

HAWAII VETERAN

Vol. 15, No. 1 State of Hawaii Office of Veterans Services July 2011

Memorial Day with special guest Tammy Duckworth

We would like to welcome our new Gov. Neil Abercrombie and our new Adj. Gen. Maj. Gen. Darryll Wong to the 2011 Memorial Day Ceremony. The Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery Memorial Day Ceremony was held on May 30, 2011 at Memorial Plaza. Musical prelude, interlude and service song medley performed by the 111th Army Band. All the service members enjoyed hearing a part of their service song. All stood so proud and even sang along.

A majestic Conch Shell presentation was presented by Kahu Manu Mook. An Oli (Hawaiian) chant was performed by Soo Whan Cullen. Accompanying her with a hula performance was the New Hope-Kailua Dance Team.

Spanaway Lake High School Choir was a new addition to our Memorial Day Ceremony. The choir performed the National Anthem and God Bless America. Tomoko Hotema was a new singer that we added to our line-up, she



Adj. Gen. Wong, Asst. Sec. Duckworth and Gov. Abercrombie placed the wreath upon Memorial Plaza

sang Hawai'i Pono'i.

Adj. Gen. Wong provided welcome remarks. Asst. Sec. of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs for the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs L. Tammy Duckworth was our distinguished guest speaker. Duckworth recently resigned from her position as Asst. Sec.

Duckworth touched each and every veteran sitting in the crowd with her inspiring words. "...war veterans here. I also want to thank you for paving the way for my generation of veterans. You are my buddies. We may not have served in the same conflict, or even the same decade, and maybe the experiences on the ground or in the air, or on the sea weren't really close to being the same, but we all wore the uniform and did our jobs with everything we had." We would like to thank Duckworth for her words of courage and her remarks about remembering those who have gone before her. Duckworth has many ties to Hawaii. She was a McKinley High School and Univ. Of Hawaii graduate. We were honored that she agreed to speak to Hawaii's veterans.

After Gov. Abercrombie delivered the Memorial Day address, together he, Maj. Gen. Wong and Duckworth placed a wreath upon Memorial Plaza to pay tribute to our fallen heroes. A rifle salute was performed by the Hawaii Air National Guard's Honor Guard. The



Our new OVS Dir. Greg Jackson walking with Asst. Sec. Tammy Duckworth

Photos by Jayme Sato

U.S. Coast Guard Air Station Barber's Point provided a MH-65C Dolphin Helicopter flyover. The red helicopter shown bright in the sky and hovered briefly in tribute over Memorial Plaza for a moment before flying over the mountains.

We would like to thank all those involved in putting together this year's Memorial Day ceremony. Especially the Girl Scouts of America and all the Active Duty Military volunteers for placing a lei and American flag at each headstone. Without their help, we would not have been able to honor each and every veteran's grave with a lei and American flag.

Hilo Office of Veterans Services has moved to its new location to better serve you. The new address is: 1304 Kekuanaoa St., Suite L-102 Hilo, HI 96720-4568 Ph: (808) 933-0316



Director's Message

Greg Jackson

Director State Office of Veterans Services

Aloha and thank you for taking the time to read the latest edition of our Hawaii Veteran newsletter.

Recognizing how I appreciate knowing about other people, I take this moment to offer you a little of my own background. I first enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1991 at 17-years old. I was stationed with the 25th Infantry Division (Light). I met my future wife while at Schofield Barracks and have called Hawaii home ever since. I separated from the active component in 1995 to go to college on the Montgomery GI Bill. Being only the second person in my family with a 4-year degree (my sister is the first and also went to school on the GI Bill) I have always felt the need to give back. During college I continued my service with the National Guard in Massachusetts until 1999, when I separated to focus entirely on my studies. I moved back to Hawaii in 2002, but after the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, I decided to re-enter active duty as a Judge Advocate with the Air Force. I deployed in 2007 to Baghdad Iraq and in 2010 I separated from the active component a second time to return to Hawaii with my wife Allison and my two children Lexie and Danny. I am blessed to have had their love and support over the years. I continue to serve as an Army Reserve Judge Advocate. I have a long family history of military service, and I am humbled by this opportunity to give back to every one of you who have served before and who continue to serve. Quite simply I am proud and honored to serve my country and my fellow veterans.

