



Commission on Veterans Affairs Accomplishments



Michael Wilson, Chair
Anneke Vandenbroek, Vice-Chair
Accomplishments/Highlights
2009 – 2025
February 5, 2025

Montgomery County's Commission on Veterans Affairs supports various County initiatives and organizations that support Veterans and their families during their transition to the civilian workforce and beyond. Its accomplishments include:

1. County Executive Isiah Leggett had Bill 23-08, Commission on Veterans Affairs - Establishment introduced before the County Council on June 10, 2008 and it was enacted July 22, 2008. He signed it into law to be effective November 3, 2008. The first Commission meeting took place on March 16, 2009.
2. In June, 2009 family members came to the Commission meeting and requested the help of the Commission in renaming the Rockville Library to Rockville Memorial Library. These family members that attended were Richard and Lee Ann Doerflinger – son Army Specialist Thomas Doerflinger killed in Mosul, Iraq on Veteran's Day November 11, 2004, Paula Davis – son Private First Class Justin Ray Davis. U.S. Army killed on June 25, 2005 in Afghanistan, Tom and Carol Barbieri - son Army Specialist Thomas Joseph Barbieri II, **82nd Airborne Division**, killed on August 23, 2006 south of Baghdad Iraq, Donald and Mary Jane Walton – son Army LTC James J. Walton killed on June 21, 2008 in Kandahar, Afghanistan, and Nikki Bunting, wife of Captain Brian "Bubba" Bunting, U.S. Army, killed on February 24, 2009 in Kandahar, Afghanistan, and her sister Tracey Paul all expressed their strong belief that to honor their family members, they request that the Rockville Library be renamed to the Rockville Memorial Library, to honor fallen soldiers. The Commission took on the mission of getting the Rockville Library renamed to the Rockville Memorial Library. Letters were written to the County Executive and the mission was accomplished in that a formal ceremony marking the official renaming of the Rockville Library to the Rockville Memorial Library was held on Friday, May 28, 2010 at 11 a.m. in the front of the building at 21 Maryland Ave., Rockville. But following the meeting where family members came, the very next day Carly Clem and Betsy Luecking staffers to the Commission sat down to discuss what we as staff could do immediately to honor the fallen so that they would not be forgotten by our community. It was decided to build a website with photos of the fallen, whatever background could be found. This was not an easy task as there were no lists and much research needed to be done. Research included visiting the National Archives in College Park, reviewing census and military records on Ancestry.com and researching article on newspapers and the lists published by the Department of Defense. As time went on they were able to research those killed in action from the Gulf War, Vietnam War, Korean War, World War

II and World War I. This website contents are on digital displays at the Rockville Memorial Library lobby and the Silver Spring Civic Building at Veterans Plaza in the front entry. In tribute to those who served and for the family members, Carly Clem, Staff, did most of the research, creation of website and digital display in an outstanding way.

