



## Georgia Department of Veterans Service

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

July 2022

### COMMISSIONER’S CORNER

Summer is a time to connect with family and I was fortunate to do so this year. My uncle (USN veteran, Vietnam) and my aunt celebrated their 65th anniversary. What an incredible milestone! When I asked my uncle if he had been in the waters of Vietnam or in country, my husband let him know I was always working. In fact, he hadn’t—but all my uncles served in the military. Of my countless cousins, I have only one with military service, Leah.

As we celebrated military women at the state capitol on June 12th, and then during our women’s conference on June 25th, our women veterans are standing up and standing out as leaders in state government, in non-profits, and here within Georgia Department of Veterans Service. I am pleased to announce Ms. Shelly-Ann Simpson will be the new executive director of field operations and appeals in August. It’s exciting to see this often-overlooked population showing up and being proud of their military service!

July was a great month to share with other states. With visits from Kentucky and Alabama, it’s always good to learn from others, while sharing the tremendous work the GDVVS team is doing. Collaboration, whether between states, or other organizations helps us better serve veterans and their families.

It’s this theme of working together that underlies our new vision statement “Cultivating community connections – empowering Georgia’s veterans and their families to flourish.” Veterans thriving through our assistance or by connecting them to other agencies and individuals who can help is the goal. These men and women fought for our nation and our freedom and it’s our privilege to ensure they are empowered and able to reach their goals.

As we look toward annual training and the opportunity to learn and gather in-person, thank you for what you do each and every day to support our veterans. In many cases, you give them hope!



– Patricia Ross,  
Commissioner of  
Veterans Service

### PRESIDENT BIDEN SIGNS NINE NEW LAWS FOR VETERAN HEALTHCARE

In early June, with bipartisan support, President Joe Biden signed nine bills into law for veterans with a focus on expanding care for female soldiers diagnosed with cancer after being exposed to burn pits.

“I have said it before, we have one truly sacred commitment,” Biden said.

“This is to prepare and equip those we send into harm’s way and care for them and their families after they return home. This is a religious duty, and veterans are the backbone or spine of our country.”

Biden signed the **Dr. Katie Thomas Hendricks SERVICE ACT**, named after Marine Corps veteran, Katie Thomas Hendricks, who was exposed to toxic burn pits during her service in Iraq and later diagnosed with an aggressive form of breast cancer at the age of 25. This bill will extend access to mammograms for all female veterans who served in areas with burn pits or were exposed to other toxic chemicals. Thomas fought for many years to prove her cancer was related to the burn pits and pushed to increase screenings for female veterans.

In addition to extending access to mammograms, Biden signed the **Making Advances in Mammography and Medical Options for Veterans Act (MAMMO)**, which will not only focus on improving technology for mammograms, but also requires VA to upgrade all in-house breast imaging to 3D mammography. For veterans who reside in areas that do not offer in-house mammography, telemammography will be provided. He also extended the **Radiation Exposure Compensation Act**, known as **RECA**, which compensates individuals exposed to radiation from nuclear weapons testing or uranium mining or processing.

The remaining bills include the **Veterans Rapid Retraining Assistance Program Restoration and Recovery Act of 2022 (VRRAP)**; renaming the VA Outpatient Clinic in Oahu, Hawaii after former senator, and WWII army veteran, Daniel Akaka; **the Provo Veterans Center** will be renamed to honor the late WWII Veteran, Gail S. Halvorsen, known as the “Candy Bomber;” **The VA Facility Transfer Act**, which allows facility names to carry over in the event of a relocation; **The Strengthening Oversight for Veterans Act 2021** which will allow the VA Inspector General to administer more thorough investigations and reviews into allegations of misconduct; and finally the **United States Army Rangers Veterans of World War II Congressional Gold Medal Act**, recognizing the Army Ranger Veterans of World War II’s extraordinary service throughout World War II.



President Joe Biden signs into law nine bipartisan bills that will honor and improve care for America’s veterans during an event in the State Dining Room of the White House in Washington, Tuesday, June 7, 2022. (AP Photo/Susan Walsh)



## GDVS RECOGNIZES WOMAN VETERAN OF THE YEAR

Trailblazer and “thought leader,” Dr. Qwynn Galloway-Salazar says it “still feels like a dream” to be named the 2022 Georgia Woman Veteran of the Year.

She was awarded this honor on June 25, 2022 at the recent GDVS Women Veterans Conference in Sandy Springs.

Galloway-Salazar has served the military and veteran community for more than two decades, committing her time and working on national initiatives which impact social change and enhance the quality of life and well-being for veterans. She says “it is heartfelt and mission-driven work.”

Most recently, her passion has centered on suicide prevention and end of life care. She became an End-of-Life Doula and founded *In Their Honor, LLC.*, which inspires communities and organizations to implement training and support services for veterans and their families.

In addition to end-of-life care, she is Co-Principal Investigator of the Brooklyn College Veterans History Project. She believes listening to veterans recount their stories is “the way to make sense of the veteran experience to shape the care and support future generations of veterans receive.”

Galloway-Salazar, who is married to a retired combat veteran, earned a Ph.D. from Walden University in Industrial and Organizational Psychology.

The 2022 honoree believes “I stand on the shoulders of so many women veterans ... this award was for all of us. It recognizes the strides and contributions [we have made] throughout history. What an honor.”



## COMING EVENTS ANNUAL TRAINING

**July 18 – July 21**

Our field offices will be closed for the week as we hold annual training.

This mandatory training equips GDVS Veteran Service Officers with the knowledge and skills to assist veterans throughout the state, maintains our accreditation with VA, and ensures we offer Georgia’s veterans top-class care.

## NEW VA CLINIC

The grand opening for the Robert S. Poydasheff Veterans Affairs clinic in Columbus, GA will take place on **July 22**.

The clinic is named after the late Colonel Robert S. Poydasheff, Army veteran and former mayor of Columbus, Georgia.

The new clinic is located at 6910 River Road, Columbus, GA, 31904. It is part of the Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System (CAVHCS).

## VSO SPOTLIGHT: SURVIVING THE WILDS!



Deciding between making a TikTok video or making homemade bug spray is an easy choice for the campers enrolled in “Kid vs. Wild” survivor camp in Paulding County!

Kyle Hungarter, manager of the Georgia Department of Veterans Service’s Cartersville office, started the camp in Paulding County 5 years ago to “teach life valuable tools that social media and internet interaction lacks.”

Some of the skills include making fire with their hands, building fishing traps, how to apply camouflage, and learning the basics of first aid. He later aligned himself with Westridge Church to expand the program and joined their larger Surge Camp, where campers can choose a course to learn baking, robotics, and more.

For Army veteran Hungarter, developing and growing the survivor camp has allowed him to “apply my life’s training and send a positive message about veterans to my community, shattering stereotypes, but also being a positive influence at the same time.”

