



TOWN OF ANDOVER

VETERANS' SERVICES

36 Bartlet Street
Andover, MA 01810
veterans@andoverma.gov
978-623-8218

Michael Burke, Director Veterans "Blast Email" Update

As of April 2010

The purpose of "Blast Email" updates is to reach as many Andover Veterans and keep them informed on calendar items, benefit information and other items. You've received this update because I have your email address. If you wish to discontinue receiving updates, please email me at veterans@andoverma.gov.

COMMUNICATION

Communication methods. I will try to provide you updates via "Blast Emails", the Andover Townsman, the Eagle Tribune, submissions to the Senior Center Newsletter, the Public Access Channel and information I provide directly to our local Commanders of The American Legion and DAV. Additionally, you can check our Website @ <http://andoverma.gov/veterans/>. The website is updated to keep you abreast of the Veterans' Office mission and various benefits available to all eligible veterans.

My Office Hours are:

- Monday through Thursday 8:30 AM to 12:00 PM for Walk-ins, Appointments and Emergency Services.
- Monday through Thursday 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM for Appointments and Emergency Services.
- Friday for Emergency Services.
- If the office is closed, I'm on official business. Please leave a note or a telephone message @ (978) 623-8218. If it is during the day and an *emergency*, please call Carolyn Lynch @ (978) 623-8219.

BENEFITS AND SERVICES

The Director of Veterans Services' mission is to assist all eligible veterans and their dependents in accessing federal and state benefits. If you're unsure if you qualify for any benefits or services, financial or other, please contact the Veterans' Office. Additionally, please pass the word to our fellow veterans. Ask them how they are doing and let them know we are here to assist.

***** Suicide Prevention – The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is available 24 hrs a day 800-273-TALK (8255). PTSD is a real item for all who served from D-Day to Fallujah.**

Massachusetts Department of Veteran Services Financial Aid – If you are a veteran, dependant of a veteran or a widow/widower of a veteran and struggling financially, you may be entitled to assistance. **Assistance is based on your income and assets.** This office has seen an steady increase in veterans needing this assistance.

Massachusetts Welcome Home Bonus – Active Duty service during WWII, Korea, Vietnam, The Persian Gulf and the Global War on Terror (GWOT) means you are entitled to a Welcome Home Bonus. Amounts vary depending on assignment and there is no time limit on applying for this one time bonus.

Massachusetts Education – All Massachusetts veterans are entitled to free tuition at Massachusetts' state colleges and universities.

FEDERAL INFORMATION

**(Note this is general information to pass along. Please confirm with your local Veterans Officer or the respective Agency to review your specific circumstances.)*

VA Long-Term Care. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers a wide spectrum of geriatric and extended care services to veterans *enrolled* in its health care system. One question we often have is regarding VA Nursing Home Care.

Who is Eligible for Nursing Home Care:

- Any veteran who has a service-connected disability rating of 70 percent or more;
- A veteran who is rated 60 percent service-connected and is unemployable or has an official rating of "permanent and total disabled"
- A veteran with combined disability ratings of 70 percent or more;
- A veteran whose service-connected disability is clinically determined to require nursing home care

*** To receive services through the VA, for any geriatric and extended care services, *the veteran needs to be enrolled with the VA Health Care System and receive Primary Care Services. The veteran will have to be followed by a VA Primary Care Physician, which is the person that initiates the referral for all services. The veteran must be seen by the VA at least one time per year to continue receiving services.***

VA Health Care. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers health care to certain veterans. Note: You are only eligible for VA Health Care if you have a VA disability, are a recent GWOT veteran, or meet a financial means test. The financial means test – less than \$29,402 (single) or \$35,284 (married) and assets under \$80,000. Your primary residence does not count against your assets. If you do not meet these requirements you are not eligible for VA Health Care.

VA Disability Claim. A VA Disability claim requires 3 items. They are: (1) Military Discharge, (2) current medical diagnosis and (3) proof that the illness (disability) is connected to your military service. If you do not have these, you do not have a claim.

VA Pension. A VA Pension is for Low-income veterans. Income must be less than \$11,830 for the veteran. Income - less than \$15,493 for a married couple. Income less than \$7,933 for a widow or widower.

