

Winter Issue 2023-2024

Veteran's Outreach Ministries

VOM

magazine

New Castle County, DE
Cecil County, MD
Delaware County, PA
Chester County, PA
Philadelphia, PA

VETERANS

Legacy Brick Fundraiser



Deadline: January 10th

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FREE

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WELCOME *from the* Board of Directors

Welcome to the Veterans Outreach Ministries Winter edition (December 2023 - February 2024) of the VOM News Magazine publication. Each member of the Board of Directors and/or volunteers have offered prayers for a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

As we successfully transition from fall (the change of colors and cooler weather) to Winter (colder weather and heating bills) we must remind ourselves that the Lord is still in command and is still responsible for the change of seasons and everyone/everything around this change.

As the holidays are upon us, we are blessed to gather with our family and friends but there are many who are suffering from conflict in their lives from loneliness and sadness for the people who are no longer with us with spouses and families also being affected. As we reflect on our relationship with God and pray for his understanding and guidance, this can be accomplished by Bible Study, Prayer Time, Worship and Fellowship at the Church of your choice, or one that you feel comfortable with. Using the Mathew 7:7 bible verse one can feel a very powerful force for healing and of self-reflection to building a relationship with God our Father.

But let us not forget the true meaning of Christmas, "The Reason for the Season" the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. In Isaiah 9:6, it was predicted of the coming of Jesus. In the gospel of Luke 2: 8-12, gives us an accounting of the actual birth of Jesus. With each day coming closer to Christmas let all of us remember to celebrate its true meaning, the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The Town of North East, MD is also offering a Legacy Brick Fundraiser at this time. The bricks will be used in the creation of a new Veteran Memorial in the North East Community Park. The planned opening is Summer 2024. Give your beloved veteran the recognition they deserve by having their name immortalized on a beautifully crafted brick paver. Details in this issue.

For the final prayer, we offer this poem, author unknown. It is called "I'm free"...

*Don't grieve for me, for now I'm free
I'm following the path God laid out for me
I took his hand when I heard him call*

*I turned my back and left it all
I could not stay another day
To laugh, to love, to work or play
Tasks left undone must stay that way
I've found my piece at the close of day*

*If my parting has left a void
Then fill it with remembered joy
A friendship shared. A laugh, a kiss
A yes, these things I too will miss*

*Be not burdened with things of sorrow
I wish you the sunshine of tomorrow
My life has been full, I savored much
Good friends, good times, a loved one's touch*

*Perhaps my time seemed all too brief
Don't lengthen it with undue grief
Lift up your heart and share with me
God wanted me now. He set me free*



www.VeteransOutreachMinistries.org
Veteran's Outreach Ministries, is located in the Newark/Bear/Glasgow area. We were incorporated in Delaware in July 2014 by veterans to be a resource to veterans and their families.

VOM is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization
Veteran's Outreach Ministries is expanding into Maryland and Pennsylvania. Currently, we are seeking volunteers to help us with this growth. If anyone is interested in assisting us with this expansion please contact me at 610-299-5523 or johnd.vom@gmail.com for more information.

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Want to Contribute? Contact Tom at: ThomasHogate@gmail.com

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Magazine Design by:

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**COMMUNITY
& VOM EVENTS**

DEC 2023 - FEB 2024

For full event details and calendar:
VeteransOutreachMinistries.org

Dec 9 - Sensory Santa 11am-4pm
FREE! For Special Needs children and adults. RSVP to Lori Darner. ldarner@live.com, 910-514-3518
Oasis Church, Newark, DE

Dec 25 - *Merry Christmas!*

Jan 1 - *Happy New Year!*

Jan 11 - Veterans Roundtable Discussion
10am-1:30pm. Veterans and organizations get together to support each other. New Covenant Church 1125 Jamison Corner Rd, Middletown, DE

Jan 18 - VOM Board of Directors Meeting starting at 6pm
VOM Meeting starting at 6:30pm - all are welcome!
771 Woods Rd, Bear, DE

Feb 14 - *Happy Valentine's Day!*

Feb 15 - VOM Meeting starts 6:30pm
All are welcome!
771 Woods Rd, Bear, DE

Feb 27 - Veterans Roundtable Discussion 10am- 1:30pm
Veterans and organizations get together to support each other. Location TBD (For info, contact: ThomasHogate@gmail.com)



Beef & Broccoli Stir-Fry

This issue's recipe is online at
VeteransOutreachMinistries.org

Article Written by
Scott Stevens, Pastor
US Army 1990-1995
National Guard 1995-1998
Disabled Veteran

'Tis the Season

With the holiday season there are a lot of causes for celebration, family get-togethers, and joy. Yet, for some, this is a season of pain, regret, and reflection of the loss of loved ones or friends who are no longer with us.

