

# Putnam Veterans SITREP



## Diary of a Horse Skeptic

Dear Diary,

OK, OK Diary not sure how to tell you about this. Remember when I went to that horse therapy program as a skeptic? Well I went to a different type of therapy with equal skepticism! This time it was music therapy. As you may know my music experience is just as checkered as my youthful experiences with horses. No not the time I was tortured having to attend a performance of the Nutcracker. When I was 10 or 11 my parents were asked by the junior choir director of our church that I should not be allowed to remain in Jr choir. Around the same time we were being taught to play the recorder in school and the teacher confiscated it from me with what may have been a caustic remark about violating his ears.

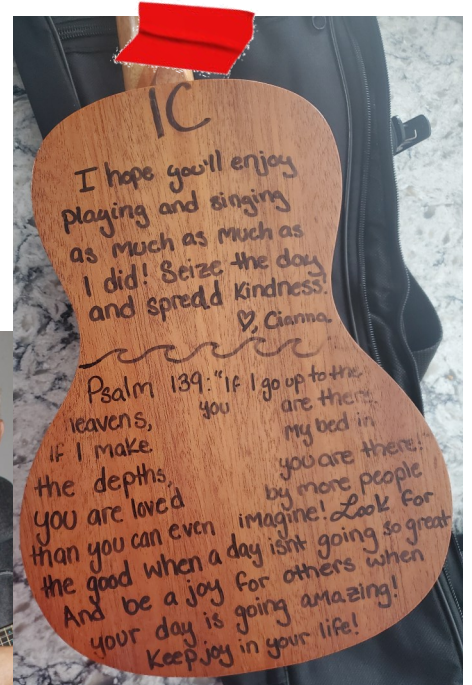
Well with that healthy skepticism I attended a free ukulele session. This was hosted by Encore a Guardian Revival Program and the Kanilapila Project. Guardian Revival is an organization that helps Veterans and first responders while the Kanilapila Project promotes the healing power of ukulele music. Each person who was there was given a uke. (See Diary that is what we musicians call ukuleles) Some of them were signed and a message added. Students in a youth program found out that the Kanilapila Project were going to be working with Veterans and wanted to give us encouragement so they wrote a message on the back of several ukes.

Each of us armed with our new instrument we were ready to meet our instructor. Kimo Hussy, a retired Air Force officer, who came in from Hawaii. He would be our instructor for the session. The song he taught us was "You Are My Sunshine". Hey Diary without getting mushy the song has special meaning for me. He thought us 3 chords and how to strum the uke.

With great presence of mind I sat between 2 people who brought their own ukes thinking they may be able to assist me in fumbling with the finger placement and they did. It was so cool listening to Kimo help us understand music and then play music. What an exciting experience. Music therapy works and music can be therapy.

Ages ago when I first experienced equine therapy I pictured myself atop a horse with a guitar singing "Happy Trails to You" like Roy Rogers (Look hm up Diary I am not going to do everything for you). Maybe this can happen with a uke instead. Hmmm. Lessons????

Karl



ME



Tunnel to Towers & Guardian Revival  
invite you to join us at



GUARDIAN REVIVAL

# HOLD THE LINE

GUARDIAN WELLNESS SUMMIT 2024

Thursday, April 25



Tunnel to Towers  
Foundation

T2T.ORG

## WHAT IS HOLD THE LINE?

A gathering of guardians (military & first responders)

## YOU HOLD THE LINE FOR US — NOW WE ARE HERE FOR YOU

The Tunnel to Towers Foundation and Guardian Revival are collaborating on **HOLD THE LINE**, a unique, in-person experience **exclusively** for America's guardians to gather together and be inspired, informed, and motivated.

Guardian communities require service & sacrifice. We ask you to **dedicate a day to yourself** — with us, with each other — to prioritize & improve your health & wellness.

