

# THE VETERAN'S VOICE OF NORTHWEST FLORIDA

A BIMONTHLY NEWSLETTER BY THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD OF OKALOOSA AND WALTON COUNTIES



**Crestview JobsPlus One-Stop**  
212 N Wilson Street, Crestview, FL 32536  
850-689-7823

**DeFuniak Springs JobsPlus One-Stop**  
171 N 9th Street, DeFuniak Springs, FL 32433  
850-892-8668

**Fort Walton Beach JobsPlus One-Stop**  
409 NE Racetrack Road, FWB, FL 32547  
850-833-7587

## Did you know?

- Currently, JobsPlus is offering a networking group for professionals looking for employment. If interested, please go to [www.emeraldcoastprofessionals.com](http://www.emeraldcoastprofessionals.com) for more information.

## WE ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT SERVING VETERANS!

Welcome Veterans and Active Duty Military Families of Northwest Florida to the May issue of the Veteran's Voice of Northwest Florida. In this issue, the Veteran Staff at JobsPlus felt that it was important to highlight some of the resources that are available to Veterans and active duty families. Frequently, Veterans who come in for employment or support assistance are completely unaware of the benefits they have earned by serving in the military. Well, did you know:

- That VA Disability compensation is a tax-free benefit paid to a Veteran because of injuries/ diseases that happened while on active duty, or were made worse by active military service.
- That VA health benefits are open to all Veterans. Family members may also be eligible to receive benefits. There is no monthly premium for VA care, but there may be co-pay.
- That the Post-9/11 GI Bill provides financial support for education, housing and approved training to honorably discharged individuals with at least 90 days of aggregate service on or after 9/11/2001, or individuals discharged with a service-connected disability after 30 days. Approved training includes graduate and undergraduate degrees, as well as vocational & technical training.
- That the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) VetSuccess Program is authorized by Congress under Title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 31. The VetSuccess program assists Veterans with service-connected disabilities to pre-

pare for, find, and keep suitable jobs. For Veterans with service-connected disabilities so severe that they cannot immediately consider work, VetSuccess offers services to improve their ability to live as independently as possible.

These are just a few of benefits offered by the VA. So, if you need Veteran assistance, you can go to [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov), or come by the office, and we can point you in the right direction.

## VETERAN BENEFIT ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

The office of the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs, located at the Eglin VA Outpatient Clinic, assists, without charge, Florida's Veterans, their families and survivors in improving their health and economic well-being through quality benefit information, advocacy and education. This state agency's Claims Examiner, Clara Miller, provides advocacy to Veterans and their families in obtaining city, county, state, and federal VA benefits for which they may be entitled.

We help Veterans with submitting claims for service connected disability compensation, pension and educational benefits. We also make requests for separation orders/DD214. The Claims Examiner can also aid with review of VA rating decisions and file appeals. Assistance extends to survivors of deceased Veterans in securing death pension, Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC), and burial benefits.

Office hours are Monday through Friday, from 8am to 3:30 pm. Assistance is provided on a walk-in basis. For additional information, contact Clara Miller at (850)609-2740 or email at [millercc@fdva.state.fl.us](mailto:millercc@fdva.state.fl.us).

## READJUSTMENT SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR VETERANS

### The Okaloosa County Vet Center

We are the people in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs who welcome home war Veterans with honor by providing quality readjustment services in a caring manner. Vet Centers understand and appreciate Veterans' war experiences while assisting them and their family members toward a successful post-war adjustment in or near their community.

### Our Mission

Vet Centers serve Veterans and their families by providing a continuum of quality care, which adds value for Veterans, Families, and Communities. Care includes professional readjustment counseling, community education, outreach to special populations, the brokering of services with community agencies, and providing a key access link between the Veterans and other services in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

### Services Provided

- » Individual Readjustment Counseling
- » Group Meetings & Counseling
- » Military Sexual Trauma Counseling
- » Bereavement Counseling
- » Marital & Family Counseling
- » Substance Abuse Information and Referral
- » Community Education
- » Liaison with Community Agencies

The Okaloosa County Vet Center offers these services. The staff is temporarily working from a Mobile Vet Center in their parking lot until they move into their building at 6 11th Ave, Suite G-1, Shalimar, Fl. The team is also at JobsPlus in Fort Walton Beach on Thursdays and

JobsPlus in Crestview on Wednesdays. To see a counselor or join a group, please call 1-866-953-1753. Also, please visit the website at [www.vetcenter.va.gov](http://www.vetcenter.va.gov).

