



**Georgia Department
of Veterans Service**

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

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**HONORING EXCELLENCE IN CARE: GWVNH-AUGUSTA EARNS TOP
HONORS FOR 11TH CONSECUTIVE YEAR**

The Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home (GWVNH-Augusta) in Augusta has once again upheld their stellar reputation, earning a “Best-In-Class” distinction in senior care for their 11th consecutive year. Activated Insights, an industry-leading customer satisfaction firm, ranked GWVNH-Augusta within the top 15% of facilities nationwide in 15 out of 16 measured categories.



“it is a great honor for the staff to receive recognition for serving and providing care for our nation’s heroes,” said Carlton Deese, Executive Director of GWVNH-Augusta.

Activated Insights scored the home in several categories - including overall satisfaction, overall customer experience, nursing care, professional therapy, and activities therapy.

“We believe the men and women who have served our country deserve the best care possible, and this award demonstrates our dedication to exceptional patient care,” said Deese. “This achievement is a validation of the staff’s commitment to our mission. We could not have achieved this accomplishment without our wonderful partnership with Augusta University.”

The Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home (GWVNH) in Augusta is a 130-bed skilled nursing care facility which operates under an interagency agreement between the Georgia Department of Veterans Service and Augusta University.



The GDVS maintains a field office on-site with VA-accredited Veteran Service Officers available to assist residents and veterans in Augusta with their claims, veterans benefits, and any additional support they may need.



NEW ROLE, SAME GOAL: SPOTLIGHTING EMPLOYEE DEDICATION AND CAREER ADVANCEMENT



“My job gives me a sense of purpose,” said State Approving Agency Coordinator Roger McDonald. “I decided to work with the Georgia Department of Veterans Service and it has been deeply rewarding, yet both professionally and emotionally demanding.”

McDonald began working with the GDVS as a VSO in Newnan in 2023. Wanting a new challenge, he recently transitioned to the State Approving Agency when a coordinator position was available.

“This was the perfect next step and allows me to grow professionally while continuing to support Georgia veterans,” said McDonald.

A native of Winfield, Alabama, McDonald completed his military training in several Georgia schools, including AIT at Fort Gordon and Airborne School at Fort Benning. He eventually retired as a Lieutenant Colonel out of Fort McPherson after over 22 years in the Army.

McDonald feels blessed to have had the opportunity to travel the world, most especially Korea where he met his wife. A father of 3 daughters, McDonald spends his days off supporting the youngest in flag football, while also enjoying fishing, hiking, and watching SEC football.

His advice to future and new VSOs?

“Pace yourself. Time management is vital to your success.”

A FASTER PATH TO SUPPORT: VA STREAMLINES SURVIVOR BENEFITS PROCESS

Surviving family members may soon see faster access to benefits thanks to a new VA regulation designed to streamline the survivor benefits process.

The new regulation, set to go into effect on February 23, will allow VA to pay the higher of two benefits—Survivors Pension or Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)—without delaying the process of developing the lesser benefit. Previously, families needed to wait for VA to process claims for DIC and Survivors Pension separately and receive a formal decision before receiving any payments.

DIC is a tax-free monthly monetary benefit paid to eligible surviving spouses, children, and parents of a service member who died in the line of duty or veterans who died from service-connected injuries or illnesses.

Survivors Pension offers tax-free monthly payments to qualified surviving spouses and unmarried dependent children of wartime veterans who meet certain income and net worth limits.

GDVS Veteran Service Officers are available to help you file for survivor benefits at no cost. Find your local office at <https://veterans.ga.gov/field-offices>.

EXPANDED TAX RELIEF FOR VETERANS WITH VA HOME LOANS

Starting this year, veterans, service members, and surviving spouses can deduct the one-time funding fee paid on a VA-backed or VA direct home loan when filing their taxes.

The funding fee typically ranges from 0.5% to 3.3%, depending on factors such as the loan type, loan amount, down payment, and whether the borrower is using the VA home loan benefit for the first time. This fee is paid at closing and can either be rolled into the total loan amount or paid directly by the veteran.

VA also provides funding-fee refunds and waivers for veterans receiving compensation for service-connected disabilities, as well as for Purple Heart recipients. To qualify for a refund, the effective date of your VA compensation must be on or before your loan closing date, or retroactive to that date.

According to Patrick Zondervan, executive director of VA’s Loan Guaranty Service, VA recently reached a milestone of granting the 29 millionth VA-guaranteed home loan to veterans, service members, and surviving spouses.

“We are pleased that eligible new borrowers can now deduct the funding fee and potentially put more money back in their pockets, which is where it belongs,” said Zondervan.

For more information on VA home loans, visit <https://www.va.gov/housing-assistance/home-loans/>.