



**From  
Patrick Welch  
Director**

This issue will provide a quick recap of the status of the Post 9/11 GI Bill and how the VA is starting to process emergency payments to veterans because of the backlog. I would suggest that the VA also look into the same practice for the 1 million veterans awaiting compensation claims.

Continuing on the education theme is a story about Student Veterans of America and their growth to 200 chapters nationwide. I am very pleased to see this new generation of veterans take advantage of the greatest GI Bill since World War II. We look to this new generation who have served our county to be the business, educational, political leaders and entrepreneurs of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century of American prosperity.

The Small Business Development Center at Buffalo State College is one of the organizations that will assist and guide this generation of entrepreneurs and we are pleased to feature a story by the new Veterans Counselor John McKeone. John is a US Navy veteran and has many years of experience in the private sector and he will now use this vast experience to help others.

The Buffalo Veterans Court was invited to Washington, DC by House Veterans' Affairs Chairman Bob Filner and present testimony on why we are so successful! We presented and the Congressman who attended learned and we hope that legislation will be passed to establish these courts nationwide.

Finally, a great story of World War II and today by Rene van Slooten from Holland. Rene contacted me in the fall of 2008 about how he had taken on the care of a monument in honor of an American MIA named Captain John Doherty, US Army who went missing in Operation Market Garden September 18, 1944. Captain Doherty was from Buffalo, NY and Rene wanted to contact his family and we helped connect them and the rest is part of a continuing history of care, consideration and compassion by the people of Holland.

## Post 9/11 GI Bill Status in a Nutshell

The VA has processed 205,074 of the 277,403 Post-9/11 GI Bill claims received.

All benefits payable for those claims have been paid. A total of 24,186 students have received benefits or benefits paid to the school on the student's behalf. The remainder will result in payments when the student enrolls in school. Veterans have 15 years from separation from service to use the benefit.

The VA has 72,329 Post-9/11 GI Bill claims pending. Of those, approximately 30,300 will result in payments to students and/or schools.

### Details of Post-9/11 GI Bill Workload

#### Claims Received and Completed

VA has received 277,403 claims for Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits (249,668 eligibility determinations and 27,735 enrollment certifications). Eligibility determinations often also contain an enrollment certification that is processed simultaneously.

VA has completed action on nearly 205,074 of those claims (189,597 eligibility determinations (and simultaneous enrollment certifications) and 15,477 enrollment certifications)

#### How Long It Takes

On average, it takes approximately 35 days to process a claim for Post-9/11 GI Bill education benefits.

*(Continued on page 2)*

(Continued from page 1)

The time to process claims may increase temporarily (as it does each year) as incoming claims related to fall enrollment increase during September and October.

Schools have been informed to continue submitting enrollment certifications in a timely manner.

### Claims Pending

VA Currently has 72,329 claims pending for Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits (60,071 eligibility determinations and 12,258 enrollment certifications).

It is estimated that 25% of eligibility determinations also include a school enrollment certificate. Therefore, approx 303,00 of the 72,329 will result in payments.

### **Details of the Total Education Workload**

#### Claims Received and Completed

VA has received 603,656 Non-Chapter 33 education claims (106,219 eligibility determinations and 497,437 enrollment certifications). Eligibility determinations often also contain an enrollment certification that is processed simultaneously.

VA has completed action on 503,323 of those claims (65,170 eligibility determinations (and

simultaneous enrollment certifications) and 438,153 enrollment certifications)

### Claims Pending

VA currently has 172,662 total education claims pending (101,120 eligibility determinations and 71,542 enrollment certifications) for all VA education benefits including the Post-9/11 GI Bill, the Montgomery GI Bill, the Reserve Education Assistance Program, and Dependents Education Assistance. Eligibility determinations may also contain an enrollment certification that is processed simultaneously.

### How Long It Takes

On average, it takes approximately 35 days to process a claim for Montgomery GI Bill education benefits.

The time to process claims may increase temporarily (as it does each year) as incoming claims related to fall enrollment increase during September and October.

### Other Important Facts

VA has authorized payment of \$997 Million in non-Chap 33 education benefits.

VA has authorized payment of \$1.05B for all benefit programs including the Post-9/11 GI Bill.



