over 200 women veterans and advocates gathered at UMASS Medical School in Worcester for the second annual Conference for Women Veterans. Governor Deval Patrick and VA Assistant Secretary L. Tammy Duckworth were among the dignitaries who presented welcoming remarks. A Major in the Illinois Army National Guard, Duckworth served in Iraq and flew combat missions as a Black Hawk helicopter pilot. During a mission in 2004, a rocket-propelled grenade struck the helicopter she was co-piloting and as a result of the attack, Duckworth lost both of her legs and partial use of one arm. She received many decorations for her service in Iraq, including the Purple Heart and the Air Medal. Duckworth shared her personal story of recovery during the opening remarks. *(Continued page 4)*

Greetings from the Network



Members of the WVN Steering Committee with VA Secretary Duckworth at the Conference for Women Veterans in Worcester. Standing L-R: Caroline Delfino, Lauren Dever, Carolyn Mason Wholley, Kimberly Adams, Carlene Arambula, Cheryl Lussier Poppe, Diane Ramsay, Catherine Corkery, Marybeth O'Sullivan, Gayle Turner, Noreen Begley. Seated front row, Sec. L. Tammy Duckworth and Debra Freed.

It is hard to believe after a scorching summer that fall will soon be here, with events for women veterans happening each month! First, let's recap what has been happening since the spring newsletter.

Our Second Annual Conference for Women Veterans was held on June 19, 2010, at UMASS Medical School in Worcester, see article at left.

Our study on women veterans' memorials in Massachusetts continues. With your help we have identified several towns with memorials to women veterans. See page 6 for more information.

The Women Veterans' Network database now has reached 14,000 names. However, we still have work to do, so please help spread the word about the Network! Let us know if you need copies of "Do You Know a Woman Veteran?" materials to display in your communities so we can reach all the women veterans in Massachusetts and update them on benefits and services they have earned as well as many events of interest. *Cheryl Lussier Poppe, Director, Veterans' Programs & Services*

Governor Patrick Visits with Massachusetts National Guard Members in Iraq and Afghanistan

Governor Deval Patrick recently traveled overseas to Iraq and Afghanistan on a Department of Defense sponsored trip to meet with Massachusetts servicemen and women. He was joined by governors from other states. The three-day trip overseas brought Governor Patrick to Kuwait, Iraq, and Afghanistan where he met with Massachusetts servicemembers, injured servicemembers, and top military officials.



Governor Deval Patrick addresses the Women Veterans' Conference while (l-r front) Lt. Gov. Timothy Murray, Sec. L. Tammy Duckworth (VA), Sec. Tom Kelley (DVS), (l-r back) James Leary (UMASS), Sec. JudyAnn Bigby (EOHHS), Rep. Harold Naughton, and Cong. James McGovern listen. Photo courtesy of Eugena Ossi/Governor's Office.

Patrick-Murray Administration Completed Second Annual Two-Week Veterans Tour

Lieutenant Governor Timothy P. Murray led the second annual MASS Veterans Tour on behalf of the Patrick-Murray Administration in June. The tour promotes and publicizes a range of benefits and services available to veterans and military families. To officially kick off this year's tour, VA Assistant Secretary L. Tammy Duckworth joined Governor Deval L. Patrick, Lt. Governor Murray, and Congressman James McGovern at the second annual Conference for Women Veterans at UMASS Medical School in Worcester on Saturday, June 19, 2010.

Bonus Applications for Subsequent Deployments Now Online

If you deployed on a subsequent tour to Iraq or Afghanistan and received your first bonus, you may be interested to know that the paperwork for subsequent bonuses is now online. Download the forms at www.mass.gov/veterans or contact the Treasurer's office at 617-367-9333, Ext. 859.

Department of Defense Implements Retroactive Stop Loss Special Pay with October 21st Deadline

The Defense Department is providing retroactive stop loss special pay. Active, Reserve, and former servicemembers who had their enlistment extended or retirement suspended due to stop loss are eligible for this special pay, if they served on active duty between September 11, 2001 and September 30, 2009.

Applications for stop loss pay must be received before **October 21, 2010**. Servicemembers must provide documented proof they were stop loss with their claim. Family members of deceased servicemembers should contact the appropriate military service for assistance. Contact your branch of service online.