Social Security. Special Extra Earnings for Military Service Up to \$1200 per year of earnings credit credited at time of application - which can make a substantial difference in social security monthly payments upon your retirement.

Since 1957, if you had military service earnings for active duty (including active duty for training), you paid Social Security taxes on those earnings. Since 1988, inactive duty service in the Armed Forces

reserves (such as weekend drills) has also been covered by Social Security.

Under certain circumstances, special extra earnings for your military service from 1957 through 2001 can be credited to your record for Social Security purposes. These extra earnings credits may help you qualify for Social Security or increase the amount of your Social Security benefit.

Special extra earnings credits are granted for periods of active duty or active duty for training. Special extra earnings credits are **not** granted for inactive duty training.

If your active military service occurred:

- **From 1957 through 1967**, Social Security will add the extra credits to your record when you apply for Social Security benefits. You must bring your DD-214 to the Social Security Office *and you must ask for this benefit to receive it!*
- **From 1968 through 2001**, you do not need to do anything to receive these extra credits. The credits were automatically added to your record.
- **After 2001**, there are no special extra earnings credits for military service.

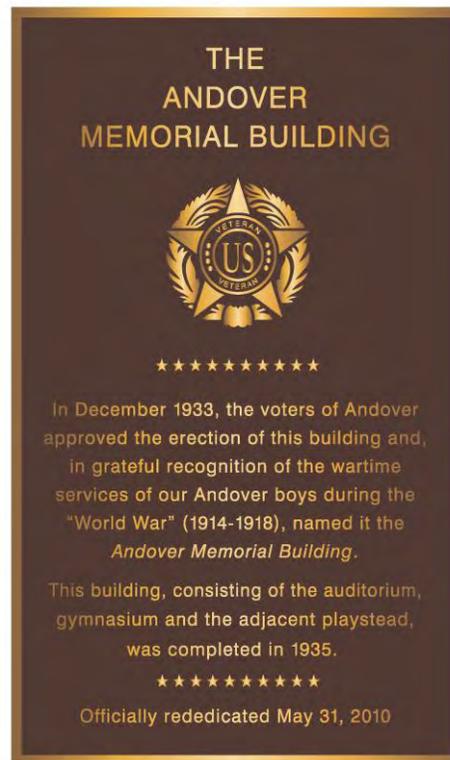
PROGRAMS, PROJECTS AND HISTORY

The WWI Memorial. Memorial Day 2010 will include a re-dedication of our WWI Memorial. The re-dedication of the WWI Memorial will include the unveiling of a plaque that identifies the auditorium as a War Memorial. Exterior work, including work on the stairs, walkway and landscaping should be complete in time. Yay!!!

The correct name for our WWI Memorial is The “*Andover Memorial Building*”.

At a Special Town Meeting on December 11, 1933, the voters of Andover appropriated funding for the erection of a junior high school, a “common assembly hall” and gymnasium. At an adjourned meeting on December 18, 1933, voters determined:

1. *that in grateful recognition of the war time services of our Andover boys, the new auditorium and gymnasium building be named the “Andover Memorial Building”*
2. *that said building have attached a suitable tablet or tablets in memory of those who served “in the World War”*
3. *an amendment included the Playstead as part of the Memorial*



“Heroes Among Us” - We are working on our next book – ***“Heroes Among Us – Book Two”***. The “Book Two” project targets WWII Veterans that served in the European Theater, to include Italy and North Africa. We plan to release this book Veterans Day 2010. This book is not meant to be a historical text. Yet it contains history as it shares the personnel stories of our own living WWII veterans. This book covers veterans who served on Destroyer Convoy Escorts in the treacherous North Atlantic, veterans that participated in D-Day and veterans that fought through the Battle of The Bulge.



Elm Green Veterans Memorial Park. The Elm Green Veteran’s Memorial was dedicated November 11, 1995.