*Next Show: Monday, October 5, at 11 a.m. EST*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
September 25, 2009



## **Secretary Shinseki Orders Emergency Checks to Students Awaiting Education Benefits *Thousands of Checks to Alleviate Student Financial Burden***

WASHINGTON – Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has authorized checks for up to \$3,000 to be given to students who have applied for educational benefits and who have not yet received their government payment. The checks will be distributed to eligible students at VA regional benefits offices across the country starting Oct. 2, 2009.

"Students should be focusing on their studies, not worrying about financial difficulties," Secretary Shinseki said. "Education creates life-expanding opportunities for our Veterans."

Starting Friday, Oct. 2, 2009, students can go to one of VA's 57 regional benefit offices with a photo ID and a course schedule to request advance payment of their education benefits. Because not all these offices are located near students, VA expects to send representatives to schools with large Veteran-student bodies and work with Veteran Service Organizations to help students with transportation needs.

A list of those VA regional offices is available at [www.vba.va.gov/VBA/benefits/offices.asp](http://www.vba.va.gov/VBA/benefits/offices.asp) <<http://www.vba.va.gov/VBA/benefits/offices.asp>> .

"I'm asking our people to get out their road maps and determine how we can reach the largest number of college students who can't reach us," VA's Under Secretary for Benefits Patrick Dunne said. "Not everyone has a car. Not everyone can walk to a VA benefits office."

Although VA does not know how many students will request emergency funds, it has approximately 25,000 claims pending that may result in payments to students.

The funds VA will give to students now are advance payments of the earned benefits for education benefits. This money will be deducted from future education payments.

VA officials said students should know that after this special payment, they can expect to receive education payments on the normal schedule -- the beginning of the month following the period for which they are reimbursed.

"This is an extraordinary action we're taking," said Shinseki. "But it's necessary because we recognize the hardships some of our Veterans face."

More than 27,500 students have already received benefits for housing or books under the new Post-9/11 GI Bill, or their schools received their tuition payments.

## Student Veterans Of America Update



***Student Veterans of America***, a group formed to improve veteran's education benefits and transition services, now has 200 chapters and expects continued growth, its executive director announced 10 SEP. Afghanistan war veteran Derek Blumke, who also was a co-founder of the two-year-old group, said reaching 200 chapters is an important milestone for "military veterans who have traded boots for books."

One of the main reasons the group was formed was to push for updated education benefits for a new generation of combat veterans, and to get assistance for students in the National Guard and reserve components whose education was disrupted by deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Most veterans attending college are older than other students and have different challenges in completing a degree — one reason why they have banded together so quickly, said Air Force veteran Blumke.

Enactment of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, which took effect August 1, marked success on the group's top agenda item. That program's promise of tuition, fees, book allowances and living stipends is expected to bring more veterans to college and university campuses. The group's vice president, Michael Dakduk, said veterans who learned to watch out for each other when deployed are now watching out for each other on campuses. Dakduk is a Marine veteran who deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. Blumke said the 200th chapter, approved September 7, is located at Fort Lewis College, Colo.

With enactment of the new GI Bill benefit, the group has expanded with new missions, launching a mental health and suicide prevention program, providing transition assistance to wounded and disabled veterans enrolled in college and establishing an alumni program so veterans who have graduated can help veterans still in school.

For more info on this organization refer to [www.studentveterans.org](http://www.studentveterans.org). One feature of this site is a map of the U.S. on which you can click the geographic location of the school a chapter is associated with and send an email to the Chapter representative with whatever questions you may have about your education and/or benefits.



[Source: AirForceTimes Rick Maze article 10 Sep 09 ++]

## Veterans Outreach at the Buffalo State College, Small Business Development Center

**V**eterans outreach at the Buffalo State College, Small Business Development Center, is about finding veterans who want to be small business owners, veterans who want to learn more about what it takes to be an entrepreneur.

Our mission is to take a "hands-on" approach to teaching the core business skills required to bring an entrepreneurial idea to life ... and to keep it alive. We work primarily through one-on-one relationships with our clients, listening and teaching in a way that illuminates the business idea and helps it evolve into a real business, that can make its way in the marketplace.

We begin by listening to you explain your idea. We will seek to learn about your idea; it is an essential first step. You will learn about your idea too ... by the simple act of having to explain it to someone else. It may be the first time you have ever really attempted to share your thinking with someone.

The idea will begin to come alive in our discussion.