3. Montgomery County Executive Ike Leggett signed a proclamation declaring that the name of the library be changed to honor “those who have given their lives defending the principles of freedom [during every military conflict since the County was created in 1776] and will be deserving of the highest gratitude and honor by the people of Montgomery County.” It is fitting that this magnificent library stand in name and purpose as a tribute to the memory of the brave women and men from Montgomery County who gave their lives so that we and future generations may enjoy the benefits of such a facility,” said Leggett who is a Vietnam Veteran, having commanded U.S. and South Vietnamese troops in field combat during his tour of duty in 1968-69.
4. The County Council passing legislation in 2009 for the County’s hiring preference for people with disabilities and Veterans including disabled Veterans. As of November, 2017 the County has hired 221 Veterans including 16 disabled Veterans.
5. The Warrior Canine Connection program of Walter Reed <https://warriorcanineconnection.org/> made a presentation to the Commission and at the time they were located in Brookville, but had been told it needed to relocate. Mike Subin assisted the program in accessing DNR property and is now located at 14934 Schaeffer Road, Germantown, MD.
6. The Veterans Education Partnership, which was established by the Commission, increases outreach to the general veteran population regarding programs and services including the Montgomery College Combat to College Program, Universities at Shady Grove Veterans Services and the University of Maryland Terp Vets.
7. The Commission continues its fight against Veteran homelessness through its support of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers and the Zero 16 Campaign to End Veteran Homelessness. As part of the County’s Fiscal Year 2016 budget, the County Council approved an appropriation in the amount of \$500,000 to provide housing and supportive services to functionally end Veteran homelessness in the County. The funding is reoccurring every year and is available to Veterans who have received less than an honorable discharge and are therefore not eligible for VA programs. The County has received 98 VASH vouchers between the years of 2010 - 2016 years, each worth \$13,122 or \$1.2 M total per year in housing subsidies.
8. The Commission supports the important of the Silver Spring Vet Center. Operated by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Vet Centers provide free readjustment counseling to combat veterans and their families to help with the transition from military to civilian life. Counseling can help with issues such as employment assessment, PTSD, sexual trauma, substance abuse, and screening and referral for medical issues such as traumatic brain injuries and depression. The Silver Spring Vet Center’s telephone number is 301-589-1073 and is located at 2900 Linden Lane, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Mike Subin of the Commission worked with the Department of Transportation and CSX to make public transportation and the railroad crossing accessible.
9. The Commission supports the work of Serving Together, which is a collection of local community-based resources for veterans, service members and their families. Its goal is to provide clear guidance on how to access the care and support veterans need. This includes support during

transition to the civilian world and job placement. www.servingtogetherproject.org

10. In observance of Veterans Day, 2014, the new Memorial Plaza located on the Government Complex Center Terrace between the new Courthouse annex and the Executive Office Building in Rockville along Route 28 was officially dedicated and the eternal flame unveiled on November 10. The ceremony was an opportunity for the County to show its appreciation and support for those people who put their lives on the line, domestically and abroad, to ensure our continued safety. Among those participating was retired Navy CDR Everett Alvarez Jr. of Rockville, who was the first U.S pilot to be downed and detained during the Vietnam War and spent over eight years in captivity, making him the second longest held American POW, after U.S. Army Colonel Floyd James Thompson.
11. The County's Office of Human Resources agreed to partner with the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs when they launched Operation Hire July 1, 2015. The mission of Operation Hire Maryland is to create an ongoing program which supports employers as they develop or expand upon their Veteran hiring and retention initiatives. Through the collaboration and efforts of Operation Hire participants, a veteran friendly business network will be established to share best practices and proven methods for Veteran recruitment, hiring, on boarding, and retention in the civilian workplace.
12. In October, 2015 County Cable Montgomery and the Commission launched a new monthly show called "Homefront" that provides information on topics and services for Veterans and their families living in the County. The 15-minute program is hosted by Mike Subin and airs on Comcast/RCN channel 6 and Verizon channel 30 on Sundays at 6:30 pm and 10:45 pm and on Fridays at 10:30 pm. The show is also available for viewing on demand on the County Cable Montgomery website at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ccm
13. The Commission continually seeks job placement resources for Veterans and their families. It supports the team at Montgomery Works - partner of the American Job Center Networks - and Tony Cancelosi of Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind for their work on Veteran hiring.
14. In observance of Veterans Day, the new Memorial Plaza located on the Government Complex Center Terrace between the new Courthouse annex and the Executive Office Building in Rockville along Route 28 was officially dedicated and the eternal flame unveiled on November 10, 2014. The ceremony was an opportunity for the County to show its appreciation and support for those people who put their lives on the line, domestically and abroad, to ensure our continued safety. Among those participating was retired Navy CDR Everett Alvarez Jr. of Rockville, who dedicated the POW flag. He was the first U.S pilot to be downed and detained during the Vietnam War and spent over eight years in captivity, making him the second longest held American POW, after U.S. Army Colonel Floyd James Thompson. The plaza is part of the Judicial Center Annex construction project that began in 2011 and involved an addition to, and renovation of, the existing Judicial Center, according to a county news release. The plaza and green spaces were redesigned to invite public use of the space. The area features a waterfall, an eternal flame, new trees, benches and a Memorial Walkway to receive the plaques that were relocated from the original Memorial Garden to allow for the construction of the annex.
15. MOAA Transition Support to Veterans in Montgomery County Business and Networking Group (BANG) –The Military Officers Association of America Transition Group for Northern VA and Southern MD is concerned that military service members transitioning back into civilian life are unprepared when seeking employment. The Northern Virginia (NOVA) Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) Business and Networking Group (BANG) was created in 1996. BANG is a monthly

