



SERVING THOSE WHO SERVED

Department of Veterans Affairs Fiscal Year 2022-2023

At a Glance

Commissioner: Ronald P. Welch

Deputy Commissioner: Joseph Danao II

Established: 1986

Statutory Authority: C.G.S. Chapter 506 Sec. 27-102l - 27-140ii

Central Office: 287 West Street, Rocky Hill, CT 06067

Number of Full-Time Employees: 229

Recurring Operating Expenses 2022-2023: \$26,600,844.00

Agency Generated Revenue/Claims 2022-2023: \$29,299,454.00

Organizational Structure: Executive Branch State Agency. Office of the Commissioner oversees all aspects of the agency which has the four core function areas:

- 1) Skilled Nursing Home Care and Rehabilitation
- 2) Residential Programs & Services
- 3) Office of Advocacy & Assistance and
- 4) Cemetery and Memorial Services.

These four core functions are supported by additional agency divisions as follows: Projects & Operations, Facilities, Food Services, Human Resources, Fiscal and Procurement, Safety and Security, and Community Advocacy. Each division has a manager who reports directly to the Commissioner.

Additionally, Department of Veterans Affairs reports to a Board of Trustees (CGS Chapter 506, Sec. 27-102n), which is made up of eighteen voting members with diverse backgrounds in healthcare, business management, social services, or law with the common interest of helping veterans. Board of Trustees members also include the Veterans' Council Presidents for both the residential facility and healthcare center. Meetings of the Board of Trustees are open to the public and are held quarterly in the Commissioner's Conference Room at the Department of Veterans Affairs campus in Rocky Hill.



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History

Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs is the nation’s first and longest operating State Veterans Home. Benjamin Fitch, a Connecticut businessman, promised Civil War soldiers a place to call home when they returned from battle. Thus, the Fitch’s Home for Soldiers and their Orphans was opened in 1863 in Darien, CT. The Home was dedicated on July 4, 1864, and is currently incorporated into the Connecticut General Assembly.

In 1940, the home was moved to its current location in Rocky Hill, and with each succeeding period of war, new generations of Veterans presented unique needs, which required the development of a comprehensive range of services. To better provide for our Veterans, the Connecticut General Assembly created the Department of Veterans Affairs [DVA] in 1986. Today, the DVA serves Connecticut’s over 170,000 Veterans with four core services: (1) Skilled Nursing Care and Rehabilitation, (2) Residential and Rehabilitative Programs and Services, (3) Office of Advocacy and Assistance with Veteran Service Officers [VSOs] located in each Congressional District, and (4) Cemetery and Memorial Services with cemeteries in Darien, Rocky Hill, and the State Veterans Cemetery in Middletown.

Mission

“Serving Those Who Served”

Enhance the lives of Connecticut’s Veterans by providing:

1. Skilled nursing home care to eligible Veterans.
2. Provide residential services to eligible Veterans that offer a continuum of rehabilitative programs and services.
3. Advocacy and assistance to Veterans, their eligible spouses, and dependents in obtaining Veterans benefits to which they may be entitled under federal, state, and local laws.
4. Coordinating and assisting Veterans and their families with burial at the State Veterans Cemetery located in Middletown, CT.

Vision

Provide Connecticut’s Veterans and their dependents proactive, comprehensive, value-based services by cultivating an environment of compassion, collaboration, professionalism, engagement, and inclusion in partnership with Veteran service organizations, community partners, volunteers, Veteran supporters, and with local, state, and federal agencies.



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Statutory Responsibility

Office of the Commissioner

The Commissioner is appointed by the Governor and is responsible for the administration of the agency. The Commissioner is tasked with assisting Veterans, their spouses, and eligible family members in the preparation, presentation, proof and establishment of such claims, privileges, rights and other benefits accruing to them under federal, state and local laws; disseminating information and assisting eligible individuals to access these services and programs, which include but are not limited to, educational, training, employment and reemployment programs, healthcare and rehabilitation programs, housing services, home loans, and burial benefits.