Eventually we will begin to ask questions, slowly bringing a business sense to your thinking, helping you begin to understand your idea in a different way ... in relation to markets, revenue streams, customers and financial realities. The outcome of our work together, will be a clear and comprehensive business plan, a cash management plan and a working relationship that will help you launch your business.

Here are some numbers for you. Studies by the Small Business Administration, looking at veteran entrepreneurial activity in the United States, document that over fifteen percent of

the twenty five million veterans are small business owners. Other studies, on general entrepreneurial activity, document an eleven percent entrepreneurial rate for the general population. Supporting a conclusion ... in the SBA report ... *"that military service appears to have provided necessary business skills to a significant portion of both current veteran business owners and those planning to become owners."*

That the SBA study goes on to state that ... *"success rates for veteran started small businesses is significantly higher than the success rate for businesses started by non-veterans"* ... simply drives the point home ... **the veteran population is fertile ground for entrepreneurial activity.**

The outreach program at the Buffalo State College, Small Business Development Center, has four key parts which work together to help us find and engage our veterans:

1. **Engage the existing veteran support groups** ... *VA Medical Center, Veterans Affairs, Vet Center, Erie County Veteran Services, and Women's Veteran Services*
2. **Build relationships with existing community based organizations** ... *Buffalo Urban League, Hispanics United, Seneca Nation, Project Homeless and the rural development agencies*
3. **Stay engaged with veterans through ongoing training workshops** ... *a standard entrepreneurial development workshop lead by the SBDC but presented and mentored by existing veteran entrepreneurs.*

*(Continued on page 6)*



(Continued from page 5)

**4. Individual small business development counseling and mentoring ...**  
*working with individuals veterans at the SDBC, along with potential mentors to help veterans succeed.*

We feel that this program will help us find and lead our potential veteran entrepreneurs to the success they have demonstrated they can achieve. An equal part of our veteran outreach work is to find and engage our successful entrepreneurs ... or what is sometimes called ... "vetrepreneurs." The potential lessons learned that the existing group of "vetrepreneurs" holds ... can be invaluable ... to emerging "vetrepreneurs."

*Never in the history of our military have so few been asked to do so much.*

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have been going on for almost eight years. Our military and their families are continuing to be asked to confront multiple deployments, a difficult two-front war zone and all the challenges that come with this. Not enough challenge for you, then add the fact that many of our deployed military members are from our reserve and National Guard units, when they deploy they leave their jobs behind.

Legal protections aside ... military veterans are returning to jobs that are gone as a result of our difficult economic environment.

The Veterans Outreach effort at the Buffalo State College, Small Business Development

Center, is an attempt to help veterans reengage our economy when they come home.

No job when you return ... "have you considered creating one?"

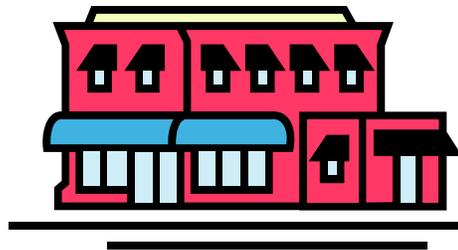
Has your military experience changed your perspective on what you want to do with your life ... "perhaps building your own business is part of your future?"

You have come up with a great idea while deployed that you want to give a try ... "a small business might be the vehicle to make it happen?"

If you are a veteran, and you think a small business might be part of your future? There is a community of people and programs to help you get started. Are you a vetrepreneur, do you want to help other veterans get started? If so, there is a community and programs that would be better with your support.

You can begin by calling the Buffalo State College, Small Business Development Center, and asking for **John McKeone, the Veteran Counselor.**

**John McKeone**  
**Business Advisor and Veterans Counselor**  
**716.878.4030**  
**[mckeonj@buffalostate.edu](mailto:mckeonj@buffalostate.edu)**



**John McKeone** is the new Veterans Outreach Coordinator at the Small Business Development Center on the Buffalo State College campus. He is a Navy veteran who served as a Quartermaster on destroyers and frigates during the 1980s. He spent his professional career as manager in the automotive industry...and recently has begun putting his experience and skills to work helping people start small businesses.

# Veteran Employment

The number of unemployed Iraq and Afghanistan veterans is now almost the same as the number of service members currently deployed in support of those two wars, according to new Labor Department numbers.