In times of transitions such as this, I find it useful to reflect on an organiza-

tion's core functions. As many of you know, the State of Office of Veterans Services (OVS) operates as the central point of contact in Hawaii government for policies and programs relating to Hawaii veterans, their dependents and/or survivors. Our services are available to all eligible veterans, reservists, National Guard members, active duty military and their dependents, including step children. The office serves as an intermediary between the Dept. of Veterans Affairs (VA) and veterans and as a liaison between the Governor and veterans organizations.

Formed in 1988, the OVS develops and manages numerous veterans programs. OVS operates as a clearing house for complaints regarding services for veterans. Although this is often listed as the last of OVS' core functions, honest criticism serves as an essential first step toward genuine improvement of services. Our goal is to assist in whatever way possible to improve and maximize services, benefits and entitlements for veterans their families and/or survivors.

Advocacy is a primary service of the OVS. In my short time with OVS, I have seen our veteran benefits counselors perform some amazing advocacy. They are absolute specialists at maximizing their clients' entitlements-- what the VA calls a "fully developed" claim. OVS may take action on behalf of veterans, their families, dependents and survivors to secure appropriate rights, benefits and services. This may include receiving, investigating and resolving

disputes or complaints of any nature. Oftentimes this is for a veteran who doesn't even know he or she qualifies before talking with OVS. I encourage anyone to contact our offices if they have ever served in the military or if you have a question about veteran services, benefits or entitlements.

Additionally, as most already know, we have eight state veterans cemeteries in Hawaii. OVS oversees maintenance on all of these cemeteries to ensure compliance with VA and state guidelines. OVS holds direct responsibility over operation and maintenance of the Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery in Kaneohe. The individual counties provide direct operations and maintenance for the neighbor island cemeteries. This arm of OVS receives federal support in two ways: cemetery improvement grants and individual burial allowances. Most of all, this arm demonstrates in a powerful way the commitment from all levels of government to provide dignified and respectable resting places for our deceased veterans and eligible family members.

Finally, this office conducts outreach and community education. Our representatives appear at transition assistance briefings, Reservist and National Guard Yellow Ribbon events, community meetings, speaking engagements, rural outreach, veterans' council meetings and more. Please contact us if you or anyone you know has an event you believe OVS should attend.

The OVS "assumes the initiative" with other agencies for coordinating services that are currently available to our veterans. We will cooperate and partner with federal departments and other agencies which have responsibility for administering the rights and benefits granted to veterans, their families and their dependents. We are dedicated to the betterment of veterans, and we are proud to serve those who have served.



Dir. Jackson welcomed the 800 guests who attended the HSVC Memorial Day Ceremony

Update your information for the Hawaii Veteran Newsletter

Aloha Kakou.

The Office of Veterans Services needs you. Over the years, we've always maintained the strictest fiscal discipline and because of this we can justify getting even more resources to spend just as wisely. OVS enjoys this reputation often directly because of the generosity of the veterans who we exist to serve.

Improvise Adapt and Overcome. Our veterans have given everything from man-hours and cash donations to furniture and computers. This newsletter, however, operates entirely on state funding. We need to find efficiencies in that budget to survive these difficult times. OVS needs to know if this newsletter is reaching you correctly, but we

have no budget for return service mailing. Please kindly fill out and return the form below, if we can improve how this newsletter is delivered to you or if your delivery needs to be cancelled. Your single stamp will save us dollars going forward. Mahalo nui loa, and a hui ho.

Cut out and mail responses in a stamped envelope to:

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ATTN: HI VETERAN NEWSLETTER
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Honolulu, HI 96819-1522

Or email us at:
ovs@ovs.hawaii.gov

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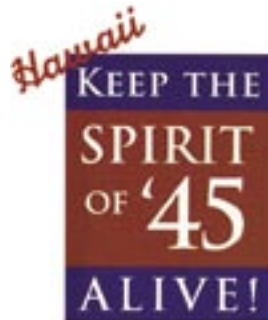
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HAWAII KEEP THE SPIRIT OF '45 ALIVE!

On Aug. 13, 2011, at 7:00 p.m. Keep The Spirit Of '45 Alive will host a celebration concert at the Waikiki Shell in honor of our WWII veterans. The goal of Keep The Spirit Of '45 Alive is to establish an annual day of remembrance to remind America of the values and accomplishments of these outstanding Americans. The concert features legendary singer Lee Greenwood, a host of local entertainers, the 111th Army Band, plus special commemorative ceremonies and video!