The Commissioner is also responsible for outreach to Veterans and community agencies; liaisons with legislature, statutory and legislative authorities and Veteran service organizations; assessment of the efficiency of programs and evaluation and development of new initiatives to better serve the more than 170,000 Connecticut Veterans and their families.

The Commissioner also oversees development of agency-wide long-range plans; the review of all appeals and final decisions made by Veterans regarding adverse decisions affecting benefits to Veterans participating in state programs; the enforcement of all regulations and procedures enacted in accordance with the provisions of General Statutes Chapters 54 and 506.

Sgt. John L. Levitow Healthcare Center

The Healthcare Center is federally certified by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and is licensed by the CT Department of Public Health as a 125-bed skilled nursing facility. The Healthcare Center provides comprehensive person-centered care to Veterans requiring twenty-four-hour nursing home level of care. It is also certified by the Federal Veterans Administration as a State Veterans Home.

A Veteran requesting admission at the John L. Levitow Healthcare Center must be a resident of the State of Connecticut and have served honorably. Applications for admission are required in advance and contain both a financial and medical component. Applicants are screened in accordance with state and federal guidelines as well as Department of Veterans Affairs policies.

The Healthcare Center adheres to all federal regulations (Title 42: Public Health) and Connecticut state statutes (Chapter 368; Health Care Institutions).



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Residential Facility

The Residential Facility offers temporary, supportive living with programming designed to assist Connecticut Veterans successfully transition to independent community living. The Residential Facility utilizes a continuum of rehabilitation services, including social work, case management, recovery support, health clinic services, recreation, compensated work therapy, vocational training, education counseling, and job search assistance. The Residential Facility can currently accommodate 168 Veterans. The Residential Facility also maintains Patriot's Landing, five homes across the street from the main Department of Veterans Affairs [DVA] campus. Patriot's Landing offers temporary family housing for Veterans, their spouses, and children who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Additionally, in 2018 the DVA partnered with Easterseals Capital Region and Eastern Connecticut to establish Veterans Rally Point II on the DVA campus. Through a lease with the DVA, Easterseals provides free temporary housing for up to twelve Veterans on John Levitow Lane. Easterseals provides additional employment services to Veterans residing in the DVA Residential Facility. Likewise, Veterans living at Veterans Rally Point can purchase meals and dine in the main dining room at the Residential Facility.

The Office of Advocacy and Assistance

The Office of Advocacy and Assistance [OA&A] assists Veterans and their families in accessing federal, state, and local benefits and entitlements. OA&A staff are comprised of bi-lingual and female staff and Veterans Service Officers [VSOs] are accredited by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to assist Veterans and their families with claims filing for disability, compensation and or pension. Office of Advocacy and Assistance offices are in each of the five Congressional Districts including Fairfield, Waterbury, Milford, Newington, and Norwich.

Additionally, advocacy work is performed statewide through OA&A attendance at job, senior and health fairs and conferences. Veteran Service Officers conduct interviews in skilled nursing homes, Stand Down events, and in response to received inquiries and referrals.

Veterans Cemetery and Memorial Services

Under the Office of Advocacy and Assistance, the Department of Veterans Affairs operates a full-time Cemetery and Memorial Services Office at the Rocky Hill Campus. The DVA Veteran Cemetery System consists of three state cemeteries: the Connecticut State Veterans Cemetery, located in Middletown; Colonel Raymond F. Gates Cemetery, located in Rocky Hill; and Spring Grove Cemetery, located in Darien, which closed for interments in 1980 due to capacity. The State Veterans Cemetery in Middletown is open for burials six days a week and contains over 16,000 remains of Connecticut Veterans and their spouses and eligible dependents. The Colonel Raymond F. Gates Cemetery is reserved for the burials of Veterans residing at the DVA Residential Facility and Healthcare Center.