A key member of Veterans of Foreign Wars said the data indicates that the government needs to do more to help separating combat veterans find jobs and that veterans need to think about their options, including using the improved GI Bill. Labor Department figures released 4 SEP show the nation's unemployment rate has now reached 9.7% (the highest in 23 years) and the rate among Iraq and Afghanistan veterans is 11.3%.



About 185,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are out of work, just 9,000 fewer than the number currently deployed to those two areas, said Justin Brown of the VFW's national legislative service. "The government needs to do more to help, like making sure veterans are getting a piece of the economic stimulus package that really short-changed veterans," Brown said. "And people who are separating from the service need to think about what they are going to do."

One option, Brown said, is for separating service members to use the Post-9/11 GI Bill to attend college. The program pays full tuition and fees, plus an allowance for books and a living stipend, that can help prepare veterans for a better job while tiding them over until the economy improves. "They can come back into the job market when it is better," Brown said.

An unemployment rate that is higher for recent combat veterans than for the overall U.S. population is not a sign of discrimination against veterans, Brown said, but a sign that service members leaving the military today are hamstrung in some ways in the hunt for jobs.

"A 22-year-old getting out of the service right now has networks of friends and family who are not employment networks," Brown said. "The primary way they are finding jobs are those listed in the paper or on the Web, and those are the hardest jobs to get because that's where there is the most competition." The economic stimulus passed earlier this year was supposed to create 3.5 million jobs, but veterans received no special treatment and, in some ways, ended up losing ground, he said.

If the money was spent by the federal government, there would be several requirements for setting aside jobs for veterans, such as making sure jobs are listed with veterans' job centers. Instead, the stimulus bill provided the money for projects in the form of state grants, and states are under no obligation to follow those rules. Brown said he hopes Congress changes the rules later this year.

[Source: AirForceTimes Rick Maze article 4 Sep 09 ++]

## Buffalo's 'Veterans Court' Wins Praise in Congress

**B**uffalo City Judge Robert T. Russell Jr.'s "Veterans Treatment Court" is helping dozens of troubled former military personnel straighten up and stay out of prison — and that's just the beginning.

Russell's idea has inspired 10 other communities nationwide to set up similar courts.

It has prompted three states to pass laws aimed at encouraging the creation of veterans courts and led Sen. John F. Kerry, D-Mass., and Rep. Patrick Kennedy, D-R. I., to push for federal funding for the concept.

It also brought Russell and several other Buffalo-area officials to a Wednesday round-table discussion with the House Veterans Affairs Committee, where they heard nothing but praise for a Buffalo-born idea that's catching fire nationwide.

"You have been an inspiration to people all over the country," said Rep. Bob Filner, D-Calif., the committee's chairman.

"You win my 'wow' award," added Rep. Steve Buyer of Indiana, the committee's top Republican, who said Russell's success at helping troubled veterans "really wows me."

Russell adapted "drug courts," which seek treatment rather than incarceration for low-level offenders, for the wave of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans he saw entering the criminal-justice system.

Working with the Veterans Affairs Health Center Network and the local Veterans Affairs office, Russell's court pairs veterans guilty of nonviolent felony or misdemeanor offenses with volunteer veteran mentors, requiring them to adhere to a strict schedule of rehabilitation programs and court appearances.

So far, 120 vets have entered the program, and only five have been kicked out. Of the program's 18 graduates to date, not one has been re-arrested, Russell said.

"They are clean and sober and actively addressing any mental health needs," Russell said. "All are either employed or pursuing further education. Many have been able to mend strained relationships with family and friends, and those who were homeless were able to attain stable housing."



*Buffalo City Judge Robert T. Russell Jr., right, tells the House Veterans Affairs Committee about "Veterans Treatment Court."*

In other words, the program is taking psychologically wounded warriors — including many who suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder or drug and alcohol addiction — and setting them on a path for a better life.

"Who better deserves a second chance than a veteran?" asked Jack O'Connor, the mentor coordinator for the Buffalo Veterans Treatment Court.

O'Connor told of one man who developed a drug habit soon after returning from war. After his arrest, he appeared disheveled in the courtroom, still showing the effects of his addiction.

After going through the court program, he's clean and sober, has a job and is in his first year at Erie Community College, O'Connor said.

The court works well because it points troubled veterans to exactly the services they need, be it medical care, psychological help or housing, said Jennifer P. Stergion of the Committee on Veterans and Servicemembers Legal Issues in Buffalo.

