



Georgia Department of Veterans Service

Cultivating community connections
– empowering Georgia’s veterans
and their families to flourish.

April 2025

CELEBRATING RAQUEL DARDEN: GEORGIA’S WOMAN VETERAN OF THE YEAR FOR 2025



U.S. Army Lt. Col. (ret.) Raquel Durden was recently selected as 2025 Georgia Woman Veteran of the Year at a celebratory luncheon at the VECTR Center in Warner Robins.

“It’s more than a personal milestone, it’s a tribute to the strength and resilience of all veterans who continue

to serve their communities. It was deeply inspiring to stand alongside the 20 other remarkable nominees and witness the passion and impact of their work,” said Durden.

Durden’s 26 year military career included time in the Military Intelligence Corps, Finance Corps, and Recruiting Operations. Her exemplary career provided a wealth of knowledge for her post-service endeavors.

Following her military career, Durden has held several positions and later cofounded Humble Warrior Wellness & Yoga, a non-profit which has impacted and changed the lives of veterans and their family members for 7 years.

Durden was motivated to create the non-profit after surviving her own health challenges, including a fight against advanced stage cancer. After hosting a small retreat with members of Georgia Military Women, Durden knew she had a passion to help others find peace and support the overall well-being of women who serve and have served.

Participants consistently share their gratitude for the program’s dedication to teaching women warriors how to embrace self-care through evidence-based and experiential tools.

As the 2025 Georgia Woman Veteran of the Year, Durden plans to host a series of events centered around the theme of ‘CONNECT’ - Community, Outreach, Networks, Navigating resources, Empowerment, Camaraderie, and Thrive.

Her future plans include amplifying the conversation around two of the core pillars of connection and wellness. This includes sharing the exploring the benefits of holistic practices with veterans and first responders.

ANISA PALMER RECEIVES VETERAN IMPACT AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS



U.S. Army veteran Anisa Palmer was recently selected to receive the GDVS Veteran Impact Award for 2025.

Deeply humbled to receive this award, Palmer says this honor is not just for her. “It’s for every woman veteran who’s had to fight battles on and off the battlefield. It’s for every survivor, caregiver, and family member who stands in the gap,” said Palmer.

Palmer’s time in the U.S. Army at Fort Bragg helped establish her expertise in handling complex and nuanced situations. As a logistician, she learned how to manage supplies while ensuring the safety of more than 70 personnel in a combat deployment environment.

Her post-military career was influenced by her family. After watching her mother fight tirelessly for at-risk youth before losing her battle with breast cancer and seeing her father not be deterred by functioning in a wheelchair after being hit by a drunk driver, Palmer knew she had to do something more to help others in need.

“It was my divine calling to serve others through impact,” said Palmer. She cofounded I Will Survive, Inc, a non-profit which provides economic support, prevention education, and health and wellness services to those at higher risk and those affected by breast cancer.

After 14 years of service and advocacy, I Will Survive, Inc. has made a significant financial impact with the community of survivors as they navigate the challenges they encounter with cancer – over \$800,000 paid in rental assistance, a 100% zero eviction success rate, and more.

Palmer’s unwavering commitment to serving and inspiring others led to her selection as the recipient of the Georgia Veteran Impact Award.

“To the veteran community—you are not alone. Your service is not forgotten, and your sacrifices are not invisible. We owe you more than words. We owe you action, resources, care, and community. Whether you’re struggling silently or thriving, know that your voice matters and your life has meaning. I Will Survive, Inc. stands with you,” said Palmer.



VET FAIR ASSISTS HUNDREDS OF VETERANS IN NEWNAN

Over 400 veterans attended a Veterans Resource Fair on April 11, 2025 in Newnan. GDVS Veteran Service Officers from were on-site to provide assistance with claims and benefits at the event.

“We assisted 119 veterans and family members with questions about claims and state and federal veterans benefits. We were also able to file 68 disability or pension claims,” said GDVS North Region Director Ken Childre.

GDVS Commissioner Dr. Patricia Ross and GDVS Executive Director of Field Operations and Appeals were also on-site to provide support. They helped support the team by responding to questions, looking up DD214s, scanning documents or escorting veterans to other agencies in attendance for additional resources.



EVERY STORY COUNTS

Georgians, we need your help to register at least 500 military women during 2025 in the Military Women’s Memorial’s National Digital Repository.

Georgia has thousands of stories waiting to be told – from currently serving members to veterans and retirees.

Family members can also share the service and history of a departed loved one.

The contributions of these courageous heroes deserves to be honored and remembered for generations to come.

Visit the Military Women’s Memorial’s website at <https://womensmemorial.org/> to get started and record their place in national history.

EXCITING CHANGES: GDVS ALBANY OFFICE NOW IN NEW LOCATION

Heads up, veterans and families in Albany! The Georgia Department of Veterans Service Albany office has moved to a new location in Artesian Hall on the main campus of Albany Technical College.

“We are proud to work alongside Albany Technical College to expand our reach in Southwest Georgia. This new office represents a meaningful step forward in supporting our veteran community,” said GDVS Commissioner Patricia Ross.

The office helps veterans and their families, caretakers, and survivors with a variety of state and federal benefits, including filing claims for disability compensation and pension, answering questions about educational benefits, and providing information on VA health care.

“Whether it’s benefits assistance, guidance, or just a listening ear, we’re here for our veterans every step of the way,” said GDVS South Region Director Sherri Whitfield.

HONORING SERVICE : GEORGIAN RECEIVES FRENCH LEGION OF HONOR



Georgia WWII veteran and centenarian Alan Kinder was recently presented with France’s highest decoration, the French Legion of Honor, for his actions as part of the 14th Field Artillery Observation Battalion.

Kinder was presented the medal during a ceremony at the American Legion in Smyrna by French Consul General in Atlanta, Anne-Laure Desjonquères.

Kinder has sharp recollections of his military service during WWII, including the intense fighting during Battle of the Bulge and the day he almost lost his life when sheltering from the frigid weather in Luxembourg City.

Kinder returned to Normandy for the 80th anniversary of D-Day last year and plans to return in June to commemorate the Battle of the Bulge, which ended in January of 1945.



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