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The DVA is responsible for the care, maintenance, and development of all three cemeteries, including installation of headstones. Cemetery and Memorial Services is responsible for consultation and assistance to families, including coordination of burial benefits, burial plot coordination, ordering headstone and foot markers, interment ceremonies, processing of federal reimbursement payments, and coordination of memorial ceremonies.

Public Service

Sgt. John L. Levitow Healthcare Center

The Healthcare Center provides comprehensive skilled care to Veterans requiring twenty-four-hour nursing care. A plan of care is developed and continually updated throughout the Veteran's stay to ensure individualized services are in place to assist a Veteran in reaching his or her maximum potential. The focus is on person-centered care whereby a Veteran's preferences are honored and reflected in the plan of care.

Under the direction of the Administrator, the Healthcare Center offers progressive programming encompassing medical, social, spiritual, recreational, rehabilitative, hospice, palliative, and end-of-life services in a Veteran-centric atmosphere.

The Healthcare Center treats a wide array of diagnoses including, but not limited to, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease [COPD], Congestive Heart Failure [CHF], End Stage Renal Disease, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Accident [CVA], Parkinson's Disease and dementia, including Alzheimer's Disease. The Healthcare Center's medical team consists of Board-Certified Physicians and Advanced Practice Registered Nurses who co-manage treatment plans with the Federal Veterans Affairs [VA] where specialty care is offered for Veterans who present with complex conditions.

The Rehabilitation Program offers physical, speech, and occupational therapy where Veterans can increase strengthening and physical function under the supervision of professionals. The Rehabilitation Program contributes to increased quality in overall mental health and well-being. Included in the department is also a team of Therapeutic Recreational Therapists, who provide an array of leisure activities greatly enhancing daily life for Veterans. The gym and recreational areas are well equipped and feature large windows showcasing picturesque Department of Veterans Affairs campus. The end-of-life program provides special medical, psychological and spiritual care to the terminally ill and their loved ones. Pain management, special nursing visits, alternative therapies and volunteer companions are provided to comfort the Veteran at end of his or her life, and specialized counseling services are offered to loved ones.



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Residential Facility Programs and Services

For the 2022-2023 fiscal year, thirty-five (35) Veteran Residents were admitted, and eleven (11) Veteran Residents successfully transitioned back to the community. The average daily census for 2022-2023 was 108 for the Residential Facility and 4 families for Patriot's Landing.

Vocational Department:

During the 2022-2023 fiscal year Veteran Residents have been active in seeking and obtaining employment. Veteran Residents were able to attend in-person educational programs at local community colleges, universities, and private training organizations. One Veteran completed his bachelor's degree in communications at Wesleyan University.

The Vocational Department continues to provide support and guidance to the Veterans to achieve his or her educational and vocational goals. The Vocational Department continues to make referrals for Veterans to receive additional employment readiness and job search assistance from our partners at the CT Department of Labor. Support and guidance were also provided to gainfully employed Veterans to assist in employment retention. During the 2022-2023 fiscal year, three (3) Veterans transitioned to independent community living with employment. Likewise, ten (10) Veteran Residents were employed either full or part time in the community.

Veterans at the Residential Facility continue to have the opportunity to participate in the Veteran Vocational & Therapeutic Program. The Veteran Vocational & Therapeutic Program [VVTP] had thirty (30) participants for the 2022- 2023 fiscal year. The VVTP is designed to address the needs of the diverse Veteran population at the Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs [DVA]. The vocational component offers individualized and supportive employment services to Veterans, improve work skills, and assist Veterans in transitioning to independent community living. The therapeutic component is intended for Veterans not seeking gainful employment, thus providing an opportunity to engage in purposeful activity for social and therapeutic purposes as they plan to transition to independent living. Over the past fiscal year four (4) Veterans who have participated in the VVTP have transitioned to community living.