"There's really no limit to the services they provide," she said. The peer mentoring that other veterans provide is particularly important, witnesses said.

"One reason this works is the camaraderie that comes with serving in the military," said Patrick W. Welch, director of the Erie County Veterans Service Agency.

Witnesses said mentoring sessions can include a lot of tough talk, but Rep. John Boozman, R-Ark., also noted the threat of tough action.

*(Continued on page 9)*

(Continued from page 8)

"The hammer you've got is that if these guys don't behave, they go back to jail," he said. "That's the ultimate accountability."

Russell established his veterans court in January 2008, and it quickly became a sensation. NBC's "Today" show did a feature story on the Buffalo court a year ago, and the National Law Journal did an article about it.

Before long, veterans courts had sprung up in Rochester, Chicago and several other communities. Illinois, Nevada and Texas passed laws aimed at launching additional veterans courts, and Kerry and Kennedy started pushing their bill.

Kennedy said the legislation, authorizing \$25 million in federal funding for veterans courts, could become law this year.

Veterans courts are not without their critics, however. Rep. Timothy J. Walz, D-Minn., noted that an American Civil Liberties Union representative questioned why they were needed and compared the concept to establishing special courts for "crimes committed by police officers, teachers or politicians."

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By Jerry Zremski, NEWS WASHINGTON BUREAU CHIEF  
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## National Guard Retirement Guide

The U.S. Army has published the first Retirement Guide for National Guard Soldiers and Families. The 56-page Army National Guard Information Guide on Non-Regular Retirement was written for anyone with an interest in how a member of the Army National Guard can earn retirement points credit, qualify for retired pay for non-regular service and apply for retired pay.

It is the result of collaboration between the Army G-1 Retirement Services Division, part of the G-1's Human Resources Policy Directorate, and the Army National Guard. The rules, links, and references covered therein are not the definitive answer on any subject. All are subject changes in laws, directives, regulations and the determinations of the offices and agencies responsible for the information assembled and presented here.

For matters concerning individual Retirement Points Accounting, contact the RPAM Administrator (Retirement Points Accounting Management Administrator) for the state in which the Soldier is a member or held membership. For specific determinations of retirement eligibility, the RPAM Administrator can refer questions to Human Resources Command - St Louis (HRC-St Louis).

The guide can be viewed at [www.armyg1.army.mil/rso/docs/ARReserveRetirementGuide.doc](http://www.armyg1.army.mil/rso/docs/ARReserveRetirementGuide.doc).

[Army Echoes Sep-Dec 09 ++]



## VA Suicide Prevention

The Suicide Prevention campaign of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is expanding its outreach to all Veterans by piloting an online, one-to-one "chat service" for Veterans who prefer reaching out for assistance using the Internet. Called "Veterans Chat," the new service enables Veterans, their families and friends to go online where they can anonymously chat with a trained VA counselor. If a "chatter" is determined to be in a crisis, the counselor can take immediate steps to transfer the person to the VA Suicide Prevention Hotline, where further counseling and referral services are provided and crisis intervention steps can be taken. "This online feature is intended to reach out to all Veterans who may or may not be enrolled in the VA health care system and provide them with online access to the Suicide Prevention Lifeline," said Dr. Gerald Cross, VA's Acting Under Secretary for Health. "It is meant to provide Veterans with an anonymous way to access VA's suicide prevention services."

Veterans, family members or friends can access Veterans Chat through the suicide prevention Web site ([www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)). There is a Veterans tab on the left-hand side of the website that will take them directly to Veteran resource information. On this page, they can see the Hotline number (1-800-273-TALK), and click on the Veterans Chat tab on the right side of the Web page to enter. Veterans retain anonymity by entering whatever names they choose once they enter the one-on-one chat. They are then joined by a counselor who is trained to provide information and respond to the requests and concerns of the caller. If the counselor decides the caller is in a crisis, the counselor will encourage the Veteran to call the Suicide Prevention Hotline, where a

trained suicide prevention counselor will determine whether crisis intervention techniques are required. The pilot program, which has been in operation since 3 JUL, has already had positive results. In one instance, the online counselor determined that a Veteran in the chat required immediate assistance. The counselor convinced the Veteran to provide the counselor with a home telephone number and then remained in the chat room with the Veteran while the hotline staff called the number and talked to the Veteran's mother. The hotline counselor worked with the Veteran's mother to convince the Veteran to be admitted to a medical facility for further treatment.