World War II Veterans receive free tickets, valet and special guest access by contacting organizers directly through www.HawaiiSpiritof45.wordpress.com. Their family members receive \$10 ticket discounts. Deadline: Aug. 1, 2011. General tickets: \$25 and \$35 on sale at Blaisdell Box Office and Ticketmaster outlets, www.ticketmaster.com or charge by phone 1-800-745-3000

Yellow Ribbon Grants for UH Manoa Graduate Students

On May 23, 2011, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) pledged fifteen \$5,000 Yellow Ribbon grants to the University Of Hawaii (UH) for eligible veteran graduate students. These grants represent an exciting development for Hawaii veterans seeking to better themselves through education. And hopefully this marks the start of a trend that continues well into Hawaii's future.

able under the new Post 9/11 GI Bill. It bridges the gap between a veteran's GI Bill award and the cost of tuition when that cost is greater. At a public institution like UH, this happens where the veteran pursues a more costly degree, such as a graduate degree as an out of state student. Now, for 15 eligible veterans this cost should no longer be a barrier to pursuing their educational dreams.

veteran participation in graduate programs, but the grants will enrich UH's student body with mature and experienced veterans. What is most significant about these grants is that UH needed to pledge 50% of the amount before the VA would ever put UH on the grant list. In other words UH and the VA become partners in ensuring Hawaii's veterans will have the opportunities and rewards they deserve for their services while in the military.

The Yellow Ribbon grant, is avail-

Not only will these grants encourage

National Veterans Golden Age Games held in Hawaii



Volunteers show veterans the “aloha spirit.” Surf and canoe clubs gave a few lucky veterans a ride around the ocean in outrigger canoes.

The National Veterans Golden Age Games “Patriots in Paradise” were held on May 26-31, 2011 in Honolulu. The Games celebrated their 25th year offering sports and recreational competitive events for veterans 55 years and older. The Dept. of Veterans Affairs (VA), Veterans Canteen Service (VCS) and Help Hospitalized Veterans (HHV) all co-sponsor the National Veterans Golden Age Games each year.

The first Golden Age Games took place in 1985 in Albany Georgia with 115 competitors. Last year’s Games had about 780 participants and this year brought a record of 933 participants. This shows you how far along the Games have come in the past 25 years. The veterans participated in activities such as swimming, cycling, golf, shot put, discus, 10-meter air rifle, table tennis, dominoes, shuffleboard, horse-shoes, nine-ball pool, bowling, check-

ers and croquet. Most of the events took place in Waikiki or the Hawaii Convention Center.

VA Secretary Eric Shinseki delivered the address for the opening ceremony. Tammy Duckworth was also on hand to meet and talk with the veterans the following day. Both were looking forward to showcasing Hawaii (Sec. Shinseki’s home state) to the veterans and guests from the mainland.

Sen. Daniel Akaka addressed the veterans at the Closing Ceremony and conveyed a deep genuine aloha to everyone

Sen. Daniel Inouye stated in his welcome letter that, “They are an important part of ensuring that our aging veterans are taking care of their physical health so that they can continue to serve as examples of bravery and perseverance for our younger generations.”

The games have separate age groups and gender divisions. Additionally, because many veterans also face medical challenges, events were added for those using wheelchairs and those with visual impairments. To accommodate the varying degrees of physical conditioning, motor and cognitive skills of the participants, basic competition rules were adapted. The modification

of rules and use of adapting the equipment in many events allow non-ambulatory and visually impaired veterans to participate in separate divisions where needed and with ambulatory and sighted veterans when possible. This has made the National Veterans Golden Age Games a truly adaptive therapeutic sports competition that has become a model for other local, state and national senior sports events.

“Since 2004, the National Veterans Golden Age Games have been a qualifier for the National Senior Games, a member of the U.S. Olympic Committee. Through this partnership, gold, silver and bronze medalists in certain events have the opportunity to compete further, among America’s elite senior athletes.”

Next year’s Games will be held in St. Louis Missouri. Already many Hawaii veterans are planning to attend these games as well. Please call our office if you would like further guidance on how to participate, volunteer, or attend.



Melvin Williams is getting ready to throw the horseshoe

Photos by Jayme Sato

U.S. Vets addresses homeless issues with Sec. of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki & Gov. Abercrombie

After visiting veterans at the Golden Age Games on May 27, 2011 Sec. of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki attended a meeting about homeless veterans in Hawaii. Sec. Shinseki has a dept. goal of ending homelessness of veterans by 2015. Sec. Shinseki said that Gov. Neil Abercrombie's initiatives for addressing homeless issues fall in with that plan. Sec. Shinseki identified six pillars in his plan to end homelessness among veterans. Sec. Shinseki's comprehensive plan to end homelessness include: preventive measures like discharge planning for incarcerated veterans re-entering society, supportive services for low-income veterans and their families; and a national referral center to link veterans to local service providers. Additionally, the plan calls for expanded efforts for education, jobs, health care and housing.