When I was in the military, holiday seasons were always tough when you were deployed or when you were away from your loved ones. When we had time and while everyone in the military was in the same position, you developed a new family and created memories and shared meals with people you never would have “back home”.

The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 3:1-8...

*“To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven;
A time to be born, and a time to die;
A time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;
A time to kill, and a time to heal;
A time to break down, and a time to build up;
A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
A time to mourn, and a time to dance;
A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
A time to get, and a time to lose;
A time to keep, and a time to cast away;
A time to rend, and a time to sew;
A time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
A time to love, and a time to hate;
A time of war, and a time of peace.”*

There is a season, time, and purpose for everything under heaven. This tells me, that each season we go through in life, shapes us for the next season and we build relationships during those times that last forever in our memories.

Many of my Army buddies survived and are doing well, yet there are a few who got injured, developed sicknesses due to exposure, and have mental trauma that they just cannot understand or process. Some have died and others have taken their own life, and that has a heavy toll on those who served and are left behind.

Holiday depression and stress can manifest into sadness, stress, fatigue, unrealistic expectations, financial stress, and the inability to be with one's family and friends without feeling something or someone is missing. During the holidays and around strangers, parties, house guests, and family obligations, some feel overwhelmed and increased tension. Many military personnel, in my experience as a counselor and pastor, have symptoms of headaches, excessive drinking, overeating, and insomnia.

If you need someone to talk to, pray with or just to listen to you, reach out to a Church or a Spiritual group. WE care and will always leave a light on for you!



Most importantly, GOD is up 24/7 and will always listen, love, and carry you through. One of my favorite verses in the entire Bible is when Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30 "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

Many of us CARRY heavy loads and feel worn out with all the "things" and memories we carry, yet God promises us "rest unto your souls" if you put your trust and faith in Him. If you feel led, repeat this short prayer after me: "Dear Lord, I am lost and feel overwhelmed with my hurt and pains of the past. I know I have messed up many things in my life, yet I believe in You, that You died for my sins, and can cleanse me from all my past hurts. I want to be better and need a personal relationship with You, thank You for dying for my sins and making me whole again. Thank You for being my friend and companion in this hurt-filled life. Help me find good people who love me, care for me, and will listen to my concerns. Thank you, in Jesus' name, Amen."

PastorStevens@aol.com is my email If you would like to learn about Jesus, find a Church, or just need to talk!

Here are some TIPS to help cope with Holiday Stress and Depression:

- 1.** Set realistic goals for yourself.
- 2.** Pace yourself. Do not take on more responsibilities than you can handle.
- 3.** Be realistic about what you can and cannot do.
- 4.** Reach out for help from qualified counselors, pastors, and VA Reps.
- 5.** Live and enjoy the present, try not to focus on past hurts and losses.
- 6.** Look to the future with optimism.
- 7.** Don't compare today with other "good ole days" of the past, live in the now.
- 8.** If you are lonely and need company, try volunteering or visiting local church events.
- 9.** Limit your drinking and set limits on how often you drink and NEVER drive after drinking.
- 10.** Reach out and make new friends at the VA, American Legion, VFW, VOM, or DAV in your area.
- 11.** Reach out to long-lost friends or relatives that brought you joy.
- 12.** Make time for yourself and embrace those who love and value you.

DESIGNING THE AMERICAN FLAG

Designer of the First Stars & Stripes...

Francis Hopkinson of New Jersey, a naval flag designer and a signer of the Declaration of Independence, designed a flag in 1777 while he was the chairman of the Continental Navy Board's Middle Dept.

Hopkinson also claimed that he designed a flag for the U.S. Navy. Hopkinson was the only person to have made such a claim during his own life when he sent a letter and several bills to Congress for his work.

Hopkinson initially wrote a letter to Congress, via the Continental Board of Admiralty, on May 25, 1780. In this letter, he asked for a "Quarter Cask of the Public Wine" as payment for designing the U.S. flag, the seal for the Admiralty Board, the seal for the Treasury Board, Continental currency, the Great Seal of the United States, and other devices.

However, in three subsequent bills to Congress, he asked to be paid in cash, but instead of his U.S. flag design, he asked to be paid for designing the "great Naval Flag of the United States" in the first bill; the "Naval Flag of the United States" in the second bill; and "the Naval Flag of the States" in the third, along with the other items.

The flag references were generic terms for the naval ensign that Hopkinson had designed: a flag of seven red stripes and six white ones. The predominance of red stripes made the naval flag more visible against the sky on a ship at sea. By contrast, Hopkinson's flag for the U.S. had seven white stripes and six red ones – in reality, six red stripes laid on a white background.

Hopkinson's sketches have not been found, but we can make these conclusions because Hopkinson incorporated different stripe arrangements in the Admiralty (naval) Seal that he designed in the Spring of 1780 and the Great Seal of the United States that he proposed at the same time.