Substance Use Treatment/Recovery Support:

Through a Memorandum of Understanding between Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs and CT Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services [DMHAS], substance use treatment and recovery support continue to be provided to Veterans residing at the Residential Facility. The Veteran's Recovery Center provides outpatient programming and services to DVA Veterans as well as to CT Veterans and National Guard members in the community. The program is staffed by a Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor [LADC]. Sixteen (16) Veteran Residents received support from the LADC during Fiscal Year 2022-2023.



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Patriots' Landing Temporary Housing Program (Veteran Families):

Patriots' Landing has been in operation since 2014 and offers temporary housing, up to two years, to Veterans and their families who are homeless or at risk for homelessness. The Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs provides physical housing for up to 5 (five) Veteran families. All houses come fully furnished, and maintenance and utility costs are covered by the agency. Veteran families and Department of Veterans Affairs residential staff work collaboratively with case managers provided through a Memorandum of Agreement with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services [DMHAS]. Case management services ensures that each Veteran family obtains the necessary benefits and services needed to successfully transition to permanent housing. For the 2022-2023 fiscal year, there were four (4) transitions to independent living and five (5) admissions to the program with an average occupancy rate of 87.41%.

Office of Advocacy and Assistance

The Office of Advocacy and Assistance [OA&A] is responsible for assisting Veterans and their families in accessing federal, state, and local benefits and entitlements. Veterans Service Officers [VSOs], accredited by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, assist Veterans and their families with documentation and filing of claims for disability, compensation and/or pension.

In Fiscal Year 2022-2023, the OA&A team returned to full in-office services while maintaining the capability to provide services remotely. The office responded to over 32,000 requests for assistance from Veterans in 2023. The CT Department of Veterans Affairs, as an accredited Veterans Service Organization, formally represented over 7,600 Veterans across the state. This representation yields over \$109,000,000.00 annually in disability, pension, and other benefit payments to Connecticut Veterans.

During Fiscal Year 2022-2023, OA&A continued to review the eligibility status of Veterans and/or dependents of Veterans across 344 of the state's skilled nursing homes and assisted living facilities. The office conducted 566 visits to nursing homes and assisted living facilities. These benefits have provided a direct savings to the state where the clients are Medicaid recipients, and in other cases, served to delay the time when clients may be forced to rely on state funded services.

Additionally, OA&A manages the Connecticut Wartime Service Medals and Registry program and awarded 1,325 medals in Fiscal Year 2022-2023, bringing the total number of Wartime Service Medals awarded to eligible Veterans since 2006 to over 41,000 recipients.

Likewise, OA&A manages the Veterans Identity on the CT Driver's License Program. The office is responsible for verifying the service of the CT Veteran and transmitting that information to the CT Department of Motor Vehicles with 1,612 applications processed during this period. Since the



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inception of the program in January 2013, more than 15,000 applications have been processed by OA&A.

Moreover, OA&A provides training for all 169 town, city, and municipal Veteran Representatives. This program provides a single source point of contact in the Veteran's hometown to act as a liaison for Veteran's benefits and services. To date, more than 148 towns have appointed a Veteran Representative and over 250 volunteers have completed a benefits training seminar since the training was first offered in October 2012. The annual municipal Veteran Representative training was held on June 9, 2023, with over 75 CT municipalities in attendance.

OA&A provides certification of Veteran owned micro-businesses. In Fiscal Year 2022-2023, the office certified 18 businesses.

The Connecticut Veterans INFO line (1-866-9CT-VETS) continues to receive an average of 30 calls per day. This number provides Veterans an easy access to general benefit information, assistance with requesting military records, referrals to other state agencies, and helpful information on the location and availability of the Congressional District Offices.

Cemetery and Memorial Services Office

The State Veterans Cemetery in Middletown is open for burials six days a week and contains over 16,000 remains of Connecticut Veterans and eligible dependents. The Colonel Raymond Gates Cemetery has more than 1600 Veterans interred on its grounds. The Spring Grove Cemetery closed for interments in 1980.

During Fiscal Year 2022–2023, 744 interments were performed at Connecticut State Veterans Cemeteries for Veterans and/or eligible dependents.