U.S. VETS is one of the nations largest non-profit agencies addressing homeless and at risk veterans. U.S. VETS has been addressing some of those exact same issues. Sec. Shinseki and Gov. Abercrombie met with some of the staff at U.S. VETS-Hawaii and a few VA dept. heads to discuss homeless issues and the ways they are trying to help the homeless veterans. After the meeting Sec. Shinseki and Gov.



VA Sec. Shinseki and Gov. Abercrombie talked with veterans about the U.S. VETS-Hawaii and the issues they face everyday

Abercrombie met with veterans that are in the U.S. VETS-Hawaii Veterans In Progress (VIP) program.

U.S. VETS Hawaii has incorporated Sec. Shinseki's six pillars with each veteran. 1) Outreach and Education, outreach teams search the community for homeless veterans in need of their services. 2) Treatment, there are intensive outpatient treatments available for veterans. 3) Prevention and 4) Housing and Supportive Services works in conjunction with each other. U.S. VETS-

Hawaii partners with other shelters and supportive services such as Institute for Homeless Services (IHS) Oahu's largest homeless shelter. 5) Income, Benefits and Employment, provided through internships with Univ. Of Phoenix and UH. And the U.S. VETS staff work with veterans to see if they can qualify for more benefits through the VA or the state. 6) Community Partnerships, clients are enrolled in Workforce Development. U.S. VETS-Hawaii partners with Waikiki Health Center, IHS and many other supportive services throughout the state of Hawaii.

Data from U.S. VETS-Hawaii showed a recent study conducted in Hawaii on Jan. 25, 2011. The study revealed that on any given night 505 veterans are without permanent housing in Hawaii. The aforesaid number includes 295 still living unsheltered. As of May 27, 2011, we have 3 years, 5 months, and 7 days to provided for the housing and support needs of these veterans to meet Sec. Shinseki's dept. goals. U.S. VETS-Hawaii's plan is to make it happen! U.S. VETS-Hawaii is committed to playing its part and doing its role to end homelessness among veterans.



The U.S. VETS-Hawaii facility at Kalaeloa. The program offers two three-story buildings that consists of 106 beds.

Photos by Jayme Sato



Hawaii Veteran Newsletter

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Frequently Asked Questions

Maui Veterans Services Counselor

By Tamickco Jackson

The Office of Veterans Services encounters many individuals that have questions regarding benefits that they may be entitled to as dependents if something should happen to the veteran. The Dept. of Veterans Affairs has implemented programs specifically for dependents of deceased veterans. Two of those programs are Dependents Indemnity Compensation and Death Pension. Both of these programs offer benefits to surviving spouses and unmarried children.

Death Pension

Eligibility for death pension is determined by income, marital status of the surviving spouse, the character of discharge of the veteran, number of days on active duty and era that veteran served. The surviving spouse must

have not remarried. The veteran must have served at least 90 days of active duty if the service date was before 1980 or 1981, depending if the veteran was enlisted or an officer. The veteran's discharge must have been other than dishonorable and service must have been during a war time era.

The basic rate for this benefits is \$661, however if the spouse is housebound or in need of aid and attendance, it may be more. Because this is an income based benefit it could also be less if there is other household income. This particular benefit is offset by any additional money that the household of the surviving spouse or dependent child receive and mandated by the national threshold.

Dependents Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

DIC is a benefit for surviving spouses of veterans who have passed away from

a service connected disability. As with death pension, this benefit is also non-taxable. The basic amount is \$1,154, but can be more depending on certain situations. That could include additional money for dependent children or if the veteran was totally disabled for a minimum of eight consecutive years before death. Additional money may also be awarded for survivors that are in need of aid and attendance.

The Most Important Documents

The most important documents to have obtainable for one that wishes to submit a claim for and survivor benefits is the DD214 and marriage certificate. Depending on the situation, sometimes it is very necessary to submit a birth certificate. Most discharge records may be requested from the National Archives if it is not available through the VA. Marriage and birth certificate can be requested through Vital Records if you do not have those on hand.