His Admiralty Seal had seven red stripes; whereas his second U.S. Seal proposal had seven white ones. Remnants of Hopkinson's U.S. flag of seven white stripes can be found in the Great Seal of the United States and the President's seal. When he was chairman of the Navy Board, his position was like that of today's Secretary of the Navy.

The payment was not made, most likely, because other people had contributed to designing the Great Seal of the United States, and because it was determined he already received a salary as a member of Congress. This contradicts the legend of the Betsy Ross flag, which suggests that she sewed the first Stars and Stripes flag at the request of the government in Spring 1776.

On May 10, 1779, a letter from the War Board to George Washington stated that there was still no design established for a national standard, on which to base regimental standards, but also referenced flag requirements given to the board by General von Steuben. On September 3rd, Richard Peters submitted to Washington "Drafts of a Standard" and asked for his "Ideas of the Plan of the Standard," adding that the War Board preferred a design they viewed as "a variant for the Marine Flag."

Washington agreed that he preferred "the standard, with the Union and Emblems in the center." The drafts are lost to history but are likely to be similar to the first Jack of the United States.

The origin of the stars and stripes design has been muddled by a story disseminated by the descendants of Betsy Ross. The story credits Ross for sewing one of the first flags from a pencil sketch handed to her by George Washington. No such evidence exists either in Washington's diaries or the Continental Congress's records.

Indeed, nearly a century passed before Ross's grandson, William Canby, first publicly suggested the story in 1870. By her family's own admission, Ross ran an upholstery business, and she had never made a flag as of the visit in June 1776.

Furthermore, her grandson admitted that his own search through the Journals of Congress and other official records failed to find corroborating evidence for his grandmother's story.

George Henry Preble states in his 1882 text that no combined stars and stripes flag was in common use prior to June 1777, and that no one knows who designed that flag.

Historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich argues that there was no “first flag” worth arguing over. Researchers accept that the United States flag evolved, and did not have one design. Marla Miller writes, “The flag, like the Revolution it represents, was the work of many hands.”

The family of Rebecca Young claimed that she sewed the first flag. Young's daughter was Mary Pickersgill, who made the Star-Spangled Banner Flag. She was assisted by Grace Wisher, a 13-year-old African American girl.



Francis Hopkinson's flag for the U.S., an interpretation, with 13 six-pointed stars arranged in five rows



Francis Hopkinson's flag for the U.S. Navy, an interpretation



13-star Betsy Ross variant



13-star Cowpens flag variant

Days to Display American Flag

Holidays to Display Flag

Dec 2023 - Feb 2024 Winter Issue

- Dec 7 - National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day (1/2 staff until sunset)
- Dec 25 - Christmas Day
- Jan 1 - News Year Day
- Jan 15 - Martin Luther King Jr Day
- Feb 12 - Lincoln's Birthday
- Feb 20 - George Washington's Birthday Observed (President's Day)

And other such days as may be proclaimed by the President of the United States

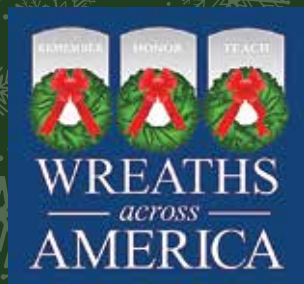
Non Flag Display Days

(for information only)

- Dec 3 - First Sunday of the Advent
- Dec 5, 1992 - Somalia Campaign Begins
- Dec 7 - Hannukah Begins
- Dec 8, 1941 - War Declared on Japan
- Dec 10 - Human Rights Day
- Dec 11, 1941 - Germany and Italy Declared War on U.S.
- Dec 15, 2011 - Iraq War Ended
- Dec 15 - Bill of Rights Day
- Dec 20, 1989 - Panama Campaign Began
- Dec 20, 2019 - U.S. Space Force Established
- Dec 22 - Winter Begins
- Dec 26 - Kwanzaa
- Dec 31 - New Years Eve
- Dec 31, 1946 - Official End To WWII
- Dec 31, 2013 - Kosovo Campaign Ended
- Jan 6 - Epiphany (Traditional)
- Jan 17, 1991 - Persian Gulf War Began
- Jan 27, 1973 - Signing of Vietnam Peace Accord
- Jan 31, 1990 - Panama Campaign Ended
- Feb 1 - National Freedom Day
- Feb 2 - Groundhog Day
- Feb 3 - Four Chaplains Day
- Feb 8, 1910 - Boy Scouts of America Founded
- Feb 13 - Shrove Tuesday
- Feb 14 - St. Valentines Day
- Feb 14 - Ash Wednesday
- Feb 22 - George Washington Birthday (actual)



Wreaths Across America



The holidays bring out many traditions and sometimes we do not know where these traditions come from. We see trees and wreaths throughout the season... But where and when did these traditions start? Specifically, what is the symbolism of the 'Christmas Wreath'?