program that provides business and networking assistance. Each month an employer is invited to speak about their company and offers assistance as well as accepting resumes. In addition, BANG sends out a weekly e-mail broadcast that provides employment opportunities, Veterans' updates, and job fair announcements. The group is open to non-military job seekers and networkers. The Montgomery County Chapter of the MOAA started BANG in Montgomery County and held its first meeting with students at Montgomery College on November 3, 2015. The Commission endorsed and supports this project of the Montgomery County MOAA of creating BANG in the County.

16. To honor our Veterans, the County, at the suggestion of the Commission, installed a digital TV display in the Rockville Memorial Library and a 55-inch digital display between the entry doors at the Silver Spring Civic Building at Veterans Plaza that show photos and names of those County residents from World War II to the present who were killed in action defending our Nation. The Silver Spring display also provides current announcements of Veteran- related activities. The Commission's staff maintains this display.
17. The Honor & Gratitude Salute to Vietnam Veterans was held on October 24, 2015 at the Universities of Shady Grove. Over 200 Vietnam Veterans and a crowd of over 800 attended this event that honored the service of Vietnam Veterans and Vietnam Era veterans. The event has been chosen by the City-County Communications Association (3CMA) as one of the top three special events held by local governments in the U.S. over the past year. CMA is the nation's most prestigious organization of government communications officials.
18. The Commission will continue its satellite meeting program whereby the Commission holds monthly meetings at different locations throughout the County. The Commission's November 2015 meeting was held at Leisure World, which gave Leisure World Veterans and their families an opportunity to directly address the Commission and learn more about County and state support.
19. In June, 2016 Joe Mornini, Executive Director, Team River Runner made a presentation on their Walter Reed kayaking program which takes place Sunday afternoons from May through November at Riley's Lock on the Potomac River. He explained how the boat launch area is not accessible and they often use the power boat launch which is not as safe as it should be. Betsy Luecking was able to put them in contact with Bob Green, ADA Compliance Manager for Montgomery Parks as they own some of that land. Drawings have been completed and funding has been applied for to the State. The State approved the funding and work began July 1, 2019 to construct it.
20. The Veterans Tribute Concert was held on November 14, 2017 at the Silver Spring Civic Building at Veterans Plaza. Dan Bullis was a featured speaker and they honored the military service of County Veterans and their families.
21. The Commission in its outreach to the County's 44,000 Veterans worked with Finance and the Public Information Office to design a property tax insert that was mailed out in June, 2016 to 42,000 households.
22. Through advocacy with the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs a Veterans Benefits Specialist was hired by the State to serve Montgomery County Veterans. This person works full time and offers services at Montgomery College, the Community Based Outpatient Clinic and the Silver Spring Vet Center.
23. Though the advocacy of the Commission, Senator Chris Van Hollen and Senator Ben Cardin, the DCVA Medical Center established a VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic which is located at

15810 Gaither Road, Gaithersburg, MD. The lease was awarded on April 11, 2016. The DCVA Medical Center have leased 11,600 square feet making it one of the largest in the State. The goal and hope is to co-locate other programs that serve Veterans and their families. There is 57,000 additional square feet that could be leased by other non-profits and government agencies. The Golden Hammer event took place September 19, 2016 at the location.

24. The Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC) is providing outreach services to veterans at the County's Crisis Center with an MOU from the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, Behavioral Health Division. VAMC Homeless Outreach Staff and Veteran's Justice Outreach Staff are available for both drop in and scheduled visits. The VA will be available to assist veterans by making referrals and connecting veterans who are eligible for VA services with the VA healthcare system.