- Storytelling
- Professional & personal learning and growth
- Connection & camaraderie

### TICKETS

THURSDAY, APRIL 25, 2024

8 AM - 5 PM

### LOCATION

HILTON GARDEN INN

STATEN ISLAND, NY

### CONTACT

[HELLO@HOLDTHELINE.ORG](mailto:HELLO@HOLDTHELINE.ORG)

[#HOLDTHELINE2024](https://twitter.com/HOLDTHELINE2024)

## WHO ARE GUARDIANS?

### A GUARDIAN IS A DEFENDER, PROTECTOR, OR KEEPER

Our guardians are veterans & first responders; you are the ones who commit your lives to service, and often sacrifice your physical & mental health.

Military · Fire & Rescue · Law Enforcement · Emergency Medical Services ·  
Emergency Dispatchers · Corrections Officers · Federal Agents



# MARCH CALENDAR

## WEEK 1

**FRI 3/1 Vet2Vet Gathering ^**  
6 PM via Zoom

**SAT 3/2 Women Guardians Outing ^**  
10 AM in Beacon

## WEEK 2

**MON 3/4 First Line In-Person Gathering ^**  
7 PM in Carmel

**MON 3/4 iRest Meditation ^**  
8 PM via Zoom

**TUES 3/5 Jam Session ^**  
6 PM in Beacon

**TUES 3/5 Writers Workshop ^**  
6:15 PM via Zoom & in Mahopac

**WED 3/6 Wellness Gathering ^**  
5 PM via Zoom

**THU 3/7 Yoga with Janel ^**  
7 PM via Zoom

**FRI 3/8 Vet2Vet Gathering ^**  
6 PM via Zoom

## WEEK 3

**SUN 3/10 Upper Esopus Fire Tower ^**  
9 AM in Mount Tremper

**MON 3/11 First Line Gathering**  
7 PM via Zoom

**TUES 3/12 Jam Session ^**  
6 PM in Beacon

**TUES 3/12 Mobility for Health ^**  
7 PM via Zoom

**WED 3/13 Wellness Gathering ^**  
5 PM via Zoom

**THU 3/14 Talk Saves Lives +**  
7 PM via Zoom

**THU 3/14 American Military History Series ^-**  
7 PM in Beacon

**SAT 3/16 Mindfulness Walk | Foundry Brook ^**  
10 AM in Cold Spring

**SAT 3/16 NAMI Homefront**  
9 AM via Zoom

## WEEK 4

**MON 3/18 First Line In-Person Gathering ^**  
7 PM in Carmel

**TUES 3/19 Jam Session ^**  
6 PM in Beacon

**TUES 3/19 Writers Workshop ^**  
6:15 PM via Zoom & in Mahopac

**WED 3/20 Wellness Gathering ^**  
5 PM via Zoom

**THU 3/21 Beyond the Soundboard: DNA of a Song ^**  
7 PM via Zoom

**FRI 3/22 Vet2Vet Gathering ^**  
6 PM via Zoom

## WEEK 5

**SUN 3/24 Puppies & Pounds +**  
10 AM at Tri State Barbell Gym

**MON 3/25 iRest Meditation ^**  
8 PM via Zoom

**TUES 3/26 Jam Session ^**  
6 PM in Beacon

**TUES 3/26 Mobility for Health ^**  
7 PM via Zoom

**TUES 3/26 Woman Guardian Gathering ^**  
8 PM via Zoom

**TUES 3/26 Talk Saves Lives +**  
7 PM via Zoom

**WED 3/27 Wellness Gathering ^**  
5 PM via Zoom

**FRI 3/29 Vet2Vet Gathering ^**  
6 PM via Zoom

**SUN 3/31 Stonykill Nature Walk ^**  
10 AM in Fishkill

Our Guardian Revival Talk Line is operational 24/7, including on weekends & holidays. We are always ready to take your call: 845.745.0088



**RSVP**  
[guardianrevival.org/calendar](http://guardianrevival.org/calendar)  
[hello@guardianrevival.org](mailto:hello@guardianrevival.org)