It is believed that advent wreaths may have been first used by Lutherans in Germany in the 16th century. The very first record of this custom, was in 1833. It was done by a Lutheran clergyman who lit a candle in a wreath every Sunday. He then told the story of the nativity. This custom spread to homes and churches throughout time and now also continues by various organizations.

The organization best known for this tradition is aptly named **Wreaths Across America (WAA)**. They began their work in 2007, with the Worcester family, along with the support of veteran organizations, groups, and individuals who had helped with the original annual veterans wreath ceremony in Arlington. They later formed the official **WAA** non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, in order to continue and expand their efforts, and to support others.

The annual trip to Arlington, along with the groups of volunteers eager to participate in Worcester's simple wreath-laying event, continued to grow each year until it became clear that the desire to remember and honor our country's fallen heroes was bigger than imagined.

The mission of Wreaths Across America was and is: Remember. Honor. Teach.

After the first year, over 300 locations held wreaths-laying ceremonies in every state, including Puerto Rico and 24 overseas locations. More than 100,00 wreaths were placed on graves by over 60,000 volunteers. December 13, 2008 was voted by U.S. Congress as **Wreaths Across America Day**.

In 2014, the goal of placing 226,525 wreaths on every veteran's grave markers was met with the assistance of sponsors and volunteers. In 2018, by invitation of the American Battle Monuments Commission, a wreath ceremony was held to honor the nearly 10,000 service members buried at the Normandy American Cemetery in France.

In 2022, **WAA** and volunteers placed approx. 2.7 million wreaths on veteran headstones at 3,702 locations. This was accomplished with the support of more than 5,000 groups and corporations, and donations from transportation industries.

This tradition held annually on the second or third Saturday each December. The **WAA** journey from Harrington, Maine to Arlington National Cemetery is known as "the world's largest veteran's parade."





VETERANS Legacy Brick Fundraiser

Give your beloved veteran the recognition they deserve by having their name immortalized on a beautifully crafted brick paver. These engraved bricks will stand the test of time, ensuring your hero's legacy lives on for generations to come.

The Legacy Bricks will be used in the creation of a new Veteran Memorial at North East Community Park. Planned to open Summer 2024.

**Order Deadline: January 10th.
Brick Options & Ordering Process...**

9" x 6" Brick (Horizontal) - \$75

- 4 lines of 17 character personalization.
- Spaces and punctuation count in the character total.
- Brick paver examples pictured just below.



North East, MD is a Beautiful Town



The Park is Lively with Lots of Attention

How to Order

Email Grant Handley for an order form at:
GHandley@NorthEastMD.org
then fill out the form and either email it back or mail the physical form(s) to:
North East Town Hall
Attn: Grant Handley
106 S. Main Street
North East 21901

then, pay for your brick(s) online, please visit:
www.NorthEastMD.org/legacybricks

There is an Annual Salute to Veterans



There are several Patriotic Displays

Questions? Please Contact

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Article by
Dee Jones, President
Light 2 World, Inc

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Gift Giving Made Special

How much is too much? What if funds are low or altogether gone? Most children don't really care about how the gifts get under the tree, that they are there.

I recall a special gift giving moment over twenty years ago. One Christmas morning, we were all around the tree and our first born was overwhelmed at the gifts he saw. Most of the gifts were for him as he was the only child at the time. In our home, we have a tradition of thanking God for our blessings and reading the Bible before opening presents. After the exchange of gifts, our son exclaimed, "I have more gifts than all of you". That was the last year we allowed our giving to overshadow the gratitude of the season.

Now we are wiser, our giving is more creative, and we are learning to model gratitude for our special 6-year-old. His fourth year with us, we awakened to a living room full of opened presents and a huge smile! We laughed and took pictures as we rewrapped the gifts. As you think of fond memories of Christmas, remember that time spent with family and friends is precious.

Here are few suggestions on how to de-stress your holiday celebrations.

Advent calendars and devotionals are a wonderful way to center your thoughts on the blessing of Christmas. For those who are grieving the loss of a loved one, or who may not have pleasant memories of past holidays; start anew. Let God's Word keep you and your family focused on the real reason for the holiday season.

Get creative! Homemade gift-giving has many benefits. They foster time together, are inexpensive, and are so much fun, and can even be tasty.

Family service is a great way to foster gratitude in our little ones. There are numerous ways to serve during the season and it can create fun memories and benefit your finances as well. Our church sponsors holiday meals and gift giving trees each year. Check with your local churches if you have a need or you want to serve.

Make a new memory. Attend a free Christmas play, a parade, or free musical event. Holiday movies have added a special feature. For example the movie "Journey to Bethlehem" offered free tickets to see the movie about Christ's birth. Other faith-based movies are offering free tickets as well for those who want to attend. If you are able, you can donate to this cause as well.