VA Community Resource and Referral Center

1500 Franklin Street, NE

Washington, DC 20018

202-745-3012 ext. 8 (Homeless Veteran Care Main Line)

Denneze Nelson, Homeless Veterans Coordinator

Email: denneze.nelson@va.gov

202-745-3012 x 53653 (Denneze Nelson)

202-948-6176 (Denneze Nelson - Work Cell)

Fatmata Kamara, VA Outreach Social Worker

Email: fatmata.kamara@va.gov

202-256-9261 (Fatmata Kamara)

Leah Lyons, VA Outreach Social Worker

Email: leah.lyons@va.gov

25. The Commission hosted an event with Mike Love, founder of the Beach Boys at the American Legion for Veterans on May 31, 2016. Max Cleland contacted the Commission to let us know that his friend Mike Love would be in town for the Concert on the Capitol lawn on Memorial Day, 2016. Mike wanted to meet with Veterans to share his experience with Transcendental Meditation (TM). Mike talked about TM and how it has helped him for the past 45 years with stress and wellness. He took the training in India in 1967 and the Beatles were there as well at the time. It was really an interesting evening as Commissioners Bill Gray and Wayne Miller talked about how they have used TM in their life. We had about 50 people and Montgomery Media there.
26. In June, 2017 the Commission wrote a letter to County Executive Ike Leggett to request support in establishing a Vietnam War Memorial in the existing Wheaton Veterans Park. The Commission formed the Montgomery County Vietnam Veterans Memorial Project, which has developed several recommendations for establishing this memorial for your consideration. We owe this recognition not only to our fallen 130 who died during service in Vietnam, but to our County's Vietnam Veterans and their families. It will demonstrate our determined resolve and support for them. Over the next five years, we hope that the County will recognize all County residents who have been killed in action back to World War I and have memorials also located in the Wheaton Veterans Park for the Global War on Terror, Gulf War, Korea, World War II and World War I. It is the hope that it will be dedicated on Memorial Day 2018. On June 30, 2017 the County Executive approved the preliminary plan.
27. The Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic opened in September, 2017, at the Easterseals Harry & Jeannette Weinberg Inter-Generational Center. The Cohen Clinic provides high-quality, accessible, and integrated behavioral health care to veterans and their families or caregivers. Their no or low-cost services are available to any person who has served in the U.S. Armed Forces, including the National Guard and Reserves, regardless of role or discharge status, and spouses or partners, children, parents, siblings, family caregivers and others. The Cohen Clinic uses evidence-based practices with a holistic approach to improve the quality of life for veterans and their families.

Services are provided by trained and credentialed staff. Veterans and their family members are able to receive services individually and as a family unit at the same place with the same treatment team. The Cohen Clinic can also help connect veteran families to community resources and services, as necessary.

