



Georgia Department of Veterans Service

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

May 2023

REMEMBERING OUR FALLEN HEROES



This Memorial Day, the GDVS hosted public ceremonies at our two state veterans memorial cemeteries.

Flags lined rows of headstones and memorial markers in Glennville and Milledgeville while hundreds of families, friends, and fellow veterans gathered to remember those who gave so much for us all.

Words are simply inadequate to express both regret and gratitude for the men and women who have died in service to their country. The chasm left in the lives of their families and those of who survived by the grace of God is simply too cavernous to ever fill.

As President Franklin D. Roosevelt once opined, "...we have enjoyed privileges such as freedom for a long time in this nation, and we should never forget that men and women have died to win it."

This has been an especially tough year in Georgia. We have lost individuals in conflicts overseas, in training accidents, and too many others to the demons that sometimes plague us when we return home – but our brothers and sisters in arms do not. This year, we are welcoming home CPL Luther H. Story, a Korean War veteran and Medal of Honor recipient, whose remains were finally identified after 73 years Missing In Action.

Memorial Day is a somber occasion where every American should reflect on the high cost of our freedom and the tremendous expense born by our military.

May we never forget.

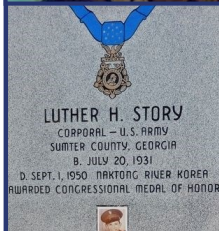
However, to paraphrase General George Patton, our focus should not be on mourning those who died but in thanking God that they lived.

Whatever your spiritual beliefs, I personally thank God they lived, because without their sacrifice, our state and our nation would not enjoy the freedom we too often take for granted. On this Memorial Day and every day, let us remember and honor our fallen brothers and sisters.

– Patricia Ross, Georgia Commissioner of Veterans Service



HE'S HOME: MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT RETURNS TO GEORGIA



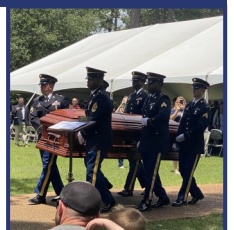
During a heavily attended Memorial Day ceremony featuring taps and a helicopter flyover, Georgia welcomed a long missing son.

A native of Buena Vista, **Corporal Luther Herschel Story** enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1948 and was deployed with the 9th Infantry Regiment in South Korea in 1950. As his unit faced being overrun, CPL Story stayed behind to cover their position as they withdrew and evacuated wounded soldiers.

Story received a posthumous Medal of Honor and Purple Heart for his heroism and sacrifice.

For 73 years, CPL Story was unaccounted for in military records. His remains were initially interred as an unknown soldier in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, the Punchbowl, in Honolulu. In 2021, Phase III of the DPAA's Korean War Disinterment plan selected X-260 as part of a group for new analysis. X-260 was identified as CPL Luther H. Story using DNA, dental, and anthropological analyses.

CPL Story was laid to rest with full military honors in Andersonville National Cemetery at 2 p.m., May 29, 2023. Thank you for your service and welcome home, CPL Story.



“LET’S CONNECT”: GDVS & KSU HOST INAUGURAL SUICIDE PREVENTION SUMMIT

The Georgia Department of Veterans Service and Kennesaw State University’s Center for the Advancement of Military and Emergency Services Research hosted a two-day suicide prevention summit as part of their joint SSG Fox Grant outreach and development efforts.

The summit was developed to not only enhance suicide prevention efforts for service members, veterans, and their families, but also allow organizations within the Governor’s Task Force to Prevent Suicide to forge deeper working relationships.

Nearly 100 attendees, representing 44 organizations and 26 counties in Georgia, participated in the event. Guest presenters included Georgia’s Adjutant General Tom Carden, the Department of Public Health, Unite Georgia, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.



PACT ACT UPDATE: PARKINSON’S PRESUMPTIVE FOR CAMP LEJEUNE

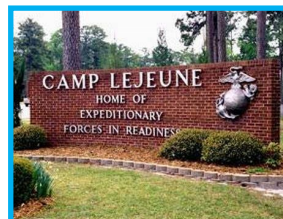
According to a recent study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association Neurology, veterans who served at Camp Lejeune have a 70% greater risk of being diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease than veterans who served at other posts across the country.

Researchers found contaminated water at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina contained a toxic chemical known as trichloroethylene (TCE), which is linked to neurological disorders.

Researchers compared health records of more than 172,000 service members stationed at the base from 1975 to 1985 with those of nearly 170,000 from Camp Pendleton in California. Tests have shown the levels of contamination in the water during the studied time period in Camp Lejeune were 70-fold higher than considered safe by the federal government. In the study group, 279 service members from Camp Lejeune were diagnosed with Parkinson’s or had Parkinson-like symptoms, compared with 151 from Camp Pendleton.

