



Georgia Department of Veterans Service

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

November 2023

RECOGNIZING VETERANS DAY 2023

To quote Benjamin Franklin, “there never was a good war or a bad peace.”

Peace is often easy to declare, but hard to achieve. Two years ago, on November 11, 2021, the President ended the longest war in U.S. history, the global war on terror. This declaration, while ending hostilities, did not bring global peace.

We need only to look at today’s headlines to understand American troops are still answering our nation’s call to serve across the world and are in harm’s way. Yet, many Americans believe we are no longer at war. Support for those who served and are serving is waning.

With the military–civilian divide created by an all-volunteer force, it is rare for every family to know or have someone who is serving or has served in the military. It’s become hard to understand military service comes with tremendous personal sacrifice, a subordination of oneself, with a devotion to our fellow American.

Ultimately, it is a willingness above all to ensure our freedom and to promote peace.

This Veterans’ Day, I encourage all veterans to tell your story.

We are the ones who will shape the future of our military. It is a National Security imperative for us to band together to serve our veterans. Our youth and future generations must know that those who sacrificed so much for our nation’s freedom are cared for long after they leave military service.

For us at the Georgia Department of Veterans Service, we understand our current veterans are returning home after extended wars and many deployments with a need for more services than previous generations.

Ultimately, it is our vision to cultivate community connections which empower Georgia’s veterans and their families to flourish and thrive across the state. Connections to others and one’s communities creates strong bonds, increases resiliency, and leads to well fulfilled life. However, we cannot do this alone.

I would assert it is a moral imperative for all Americans to support our veterans and their families who make up such a small number of our overall population, but without whom our nation and way of life would be at risk.

Not just on Veterans’ Day when we recognize and thank those who have served or are serving in defense of our nation, we should take it a step further.

Take the opportunity to connect with our nation’s heroes, learn their stories, share them with your children, and encourage others to take up the mantle of freedom and serve.

Sincerely,

Patricia Ross, Commissioner of Veterans Service



LEGACIES PRESERVED: VETERANS HONORED WITH DIGITAL MEMORIALS

“The grave marker of our veterans should not be their final remembrance,” said Matt Quinn, Undersecretary of Memorial Affairs for the VA. Their legacy, he believes, will live on beyond the grave thanks to the Veterans Legacy Memorial.

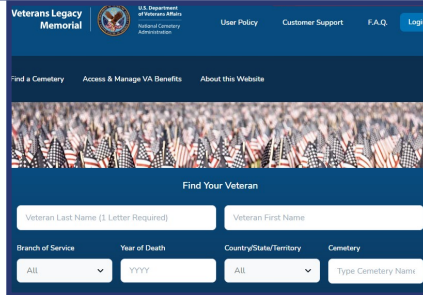
The names and legacies of nearly 10 million veterans can be found on the VA’s interactive website, which was launched in 2019. It contains the history of men and women who served our country honorably dating back to the Revolutionary War.

Veterans interred in VA national cemeteries, VA grant-funded cemeteries, Department of Defense managed cemeteries, and U.S. Park Service national cemeteries are automatically added to the site.

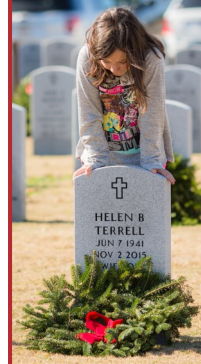
Recently, thousands of private cemeteries where veterans have received a VA-provided gravesite marker were added to the database. This brought in entries from nearly 5 million veterans to now be honored and remembered.

The site consists of individual pages for the veterans which include service branch, rank, war period, military record, honors, photos, and tributes. Visitors are encouraged to submit photos, post tributes, and learn about the veteran’s military service.

Find more information and search for veterans at <https://www.vlm.cem.va.gov/>.



REMEMBER, HONOR, TEACH: JOIN US FOR WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA



Georgia’s state veteran memorial cemeteries in Glennville and Milledgeville will host their annual wreath laying ceremonies on Saturday, December 16, 2023.

TOUCHING TRIBUTE: HOLIDAY TREE DEDICATED TO VETERANS, MILITARY SERVICE MEMBERS, AND FAMILIES



The GDVS joined [North Atlanta Events](#) as part of the 2nd Annual Festival of Trees at Town Center at Cobb.

We joined our partners with the Governor’s Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans and their Families (SMVF) to create You Matter: A Tree of Hope.

The tree features suicide prevention resources, recognizes our military service members and veterans, Staff Sergeant Fox’s dog tags, and a pair of boots donated by a GDVS Army veteran.

The tree reminds viewers of the promise of the future and the importance of finding community.

GET TO KNOW YOUR VSO: TONJALA MOTON-WILLIAMS



“At one point, every veteran wrote a blank check made payable to the United States of America for an amount of up to and including their lives.” This decision is why GDVS Veteran Service Officer, Tonjala Moton-Williams, works to ensure veterans receive the benefits they deserve.

An Army veteran, Moton-Williams joined the GDVS in 2020 and currently works in the Macon office. She is also the GDVS assistant American Legion service officer.

While serving on active duty in the U.S. Army from 1989 to 1995, she was stationed in Giessen, Germany, and later served as a Unit Supply Specialist in Fort Valley, Georgia with the Army Reserve.

A native of Georgia, Moton-Williams is a Falcons fan for life. She is most passionate about her family, especially her four grandsons who “always make me smile or laugh.”

Her message to new and future VSOs?

“Be patient, be kind, and be knowledgeable of 38CFR.” She adds, “it’s the key to a successful claim and the answer to all your questions. Take pride in knowing you are serving our fellow veterans.”