Start your own special traditions. We love memorizing scripture each week leading to the story of Mary and Joseph. Little ones love time spent together. My son enjoys interaction more than reading a book, so we act out parts which bring the story alive.

No matter your economic status, time is golden. Spend it wisely and model gratitude and love this holiday season. It is blessed to give and it is also blessed to receive.

Have a Merry Christmas!

Resources: "9 Meaningful Advent Devotionals That Families Will Love" (The Purposeful Mom), "Christmas Bible Reading Plan" (biblestudytools.com), "6 Awesome Gifts that Students With Disabilities Can Make" (teachingexceptionalthinkers.com), "Christmas Events & Festivals for Harford County, MD" (americantowns.com), "12 Holiday Events Happening Across Delaware This Season" (delawaretoday.com)

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Article Written by
Rebecca Hummer
of Pura Vida Yoga



Lymphatic System 101

*The lymphatic system, or lymphoid system, is an organ system that is part of the immune system, and complementary to the circulatory system. It consists of a large network of lymphatic vessels, lymph nodes, lymphoid organs, lymphoid tissues and lymph. Lymph is a clear fluid carried by the lymphatic vessels back to the heart for re-circulation. (The Latin word for lymph, *lymphā*, refers to the deity of fresh water, "Lympha").*

One of the main functions of the lymphatic system is to provide an accessory return route to the blood for the surplus. The other main function is that of immune defense.

What are the symptoms of a poor lymphatic system?

Symptoms of lymphoedema:

- an aching, heavy feeling.
- difficulty with movement.
- repeated skin infections.
- the skin becoming hard and tight.
- folds developing in the skin
- a leakage of fluid through the skin.

The build-up of fluid in the tissues of people with lymphoedema may be a sign they are more vulnerable to infection. A bacterial infection of the skin called cellulitis is common in people with the condition.

There are two main types of lymphoedema:

- **Primary lymphoedema:** caused by faulty genes affecting the development of the lymphatic system; it can develop at any age, but usually occurs in early adulthood.

- **Secondary lymphoedema:** caused by damage to the lymphatic system or problems with the movement and drainage of fluid in the lymphatic system, often due to an infection, injury, cancer treatment, inflammation of the limb or a lack of limb movement.

How do you detox your lymphatic system?

Regular physical exercise is a key tool to get your lymphatic system pumping and detoxing your system of waste. Jumping, dancing, walking, stretching, YOGA, and other moderate exercises done on a daily basis will improve the state of your lymph. Wearing compression garments, tending to your skin, having a healthy diet and lifestyle, and using manual or simple massage techniques help.

There are two types of lymphatic drainage:

- **Manual:** A qualified therapist will perform manual lymphatic drainage.
- **Simple:** Simple lymphatic drainage is a technique a person can use at home.

However, this type of massage may not be suitable or safe for some people, for example, if they have cellulitis or a heart condition. People should speak with a doctor before using lymphatic massage.

What are the benefits of lymphatic drainage massage?

- Debloats and depuffs.
- Breaks down cellulite and fat cells.
- Gives skin a glow.
- Helps with post-injury swelling.
- Eases tension in the body.

Lymphatic breathing is a tool!

Deep breathing acts like a pump that helps move fluid through the vessels and lymph nodes. Follow the steps below:

1. Place both hands on the ribs.
2. Take slow, deep breaths and feel the air move down to the abdomen.
3. Slowly sigh the air out through the mouth.
4. Rest between breaths and repeat five times.

Simple Lymphatic Massage for front/sides of the neck and chest:

1. Place the index and middle fingers of each hand on either side of the neck, just below the earlobe.
2. Stretch the skin by gently sliding the fingers down toward the shoulders, then release.
3. Repeat 10–15 times.
4. Move the hands down and repeat until you have massaged the whole neck.

