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February 2020 Edition of Forward March Veterans' Newsletter

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FORWARD MARCH



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Honoring those who served U.S.

www.FloridaVets.org

February 2020

Our Mission

To advocate with purpose and passion for Florida veterans and link them to superior services, benefits and support.



From Executive Director Danny Burgess:

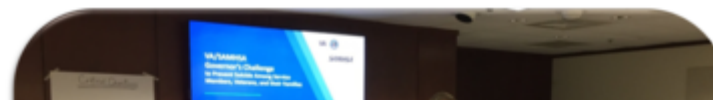
Welcome to our second edition of the Forward March veterans' newsletter, just one of several strides we're taking to enhance our direct communication with Florida's 1.5 million veterans, their families and supporters.

Governor Highlights New Housing Assistance Initiative for Veterans



Gov. Ron DeSantis announced a new "Salute Our Soldiers" Military Loan Program Feb. 19 that will be offered to veterans and active duty military members throughout the state. The initiative will initially set aside funds to assist more than 1,000 veterans and active duty military members by making the home buying process easier and more affordable. You can find the complete news release [here](#).

Florida Joins Governor's Challenge on Suicide Prevention



It's been a busy and productive month as we head toward the end of the 2020 Legislative Session. We appreciate your support.

Forward March!

Dany



The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs is partnering with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) on the Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans and their Families. The Governor's Challenge is a national call to action, asking state, military and civilian interagency teams to embark on a process of collaborating, planning and implementing suicide prevention best practices and policies for service members, veterans and their families state-wide. As one of seven states to take up the challenge, the new initiative expands recent efforts with FDVA, the VA's Sunshine Healthcare Network and the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay to enhance statewide veteran suicide prevention efforts. Key national and state leaders met at the Capitol in Tallahassee Jan. 30-31, with a second round of workshops set for Washington, D.C. at the end of the month. Visit the [SAMHSA website](#) for more information.



Florida College System Launches Patriot's Path

The Florida College System Council of Presidents and State Rep. Mel Ponder announced Feb. 20 the creation of the Patriot's Path program, which will help

veterans and active duty members to have the most accessible and affordable educational options. Each college will have services and programs that reflect their community's needs. For more information, click on the news release [here](#).

Podcast Highlights Florida Veterans' Issues

Did you know there are 1.5 million veterans in the state of Florida and FDVA is the premier point of entry for Florida veterans to access earned services, benefits and support? FDVA Executive Director Danny Burgess recently sat down with the James Madison Institute and discussed *Forward March* and other veterans' outreach initiatives. [Click here](#) to listen to the latest episode of "Pundits on the Porch."





VA Medical Center Opens New Domiciliary

During ceremonies Feb. 20, officials with the West Palm Beach VA Medical Center opened a new, 60-bed veterans' domiciliary at 7305 North Military Trail in West Palm Beach. The facility is the first-of-its-kind in South Florida and provides mental health care for area veterans.



Land O' Lakes Veterans' Home Observes Anniversary

The 120-bed Baldomero Lopez State Veterans' Nursing Home opened its doors on Feb. 26, 1999. The award-winning skilled nursing facility at 6919 Parkway Boulevard in Land O' Lakes is led by Home Administrator Marlies Sarrett.



Celebrating Florida National Guard Day

The annual Florida National Guard Day will be held March 3 at the Capitol Courtyard in Tallahassee from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Army and Air National Guard members will have equipment displays and free hotdogs will be available to the public.

Pensacola Honors Chappie James on 100th Birthday

The city of Pensacola honored the late U.S. Air Force Gen. Daniel "Chappie" James Jr. on the occasion of his 100th birthday by declaring Feb. 11, 2020 as General "Chappie" James Day. James, who called Pensacola home, was a distinguished combat pilot and nation's first African-American four-star general. He died shortly after retiring from active duty in February 1978.





Construction Continues on Port St. Lucie Veterans' Home

The 120-bed Ardie R. Copas State Veterans' Nursing Home in Port St. Lucie is in the home stretch of its two-year construction. The 121,000 square foot skilled-nursing facility is scheduled to open in the summer of 2020. Once fully operational, the facility will employ approximately 170 health care professionals

and staff. For information on admissions, call (727) 518-3202, extension 5562 or visit the FDVA website, [click here](#).

Renovations Continue in Orlando at Veterans' Home

The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs is renovating a former VA Community Living Center in Orlando and converting it into a 112-bed state veterans' nursing home. The skilled-nursing facility, located on VA's Lake Baldwin campus, is scheduled to open later in 2020. More information on resident admissions and employment opportunities will be released in the coming months.



FDVA Joins Pandora



To help connect Florida veterans with their earned services, benefits and support, the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs has launched a six-month veterans' outreach initiative on the internet music streaming service, Pandora. The six-month campaign features the voice of FDVA Executive Director Danny Burgess interspersed with music tracks and includes a digital component which drives

listeners to the FDVA website at www.FloridaVets.org.

Foundation Launches Ambassadors for Veterans Council

The [Florida Veterans Foundation](#) is launching a new *Forward March Ambassadors for Veterans Council* initiative to support and augment the ongoing role of the foundation, which provides a variety of needed support and services for Florida's veterans. Founded in 2008 by the Florida Legislature, the non-profit foundation is the direct service organization of the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs and provides a variety of services and programs to support veterans statewide. For more information on the campaign, contact Florida Veterans Foundation President Lew Wilson at Lew@HelpFLVets.org.



VA Strengthens Care & Benefits for Veterans with \$243 Billion Budget

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has a proposed \$243.3 billion budget for fiscal year 2021. The 10.2% increase from FY 2020 will allow VA's continued commitment to provide veterans with high quality health care and timely access to benefits and services. Click [here](#) to read more.

Be in the Know

You may track current veteran-related legislation and appropriations during the remainder of the Florida Legislative Session by visiting our [website](#) or contacting our legislative team at (850) 487-1533. The 2020 Florida Legislative Session, which is setting the budget for the upcoming state fiscal year beginning July 1, is scheduled to end on March 13, 2020



Stay Tuned: Upcoming Dates & Events

February 29 - Inaugural Women Veterans Luncheon - The PLK Agricultural Estate - for more information [click here](#).

March 13 - Friday K9 Veterans Day Celebration - Military Heritage Museum - contact Amy Huddleston Office: [941-575-9002](tel:941-575-9002) ext. #3 or Cell: [941-286-3219](tel:941-286-3219)

March 17 - St. Patrick's Day

March 28 - Vietnam War Veterans Commemorative Ceremony - Florida National Cemetery for more information [click here](#).

March 28 - Joint Veterans Support Committee Hosts - East Coast Thunder - Florida National Cemetery - for more information [click here](#).

If you would like to add your event to the *Forward March* Newsletter please email: Sferrazza-riosl@fdva.state.fl.us

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