"The chat line is not intended to be a crisis response line," said Dr. Janet Kemp, VA's National Suicide Prevention Coordinator at the VA medical center in Canandaigua, N.Y., where VA's trained counselors staff the chat line 24 hours a day, seven days a week. VA's suicide prevention hotline is also staffed continuously. "Chat responders are trained in an intervention method specifically developed for the chat line to assist people with emotional distress and concerns," Kemp said. "We have procedures they can use to transfer chatters in crisis to the hotline for more immediate assistance." Both Veterans Chat and the VA's Suicide Prevention Hotline have been established under the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, which was established through collaboration between VA and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) of the Department of Health and Human Services. Since becoming operational in July 2007, VA's Suicide Prevention Hotline has received more than 150,000 calls, resulting in 4,000 rescues.

[Source: VA News Release 31 Aug 09 ++]



# American Veterans Gather in Holland

## 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of 'Market Garden' Celebrated

By René van Slooten

**O**n September 17 through 19, hundreds of American, British and Polish veterans gathered in Holland, to celebrate the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 'Operation Market Garden.' That was Montgomery's daring plan to end the war in Europe early in 1944, by occupying the bridges over the major rivers and canals in Holland with airborne troops, in order to create a free corridor into Germany. The operation became known as 'A Bridge too Far', because the British 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division could not hold the bridge over the Rhine at Arnhem, although the American 82<sup>nd</sup> and 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division reached their goals at Eindhoven, Grave and Nijmegen, despite heavy losses. But 'Market Garden' did liberate a large part of Holland and considerably weakened the German army, and the American, British and Polish soldiers became instant heroes, to this very day.

This year the major part of the celebrations were organized on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of September around Nijmegen, where the large bridge over the river Waal was the center of the festivities. Together with thousands of grateful Dutch citizens, Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands and Prince Philip of England watched the parade of the veterans. Many of them were sitting in military vehicles from the war, that are kept in spotless original condition by the volunteers of the Dutch organization 'Keep them Rolling': HD motorcycles, Willy jeeps, GM trucks, Dodge command cars, White half-tracks and even a Sherman tank were present.

But on September 18 the celebrations were in Eindhoven, the town where I was born two months after the liberation by the 506 PIR, the 'Band of Brothers' from the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division. This happened just in time to save my parents from prison and worse, because they had helped to hide Jews and were betrayed. My mother had already been arrested and interrogated once, and she was expecting a second arrest. No wonder that she always remembered the American paratroopers as 'The angels who fell from Heaven'!

Since the liberation saved my life, it is always emotional for me to meet American veterans from WWII, although after 65 years I still have not found the right words to express my gratitude. Fortunately, there were quite a few veterans his year, and it was a great joy to see how enthusiastic they were received and honored by the population of Eindhoven. Wherever the veterans went, they were welcomed, thanked and touched, and they were continuously asked for their autographs and signatures in

books about the war. The shops had 'Thank you for the Liberation' posters in the front windows, and the personnel in hotels, restaurants and pubs wore special 'Thank You' T-shirts.

In the afternoon of the 18<sup>th</sup>, the American veterans, American guests, the American ambassador and many Dutch civilians and American and Dutch military gathered in the forest near the small town of Best, to commemorate Lt. Col. Robert G. Cole of the 502 PIR, who died there 65 years ago. Lt. Col. Cole was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions in Normandy, but he was killed near Best before he could receive it. He is buried at the American Military Cemetery 'Margraten' in The Netherlands, together with 8,300 of his comrades who fell during 'Market Garden' and the 'Battle of the Bulge' in the Ardennes.

### Capt. John Doherty and his mysteries

Ever since I knew that my life was saved by American soldiers, I wanted to express my gratitude. Several years ago I tried to adopt one of the graves at 'Margraten', but these had all been adopted by Dutch civilians a long time ago. Many graves remain adopted by the same Dutch families, from one generation to the next, since the war! But since there is a waiting list for adoption of a grave at 'Margraten', a year ago the possibility was offered to adopt one of the 1,722 names on the 'Wall of the Missing,' which I did immediately. And I was not the only one, for within half a year more than 700 names had been adopted!