Location: 1420 Spring Street, Suite 300, Silver Spring, MD 20910

28. Hours: Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday, 8:00am to 6:00pm; Wednesday, 8:00am to 8:00pm; Friday, 8:00am to 3:00pm; and the 2nd and 4th Saturday of the month, 9:00am to 1:00pm.
29. There has been established a Mental Health Court and the Commission advocated that a Veterans docket be included. The Commission is very interested in providing support/mentoring to incarcerated Veterans and their families. The Commission recommends that the STEER and Sequential Intercept Model be used in the new Mental Health Court, but it can also function independently, be used to identify Veterans and refer them to needed services. The goal of the Deflection Model project is to deflect low-risk individuals with substance use disorders (SUDs) away from the criminal justice system and directly into community-based treatment. This deflection model presents an evidence-based approach to providing individuals treatment for substance use and will have many benefits not only for the affected individuals, but also for their families and our communities, as well as Montgomery County's overburdened expensive criminal justice system. We are now working on having the key elements of a Veterans Docket be included in the Mental Health Court.
30. Over the years we have had some very interesting presentations that include presentations on Buffalo Soldiers, the Vietnam Wall Director who lives in Rockville, Bikers against Child Abuse, VA Behavioral Health Ritchie Cam Richie and many others you can read up about in our posted annual reports at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva
31. On May 21, 2018 a Vietnam War Memorial was dedicated by County Executive Isiah Leggett at Memorial Plaza with the names of the 130 County residents who were killed in action or reported missing in action during the Vietnam War. Over 400 persons attending this event. Mike Subin, County Executive designee to the Commission was the MC of the event. Please go to www.montgomerycountymd.gov/veterans
32. The DC VA Medical Center hosted the official ribbon cutting ceremony for the new DC VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) on Friday, September 7, 2018 at 1:30 pm. It is located at 15810 Gaither Drive, Gaithersburg, MD 20877 and has ample parking and easy access. It will be the first Department of Veterans Affairs primary health care clinic in the County offering health care services to the more than 42,000 Veterans living in the County and other Veterans in the surrounding area. The newly renovated building space will offer 11,600 square feet with room for primary care and mental health clinics as well as spaces for exams, telehealth, telemedicine, pharmacy, lab, patient education, hearing aid fittings and specialty health care. The Commission on Veterans Affairs Chair and staff along with Michael Subin of the Executive's Office, Austin Morris of Senator Chris Van Hollen's Office and Ken Reichard of Senator Ben Cardin's staff met with the VA to have this clinic established since 2011. To date they have 800 patients and their goal is 2,400.
33. On May 21, 2019, the Commission had a one-year commemoration of the dedication of the Vietnam War Memorial at Memorial Plaza. Several family members of those who were killed in action attended the event. This was followed by a presentation by Michael Heimall, Director of the DC VA Medical Center.

34. The Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs is seeking a donation of 25 acres of land to build a Veteran Home like they have at Charlotte Hall. Montgomery County is considered ideal as it is centrally located in the State. Along with the Military Officers Association of America, the Commission Chair will be meeting with the County Executive in August to further discuss options. The Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs has chosen to build in Carroll County on state owned land.
35. As of March 2020, the Office of Human Resource's merit hiring initiatives has led to the County hiring 286 Veterans, including 23 who have a disability.
36. We continue to be pleased with the County's efforts to end homelessness amongst Veterans and to assist in obtaining permanent housing as was highly successful during the Zero:16 campaign. We are considered to be in the top 10 jurisdictions in the country in serving homeless Veterans due to the Council supporting the Commission's request to fund housing for Veterans not eligible for Veterans Assisted Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers. Montgomery County has been the direct recipient of 98 HUD VASH vouchers and an additional 25 ported HUD VASH vouchers from DC and other states. We are in strong support of Bethesda Cares outreach expansion to Veterans and support the funding of \$647,000 for Veteran housing. This funding will accomplish many County priorities such as the addition of permanent affordable housing for homeless populations and achieving racial equity through sound housing policy.
37. September 2, 2020: Launch improves accessibility and safety for kayaks, canoes and paddleboards
Silver Spring, MD – Montgomery Parks, part of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, has completed construction of a new floating launch for nonmotorized boats improving accessibility and safety for kayakers, canoeists and paddle boarders at Seneca Landing Special Park. The site, located in Poolesville, is one of the busiest access points to the Potomac River and adjoins the National Park Service's popular C&O Canal. Prior to the new floating launch, motorized and non-motorized boats were sharing the same ramp, causing conflict and safety issues. The ramp was also not ADA accessible presenting numerous challenges for users with disabilities. "The need for an accessible boat launch was initiated by Team River Runner, a non-profit organization that provides adventure and adaptive paddles sports to veterans and their families. They approached the Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs about the need for an accessible launch and were assisted by the Commission to initiate the project. On Sundays from May to November, the group hosts a kayak program at Seneca Landing with patients from Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. "Having a safe and totally accessible launch for paddle craft is a game changer," said Joe Mornini, Executive Director, Team River Runner. "An all-inclusive site for those with physical challenges grants equal accessibility and affords all the opportunity to find health, healing, and social connections on the beautiful waters of Seneca Creek and the Potomac River." A second phase of the project, which will include accessibility upgrades to improve safety, capacity and enhance accessibility of the existing boat ramp for motorized boats is scheduled to begin this winter. Accessibility Montgomery Parks, part of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, encourages and supports the participation of individuals with disabilities. Please contact the Program Access Office at 301-495-2581 (Voice/TTY), MD Relay 7-1-1 or 800-552-7724 or ProgramAccess@MontgomeryParks.org to request a disability modification. Visit www.montgomeryparks.org/access for more information.
38. Thursday, February 13, 2020: The Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs is honoring 19 County military service members and veterans with detailed tributes displayed throughout February at Buffalo Soldiers Great Hall at the Silver Spring Civic Building. The Black History Month display is free to view any time the Civic Building is open to the public. The Silver Spring Civic Building is located at One Veterans Place in Downtown Silver Spring. The main room of the building