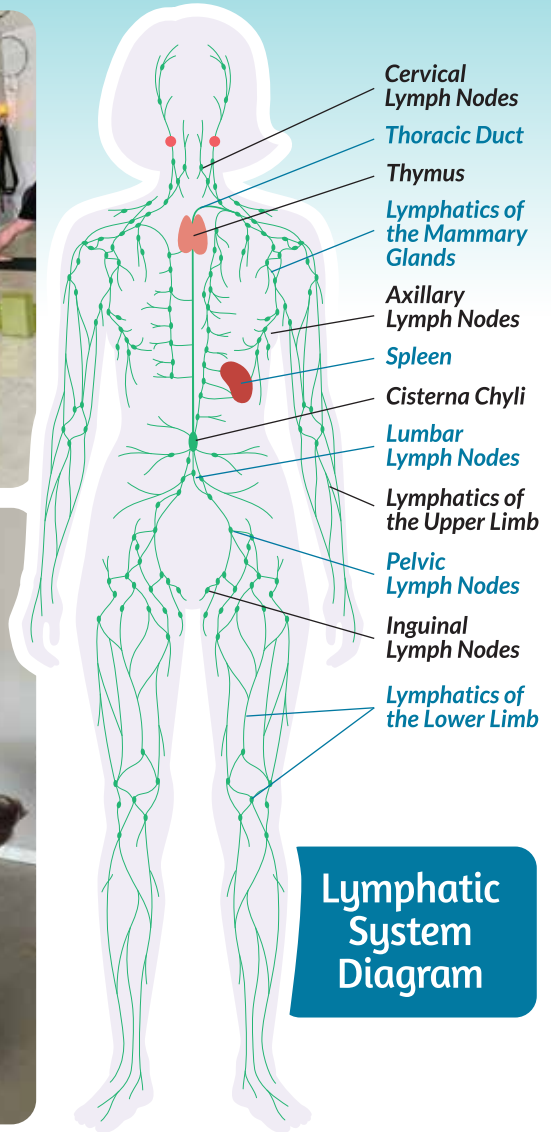
Place the palm flat on the opposite side of the chest, slightly above the breast:

1. Move the hand up the chest and over the collarbone.
2. Continue up the neck until the skin covering the chest feels tight, then release.

Under the arms and fingers:

Prepare the lymph nodes under the arms to help them accept lymph fluid from other areas.

1. Cup the palm under the armpit.
2. Gently pump the palm upward and toward the body.
3. Repeat on the other arm.



Lymphatic System Diagram

To massage the fingers:

1. Start at the base of the swollen finger close to the palm.
2. Use the index finger and thumb to stretch the skin on the finger toward the hand.
3. Continue this motion over the entire finger.
4. Remember to direct fluid toward the hand.

Behind the knees and toes:

1. Place both hands behind the knee so the fingers point toward each other.
2. Pump the back of the knee by gently pressing the hands into the back of the knee and rolling them upward.
3. Repeat on the other knee.

To massage the toes:

Use the thumb and index finger and stroke the skin from the tip of each toe toward the base.

It is vital to always end the massage by drinking extra fluids. People should use light pressure during the massage and avoid any areas with swelling. People who think that they could benefit from a lymphatic drainage massage should speak with a primary care or physical therapist, preferably one who specializes in treating lymphedema.

Utilizing these tools may assist in the health of and/or improve circulation throughout the lymphatic system and aid with lymphedema.

MALE

VETERAN of the Quarter

Joel (Skip) Leeson

Joel (Skip) Leeson, of Middletown, DE, was living in Woodbridge, New Jersey when he was accepted into Rutgers University.

Following college, he joined the Navy. He went to Officer Candidate School in 1967. At 22 years of age, he was commissioned as an Ensign in the U.S. Navy and spent 2 ½ years on active duty. When he came home, Skip became a member of the U.S. Navy Reserve, drilling on weekends, and working for Mine Forces.

He shared that back then, "Officer Candidate School was not the most pleasant. They tended to cram as much as possible into four months of training." He graduated as Color Company Commander and received six awards. After that, he went to Anti-Submarine Warfare School in Key West, Florida before being assigned to a destroyer, the USS Buck DD-761, off the coast of Vietnam.

Skip said his biggest concern was that they were the first ship in the Sea of Japan when the USS Pueblo was taken by the North Koreans. They were the designated ship to go into Wonsan Harbor and get it back if the order was given. Thankfully, the order was not given.

He became an ASW (Anti-Sub Warfare) Officer and Gunnery Plot Officer. His most important job was standing bridge watches as the Officer of the Deck and running the ship. As Gunnery Plot Officer he was responsible for shore bombardments.

At that time, Vietnam was divided into five sections north to south. 1 Corps was the DMZ (demilitarized zone). 5 Corps was the Mekong Delta. The Ship worked mostly off 3 Corps, at the mouth of the Saigon River, where his Destroyer was assigned to help the Australians. We even parked in the mouth of the Saigon River to help the River Patrols. We were also called to protect USS New Jersey BB-62 off 1 Corps on the DMZ.



Our ship was never shot at, even though it went into harm's way a few times. He managed to stay in touch with family by mail. He did get some treats in return mail, but the "mail was always late." There are no breaks at sea; he did two bridge watches a day and refueled at sea every three days, so there was lots of paperwork to do.

A typical day was reveille at 6 am. Breakfast 6:30 to 7:30. Commence ship's work 8-11, Lunch 11 to 12:30. Continue ship's work until 4:30. Dinner 6-7 pm. Taps at 10. In addition, depending on the number of watch sections, standing Bridge watches 2 or 3 times a day. Then doing paperwork, gun shots, flying DASH (drone antisubmarine helicopter, remote controlled), Underway replenishment every 2 to 3 days (mostly refueling).