### LEGEND:

- ^ Guardians Only (Veterans & First Responders)
- Bring a Buddy (Adults)
- \* Family Friendly (Kids welcome)
- + Open to the Public



## VA secretary orders famous WWII kiss photo to stay at agency facilities despite memo calling for its ban

By LINDA F. HERSEY STARS AND STRIPES • March 5, 2024

WASHINGTON — A tweet on social media about a Department of Veterans Affairs memo banning a famous World War II photo of a sailor kissing a nurse in Times Square went viral Tuesday morning, prompting a swift response from VA Secretary Denis McDonough denying its accuracy. “Let me be clear: This image is not banned from VA facilities — and we will keep it in VA facilities,” McDonough posted to X, formerly Twitter. McDonough’s tweet, which included the black-and-white image of an unidentified sailor holding and kissing a woman in a nurse’s uniform when news broke of Japan’s surrender in World War II, garnered more than 116,000 views by 10 a.m. More so, an X account under the name @EndWokeness had drawn 2 million views by 11 a.m. with the original tweet stating, “The Department of Veterans Affairs just BANNED the V-J Day kiss photo from all department facilities.” Included with the tweet was a memo from RimaAnn Nelson, the VA assistant secretary for health for operations, that was sent in February to the Veterans



Integrated Services Network Directors. Nelson’s memo had requested the photo be removed and replaced at all VA facilities to support a “respectful, safe and trauma-informed” workplace. The VA confirmed the validity of the memo Tuesday but said it should not have been issued. The memo stated, “to foster a more trauma-informed environment that promotes the psychological safety of our employees and the veterans we serve, photographs depicting the ‘V-J Day in Times Square’ should be removed from all Veterans Health Administration facilities.” The memo asserted the spontaneous kiss was nonconsensual and therefore violated the VA’s “no tolerance” policy against sexual harassment and assault. “A memo was sent out that should not have been, and it has been rescinded,” said Terrence Hayes, VA press secretary. “VA is NOT banning this photo from VA facilities.” Nelson’s memo also ordered the replacement of the photo and detailed the Department of Justice’s definition of sexual assault as “any nonconsensual sexual act.” The memo asserted some employees complained about the photo “as a tacit endorsement of the inappropriate

behavior it depicts.” “The placement of this photo in VA facilities was initially intended to celebrate and commemorate the end of World War II and the triumphant return of U.S. soldiers,” according to the memo. “However, perspectives on historical events and their representations evolve. Recent discussions have highlighted concerns about the nonconsensual nature of the kiss.” The kerfuffle over the photo comes as the VA manages public fallout and scrutiny over allegations of improper sexual conduct by supervisors within an office set up to promote a harassment-free workplace. The allegations have been aired at recent congressional hearings looking into claims of sexual misconduct by supervisors at the VA’s Office of Resolution Management, Diversity and Inclusion. The House Veterans’ Affairs Committee and the VA are conducting investigations of the alleged incidents.

*(Another American iconic symbol attacked and demeaned! Where does it stop? When will we put a halt to this stupidity? The Secretary responded quickly but the memo banning the image should never have been circulated!)*



**DONALD. B. SMITH**  
GOVERNMENT  
CAMPUS  
**110 OLD ROUTE 6, BLDG. 3**  
**CARMEL, NY 10512**  
**PHONE (845)808-1620 FAX (845)808-1940**

**KARL ROHDE, DIRECTOR**  
**ART HANLEY, DEPUTY DIRECTOR**



Lest we forget



DAVE GRANLUND ©



Volume 14 Issue 3

## Veterans exposed to toxins and other hazards during service now eligible for VA health care

“We want you to come to us for the health care you deserve.”

March 5, 2024

Hans Petersen  
Air Force Veteran and VHA Digital Media Editor

In one of the largest-ever expansions of Veteran health care, all Veterans exposed to toxins and other hazards during military service—at home or abroad—are now eligible for VA health care.

