



WOMEN VETERANS' NETWORK

Spring 2010

Michelle Wilmot: Recipient of the 2009 Outstanding Woman Veteran Award

Michelle Wilmot served as a medic, mental health sergeant, and retention NCO in the US Army for 8 years and while on her year-long deployment to Ramadi, Iraq in 2004-2005 she served as a member of Team Lioness, the first female team that was attached to Marine infantry units to perform checkpoint operations, house raids, and personnel searches on women and children for weapons and explosives.

Wilmot was featured in the documentary film "Lioness" and Kirsten Holmstedt's book "The Girls Come Marching Home" in the chapter entitled, "Quixote in Ramadi." She has a unique understanding of the needs of our returning veterans and continues to write and speak out on various issues particularly those surrounding returning OIF and OEF veterans as well as minority and female veterans. She speaks seven languages and holds a BS in political science with a specialty in Middle Eastern studies and is working on her first book about facing injustice during combat, overcoming strife, and the importance of self-empowerment.



Michelle Wilmot in Ramadi, Iraq

Secretary's Welcome

The past several months have been an exciting time for women veterans in the Commonwealth. In November Governor Patrick issued a Proclamation honoring the women veterans of Massachusetts. On November 5th we hosted the Women are Veterans Too! ceremony at the State House, honoring Michelle Wilmot the recipient of the 2009 Outstanding Woman Veteran award. Michelle is an Army OIF/ OEF veteran

In January women veterans were honored again when they were invited to lead the Pledge of Allegiance during the State of the Commonwealth address.

On March 27th, in conjunction with the Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs and There and Back-Again yoga, the Women Veterans' Network hosted the first ever Women Veterans' Wellness Fair at the International Resort in Bolton.

In the next few months more events for women veterans are planned:

- On June 19 the Women Veterans' Network will host our 2nd annual Massachusetts Conference for Women Veterans in Worcester.

Please save the date for the Massachusetts Governor's Advisory Committee on Women Veterans' 23rd annual luncheon on October 16th. This is a special anniversary for the GACWV. We are grateful for their work in founding the Women Veterans' Network.

*Tom Kelley,
Secretary, MA Department of Veterans' Services*

Celebrating and Honoring Women Veterans

Women are Veterans Too ceremony at the State House



Left to right: Noreen Begley, Panayiota Bertzikis, Cheryl Poppe, Carolyn Mason Wholley, Margaret Russell, Kim Adams and Sue Lynch. Photo courtesy of Johnny Bonacci

On November 5th, the Women Veterans' Network celebrated and honored Massachusetts women veterans at the 5th annual "Women are Veterans Too! award ceremony at Nurse's Hall in the State House. An audience of more than 100 welcomed speakers, JAG Officer Captain Sue Lynch, United States Army Reserve; Rep. Naughton, Tom Kelley and the 2009 Outstanding Woman Veteran: Michelle Wilmot.

Proclamation issued in recognition of women veterans in the Commonwealth

The Patrick-Murray Administration has issued a proclamation recognizing the service of women in the Commonwealth and has declared the week of November 1st-7th to be Women Veterans Week. Women have served in every conflict since the Revolutionary War and we are please to have women's military service recognized.

Deborah Sampson of Plympton is considered to be the first American woman soldier, enlisted under disguise to serve during the American Revolution. Today over 2,100 women from Massachusetts are serving on Active Duty and Massachusetts is home to over 27,000 women veterans.

Women Veterans at the 2010 State of the Commonwealth Address

The Patrick-Murray Administration invited women veterans to lead the Pledge of Allegiance during the 2010 State of the Commonwealth Address. It was a great honor for the four women veterans: U.S Navy Commander MaryBeth O'Sullivan; U.S Coast Guard veteran Panayiota Bertzikis, Ichelle Herbu, a combat veteran of the U.S. Army and Army Sergeant Sharee Holmes.

Juggling Expenses?

Learn about Credit, Foreclosure, Bankruptcy and More.

Date: May 19th, 2010 from 7-9 Pm

Where: Military and Family Support Center,
14 Minuteman Lane, Wellesley MA 02481

The event is sponsored by the Department of Veterans' Services in collaboration with the Boston Bar Association, the Massachusetts National Guard and State Transition Assistance Advisor.