Skip has stayed in touch with many of his officer shipmates; one lives in Australia, one in Guam, and some others are in the United States. After his discharge from duty in 1969, he joined the VFW. He also stayed in the reserves and retired as a Commander.



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In 1982 he was chosen to command the Naval Reserve Unit attached to the USS New Jersey. It was his second Ship Reserve crew Command, the first being USS Arkansas CGN-41. Both Arkansas and New Jersey were start-up units. The USS New Jersey was stationed off the coast of Beirut in 1983-84 and was not given a relief.

As Commanding Officer and as part of the reserve unit, the Chief of Naval Reserve was contacted and an airlift to the ship to relieve part of the crew was obtained with the help of USS New Jersey CO.

It was so successful, five additional flights were scheduled, and reservists from all over the country volunteered. Reservists, during this action, relieved over half the crew (700) in increments, so they were able to go home on leave. It was the largest peacetime crew relief in the history of the Navy.

Where do you go from here? To US Forces Caribbean reserve unit drilling in Wilkes Barre, PA. Having to do simulated confrontations in the Gulf of Mexico. That then became US Forces Atlantic and went to Norfolk for some drill weekends to help out Desert Shield.

I cannot express how much I miss the Navy and comradeship with the other services. I still work on what is now the Battleship New Jersey Museum in Camden, NJ. I help mostly with tours and Overnight Encampments where we stay overnight with families and scouts. Makes me feel like I still am accomplishing something.



BUSINESS of the Quarter

The Elkton Vet Center

Vet Centers have been providing a safe place for Veterans, Service Members, and their families to talk and heal for over 43 years. **The Elkton Vet Center** was one of the earliest Vet Centers established by the Department of Veterans Affairs, opening its doors at the beginning of January 1980.

Vet Centers are conveniently located in community settings. We have a welcoming and non-clinical environment. Vet Centers are about Community, Comradery and Connections. We offer counseling, referrals, and community engagement to create a greater support system. We always have coffee, and it is a safe gathering place for support and comradery.

The Elkton Vet Center is within 15 miles of the Perry Point Veterans Administration Medical Center. We are also located in a tristate area; therefore, we serve veterans in Maryland, Delaware, and Pennsylvania.



Main Location (Elkton)
103 Chesapeake Blvd,
Suite A, Elkton, MD
Direct line
410-392-4485

Satellite Locations:
223 West Bel Air Ave
Aberdeen, MD
926 Snow Hill Rd
Salisbury, MD

We offer confidential help for Veterans, service members, and their families at no cost in a non-medical setting.

Our Vet Center mission is to provide a wide variety of services for the veteran community including resource connection for any veteran. For veterans who meet our eligibility criteria we can provide individual, family, couples, and group therapy. We provide a variety of groups including war zone era, family support, walking and yoga groups. We specialize in treatment for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), military sexual trauma and bereavement. Our therapists are all trained in at least one evidenced based practice for PTSD such as Prolonged Exposure Therapy, Cognitive Processing Therapy and Eye

Movement Desensitization Reprocessing. We also provide therapeutic outings for the veterans we serve including an annual fishing trip on the Chesapeake Bay.

The Elkton Vet Center is located at 103 Chesapeake Blvd., serves Cecil County, Harford County, and the Eastern Shore of Maryland. The main office is in Elkton, with two additional locations, one in Aberdeen, and in Salisbury, MD. We have community access points along the Eastern Shore of Maryland. **For more information call us at 410-392-4485.**

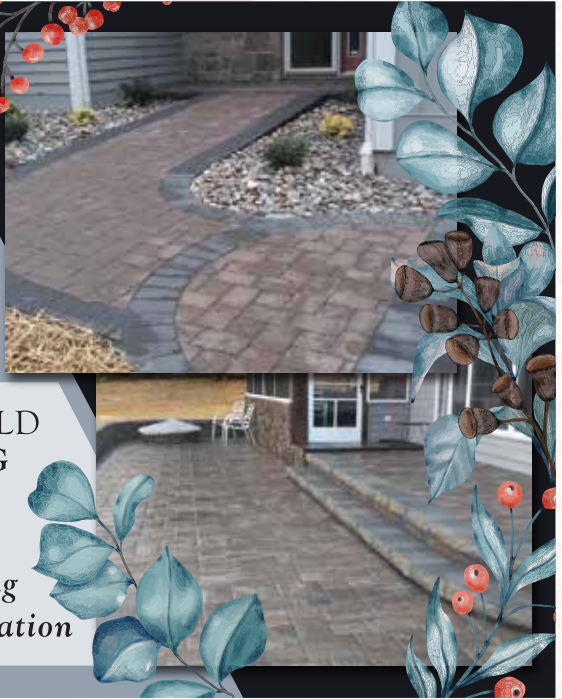
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FEMALE
VETERAN
of the Quarter

Shannon Ayres

Daughter of a Naval Aviator, I enlisted into active duty Air Force out of Louisville, KY in 1996, traveling the world in the back of AWACS as a radar technician. Upon completion of my enlistment, I joined the DE Air National Guard, flying in the back of C130s as an inflight medic. However, in 2002, I graduated with a bachelor's from Wilmington University and headed off to pilot training. This time, I was flying all over the world but had a front view window.