## HELP FOR HOMELESS VETERANS HAS ARRIVED

### Courtesy of VA Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System Public Affairs

The Department of Veterans Affairs Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System has hired two caseworkers at the Eglin Community Based Outpatient Clinic to help homeless Veterans secure permanent housing through the Housing and Urban Development -Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing program.

HUD-VASH is designed to provide case management and supportive services along with subsidized housing vouchers for eligible homeless Veteran families.

"We are excited to bring this service to Veterans in the Okaloosa County area," Jennifer Steinmeier, who along with Phyllis Morgan, serves as the VA's local HUD-VASH caseworkers. "HUD-VASH is going to play a huge part in the VA's goal of eliminating Veteran homelessness by the fall of 2014."

In order to participate in HUD-VASH, Veterans must be eligible for VA health care, homeless and have a clinical need for and willingness to participate in case management. Veterans who lived in transitional housing or residential treatment programs who were homeless prior to entering those programs are also eligible. Vouchers cannot be given to a Veteran if his/her household income exceeds certain limits or if anyone living in the home is required to register as a lifetime sex offender.

Steinmeier and Morgan will partner with local Public Housing Authorities to place Veterans in housing, with

the understanding that the Veterans will follow the rules of the PHA and landlord to sustain their housing. Veterans must pay a portion of the monthly rent directly to the landlord, which is equal to 30 or 40 percent of their gross monthly income. The PHA will pay the remaining portion of the rent.

Morgan is excited about the way ahead.

"We will work with the Veterans to establish goals, and we'll provide support and assistance in the name of recovery, stability and permanency," Morgan said.

For more information, contact Steinmeier or Morgan at 850-609-2600 (toll-free 866-520-7359.) The Eglin CBOC located at 100 Veterans Way. It is adjacent to Eglin Air Force Base's west gate along Eglin Parkway.

## JOBSPLUS CELEBRATES MILITARY SPOUSES

With over 160 spouses and supporters in attendance, the 2nd Annual Military Spouses Appreciation event titled Operation Empowerment: Imagine, Believe, Achieve was held Wednesday May 18, 2011 at the Emerald Coast Conference Center in Ft. Walton Beach. The opening ceremonies included the presentation of the colors by the US Marine Corps VMFAT-501 and a beautiful rendition of the national anthem by TSgt Yakeem Jones of the 96th Mission Support Group.

The day was filled with presentations by Lori Bell, founder of the National Association of Military Moms and Spouses (NAMMAS) and Military Spouse Magazine's 2010 Spouse of the Year. Mrs. Bell spoke on her experiences on being a military spouse and encouraged spouses to remember to prosper (bloom) where planted. She also offered to the community seven special strategies to consider when supporting Military Families:

- Military liaison on the PTAs, Councils & Parent Support Groups
- Compassionate understanding in preschools and daycare centers where military kids are coping with military transition and deployment
- Teen/peer buddies in junior high and high schools when students PCS during the year
- "Brat Parties" for teens who are new to the neighborhood in the summer
- Encourage volunteerism from military kids
- Military spouses can "open the door" for support
- Military members initiate support from community leaders and neighborhood

The day also included an interactive discussion moderated by Andi Hurly, founder of SpouseBUZZ Live. The panelists engaged the audience into a very lively dialogue which included topics such as PCSing, deployments, re-integration and more. There were also three breakout workshops facilitated by Tamara Kiss and Melissa King, Military Family Employment Advocates (JobsPlus) and the Airman and Family Readiness Centers aboard Eglin Air Force Base and Hurlburt Field. The workshops provided spouses with options to choose their own path towards knowledge empowerment.

The goal of this JobsPlus event was to recognize military spouses from all branches of service, appreciate them for their sacrifice and empower them with knowledge to enhance the lives of their families.

Breakfast and lunch were sponsored by the Merchants and Shops at Uptown Station and Hammock Bay Residential Community. Spouses are already looking forward to next year's event, MISSION ACCOMPLISHED.

If any military spouses within the local area need employment, transition, or training assistance, JobsPlus is here to help.

## Important Numbers

Eglin A&FRC  
(850) 882-9060

Eglin VA Clinic  
(850) 609-2600

Hurlburt A&FRC  
(850) 884-5441

Okaloosa County Service Officer  
Shalimar (850) 651-7258  
Crestview (850) 689-5922

Okaloosa County VET Center  
(850) 456-5886

Pensacola VA Clinic  
850-912-2000

VA Vocational Rehabilitation  
(850) 862-4229

Veteran Affairs  
1-800-827-1000

Walton County Service Officer  
(850) 892-8140/8141