Celebrating the 102nd Birthday of our Senior Female Veteran



Tom Kelley with Irene Davey

On January 26, 2010 Irene Davey celebrated her 102nd birthday. Davey is the oldest female veteran in Massachusetts, currently residing in Attleboro. Secretary of Veterans' Services, Tom Kelley joined local officials and Attleboro residents as they celebrated Davey's birthday and honored her incredible life.

Davey joined the Army in 1943 after her husband informed her that he had joined the Air Force. She served for two years in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps. Her career began as a truck driver at Fort Devens, she went on to become a recruiter stationed in Ohio. Davey was honorably discharged from the Army as a Technician Third Grade in 1945.

Women Veterans' Network



Women veterans taking part in a yoga class during the Women Veterans' Wellness Fair.

Women Veterans' Wellness Fair 2010

On Saturday March 27, more than 75 women veterans gathered at the International Resort in Bolton, MA for the first ever Women Veterans' Wellness Fair. Women veterans enjoyed a day of yoga and tai-chi classes, hands-on treatments in massage therapy, Reiki, acupuncture and workshops in nutrition and aromatherapy.

The Women Veterans' Wellness Fair was sponsored by the Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs, There and Back Again Yoga and the Massachusetts Women Veterans' Network.

Visiting Lawyer Program

The Massachusetts Bar Association in conjunction with DVS will be offering free legal advice to veterans, **Thursday, June 17, 2:00 – 5:00 p.m. at the Holyoke Soldiers Home.** If you are a veteran and reside in Berkshire, Hampden, Hampshire or Franklin County, this program will provide an opportunity for you to speak to a lawyer individually, free of charge.

For more information, or to register please contact Gail Cavanaugh McAuliffe, paralegal (DVS), (617) 210-5782, or visit the website: www.mass.gov/veterans

*** The deadline for registration is June 4.***



2nd Annual Conference for Women Veterans!

Due to the overwhelming success of last year's conference, the Women Veterans' Network will be holding the 2nd Annual Conference for Women Veterans.

Join fellow women veterans on **Saturday, June 19th from 9am-3pm** at **University of Massachusetts Medical School** in Worcester (55 Lake Avenue North).

Workshops include opportunities to learn about state and federal benefits that you may be eligible for; getting involved with women veterans' organizations, securing employment by using your one Stop Career Center, and an opportunity to learn about the latest in Social Media!

Admission is free but registration is required.

Online registration is available at

www.mass.gov/vets/womensconference

Or call (617) 210 5907.

**For attendees: please bring a photo of yourself from basic training.

Do you know of any memorials dedicated to a woman veteran?

The Women Veterans' Network is compiling a list of Women veterans' memorials through the state. If you have a street, park, bridge or any memorial in your town honoring a woman veteran please let us know by email at dvswomen@vet.state.ma.us or call (617) 210 5907.

Would you like to receive event updates between Newsletters?

If you would like to receive periodic email updates from the Women Veterans' Network between issues of the newsletter send us your email address. The WVN sends bi-monthly email updates about events, benefits, and issues of interest. Email dvswomen@vet.state.ma.us

**The Massachusetts Governor's Advisory Committee on Women Veterans
cordially invites you to its**

23rd Annual Luncheon

With special guest of honor former Governor Michael Dukakis

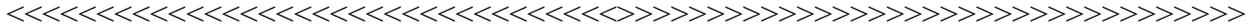
**Saturday, October 16, 2010
11:00 AM to 2:00 PM**

Luncheon Served at 12 Noon

Lombardo's, 6 Billings St., Randolph, MA

***Tickets - \$25.00 per person
New England Roasted Turkey Dinner***

Jewelry Sale and Raffle



Please complete the registration below and return with your check or money order to:

Stephanie Landry
290 Newport Road
Hull, MA 02045
781-925-4486
Stephanie.Landry@hou.state.ma.us

or Regina B. Jackson, Veterans Agent
Town Offices
50 Billerica Road
Chelmsford, MA 01824
978-250-5238
rjackson@townofchelmsford.us

Make checks payable to "Women Veterans Committee". Your cancelled check will be your receipt.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/TOWN _____ STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____

HOME PHONE _____ CELL PHONE _____

E-MAIL _____

Number of tickets _____ x \$25.00 each =\$ _____

(Please indicate choices by number, not a check mark if ordering more than one ticket)

*******NO TICKETS WILL BE SOLD AT THE DOOR*******

RESERVATION DEADLINE IS OCTOBER 10

Join Task Force on Military Sexual Trauma



The Patrick-Murray Administration is convening a multi-disciplinary group to discuss the Commonwealth's response to Military Sexual Trauma. This is a collaborative effort between The Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans' Services, the Governor's Council to Address Sexual and Domestic Violence, the Department of Veterans' Services, Women Veterans' Network, Department of Public Health and state-wide non-profit organization. This first in the nation initiative will expand to services to survivors of Military Sexual Trauma.