So for a year now I have been the proud adopter of Capt. John S. Doherty, 319<sup>th</sup> Glider Field Artillery Battalion, 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. He was MIA on 18 September 1944, the



*John Doherty and his wife Ruth, shortly before he left for Europe*

same date that my parents were liberated! This struck me particularly, and I wanted to find Doherty's family and know all about him. Thanks to the excellent websites of the American Battle Monuments Commission and the World War II Memorial, I soon found out that John Doherty came from Lockport, Erie County, NY, and that he was a medical officer. Via the internet I found Patrick Welch, the Director of Veterans Affairs in Erie County, who incredibly quickly managed to bring me into contact with Do-

*(Continued on page 12)*

(Continued from page 11)

herty's family. They were surprised at first, but then very happy to learn that people in Holland still care so much about what happened 65 years ago. Doherty's granddaughter Elizabeth and I have now joined forces to find out what happened to Doherty on 18 September 1944, why he and three of his men were MIA after they landed with their Waco glider near Nijmegen, and why their bodies were never recovered, despite many searches of the area after the war. And I can say that we have already made much progress to solve that mystery, thanks to information from American and German archives, the help of Dutch and German journalists, and the advice and support of Charles and Alfred Nigl, the authors of *'Silent Wings Savage Death: The Saga of the 319<sup>th</sup> GFAB'*.

#### Links:

[www.YouTube.com](http://www.YouTube.com) for video's of the celebrations in Holland. Search with 'Market Garden 2009'

<http://www.stichting18september.nl/English/index.php> for pictures of the celebrations in Eindhoven.

[www.fallennotforgotten.nl](http://www.fallennotforgotten.nl) and [www.heroesatmargraten.com](http://www.heroesatmargraten.com) for the adoption program and stories of American heroes who are resting at 'Margraten' Cemetery, or whose names are on the 'Wall of the Missing'.



Eindhoven 18 Sept. 1944:

*My father took this picture on 18 September 1944: my brother in front of two paratroopers of the 506th PIR. The officer on the right is 1Lt Herbert Viertel who was in combat in Normandy, Holland and the Ardennes. He has three Purple Hearts and now lives in Miami, where I located him after a search of several years.*

## Mysteries of John Doherty and the missing men of 82nd Airborne

Capt. John Doherty was in one of almost 50 Waco gliders that overshot the landing zones near Groesbeek and Nijmegen and landed near the little German towns of Wyler, Zyfflich and Kranenburg.

These gliders carried men and supplies for the 319<sup>th</sup> and 320<sup>th</sup> GFAB, and the 504th and 508th PIR. Unfortunately they landed between experienced and well armed German Fallschirmjäger' (paratroopers) who were rushed into the area after the first Allied landings the day before. Heavy fights followed and many men were killed and wounded.

Some American soldiers managed to hide in the fields and could return to their units during the night. German sources mention at least 31 American officers and men being taken POW, but many are still MIA, which is one of the remaining mysteries of 'Market Garden'.

In order to solve that, I would like to come into contact with the men who were taken POW at Wyler, Zyfflich and Kranenburg on that fateful afternoon of 18 September 1944.

And how could one of John Doherty's dog tags turn up in 2003, during a garage sale near Niagara? Was it taken to one of the POW camps near Niagara by a German POW? Or was it found by one of the searches after the war, and did the finder not want to bother the family anymore since the case of John Doherty was closed when he was officially declared dead on 19 September 1945?



John Doherty's name on the Wall of the Missing at Margraten Cemetery

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# The Western New York Connection...

## Staff Sergeant Aaron Kenefick

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*Staff Sergeant Aaron Kenefick  
1979-2009*



*Members of Chapter 77, Vietnam Veterans of America, present a "Remembrance Rendering" to the family of GySgt Aaron Kenefick, USMC. Left to right: members of the Kenefick family; Tom Konopka, Chapter President; Ed Bodine and Rick Topolski, Board Members.*

Staff Sgt. Aaron M. Kenefick was a native of Williamsville, New York. In tenth grade, he moved to the Atlanta Georgia area with his mother and joined the Marine Corps after graduating from Roswell High School in 1998.

In his twelve year career, he was twice named Marine of the Year. In 2001 he was stationed in Germany and for a few years served on humanitarian missions in Africa. He returned to America and attended Army Airborne School at Fort Benning, Georgia, where he graduated as a Distinguished Honor Graduate. Assigned then to Central Command in Tampa, Florida, he went several times to Iraq.

