



Georgia Department of Veterans Service

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

March 2025

REMAINS OF SAVANNAH NATIVE AND WWII NAVAL OFFICER JOHN CONNOLLY IDENTIFIED, LAID TO REST



After 81 years, the remains of United States Navy Chief Warrant Officer John Connolly have been identified. He was buried at Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors on March 27, 2025.

Born in Savannah, Georgia in 1893, John Gaynor Connolly enlisted in the Navy in 1913 and made Chief Pay Clerk by 1926. His 28-year career aboard various ships took him to multiple countries, including China, Russia, and the Philippines.

Connolly was stationed on the U.S.S. Oklahoma during WWII. On December 7, 1941, the U.S.S. Oklahoma was among the vessels anchored at Naval Base Pearl Harbor when the base was attacked and was one of the first vessels hit by torpedoes.

429 U.S.S. Oklahoma sailors lost their lives.

In 1950, all unidentified remains from the U.S.S. Oklahoma were laid to rest at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii.

In 2015 the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) began exhuming the graves of U.S.S. Oklahoma Unknowns, and through advanced forensic techniques, DPAA identified Connolly in December 2020. 32 U.S.S. Oklahoma crewmembers remain unidentified.

The Evarts-class destroyer escort U.S.S. Connolly (DE-306) was named in WO Connolly’s honor and sponsored by his widow. The ship was deployed to waters off Iwo Jima and Okinawa, protecting shipping convoys and supporting military operations. The U.S.S. Connolly was decommissioned in 1945.



CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2024 GEORGIA MILITARY HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

The 2024 Class of Georgia Military Veterans Hall of Fame was unveiled at the Georgia State Capitol on March 18, 2025. Governor and First Lady Kemp were in attendance to congratulate the 14 honorees and share remarks on the honorable occasion. The portraits of the inductees will be located inside the Georgia State Capitol.

For more information on the honorees, visit www.gmvhof.org.



PEACEFUL FAREWELLS, NO REGRETS: SPOTTING SCAM TACTICS

GDVS and the Georgia’s Secretary of State are urging veterans and their families, caretakers, and survivors to remain fraud aware.

Recently, the Secretary of State’s received news of a distressing scam where an imposter posing as a representative of Georgia National Veterans Cemetery preyed upon a grieving widow.

The imposter convinced the widow to send funds via Zelle and PayPal for an insurance policy for funeral expenses. No such insurance policy exists.

VA representatives will never approach you over the phone and ask for payment via third party companies. Multiple law enforcement authorities are investigating this matter further.

The Secretary of State urges the public to notice common signs of fraud:

1. **Bogus fees and upselling** of services that should be free.
2. **Pressure tactics** demanding immediate payment for unfamiliar services.

3. **False claims of unpaid debts** on the behalf of the deceased without verifiable proof.
4. **Unsolicited offers of help** from unverified sources or services claiming to advocate for your loved ones.

Tips to avoid falling victim to scams like these include:

1. **Research funeral homes** and check for disciplinary actions.
2. **Engage directly** with funeral homes and cemetery representatives to confirm plans and benefits.
3. **Ensure family members are informed** of end-of-life decisions and document them properly.
4. **Never sign blank documents or agreements** without reviewing charges in full.

If you or someone you know was the target of a burial or memorial related scam, report it to the Secretary of State’s Cemeteries Division at cemeteries@sos.ga.gov.

A DECADE OF ADVOCACY: CELEBRATING WOMEN VETERAN TRAILBLAZERS

The 10th annual Women Veterans Legislative Breakfast was held recently at the Georgia Freight Depot, coinciding with Military Women Veterans Day.

“This marks a decade of recognizing the contributions of women veterans and advocating for policies that improve their quality of life,” explained State Representative Sandra Scott.

The annual event honors the service and contributions of women in the U.S. armed forces.

The breakfast often serves as an opportunity for veterans and state legislators to network and discuss critical issues facing women servicemembers when they complete their military service and transition to civilian life.

The annual event looked back upon a rich history of achievements, while planning future endeavors to insure Georgia remains a top destination for women veterans after serving their country.



MEET NEW SUICIDE PREVENTION SPECIALIST FRANK MAYS, JR.

GDVS Marietta CBOC Office Manager Frank Mays was recently selected to join the GDVS Suicide Prevention and Outreach Team as a coordinator.

“I’ve always been the one my friends and family would come to, so what better way to continue that other than helping my fellow veterans in their time of need,” said Mays.

Mays always takes time to listen, making veterans feel welcome and comfortable within two minutes of talking when they visit or contact his office.

A Philadelphia native, Mays served in the Navy for six years and the Navy Reserves for three years as a radioman and attained the rank of Petty Officer 2nd Class. He was also a plankowner on the U.S.S. Cole DD-67.

His advice to new and future VSOs? “Remember to treat people the way you want to be treated... it may be hard to do at times, but just remember you’re there to help those in need.”

MEET NEW SUICIDE PREVENTION SPECIALIST TAMMY BACON



GDVS Statesboro CBOC Office Manager Tammy Bacon was recently selected to join the GDVS Suicide Prevention and Outreach Team as a coordinator.

For Bacon, the impact and pain of suicide hits home. She has lost several people to suicide, including two veterans.

As a wife of a veteran with PTSD, and battling her own struggles with trauma and depression, Bacon understands the darkness that can take hold and the importance of having someone there to listen and offer support.

Bacon is ready to play her part with the team, to strengthen outreach efforts, and to provide hope, resources, and a sense of connection to veterans who may feel like they have nowhere to turn.

Her passion for mental health advocacy is in line with her greatest strength, her ability to listen with empathy and take action.

Her advice to new and future VSOs? “Every case is unique, and your willingness to advocate for them with compassion and determination can change lives.”

SAVE THE DATE

2025 LET'S CONNECT SUMMIT



Be the link that saves a life!

Mark your calendars for an impactful Summit designed to unite Veterans, Service Members, Youth, Professionals Supporting Mental Health, and anyone committed to improving mental wellness and preventing suicide.

Stay Tuned for Registration Details
Earn CEU Hours, connect with peers, and take part in groundbreaking conversations about mental health and suicide prevention.

JOIN US
06.09.25
SAVANNAH, GA