Army: <https://www.stoplosspay.army.mil>
or email RetroStopLossPay@conus.army.mil

Navy: Email NXAG_N132C@navy.mil

Marine Corps: <https://www.manpower.usmc.mil/stoploss> or or email stoploss@usmc.mil

Air Force: <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/stoploss/>

She Was Only a Girl

She played with dolls,
Learned to sew and cook,
She was only a girl.
Marriage and children,
What more could be expected?
She was only a girl.
Her country went to war,
Male chauvinists blocked her participation,
She was only a girl.
A career in the military
Was unheard of in the United States,
She was only a girl.
Given the opportunity to serve,
She experienced wounds, imprisonment and death,
Who would now say—
She was only a girl.
From the Battlegreen in Lexington
To space travel today,
She has taken her rightful place
In the military of our country.
She has come a long way,
Since, SHE WAS ONLY A GIRL.

— *By Tom Convery, Major, USAF, Retired (Medford, MA)*

Mark Your Calendars for Fall Events

September 25th will be Veterans' Appreciation Day in the Park at Houghtons' Pond in Milton from 11 AM to 3 PM. Join us for fishing, geocaching, letter-boxing, and other events. This joint effort between the Department of Veterans' Services and the Department of Conservation and Recreation is open to veterans of all abilities and their families. Admission is free but registration is required. Call 617-210-5761 or email cisaksen@massmail.state.ma.us to register.

Also on **September 25th**, the VA is hosting a special expo geared toward preparing for employment. There will be workshops on interviewing and resume writing by experts. The expo will be held at the Jamaica Plain VA from 10 AM to 2 PM. For more information visit www.boston.va.gov.

October 16th will be the 23rd Annual Governor's Advisory Committee on Women Veterans' Luncheon. There is still time to sign up for this event. See registration form on page 5.

November 4th at 11 AM will be the Women Are Veterans' Too! celebration at the State House. Don't forget to nominate an Outstanding Woman Veteran. For more information, call the Women Veterans' Network at 617-210-5781.

On **November 17th** the U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Women's Health is hosting an all-day conference in Boston called "Making Connections" for women who have served in the military. Speakers and panelists will focus on childcare and family, health and mental health, job and workplace training, compensation and housing, and success stories. For more information call 617-565-1988.

Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010

The Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 expands healthcare for women veterans and provides support to family members who care for wounded warriors. Detailed provisions of this legislation can be found in Public Law 111-163. Massachusetts congressional representatives have introduced legislation to expand support services for survivors of sexual assault. The VA has relaxed reporting requirements to support claims of PTSD.

Report on NASWVC Conference

The 11th Annual National Association of State Women Veterans' Coordinators (NASWVC) Conference was held in Portland, OR, May 24-27, 2010. Twenty-two state women veteran coordinators attended and shared information about their states' programs and participated in forums to get the most current information about women veterans. There were presentations on new legislation from Dr. Irene Trowell-Harris from the Center for Women Veterans, BG (Ret) Wilma Vaught on the Women in Military Service for America (WIMSA) Memorial, and on veterans' benefits. Several presentations focused on military sexual trauma (MST). The VA is recognizing that many MST cases go unreported. To that end, the VA has relaxed the stressor requirements for processing MST claims for PTSD.

Conference attendees paid tribute to those women who have lost their lives in service since September 11th in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. There are four Massachusetts women among those fallen. There was also a very moving tribute to Delilah Washburn, president of NASWVC since 2005, who passed away on April 25, 2010. Delilah left a legacy of selfless service on behalf of women veterans not only in her home state of Texas, but for women across the country. Photos of the conference are online at <http://picasaweb.google.com/NASWVC> and copies of the conference presentations are available at the WVN office. If you would like a copy of the presentations, email dvswomen@vet.state.ma.us.

Cheryl Lussier Poppe, Director, Veterans' Programs & Services

Department of Labor Grants

Massachusetts has been fortunate to receive Department of Labor Training Grants for homeless veterans and for training leading to green jobs. We are pleased that those grants have been renewed this year with Veterans Inc., Veterans' Northeast Outreach Center, and Father Bill's & MainSpring. In addition, two of our providers, Veterans Inc., and Soldier On, have received training grants specific to training homeless women veterans and families. This will be a great step toward assisting many veterans to obtain employment and housing and enhance their quality of life.

Woman in Uniform—SGT Liz Thompson



Upon returning from a deployment in early 2005, I began experiencing mild symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Within the first couple months, the symptoms were limited to severe anxiety both about driving and about returning to work with the Marines with whom I had deployed. Over time, I began to have sleep problems, flashbacks, and hallucinations. My friends and family recognized that I was different than I had been before—I was withdrawn, extremely irritable, and depressed. I got up and went to work, but found little joy in the things I did.