Offered a desk job, Aaron would have nothing to do with it; he wanted to be out, teaching and supporting his men. His deep caring for his fellow soldiers earned him a Purple Heart a few days before his death. He took shrapnel during a fire-fight, and quickly asked the medics to get it out, he needed to be with his men. A quick sew job and he was back out.

Aaron was killed along with three other Marines in an ambush in Afghanistan on September 8, 2009, in the Kunar Province. Aaron was laid to rest next to his maternal grandfather, Stuart Price, in Acacia Park and Resthaven Memorial Gardens in North Tonawanda, New York.

<http://freedomremembered.com/index.php/gunnery-sergeant-aaron-kenefick/>

## October 2009 Veterans Advocate of the Month Chris Kreiger



*Staff at the Veterans Service Agency with recipient, Chris Kreiger (fourth from left)*

The Erie County Veterans Service Agency has recognized Chris M. Kreiger, Sr. as the October 2009 Veterans Advocate of the Month. Chris is the President of WNY Heroes, Inc., a non-for-profit organization that strives to assist disabled and needy war veterans and service members, their dependents, widows and children of deceased veterans.

Chris lives in Tonawanda with his wife, Melissa and two children. He joined the United States Army in 1997. In 1998, he participated in Operation Gold Cargo. Additionally, he was called to active duty to serve under Operation Join Forge in Bosnia, working with NATO in mass grave sites. In 2001, during the birth of his second son, he was called to ground zero working with FEMA for security, securing train stations with the New York Police Department and Port Authority. Chris participated in Operation Noble Eagle, working with customs and immigration in securing bridges and detecting illegal immigrants.

Chris served in Iraq from 2003 - 2004. While in Iraq, Chris was hit by a roadside bomb, which resulted in many injuries. He has had surgery on his right leg and lower back. He has a dislocated hip and has experienced a loss of hearing in his right ear. Additionally, Chris has been diagnosed with Traumatic Brain Injury. Upon returning home, Chris struggled with his disabilities and lost his home. He is now 100% service-connected.

We would like to thank Chris for all of his hard work and dedication to our community's veterans. You have truly made an impact on our community and to our team here at the Erie County Veterans Service Agency.



The Erie County Veterans Service Agency

*Presents:*

# The Veterans Opportunities Fair

*Providing veterans with Education, Employment and Business opportunities*

**Buffalo Convention Center  
Thursday, November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2009  
10:00 AM to 2:00 PM**

A *free* continental breakfast will be served.

Erie County Executive Chris Collins will be delivering the opening remarks.

Proceeds will benefit:

WNY Heroes, Inc. and The Buffalo Renaissance Foundation.

If you wish to participate in this event, please contact:

Alyssa at 716-858-6363 or email: [Alyssa.Gingerich@erie.gov](mailto:Alyssa.Gingerich@erie.gov)

## *Mission Statement of Erie County Veterans Services*

To insure that every veteran in the county is registered in the VA System and is fully aware of all the benefits that they have earned.

To make veterans an economic force in education, employment and business development.

## **Call for Volunteers**

### *Military Sexual Trauma (MST)*

In association with the UB Department of Sociology and the Buffalo VA, Dr. Brenda Moore is conducting research to better understand the coping mechanisms associated with MST. The study is open to both male and female veterans who have screened positive for MST.

Volunteers will be required to participate in an individual one-hour interview with Dr. Moore. The interview will cover topics ranging from military experience, coping strategies, VA treatment and support networks.

Participants will receive \$25 in compensation.

Contact: Dr. Brenda Moore  
[socbrend@buffalo.edu](mailto:socbrend@buffalo.edu)  
716.645.8470

### Contact us at:

#### **Erie County Veterans Service Agency**

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<http://www.erie.gov/veterans/>

- Patrick Welch  
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- Sergio Rodriguez  
Deputy Director
- Alyssa Gingerich  
Assistant Service Officer
- Judy Ehman, RSVP Volunteer  
and Newsletter Editor



IT TAKES THE COURAGE AND  
STRENGTH OF A WARRIOR TO  
ASK FOR HELP...

If you're in an emotional crisis,  
call 1-800-273-TALK (Press "1" for Veterans)  
[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)