Improvements/Achievements for Fiscal Year 2022-2023

Agency Wide

- On 08/31/2022 the Department of Veterans Affairs [DVA] held a ribbon cutting and dedication of the new Veterans Resource Support Center [VRSC] housed on the DVA Rocky Hill Campus. The VRSC, DVA Building #50, was listed for closure and demolition but is now home to several Veteran support organizations, including Department of CT American Legion Auxiliary, Department of CT Veteran of Foreign Wars, CT APEX, and Forever in My Heart. It is also home to DVA and Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services offices.



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- Public Act 23-207 directs Department of Veterans Affairs, within existing appropriations [\$5,000,000.00] to renovate, convert, rehabilitate vacant structures with the purpose of housing homeless or housing insecure Veterans.
- Public Act 23-34 increases the minimum required number of Veteran Service Officers [VSOs] from 6 to 8, and total minimum Office of Advocacy and Assistance staff from 8 to 10.

Sgt. John L. Levitow Healthcare Center

- During fiscal year 2022-2023, the Healthcare Center’s [HCC] clinical focus has been de-prescribing of medication, specifically the gradual dose reduction of psychotropic medications. Through person-centered care planning with input from the Veteran, Veteran’s family, and responsible party, attending physicians, psychiatrist, and pharmacist, the current percentage of individuals residing at the HCC and receiving antipsychotic medications is 22%, which is below the CT average of 23.7%. Similarly, Veteran use of hypnotic medication at the HCC is 0% compared to the CT average of 5.3%. Additionally, the HCC’s use of anti-depressant medication among Veterans is 48.4%, which is below the CT average of 54.5%.
- The HCC has partnered with the University of CT [UCONN] Dental School. Dentists and dental residents visit the HCC weekly to provide dental services to Veterans. Many HCC Veterans are mobility challenged, so having dental services provided in-house is optimal. The dental program is made possible by a grant that UCONN received to provide dental services to Veterans.
- The HCC’s Healing Garden had the addition of an enclosed gazebo as well as a small pavilion that allows for outdoor time under the shade. Additionally, the HCC, with support from volunteers, created a successful butterfly garden habitat with the Veterans’ goal of preserving the Monarch butterfly population.

Residential Facility and Programs and Services

- Upgraded all computers in the VET Center, a shared technology space for Veterans. The VET Center contains six computers and a printer, all with internet access. Wi-Fi is available for personal laptops, tablets, and cell phones. Computers were also added to the shared library space.
- Old canteen area refurbished as an Art Studio.
- The “do-it-yourself” Garage, Building #7, was renovated to provide improved spaces for program participants to work on their own vehicles.



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Office of Advocacy and Assistance

- Office of Advocacy and Assistance [OA&A] opened a new District Office at the Bigelow Center for Senior Activities in Fairfield, CT.
- 1325 Connecticut Veterans Wartime Service Medals were issued during Fiscal Year 2022-2023.

Veterans Cemetery and Memorial Services

- Burial Services Office collected \$275,994.00 in federal reimbursement burial allowances for the General Fund. Also, installation payments for over 1,628 federal Veteran headstones/foot markers were processed totaling \$183,174.77.

Safety and Security Division

- Provided in-person Active Shooter training to Department of Veterans Affairs [DVA] employees through Connecticut State Police.
- Assisted in completing N95 fit-testing requirements for DVA employees.
- Hired (1) Part-Time Officer, (3) Full-Time Officers, and reclassified one Part-Time Officer to a Full-Time Officer.
- Promoted one employee from Secretary 1 to Secretary 2.
- Conducted approximately 53 criminal background checks for incoming employees.
- Safety Program Officer has performed pre-event Fire & Life Safety inspections, monitored construction and maintenance project safety, conducted Fire & Life Safety surveys across the DVA campus, and revised several safety policies, attended inspections, testing and maintenance trainings, and assisted in the CT Long Term Care-Mutual Aid Plan full-scale exercise drill.
- Supported multiple law enforcement trainings on the DVA campus, including federal (FBI, Homeland Security, US Marshalls), state, and local law enforcement agencies. These trainings included SWAT teams, K9 units, hostage negotiations, state and local police academies, and State Police Drone Unit.



