



Veterans Journal

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A virtual place to go for returning vets

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The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has launched its new Returning Veterans Web site, at www.oefoif.va.gov, to welcome home veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts with a social Web site focusing on their needs and questions.

The VA has opened its doors — virtually — to these veterans to let them know what they can expect when they return to a post-war reality. The Web site features videos, veteran's stories and a blog where veterans are encouraged to post feedback.

The site also will restructure the traditional index of benefits format found on other VA pages into question-based, categorized and easily navigated links by topic. This will allow veterans to find benefits of interest easily and discover related benefits as they explore.

In a related move, the proposed VA budget for the next fiscal year will provide more post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury services to combat veterans and represents the largest single-year increase in VA funding in three decades. More PTSD information and resources are available online at www.military.com/news/stories/ptsd-news.html.

The proposed VA budget will also invest in better technology for VA; provide greater benefits to veterans who are medically retired from service; aid homelessness veterans; ensure the timely adoption of new, comprehensive education benefits that veterans earn through their military service; and fund a pilot program for not-for-profit groups to ensure that veterans at risk of losing their homes have a roof over their heads.

Hendricken to honor Vietnam War vets

Hendricken High School will host its semi-annual program honoring Vietnam War veterans on May 12 at 7 p.m. in the school's theater. The event will focus primarily on the two Rhode Island Army National Guard units — the 107th Signal Company and elements of the 115th Military Police Company, which were activated and deployed to Vietnam. Special recognition will be given to Sgt. Ernest Perry Jr., a member of the 107th Signal Company, who lost his life in service to his country in Vietnam.

The traditional reading of the names of the 229 fallen heroes from Rhode Island who were lost in the Vietnam conflict will occur and all veteran attendees will be honored for their service to our country. The keynote speaker will be Maj. Gen. Robert Bray, Adjutant General of the Rhode Island National Guard. A light reception will follow the program.

Interested attendees should call Jan O'Donnell at Hendricken at (401) 739-3450, or send e-mail to jan@hendricken.com no later than May 5.

U.S. Armed Forces to be saluted in free concert

"An Armed Forces Salute," a free concert performance by The Lafayette Band of North Kingstown on May 9 at the North Kingstown High School auditorium at 150 Fairway Drive, will be an evening of patriotic music and a tribute to active duty, Reserve and National Guard Members, veterans and their families. All Rhode Islanders are welcome to attend.

The concert, scheduled one week before Armed Forces Day, will include American popular and patriotic music with a special guest performance by The Hummingbird Trio. The trio specializes in music from the 1930s to the present day and takes inspiration from groups like The Andrew Sisters, The Supremes and The Manhattan Transfer.

The R.I. Army and Air National Guard, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, the Pawtuxet Rangers of the R.I. Militia, the American Legion and VFW, and the Naval Sea Cadets will participate in opening flag ceremonies and military memorial ceremonies during the concert. Additionally, there will be contemporary and historical military equipment and uniforms on display by the National Guard, Saratoga and Seabee museums, and the Pawtuxet Valley Historical Society. This concert is made possible with a grant from the North Kingstown Arts Council and Centreville Bank. The Lafayette Band of North Kingstown is a nonprofit community concert band more than 125 years old and one of the oldest bands in continuous existence in Rhode Island. The band has 45 members from 13 towns and cities. For more information, visit the band's Web site at www.lafayette-band.com/index.php.

- Governor's Veterans' Affairs Advisory Council meets Monday at 1 p.m., at the Rhode Island Veterans Home, south building conference room, 480 Metacom Ave., Bristol.
- American Legion Balfour-Cole Post 64, 170 Pleasant View Ave., Smithfield, will meet Wednesday at 7:30 p.m.
- Jewish War Veterans of the USA Post 23 will meet on Thursday at 11 a.m., for officer elections with lunch to follow at 1 p.m. at Rhodes Place, Broad Street, Cranston; reservations must be made by Monday by calling Steve at (401) 463-5159.
- Military Order of the Purple Heart, Oliver Hazard Perry Chapter 1812, will meet Thursday at VFW Post 4487, in Middletown, at 2 p.m.
- Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary Department President Rosemary Williams will hold a council of administration dinner meeting on Thursday at the Atwood Grill, 1413 Atwood Ave., Johnston, at 7 p.m., in honor of national council member Peggy Azzinaro.

- Pawtucket Veterans Council will install officers on Sunday at Gatchell VFW Post 306, 171 Fountain St., Pawtucket, starting with a social hour at 1 p.m. followed by dinner; to make reservations, call Moe at (401) 723-4365 or Roland at (401) 431-0024.

Send veterans' news and feature items to George W. Reilly at VeteransColumn@verizon.net, or write to The Veterans Journal Column at The Providence Journal, 75 Fountain St., Providence, RI 02902.