Two years after my return, I went to a movie with my mother. The best way to describe the experience is that I was flooded with every thought, emotion, and feeling that I had suppressed while I was in Iraq. I sobbed through the entire movie (the first time I remember crying in years), doing my best to hide it from my mother as I did not want her to worry. On the way home, I contacted one of my closest friends, a Marine veteran and said, “I need help.” I began regular (several times a week) Cognitive Processing Therapy with a psychiatrist from the VA. In addition I began talking with someone at the Vet Center. While I found it helpful to talk about what had happened and finally be able to feel emotion, I still felt like I was not in control of my emotions.

My psychiatrist suggested that I try yoga. I was very skeptical. After several months I decided to give it a try. Practicing yoga has made all of the difference in the world. I was able to regain control of myself and my emotions. Instead of letting anxiety, depression, or anger take control of me, I took control of them. Yoga helped me ground myself through poses, breathing, and meditation. As I continued my yoga practice, my sleep disturbances, anxiety, irritability, and desire to isolate myself decreased. I found myself feeling happy again.

—Liz Thompson of Watertown, MA



Conference for Women Veterans, *Cont'd from pg. 1*

Duckworth recounted that it was the special caring of another woman soldier that helped speed her healing. She also addressed the important changes underway at the VA for women veterans.

Throughout the day women attended workshops in finance, benefits, health care, social networking, and getting and preparing for employment. There was a panel discussion on military sexual trauma and a presentation on the Wounded Warrior Project. Over 37 agencies and veteran service providers were on hand to share information on terrific programs and services. Women had the opportunity to share photos from their careers, take professional portraits, and assemble a quilt. All in all, it was a great day.

Filing an MST Claim

The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) processes claims for conditions resulting from Military Sexual Trauma (MST). Like all disability claims, you will need to submit paperwork and records that indicate that MST occurred during your service and that your current difficulties resulted from these experiences. If you reported the assault to the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO) or the Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC) when it occurred using DD Form 2910 (Victim Reporting Preference Statement) or DD Form 2911 (Forensic Medical Report: Sexual Assault Examination) those documents can be used as corroborating evidence of a report of MST.

However, in recognition that it is often difficult to prove that the MST occurred, indirect indicators that the MST occurred are acceptable (e.g., changes in work performance at the time; request for a change in work assignment; increase in health care visits).

VA compensation may be awarded even if you did not report the assault or if your perpetrator was never prosecuted. There is no time limit to file a claim. If service connection is granted, you will be assigned a percentage of disability ranging from 0% to 100%.

The Women Veterans Coordinator at the VA's Boston Regional Office (call 800-827-1000) can help you through the claims process. You may want to have the free help of a veteran service officer from a national service organization in the claims process, such as the DAV, American Legion or AMVets.

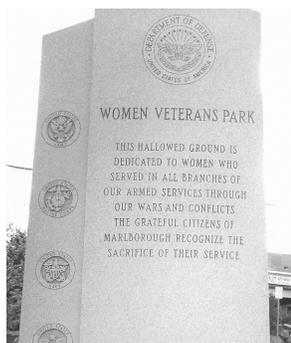
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Is There a Memorial to Women Veterans in Your Area?



The Women Veterans' Memorial in Marlboro on Route 85. Photo courtesy Lora Forman, Major, Medical Service Corp, US Army Reserves (Retired) OIF Veteran, Kuwait 2003.

We asked this question in our last newsletter and received a nice response so far with several submissions of locations of monuments, plaques or street signs named after women veterans or as a tribute to women veterans in the towns of Bedford, Fall River, Lynn, Marlboro, Marshfield, Medford, Peabody, and Salem. Many thanks to those who have sent photos or emails. We will publish the full list in the next newsletter. Meanwhile, if there are others we have missed, please let us know.

Helpful Websites for Women Veterans

Massachusetts Women Veterans' Network
www.mass.gov/womenveterans
Governor's Council to Address Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence
www.mass.gov/governor/dv
American Women Veterans
www.americanwomenveterans.org
Military One Source
www.militaryonesource.com
Nat'l Assoc. of State Women Veterans' Coordinators
www.naswvc.org
VA Center for Women Veterans
www.va.gov/womenvet
Social Security Administration
www.socialsecurity.gov
Grace After Fire
www.graceafterfire.org
Business and Professional Womens' Foundation
www.bpwfoundation.org
Department of Labor Womens' Bureau
www.dol.gov/wb
Post 9/11 GI Bill Questions
www.gibill.va.gov