On the first deployment to Afghanistan in 2005, a friend and C130 crew chief completed suicide. I was determined then to do what I could to help any veteran struggling or suffering in silence. I returned to Wilmington University's graduate counseling program to work in the VA.

I have been a counselor for over a decade and enjoy welcoming home veterans in the Elkton Vet center since 2020. Coming to work here feels a little like 'coming home' for me as well.



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This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor, Tyler Simonds. Edward Jones, Member SIPC

FINANCIAL FOCUS:

Can you make charitable giving less ‘taxing’?

It’s the season of generosity. In addition to considering gifts for your loved ones, you might want to think about charitable gifts as well. But what should you know before making gifts to charities? And what impact might these gifts have on your financial and tax situation?

First, you may want to **create a gift budget** by deciding just how much you will give to charitable organizations over the rest of the year.

Next, look closely at the groups to whom you wish to contribute. You can find many reputable charities, but some others may be less worthy of your support. One of the red flags of a questionable organization is the amount of money it spends on administrative costs versus the amount that goes to its stated purpose. You can check on the spending patterns of charitable groups, and find other valuable information about them, on the well-regarded CharityNavigator.org.

Once you’ve established a gift budget and are comfortable with the groups you choose to support, you might turn your thoughts to another key issue connected with charitable giving: **tax benefits.** Changes in the tax laws resulted in an increase in the standard deduction, which meant that many taxpayers found it more favorable not to itemize. But if you still do itemize, your charitable gifts or contributions to those that qualify as 501(c)(3) organizations — can generally be deducted, up to 60% of your adjusted gross income, although lower limits may apply, depending on the nature of your gift and the organization to which you’re contributing.

Long-term avenues also exist that combine charitable giving with potential tax benefits.

One possibility is a donor-advised fund, which allows you to make an irrevocable charitable contribution and receive an immediate tax deduction. You can give cash, but if you donate appreciated assets, such as stocks, your tax deduction would be the fair market value of the assets, up to 30% of your adjusted gross income. Plus, you would not incur the capital gains tax that would otherwise be due upon the sale of these assets. Once you establish a donor-advised fund, you have the flexibility to make charitable gifts over time, and you can contribute to the fund as often as you like.

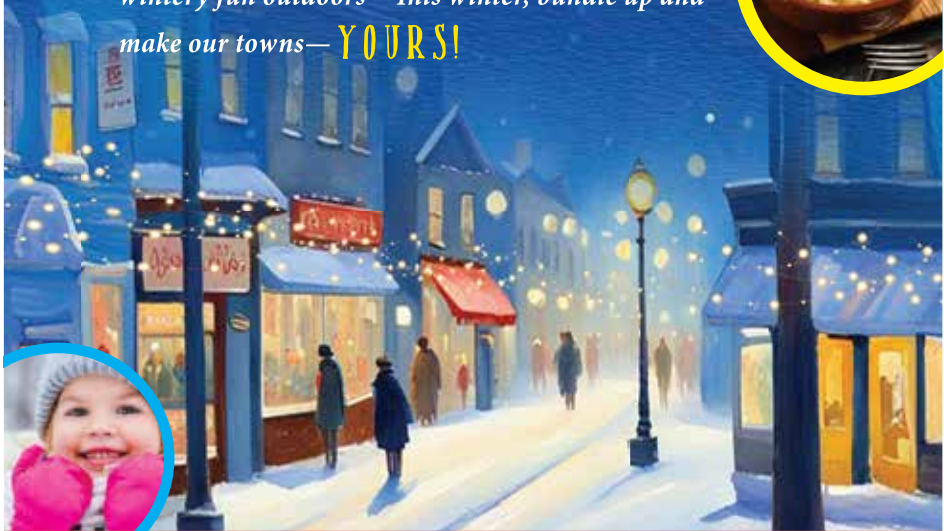
Another possible tax benefit from making charitable contributions could arrive when you start taking required minimum distributions, or RMDs, from some of your retirement accounts, such as your traditional IRA and 401(k). These RMDs could be sizable — and distributions are counted as taxable income. But by taking what’s called a qualified charitable distribution (QCD), you can move money from a traditional or Roth IRA to a qualified charitable organization, possibly satisfying your RMD, which then may be excluded from your taxable income.

Establishing a donor-advised fund and making qualified charitable distributions are significant moves, so consult with your tax advisor first. But if they’re appropriate for your situation, they may help you expand your ability to support the charitable groups whose work you admire.

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