was dedicated in 2018 as Buffalo Soldiers Great Hall to pay tribute to the Buffalo Soldiers unit that was formed by Congressional legislation in the 1860s that allowed African Americans to enlist in the United States military. The County service members and veterans featured in the tribute of photos, background information and details of accomplishments during their military careers and afterward include John Chaney, Fred Cherry, Sr., James "Pat" Daugherty, Justin Davis, Lillian Fishburne, Jeremiah Floyd, Charles Frazier, Gloria Gardner, Elwood Gray, Jr., Otto Hamilton, Arthur Holmes, Jr., Isiah Leggett, Charles McGee, Roscoe Nix, Vernon Ricks, Jr., William Smith, Jr., Charles Williams, Waverly "Woody" Woodson, Jr. and William Zeigler. The display also includes photos of the Buffalo Soldiers Cavalry.

39. Wednesday, March 4, 2020: The Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs is honoring 21 Montgomery County Vietnam War and Vietnam Era veterans with detailed tributes displayed now through the end of May at Buffalo Soldiers Great Hall at the Silver Spring Civic Building. The displays are free to view any time the Civic Building is open to the public. The Silver Spring Civic Building is located at One Veterans Place in Downtown Silver Spring. National Vietnam War Veterans Day is observed every year on March 29. The special day recognizes U.S. Armed Forces personnel with active duty service between Nov. 1, 1955 and May 15, 1975, regardless of location of service. According to the U.S. Census Bureau estimates, there are 42,509 County residents who are veterans. Of that number, 11,272 are Vietnam War or Era veterans. Records show that 130 County residents were killed in Vietnam and their names are on the County's Vietnam Memorial Wall, which was dedicated in 2018 on Memorial Plaza adjacent to the Executive Office Building in Rockville. More information is available about each at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/veterans. Click on the "Fallen Heroes" tab. The County service members and veterans featured in the tribute of photos, background information and details of accomplishments during their military careers and afterward include Douglas "Lamar" Allen, Jr.; Everett Alvarez, Jr.; Daniel Bullis; Stephen Campanella; Fred Cherry, Sr.; Michael Cronin; Elwood Gray, Jr.; William "Bill" Gray; Otto "Greg" Hamilton; Arthur Holmes, Jr.; John "Jay" Kenney; Isiah Leggett; Jane McCarthy; Charles McGee; Wayne Miller; Thomas Murphy; Bob Norton; Lawrence J. Stark; Michael Subin; Hubert Clifford Walker, Jr. and Michael Walsh. Below are their brief bios. Many more details of their lives are part of the Silver Spring display. View profiles on our website: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-rogram/ADS/VETERANS/Vietnam.html
40. Wednesday, December 2, 2020: Mental and physical wellness services available for Montgomery County veterans is the focus of the most recent edition of the County Cable Montgomery (CCM) show "Homefront," which is now available for viewing. The show featured four experts whose operations offer a variety of services for veterans. The long-running Homefront series provides an inside look at the lives of Montgomery County veterans and their families. It also looks at the services the County and various agencies make available to them. The 15-minute show can be viewed at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/CCM/homefront.html. The show also will run at various times in the upcoming weeks on the County cable station. The station is viewable to County residents with cable service on Comcast (Channels 6 and 996 HD); RCN (Channels 6 and 1056 HD); and Verizon (Channel 30). The show on available mental health services for veterans is hosted by Mike Subin, a Vietnam era veteran who serves on the County's Commission on Veterans Affairs. The guests are Norvell Coots, president and CEO of Holy Cross Health; Charles Faselis, chief of staff of the DC Veterans Administration Medical Center; Shea Lott, lead clinician of the Silver Spring-based Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic at Easter Seals; and Vietnam veteran Wayne Miller, director of the Silver Spring Vet Center and chair of the County Commission on Veterans Affairs.