At the direction of President Biden, VA is expanding health care eligibility to millions of Veterans, including all Veterans who served in the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan or any other combat zone after 9/11, years earlier than called for by the PACT Act. These Veterans will be eligible to enroll directly in VA health care without first applying for VA benefits.

Additionally, Veterans who never deployed but were exposed to toxins or hazards while training or on active duty in the United States will also be eligible to enroll.

This expansion of VA health care eliminates the phased-in approach called for by the PACT Act, meaning that millions of Veterans are becoming eligible for VA health care up to eight years earlier than written into law.

VA encourages all eligible Veterans to visit the [Pact Act website](https://www.va.gov/PACT) or VA.gov/PACT, or call 1-

800-MYVA411 to learn more and apply for VA health care, beginning March 5. Since President Biden signed the PACT Act into law on Aug. 10, 2022, more than 500,000 Veterans have enrolled in VA health care.

**“Once you’re in, you have access for life.”**

“If you’re a Veteran who may have been exposed to toxins or hazards while serving our country, at home or abroad, we want you to come to us for the health care you deserve,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. “VA is proven to be the best, most affordable health care in America for Veterans. And once you’re in, you have access for life. So don’t wait, enroll today.”

“Beginning today, we’re making millions of Veterans eligible for VA health care years earlier than called for by the PACT Act,” said VA Under Secretary for Health Dr. Shereef Elnahal. “With this expansion, VA can care for all Veterans who

served in the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, Iraq Afghanistan, the Global War on Terror or any other combat zone after 9/11. We can also care for Veterans who never deployed but were exposed to toxins or hazards while training or on active duty here at home while working with chemicals, pesticides, lead, asbestos, certain paints, nuclear weapons, x-rays and more. We want to bring all of these Veterans to VA for the care they’ve earned and deserve.”

### Enroll directly in VA care without applying for VA benefits

In addition to expanding access to VA care, this decision makes it quicker and easier for millions of Veterans to enroll. Many Veterans believe they must apply to receive VA disability compensation benefits to become eligible for VA health care, but this isn’t correct.

With this expansion and other authorities, millions of eligible Veterans can enroll directly in VA care without any need to first apply for VA benefits.


This is a critical step forward because Veterans who are enrolled in VA health care are proven to have better health outcomes than non-enrolled Veterans, and VA hospitals have dramatically outperformed non-VA hospitals in overall quality ratings and patient satisfaction ratings.

And VA health care is often more affordable than non-VA health care for Veterans.



The

# Bulletin Board



**NEW YORK STATE  
SENATOR PETE HARCKHAM**

**Albany Trip For  
Vietnam Veterans**

★ ★ ★ ★

**Wednesday, March 27**



Senator Harckham invites Vietnam veterans from the 40th District on a complimentary trip to Albany.

**Schedule of the day includes:**

- Tour of the New York State Capitol
- Passage of a NYS Senate Resolution recognizing Vietnam Veterans Day (March 29)
- Breakfast and lunch

Transportation will be provided to and from Albany by My Brother Vinny.

**SPACE IS LIMITED**  
RSVP Required  
Please call (914) 241-4600  
or  
email [zeiger@nysenate.gov](mailto:zeiger@nysenate.gov).

Assemblyman Matt Slater

## Save the Date



**for Vietnam Veteran's Day  
at the State Capitol**

Open to all Vietnam Veterans in the 94th Assembly District

**Tuesday, March 26th, 2024**  
**Starting at 11:30am**  
**Lunch, Tour, Session**

Please contact my office at 845-278-2923 or [brunnerk@nyassembly.gov](mailto:brunnerk@nyassembly.gov) for any questions or to RSVP



**MAHOPAC  
VFW  
5491**



*Join the Nation...  
Thank a Vietnam Veteran  
for Service to our Nation*

*Food will be served after.  
\*\*\*  
Ray Callinan  
Is  
Detail Commander*

*Please join  
us  
\*  
Vietnam War  
Remembrance  
Ceremony  
\*  
Friday,  
March 29th  
2024  
At 11:30am*