



**Georgia Department
of Veterans Service**

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

November 2024

CELEBRATING GEORGIA’S BRAVE MEN AND WOMEN

On November 7, 2024, Governor and First Lady Kemp joined state legislators, Veteran Service Organizations, and GDVS staff at the state’s annual Veterans Day Ceremony in the Nathan Deal Justice Center.



**UNLOCK SAVINGS: CHECK
YOUR COMMISSARY ELIGIBILITY**

The Department of Defense expanded commissary shopping privileges in the U.S. effective 1 January 2020 as part of the Purple Heart and Disabled Veterans Equal Access Act of 2018, included in the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019. This expansion adds to the existing authorized shopper list [here](#).

Follow these easy steps to verify Commissary eligibility before you shop:

1. Examine your Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC), it must show either: Service connected, Medal of Honor, Purple Heart recipient status, Former prisoner of war (POW). Ensure that the expiration date is current.
2. Update if Necessary: If any condition is not met, contact VA Healthcare at 877-222-8387 to request an updated card.
3. Check Local Requirements: Verify entry requirements with your local installation.



**SERVICE CONNECTED Veteran’s
Health ID Cards are your passport
to Commissary Savings!**



BRIDGING ERAS: PRESERVING WWII AND CIVIL RIGHTS HERITAGE



KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY
 CENTER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF MILITARY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES RESEARCH

The stories of United States WWII Veterans who fought discrimination abroad and faced the same challenges when returning home are being gathered by researchers with

the Center for the Advancement of Military and Emergency Services (AMES) at Kennesaw State University.

Using funds from a U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs Veterans Legacy Grant Program grant, the legacies of these heroes are being preserved. “Following their military service, these World War II veterans would have been coming home to an environment that was facing segregation and discrimination,” said Dr. Kristin Horan, Assistant Professor of Psychology and Director of AMES Outreach Core.

The research team has already gathered thousands of records from cemeteries in Georgia, including the state’s veterans memorial cemeteries in Glennville and Milledgeville. “The goal’s for the project include telling the stories of veterans who contributed to our nation in an extraordinary way, through both military service and the fight for civil rights and promoting community engagement with our state and national memorial cemeteries,” She hopes to showcase these stories in a traveling museum exhibit that will go to schools, summer camps, libraries, and community outreach events.

If you would like to participate in the research, contact AMES at ames.veteran.legacy@gmail.com.

HUNDREDS OF VETERANS FIND HELP AT WE CARE

From health care assessments, haircuts, and benefits assistance, the 3rd Annual We CARE Veterans Resource Fair provided answers and help to Georgia veterans and their families, caretakers, and survivors.

GDVS staff assisted veterans seeking information about state programs, suicide prevention and awareness, and general benefit questions.

This annual resource fair, for some veterans, can have a major impact on their lives.

“The immeasurable assistance they receive from providers can change the trajectory of their circumstances. The GDVS is proud to partner with United Military Care to make this event a success year after year,” said Shelly Ann Simpson, GDVS Executive Director for Field Operations and Appeals.



GET TO KNOW YOUR VSO: SONJA MARTIN



Giving her very best and going the distance for veterans is what Veteran Service Officer Sonja Martin wants Georgia veterans to know about her.

A Macon native, Martin enlisted in the U.S. Army after graduating high school. After serving 12 years in the U.S. Army, she retired as Sergeant. She then joined the Army Reserve.

Martin has been with the GDVS for two years. She currently assists veterans and their families, caretakers, and survivors in the GDVS Macon office.

When she is not helping veterans, Martin enjoys playing tennis and pickleball or reading.

Her advice to new and future VSOs?

“Take your time for knowledge and accuracy, but always put the veterans best interest first.”

WARRIOR CALL: A NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION

It can be your phone call that prevents the suicide of a veteran or servicemember. Understanding the significance of this one action, the United States recently participated in the first National Warrior Call Day .

This National Day of Action falls on the first Sunday after Veterans Day and encourages all Americans to contact a member of the military and provide whatever support they need.

According to the VA, the rate of veteran suicide is 57% higher than the non – veteran population.

Through initiatives like Warrior Call, more veterans have an opportunity to make a vital connection to care.

For more information and resources, visit <https://warriorcall.org/>.