Statewide Head Injury Program

The Statewide Head Injury Program (SHIP) of The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) has been working to improve access to the care, services and supports needed by veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan who have sustained a traumatic brain injury (TBI).

One of the biggest obstacles we have encountered is strategies for outreach and identification of veterans with TBI who have already returned to their communities and are struggling with issues possibly associated with an undiagnosed traumatic brain injury, such as memory problems, personality changes, difficulty concentrating and problem solving. While we recognize that the military culture emphasizes duty, performance and perseverance, these admirable qualities may also become obstacles when a soldier is in need of help. In addition we can not underestimate how these challenges may impact families, significant others, friends and the community at large. This has led to us to focus some of our efforts on educating families, who are often the first to recognize the problems associated with TBI and to seek help for their wounded warrior.

We encourage you to call the Statewide Head Injury Program at (800) 223-2559/ (617) 204-3852 and ask to speak with Felisha Bennett, Veterans Program Coordinator if you have any questions.

Statewide Advocacy for Veterans Empowerment (SAVE) program celebrated its second anniversary

In 2008, the Department of Veterans' Services, in collaboration with the Department of Public Health, created the Statewide Advocacy for Veterans Empowerment (SAVE) program, a suicide prevention initiative focusing on community advocacy, outreach and mental health awareness. This first-in-the-nation program offers support to veterans and their families coping with the stresses of returning from war. The program also provides assistance in obtaining veterans benefits and services.

Since its inception, the SAVE team has reached out to more than 13,000 veterans and family members in Massachusetts. Approximately 1,000 veterans and family members have received assistance, advocacy and referrals from team members, including referrals for persons with moderate to severe mental health issues related to their service.

The SAVE team provides suicide prevention training for first responders and community participants, while also providing training and awareness about issues veterans face upon returning home from combat. Trainings have successfully been provided to families, advocates, local police and fire departments across Massachusetts. The SAVE team can be contacted by calling **617-571-7587**.

White Ribbon Day Massachusetts

On Thursday, March 2, 2010, Governor Deval Patrick joined Jane Doe Inc. to declare the 2nd Annual White Ribbon Day Massachusetts, encouraging men throughout the Commonwealth to join him as a White Ribbon Ambassador to help prevent and eliminate violence against women.

We are very pleased that our Senior Leadership, Secretary Tom Kelley and Undersecretary Coleman Nee, are advocating for us as Ambassadors of the White Ribbon campaign.

VA Announces Study of Vietnam-Era Women Veterans

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced the Department of Veterans Affairs is launching a comprehensive study of women veterans who served in the military during the Vietnam War to explore the effects of their military service upon their mental and physical health.

The study, which begins in November and lasts more than four years, will contact approximately 10,000 women in a mailed survey, telephone interview and a review of their medical records.

VA will study women Vietnam Veterans who may have had direct exposure to traumatic events, and for the first time, study those who served in facilities near Vietnam. These women may have had similar, but less direct exposures. Both women Veterans who receive their health care from VA and those who receive health care from other providers will be contacted to determine the prevalence of a variety of health conditions.

The study represents to date the most comprehensive examination of a group of women Vietnam Veterans, and will be used to shape future research on women Veterans in future wars. Such an understanding will lay the groundwork for planning and providing appropriate services for women Veterans, as well as for the aging Veteran population today.

Helpful Websites for Women Veterans

Mass. Women Veterans' Network: <http://www.mass.gov/womenveterans>

Governor's Council to Address Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence: www.mass.gov/governor/dv

Grace After Fire: www.graceafterfire.org

Department of Veterans Affairs: www.va.gov/womenvet

American Women Veterans: www.americanwomenveterans.org

Department of Veterans' Services
Attn: Women Veterans' Network
600 Washington Street, Suite 1100
Boston, MA 02111



We're on the Web! Visit us at:

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Women-Veterans-Network](https://facebook.com/pages/Massachusetts-Women-Veterans-Network)

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