41. November 2021: We continue to encourage cooperation, coordination and collaboration among all agencies and non-profits that serve Veterans so that our community works together to honor and provide the best services possible to Veterans and their families. We continue to be pleased with the County's efforts to end homelessness amongst Veterans and to assist in obtaining permanent housing. In collaboration with the Commission, Montgomery Parks, part of the Maryland National Capital park and Planning Commission has completed construction of a new floating launch for non-motorized boats, improving accessibility and safety for kayakers, canoeists and paddle boarders at Seneca Landing Special Park. A second phase of the project, which will include accessibility upgrades to improve safety, capacity and enhance accessibility of the existing boat ramp for motorized boats is still to be completed. We recommend if any additional funds be required that they be funded. Team River Runner facilitates two important treatment modalities: exercise and nature. It is highly used by Veterans and the entire community.
42. Feb. 28, 2022 the last day of Black History Month, Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich was joined by Montgomery County Councilmember Will Jawando, Montgomery County Public Libraries Director Anita Vassallo, the Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs, the Tuskegee Airmen, members of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, family members of Brig. Gen. Charles E. McGee, and others in ceremony to sign an executive order that will enable the County to rename the Silver Spring Library to the "Brigadier General Charles E. McGee Library."
43. October 28, 2022: As Veterans Day approaches on Friday, Nov. 11, Montgomery County is preparing to join the national "Operation Green Light" salute to veterans and the County's Commission on Veterans Affairs is seeking additions to its virtual tribute to County veterans. Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich and the County Council are supporting the effort to join Operation Green Light, a program sponsored by the National Association of Counties to honor those who have made Immeasurable sacrifices to preserve freedom. The program asks for displays of a green light, from Nov. 7-13, in a window of businesses or residences to honor veterans. From Nov. 7-13, Montgomery County's Memorial Plaza, which is located adjacent to the County Executive Building at 101 Monroe St. in Rockville, will be lit with green lights. More information about Operation Green Light is available at www.naco.org/blog/counties-take-action-participate-operation-green-light-veterans. The County's Commission on Veterans Affairs is continuing to pay tribute to County veterans through a virtual "Tribute to Montgomery County Veterans" website. As Veterans Day approaches, the commission wants to add tributes to the site. The website is open to all residents who have served in military service. In addition, there will be Montgomery County veterans' tributes during the month of November in the display cases at the Rockville Memorial Library and the Silver Spring Civic Building at Veterans Plaza. Many people confuse Memorial Day in May and Veterans Day in November. Memorial Day honors military personnel who died in service, particularly those who died in battle or as a result of wounds sustained in battle. While those who died are also remembered on Veterans Day, the upcoming holiday is set aside to honor all of those who served honorably in the military—in wartime or peacetime. Veterans Day is largely intended to thank living veterans and acknowledge their contributions to national security. The commission is seeking to expand the Tribute to Montgomery County Veterans website by adding information on more veterans whose information is supplied either by the veterans themselves, by family members or by friends. The tribute to veterans website can be found at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/veteransday. From this site, there is a link to the commission's Fallen Heroes page at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/fallenheroes.