The Patriotic Holiday Committee is working at “Freshening-up” Elm Green and using this opportunity to remind the community (clarify) that this location is a Veterans Park. – *a solemn location honoring ALL Andover’s veterans.*

Work includes - cleaning the brick and stone work, removing trees that are undermining the wall, providing fresh plantings and installing adequate lighting for the flag pole. In addition, we are proud to announce that we will install a plaque to let the community know that this solemn location is a *Veterans Park.*

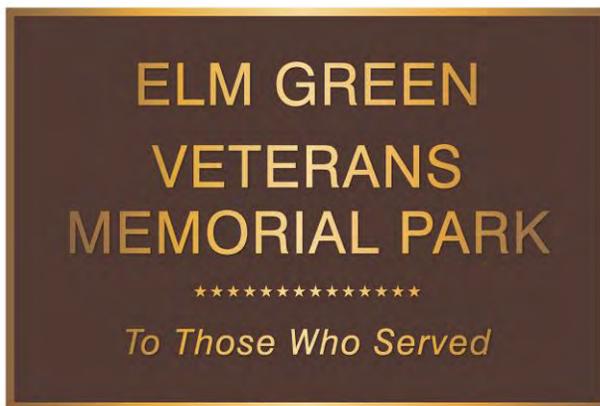
Veterans’ Services
 Elm Green Veterans Memorial Park - In Progress Review
 February 2010



1995



2010



12844 36 x 24 Single line Bronze Color: Dark Oxide Mounting: Studs 12/21/09

OTHER NEWS / UPDATES:

Dial-A-Lawyer Continues

The Massachusetts Bar Association (MBA) will be having a Veterans' Dial-A-Lawyer event on April 29, 2010 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. *MBA has also continued its call-in hours for veterans or family members that are struggling with Veterans' Administration appeals.* Those call-in hours are every

Monday from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at (617) 338-0572. If you are an attorney and would like to participate in our Visiting Lawyer Program please contact Beth O'Neil at the Massachusetts Bar Association at (617) 338-0560.

Poor Charity Work - Donators Beware

Please note that my office and Veteran Service Officers in Massachusetts have seen an increase in “scams”, particularly preying on the elderly.

We all wish to assist charities, this includes Veteran Charities. Yet even if a charity is not a “scam” some charities are better than others. Unfortunately there are organizations that should be ashamed of what they do.

Often we see organizations with pretty websites, appealing mailings and they present nice press releases. However the underlying problem is they have exorbitant pay for CEOs and paid employees, hold excess cash in reserve and the percentage of donations that actually make it to the veteran is small.

When in doubt, I suggest donating to an organization you are certain of; or locally where you can confirm your donation will go to a good cause. *Note - Donations to National Organizations, rarely, if at all assist our local veterans.*

There are three local organizations you can donate to that impact our veterans directly. They are:

1. The Disabled American Veterans, Chapter 18 in Andover
2. The American Legion, Post 8 Andover
3. The Andover Veterans Office

Below is a partial list of Non-Profit Veterans Organization and their ratings Letter grades were based largely on the charities' fundraising costs and the percentage of money raised that was spent on charitable activities. (Source - American Institute of Philanthropy)

Air Force Aid Society (A+)
American Ex-Prisoners of War Service Foundation (F)
American Veterans Coalition (F)
American Veterans Relief Foundation (F)
AMVETS National Service Foundation (F)
Armed Services YMCA of the USA (A-)
Army Emergency Relief (A+)
Blinded Veterans Association (D)
Disabled American Veterans (D)
Disabled Veterans Association (F)
Fisher House Foundation (A+)
Freedom Alliance (F)
Help Hospitalized Veterans/Coalition to Salute America's Heroes (F)
Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund (A+)
Military Order of the Purple Heart Service Foundation (F)
National Military Family Association (A)
National Veterans Services Fund (F)
National Vietnam Veterans Committee (D)
Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (A+)
NCOA National Defense Foundation (F)

Paralyzed Veterans of America (F)
Soldiers' Angels (D)
United Spinal Association's Wounded Warrior Project (D)
USO (United Service Organization) (C+)
Veterans of Foreign Wars and Foundation (C-)
Veterans of the Vietnam War & the Veterans Coalition (D)
Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (D)
VietNow National Headquarters (F)
World War II Veterans Committee (D)

Here is a good web site is good way to check on all charities in the state:
<http://www.charities.ago.state.ma.us/charities/index.asp>