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Projects and Operations Management Division

The Department Projects and Operations Division oversees emergency management, facilities maintenance, building services, transportation, environmental management, strategic planning, information technology, and energy efficiency functions for the agency. The division maintains collective responsibility for three state Veteran cemeteries and a 92-acre campus with approximately 800,000 square feet of facilities. Projects and Operations Management synchronizes and coordinates these functions to support the DVA’s mission and core functions.

- Management of emergency response for DVA agency operations and Veteran residential environments through continuation of weekly COVID-19 Mitigation Huddles on a virtual platform. Huddles focus on infection control procedures, logistics and the operational environment relative to any adverse events.
- Completed annual update to the Emergency Preparedness Program and Plan covering community risks to the operating environment.
- Utilizing approximately \$7.5 million in funding from the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection’s “Lead by Example” program, the DVA started several projects to improve energy efficiency, lower consumption and lower emissions of Greenhouse Gases. Projects include steam trap valve replacement (completed), interior lighting upgrades in all buildings (ongoing), replacement of central boilers (ongoing), exterior lighting upgrades (ongoing), and solar panel installation (ongoing).
- Security and Safety projects include upgrade of all camera systems (ongoing), new front entrance and gates (ongoing), installation of mass notification system (ongoing), new call bell system at the Healthcare Center (ongoing), new and repaired roofs as applicable (ongoing), water tower repairs (ongoing).
- Completed capital project plans include:
 - Facility capitalization 5–year master plan
 - Cemetery Services master plan
 - Information technology investment strategy plan
 - Facility condition audit of all buildings

Information Reported as Required by State Statute

Veterans requesting support and services from the Department of Veterans Affairs [DVA] must be a Veteran, discharged from the military with other than a dishonorable discharge, and be a current resident of the State of Connecticut. Application for admission may be requested in advance. Information detailing admission requirements are available on our website: www.portal.ct.gov/DVA.



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Human Resources

The Human Resources (HR) Department is comprised of a Human Resources Business Partner and Human Resources Generalist assigned to the Department of Veterans Affairs from the Department of Administrative Services. The HR Department assists the agency and its employees by providing functions, including recruitment, staffing and staff transactions such as management of all position actions in CORE-CT. The HR Department in conjunction with Labor Relations manages all disciplines, grievances and investigations and provides guidance to managers and supervisors regarding employee relations. The HR Department is also responsible for reviewing requests for accommodations/ergonomic assessments through the Americans with Disabilities Act accommodations.

Affirmative Action

The Department of Veterans Affairs [DVA] Affirmative Action Plan was approved by the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities [CHRO] for the plan year November 1, 2021 through October 2022 and was approved for biennial filing November 1, 2022 through October 2024. The DVA's hiring goals were achieved in all categories except for Professionals and Technicians category at 50% attainment. The DVA continues to monitor and improve its practices in employment and giving special consideration to affirmative action goal attainment. Additionally, included in this two-year plan is an established goal to develop training curriculum for leaders at all levels to achieve enhanced and standardized methods of supervising staff along the continuum of employment. Human Resources in conjunction with Labor Relations completed a training specific to conducting service ratings, discipline, and overall leadership. Additional trainings will be conducted through this two-year window to include recruitment, leadership, etc.

Moreover, the Department of Veterans Affairs required all staff to participate in Domestic Violence training which was required training through LinkedIn Learning by June 30, 2023. Domestic Violence was added as another protected class with the CHRO.

DVA staff have taken advantage of the opportunity for learning through the LinkedIn Learning portal and continue utilize it regularly. DVA staff have continued to register for Inservice Training with the community colleges throughout Connecticut with courses relevant to their position.