44. February 23, 2023: A plaque has been dedicated at the Rockville Memorial Library recognizing the name change from the original Rockville Library. The name change for the branch of the Montgomery County Public Libraries system was instituted in 2010 at the request of Gold Star families—those who have lost a family member in U.S. military conflicts—and the County Commission on Veterans Affairs. The plaque is located on the first-floor lobby of the library, next to a digital display honoring the County's Fallen Heroes. The Fallen Heroes digital display honors County residents killed in action dating to World War I. The Commission on Veterans Affairs has a “Fallen Heroes” website with the names of County residents killed in action. Military and private information are part of the tributes, many of which contain photos. The Fallen Heroes website can be found at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/fallenheroes. The words on the plaque include: “To honor County residents Killed in Action in service to our Country in military conflicts since our County’s founding in 1776, the Rockville Library was renamed the Rockville Memorial Library at the request of Global War on Terror Gold Star family members and the Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs.” Council President Evan Glass commended the Gold Star families and the Commission on Veterans Affairs for their efforts to have the plaque created.
45. August, 1, 2024: Property tax credit for disabled veterans passes: The Council unanimously approved legislation that Councilmember Natali Fani-Gonzalez authored that extends a property tax credit to severely disabled veterans. This bill offers a 50% credit for those with a 75-99% disability rating and a 25% credit for those with a 50-74% rating. Eligible veterans must be honorably discharged, certified by the VA, and have an income not exceeding \$100,000, per the provisions of the enabling state law. The credit also extends to surviving spouses. I Natali Fani-Gonzalez wants to thank the Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs, VFW Post 2562, Easterseals, and individual veterans for their powerful testimonials. Their stories underscored the importance of this bill and its positive impact on our veteran community. [Read more here »](#)
46. 2024 - The Commission continues to promote community outreach efforts with the media to educate on the many Veteran programs and services. We especially thank Barry Hudson and Neil Greenberger of the Public Information Office for their strong support in promoting and recognizing the services and sacrifices of our Veterans and their families. Promote suicide prevention awareness and promote resilience by Advertising Psych Armor and encourage individuals to enroll in the free trainings.
47. May, 2024 Staff worked with Senator Van Hollen and Senator Cardin staff to support federal legislation to award Everett Alvarez the Congressional Gold Medal. The bill passed in December, 2024. Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro announced Jan. 15, 2025 the names of three guided missile destroyers -- the future USS Ray Mabus (DDG 147), the future USS Kyle Carpenter (DDG 148), and the future Robert R. Ingram (DDG 149). Del Toro also named a future guided missile frigate after Everett Alvarez Jr. (FFG 68) The naming of the future FFG 68 honors Commander Everett Alvarez Jr., USN (Ret), the first U.S. aviator taken captive in the Republic of Vietnam after being shot down near Hanoi. Alvarez, the grandson of Mexican immigrants, was commissioned in the U.S. Naval Reserve in 1960 and joined Attack Squadron 144 (VA-144) in 1962. While conducting a bombing mission over North Vietnam in retaliation after a reported North Vietnamese attack a day earlier on two U.S. destroyers (now known as the Gulf of Tonkin incident), Lieutenant (JG) Alvarez’s Douglas A-4 Skyhawk was shot down in the vicinity of Hon Gay Harbor. He was reported missing on 5 August 1964 and endured eight years and seven months as prisoner of war at the Hỏa Lò Prison in Hanoi. One of the longest-held U.S. prisoners of war, Alvarez was released from captivity on 12 February 1973. Upon his return to the United States, he attended the U.S. Naval Post Graduate School and subsequently served at the Naval Air Systems Command until his retirement from the Navy in 1980. He went on to hold civilian positions with the Peace Corps, Veterans Administration

(now Department of Veterans Affairs), Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, and Vietnam War Commemoration Advisory Council. For his service and sacrifice, Everett has received the Congressional Gold Medal, the Silver Star, two Legions of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross, two Bronze Stars, and two Purple Hearts. A subdivision at Naval Air Station Lemoore in California was also named in his honor during his internment. Along with the ship's name, Secretary Del Toro announced the sponsor for FFG 68 to be the namesake's spouse, Thomasine Alvarez. She, and her chosen maids and matrons will represent the ship throughout the duration of its lifetime.

48. November 2024 The Commission collaborated with the Montgomery County Department of Transportation "The Operation Green Light bus will circulate around the County throughout the month of November as a tribute to our veterans," said MCDOT Director Chris Conklin. "Ride On buses will have signs on board highlighting Operation Green Light and directing veterans to resources. We know many veterans rely on our Ride On buses, and we hope to make them aware of the support available to them." The Operation Green Light bus will be deployed on bus routes throughout Montgomery County.