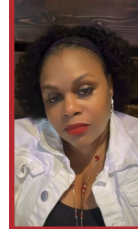
Veterans who served for at least 30 days at Camp Lejeune between August 1, 1953, and December 31, 1987 may have been exposed, as well as their family members. They are encouraged to file a claim with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Georgia Department of Veterans Service is here to help. Find your local GDVS field office at <https://veterans.georgia.gov/field-offices>.



GET TO KNOW YOUR VSO:

SANDRA BENNETT



“Created to serve” is how the GDVS South Region District Manager Sandra Bennett describes herself.

“Serving in any capacity... is just who I am.”

Bennett has been serving veterans for 10 years at GDVS, going above and beyond to ensure their needs are addressed as the manager of the perpetually busy GDVS Columbus field office.

“I am inspired by the strength and endurance of veterans and their families to push through no matter what,” said Bennett.

Bennett served in the Air Force from March 1988 to February 1990. Her service ended due to a back injury and was discharged at the rank of Airman 1st Class.

As a fellow veteran, Bennett relates to the assistance veterans need after leaving military service.

She spends her days off serving the community, her church ministry and even veterans not seeking help through GDVS.

Her advice to new and future VSOs? “Remember helping veterans is not just about claims and money. Some veterans just need to be heard. So always show them you care and are concerned about whatever concerns them.”

One of Bennett’s greatest strengths is the ability to see the positive in every situation.

“I never let negativity settle within my spirit. I will find a positive comeback every time.”

READY TO BE MOORE? FORT BENNING RENAMED

U.S. Army Infantry School, home of the Maneuver Center of Excellence, and home to the Army Ranger School, Fort Benning recently received a new moniker— Fort Moore.

Honoring Lt. General Harold “Hal” Moore, a distinguished WWII, Korea and Vietnam Veteran, and his wife, Julia Moore, a visionary leader for military spouses, the fort was renamed as part of the U.S. Department of Defense’s effort to remove Confederate names and symbols from military property.

Fort Moore is the first U.S. Army base named for a married couple. “Together, Hal and Julia Moore embodied the very best of our military and our nation.” said Maj. Gen. Curtis Buzzard, the top commander of Fort Moore. “The renaming of this installation as Fort Moore is a fitting tribute to their lifelong dedication to the Army, its soldiers, and their families.”

General Moore is best known for his leadership at Landing Zone X-Ray during the Battle of Ia Drang, the first major battle of the Vietnam War. After a three-day battle facing overwhelming forces, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his extraordinary heroism and leadership.

Back home at Fort Benning, Julia Moore was busy supporting Army families responding to news of casualties from Ia Drang—often receiving telegrams via taxis. Julia Moore began following the taxis to offer comfort, as well as attending funerals of soldiers lost under her husband’s command. Her efforts ensured the Department of Defense began notifying military families of war casualties in person, rather than by telegram.



GDVS PARTICIPATES IN NATIONAL VA2K WALK AND ROLL



The Georgia Department of Veterans Service was well represented at the Dublin VA Medical Center’s annual Walk and Roll on May 17th.

GDVS Women and Diverse Veterans Coordinator Veda Brooks, Americus Office Manager Melissa Ingle, Lyons Office Manager, and South Region District Manger Debbie O’Neal joined local GDVS staff to share information about homeless initiatives for veterans and living healthy with nearly 100 participants.

“The annual VA2K event encourages people to live active lifestyles and allows participants to support homeless veterans through voluntary donations of food and clothing items,” according to the VA.

In addition to answering questions about claims and providing information through local partners, GDVS staff were invited to participate in sharing stories from their time in service.

GDVS South Regional Director Vince Pritchett was struck by the heartfelt stories from female veterans attending the event. “A Gulf War veteran shared her fear and grief at losing comrades in combat but having to still get the mission done. It was moving and obvious that several attendees had similar experiences,” said Pritchett.

GDVS COMMISSIONER RECEIVES AWARD

GDVS Commissioner Patricia Ross was recently presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award for her military service and dedication to helping her fellow veterans at The Warrior Alliance’s 2023 Veteran Impact Awards.

Recipients of the award are honored for their significant impacts in improving their communities and lives of their fellow veterans.

Commissioner Ross credits her great teams at the Georgia Department of Veterans Service, the Georgia Veterans Education Career Transition Resource Center (VECTR), and the Central Georgia Technical College for their hard work in serving veterans across the state.

Thank you for your service, Commissioner Ross!