



Democratic Veterans Caucus of Florida

Newsletter

July - September 2018

Veterans Caucuses Celebrate the 4th of July



Palm Beach County Partnership Picnic, pictures by Carlton Cartwright



Bay County DEC and DVCF at Sharon Sheffield Park in Lynn Haven, picture by Reuben Sparks

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100,000 Father's Voting Pledge



pictures by Tim Allen

Warrior Beach Retreat By Reuben Sparks

Bay County - Reuben Sparks, President of the Bay County Democratic Veterans Caucus attended the spring 2018 Wounded Warrior Salute in Panama City on April 26. The Wounded Warrior Salute is part of the Warrior Beach Retreat that the community hosts twice a year.

On November 12, 2006 US Army Sergeant (Sgt.) Joshua Cope was severely injured by a blast from an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) in Baghdad, Iraq. He lost both legs above the knees and his hands were severely injured. Erica Cope, the wife of Sgt. Cope was told about the injuries the following day. The chaplain told her he was in critical but stable condition but he was going to live. A friend drove her to the hospital where Joshua had been transferred and the chaplain walked in with her.

Linda Cope, Joshua's mother started Warrior Beach Retreat, Inc., a 501(c)(3) on September 3, 2009 to provide a forum for combat wounded warriors from the Iraq and Afghanistan war and their spouses or care givers to bring honor and respect to those who have served our great nation. Twice each year 50 wounded warriors and their spouses or care givers from all across the country come to Panama City Beach to enjoy a seven day retreat hosted by local businesses. The retreats are made possible by many generous donations. Linda Cope said her vision as a mom "was to bring wounded warriors, and their spouses or care givers to Panama City Beach for a week of rest and relaxation. This retreat will be a time to give them hope to carry on and know that their sacrifice was not in vain. We can let them know as a nation that we are truly grateful for their service and sacrifice and it was not in vain." Linda said Joshua and Erica are her heroes.

Besides rest and relaxation, during the week, the participants are treated to many beach activities. These events include deep sea fishing, makeovers, spa treatments and massages. A culminating ceremony called the Wounded Warrior Salute is held driving the participants from the host resort to a local church where

the ceremony will take place. Citizens line the parade route waving flags and other patriotic symbols. Last fall the ceremony took place at Grace Presbyterian Church. This spring the ceremony took place at the First Baptist Church of Callaway. The featured speaker this year was Command Master Chief Petty Officer Joseph Howard. Chief Howard is the Command Master Chief at the Center for Explosive Ordnance and Diving at the Naval Coastal Systems in Panama City, Florida. All of the warriors and their care givers are brought into the church. A few selected warriors are offered the opportunity to give their testimony. A favorite part of each ceremony is where the songs from each service are played and all in the audience who are a member of that service are invited to stand.

The Warrior Beach Retreat has become a favorite for the Panama City community since its inception in 2009. The Warrior Beach Retreat is not to be confused with the Wounded Warrior Project. The Warrior Beach Retreat takes place exclusively in Bay County Florida. Numerous individuals, organizations, companies and families volunteer time, money and items to make the retreat a success. To make a donation, learn about the retreat or be a part of it, visit www.warriorbeachretreat.org or email info@warriorbeachretreat.org or pnclope29@gmail.com.

William Walker



Billy and Toni

The DVCF is saddened to announce the loss of William (Billy) Walker. Billy passed on June 15, he was a mainstay in Pinellas County Democratic politics for the last decade. He was a founding member of the Pinellas County Democratic Veterans Caucus, he was also a US Navy veteran and a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) and the American Legion Post 273. He was the Treasurer of the Pinellas County DEC and Veterans Caucus. Most recently, Billy was serving as Campaign Treasurer for Amy Kedron's campaign for Pinellas County Commission. Billy and wife Toni were both delegates to the 2016

Democratic National Convention, supporting Hillary Clinton. We extend our condolences to Toni and the rest of the family. His presence will be deeply missed.

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Please visit our website: demvetsfl.org

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The DVCF supports these candidates in the November 2018 Florida Election

Please visit www.demvetsfl.org to see the complete list of US Congress, Florida House and Senate and County Commission and other area and local candidates the DVCF supports in the November election. Thanks to Endorsement Committee Chair Bob Keenan and the entire committee for the work done supporting these candidates.

US Senator
Bill Nelson

Governor/ Lt Governor
Andrew Gillum/ Chris King

Attorney General
Sean Shaw

Agriculture Commissioner
Nikki Fried

Chief Financial Officer
Jeremy Ring



State pushing for veterans to use unclaimed benefits

By Mike Vasilinda | July 04, 2018

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (CAPITOL NEWS SERVICE) - Tens of millions of dollars in benefits for Florida veterans are going unclaimed because the vets either don't know they are eligible or have had a bad experience with the troubled Veterans Administration. But the state is stepping up efforts to get vets to claim what's rightfully theirs.

"I had a traumatic brain injury and I was in a coma for six months," said Army Veteran Larry Ware. Ware spends most days at an adult day care center, paid for almost entirely by the federal government. "Before I came, I was sitting home, taking my meds. Going to sleep. Sitting in the chair, talking to the TV," he said. Unlike Ware, one in three vets in Florida isn't claiming their benefits. The result: a lot of open slots in his adult day care and others. "We have eight current veterans in the building as patients," said Norman Pasley with Tallahassee Memorial Healthcare. But they can take as many as 35. Now the state is launching a program to get more vets using what is already theirs. "And we keep them healthier and if we keep them in their home environment

which is very supportive, I mean they are comfortable in a home environment, and that's what we really want to do," said Colonel Glen Sutphin the Veterans Affairs Executive Director.

The state says the good thing about veterans claiming their benefits is that it brings money into the state economy, but it doesn't cost the state a cent. Any money the state saves by not taking care of vets is money it can use helping other families who aren't entitled to veteran's benefits. The state's message to veterans: You are not alone! If you need help, call the Florida Veterans Support line at 1-844-MYFLVET or 211.

Upcoming Events

Florida Primary Election
August 28, 2018

National Mid-Term Election Day
November 6, 2018

100,000 Father Voter's Pledge Campaign

The Fatherhood and Mentoring Initiative of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. is seeking 100,000 fathers to take part in its 100,000 Father Voter's Pledge Campaign. The Initiative is seeking 100,000 fathers to take the pledge to show the importance of voting to their sons. The Initiative includes fathers, grandfathers, and mentors and not just men from the fraternity but men from everywhere to pledge to involve your son, grandson or mentee in the voting process. You can confirm your vote at www.oppf.org by sending a picture of you at the poll. The pledge is to vote during the November 2018 Mid-Term Elections and take your son, grandson or mentee to the polls. The website of the Fatherhood and Mentoring initiative is www.omegafandm.org. Your sons will follow your lead.

weVOTE!
100,000 Father Voters' Pledge Campaign
OMEGA PSI PHI FRATERNITY, INC.

I PLEDGE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Please check all boxes that apply:

I am a ... Father Grandfather Mentor
My age is ... 60+ 50+ 40+ 30+ 18+
I am ... Married Single Divorce
My state is... _____

Confirm your vote at www.oppf.org
by sending a photo of you at the poll

Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.
Fatherhood & Mentoring Initiative
omegafandm.org

Your sons will follow your lead.



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