Fiscal Updates

Fiscal Services division at the Department of Veterans Affairs [DVA] supports each interagency department by prioritizing expenditures to conservatively manage appropriated resources while meeting the challenges of supply chain shortages and rising costs. The DVA's Fiscal Year 2023 Other Expenses (OE) increased 1% and Personnel Services (PS) increased 14% compared to Fiscal Year 2022 expenditures. The department closed Fiscal Year 2023 balanced within its appropriated funding resources. Fiscal Services will continue to apply strategic methodologies using a conservative approach



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to manage resources while fulfilling the core mission of “Serving Those Who Served” innovatively and responsibly.

Special Events

Gold Star Families Memorial Auditorium Dedication:

On Tuesday, November 15, 2022, Department of Veterans Affairs hosted a dedication and ribbon cutting ceremony to name the newly renovated campus auditorium as the “Connecticut Gold Star Families Memorial Auditorium.” Participating in the ceremony were Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz and Connecticut Gold Star Moms Helen Keiser-Pederson and Lessa Philippon. Among the more than 100 in attendance were many Gold Star Families, local and statewide Veteran Service Organization members as well as Rocky Hill officials, including Mayor Lisa Marotta.

Wreaths Across America:

The Department hosted Wreaths Across America ceremonies at the State Veterans Cemetery in Middletown and the Colonel Gates Veterans Cemetery in Rocky Hill on Saturday, December 17, 2022. More than 500 volunteers placed nearly 12,000 wreaths at the graves of our Veterans. Special thanks to the Cadets of the Civil Air Patrol CT Wing for serving as the color guard and volunteers at the Middletown ceremony, and to US Senator Richard Blumenthal and keynote speaker Brigadier General (Ret) John Lawlor for their inspirational remarks about Remembering and Honoring our Veterans and teaching the next generation about the meaning of service and sacrifice to preserve our freedoms and democracy.

Veterans Hall of Fame:

On 01/19/2023 the Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs [DVA] in partnership with the CT Military Department and the Office of Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz inducted 12 Veterans into the Connecticut Veterans Hall of Fame. Induction into the Hall of Fame recognizes the impact and inspirational work Veterans have contributed to their communities after his or her military service.

Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans:

On 03/30/2023 the DVA hosted the State's official Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans ceremony on the 50th anniversary of the withdrawal of all U.S. ground combat forces from Vietnam. Former State Representative and Vietnam Veteran Ted Graziani was instrumental in passing the law establishing this official recognition of our Vietnam Veterans who were mistreated when they came home from Vietnam fighting in a war they had no control over. Joining former DVA Commissioner Thomas Saadi in delivering remarks honoring our Vietnam Veterans were Governor Ned Lamont, Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz, Comptroller Sean Scanlon, Secretary of State Stephanie Thomas and BG Ralph Hedenberg.



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Stand Down 2023:

Stand Down is the Department of Veterans Affairs [DVA] signature event bringing together federal and state agencies, community providers, Veteran service organizations providing medical screenings, employment and education assistance, legal and motor vehicle help, Veterans' benefits information, and housing referrals. Stand Down 2023 will be the fourth year in a row that the event is held across five regional locations: Bridgeport, Bristol, Danbury, Rocky Hill, and Norwich. The event in 2022 was widely attended with more than 1000 Veterans from across CT attending. Information on Stand Down 2023 can be found on the DVA website: [Veterans Stand Down 2023 \(ct.gov\)](https://www.dva.gov/stand-down).

Vietnam and Korean Veteran Ceremonies:

In conjunction with the Lieutenant Governor's Office, the Department of Veterans Affairs [DVA] has been traveling throughout the state honoring Vietnam and Korean Veterans weekly. Vietnam and Korean Veterans are presented with a pin from the DVA and a certificate from Lt. Governor Bysiewicz. During Fiscal Year 2022–2023, the Department of Veterans Affairs participated in twenty-one events with the L. Governor's Office.