

# WHAT DOES THE METHUEN VETERANS' SERVICES DEPARTMENT OFFER TO OUR PROUD VETERANS?

## **Financial Assistance:**

Veterans and their families may be eligible for benefits set forth through state budget guidelines. This office directly assists approximately 65 families under Mass. GL 115 throughout the year. The state reimburses the City of Methuen 75% of money used to assist our Veterans. Federal assistance is done through disability claims, non-service connected pension applications or widow compensation. Currently this office has power of attorney on 120 claims.

## **Education:**

All Veterans can attend state colleges at no cost. Children of Veterans can also attend under certain conditions.

## **Housing:**

Our office receives many calls on housing. We try our best to assist our Veterans in this process. VA home loans are available for up to \$240,000.

## **Prescription Drug Program:**

This is one of the best programs offered by the Veterans Administration. This office has referred many Veterans from Methuen to this program saving our Veterans and their families thousands of dollars. This program will continue to grow as time goes on.

## **Employment:**

We continue to work closely with the Haverhill and Lawrence ValleyWorks Career Centers, which are part of the Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Division of Career Services (DCS), to assist Veterans in obtaining employment and training, if needed. Each Career Center office has a Local Veterans Employment Representative, who is there to assist Veterans.

## **License Plates:**

This office continues to process applications for our Veterans who are entitled to these well-deserved plates. If a Veteran received the Purple Heart, Silver Star, Bronze Star, Ex POW, Legion of Valor, or Pearl Harbor Survivor, there is no cost for plates. Also available are Distinguished Flying Cross license plates. If one qualifies, call the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) at 617-351-9322. Gold Star license plates are also available at all RMV locations. These plates are for Parents, Spouses and Children of those killed in action. Our office has been one of the most active with this program.

## **Burial:**

Veterans are entitled to a bronze or stone grave marker, and an American flag when they die. State law requires a flag to be placed at the graves of all Veterans every Memorial Day. This office, with the help of girl scouts, brownies, cub scouts, boy scouts, VFW, American Legion, local youth groups and other volunteers placed over 5,000 flags on the graves of our

Veterans, in nine (9) cemeteries in the City of Methuen. The burial officer is responsible to ensure that any repairs needed to bronze markers are done. Wreaths are also hung at all city squares in honor of our fallen heroes. If a Veteran or other eligible family member dies with no life insurance or other means to pay for burial expenses the Department of Veteran Services may pay up to \$ 2,000 toward burial expenses under circumstances set by the Massachusetts Department Of Veterans Services. Flags and burials are reimbursed by the state at 75% of cost.

### **Health Care:**

60% of our work deals with health care, some of the main needs are long term care, hearing aides, dental, prescriptions, transportation to VA hospitals and other appointments, ramp requests, wheelchairs, assisted living and Alzheimer's day care. This office receives calls and request for these needs everyday. We are able to meet some of these needs directly, and we try to refer our Veterans and families to other agencies and community resources. The health care needs of our Veterans in Methuen and throughout the country will continue with no end in sight.

### **Medals:**

This is a popular item among veterans. This office has processed numerous applications that are sent to St. Louis. Return time is 2 years.

### **Counseling:**

This is a very important part of this job. Every case is different and requires care, compassion, sensibility, and a good ear. We do our best in directing our veterans and their families with the up to date availability of assistance.

### **Outreach:**

It is the Veteran Services Officers (VSO) duty to be visible in the community. Attending meetings at local Veteran organizations, going into our schools for various events and talks are some examples at what we do. I Visit the Senior Center monthly to be available to our Veterans and their families. I try to provide transportation to our Veterans who have no way of getting to VA hospitals or appointments. I'm available to retired organizations for talks about benefits. This office has established a Veterans Night and Health Fairs. Both have been very successful. The use of the media has been a vital tool to let our Veterans know what benefits are available to them.

### **Welcome Home Bonus:**

We also assist eligible Veterans in obtaining their Welcome Home Bonus, which is available to all War Time Veterans. Recent changes in State law provide for additional bonuses additional bonus payments for multiple deployments for Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)