KEY CALENDAR ITEMS

<u>DATE</u>	<u>EVENT</u>	
<p>May 16th (Rain date May 23rd)</p>	<p>Flags on Graves. This is a great opportunity for the veterans to connect with our youth. *NOTE: We will meet at Spring Grove Cemetery on Abbot Street at 11:00 a.m.</p>	
<p>May 31st</p>	<p>Memorial Day Ceremonies and Parade 7:00 a.m. West Parish Cemetery, 7:30 a.m. St Augustines Cemetery, 8:00 a.m. Spring Grove Cemetery and 10:00 a.m. the parade.</p>	
<p>April 23</p>	<p>Veteran Reception ("Heroes Among Us")</p>	

April 28th

Town Hall Meeting
– (First Night) at the
AHS Field House.



VETERAN SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS:

We have two Veteran Service Organizations in Andover. They are *the American Legion Post 8 Andover* and *the Disabled American Veterans Chapter #18*. ***Note - I provide monthly updates directly to the commanders of Andover's two Veteran organization.*

- **DAV Chapter #18** meets the second Tuesday of the month @ 3:00 p.m. @ The Veterans Hall, Whittier Court (Rear of Town Offices) *Contact is Joe Augusta (978) 688-6466.*



- **The American Legion, Post 8** Meets the second Wednesday of each month @ 7:00 p.m. @ The Veterans Hall, Whittier Court (Rear of Town Offices) *Contact is Ted Witman (978) 683-9988.*



"Some" of Post 8's recent highlights and upcoming events:

- *Memorial Day / Veterans Day Firing Detail*
- *Posting colors at the Andover Town Meeting.*
- *Supporting Youth Programs (Boys State, Sea Cadet, Army JROTC, Civil Air Patrol Cadets etc...)*
- *Flags on Graves (10 cemeteries and over 3,600 graves)*
- *Honor Guard at Ceremonies and Grave Side Services*

Proper Respect to the American Flag



Disposal

When a flag is no longer a fitting emblem for display, it should be destroyed in a dignified way, preferably by burning.

*** Please change your unserviceable flags. I have a drop off box outside my office. Please leave them with me and I will ensure they are disposed of properly.*



LASTLY --- SOMEONE WE SHOULD KNOW

SPC Monica Lin Brown - First Woman to be awarded Silver Star in Afghanistan

Source – Deputy Chief of Staff (Army G-1) – Press Release

Monica Lin Brown enlisted in the Army at 17 because her brother, Justin was enlisting. She completed Basic Training and Advanced Individual Training as a medic before assignment to a Forward Support Company of 4th Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Corps. In February 2007 the unit deployed to Afghanistan. On April 25, 2007, then a PFC, Brown was the medic attached to a platoon on a mission to track members of a bomb-making cell. As they returned from the mission, their rear vehicle of the convoy was hit with an IED. The rest of the convoy was engulfed in an ambush. Brown and her platoon sergeant, SSG Joe Santos ran back to the truck hit by the IED, where all five Soldiers were injured. Brown and other Soldiers moved the seriously injured Soldiers to a shallow stream while under fire from the ambush, as close as 25 yards away. Fire had spread through the damaged vehicle and was detonating the ammunition in the vehicle. At least twice Brown shielded an injured Soldier from the gunfire with her body, continuing to treat their wounds. The ambush lasted more than thirty minutes and the wounded Soldiers had to be moved two more times. All were eventually evacuated by helicopter and survived.

For her actions, PFC Brown was awarded the Silver Star, the Nation's third highest award for valor. She was the first female Soldier in Afghanistan to receive the Silver Star and only the second woman since World War II to do so. Vice-President Cheney personally awarded her medal in April 2008. She and her unit are back at Fort Bragg, NC. She plans to eventually pursue a Nursing degree and commission through ROTC. Then she plans return to active duty to again provide medical care for Soldiers.



Please feel free to provide input and ideas as to what we can do to reach veterans in need.

Sincerely,

Michael Burke

"The only defensible war is a war of defense."
G. K. Chesterton

SOME HELPFUL WEBSITES:

[The American Legion](#)

[American Legion, Post 8 Andover](#)

[The Disabled American Veterans Site](#)

[Veteran of Foreign Wars National](#)

[US Army](#)

[US Air Force](#)

[US Navy](#)

[US Marines](#)

[US Coast Guard](#)

