

Memorial Day an Opportunity to Celebrate Veterans

As part of this year's Memorial Day celebration in Solano County we will be adding eight names of soldiers who have died in combat since September 11, 2001 in the Global War on Terror to the war memorial at the Old Solano County Courthouse, located at 580 West Texas Street in Fairfield. Everyone is welcome to pay their respect by attending the public ceremony, starting at 1 p.m. Together we will recognize the eight men who gave their lives to our Country and to this County by paying them with the utmost respect, preserving their names in stone next to the other Solano County men and women who died in World War I, World War II, Korea and Vietnam.

As we take a day to honor and remember those brave men and women who gave their all for this County, it is also an opportunity to reflect on where they are buried. Across the nation, the Veterans Administration (VA) maintains 133 national cemeteries in 39 states. In California there are nine national cemeteries, five of which are accepting new interments. They include Riverside National Cemetery, San Joaquin Valley National Cemetery, Miramar National Cemetery, Bakersfield National Cemetery and the Sacramento Valley National Cemetery.

The VA and the California Department of Veteran Affairs provides certain burial benefits for qualified veterans and their dependents. These benefits include burial plot and grave markers, military honors, a burial flag and some reimbursement for qualified veterans funeral and burial expenses. People eligible for burial include veterans, service members who die in active duty, certain reservists and National Guard members. Eligibility is determined by the national cemetery.

Recently Solano County became home to a brand new veteran's cemetery. Located at 5810 Midway Road near Dixon, the Sacramento Valley National Cemetery is almost fully developed and a beautiful addition to our community. Their friendly, competent staff stands ready to help all veterans and their families during the stressful time managing the death of a loved one. Additionally, the cemetery hosts a series of annual events, including a Memorial Day ceremony, Veterans Day observance and Wreaths Across America. Everyone is welcome to attend. Contact them at (707) 693-2460 and <http://www.cem.va.gov/CEMs/nchp/sacramento.asp>.

Finally, when it comes to the costs of paying for a military funeral, the Solano County Veterans Service Office can help you apply for reimbursement of some of these costs. Simply bring in the death certificate and funeral bill receipts. The VA will pay up to \$300 for funeral expenses and up to \$700 for burial cost (this does not include veterans buried in national cemeteries).

If you have any questions I encourage you to visit my office, as we stand ready to help all veterans and their family, year-round, and especially now as we take a day to remember and memorialize those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom and our country.

The following names are the residents of Solano County who died in combat since September 11, 2001 in the Global War on Terror. They will be honored at a war memorial dedication ceremony on Memorial Day at the Old Solano County Courthouse where everyone is invited to attend.

- Specialist Adam Kinser, US Army, 01/29/2004 died in Afghanistan
- Specialist Casey Sheehan, US Army, 04/04/2004 died in Iraq
- First Lieutenant Dustin Shumney, US Marine Corps, 01/26/2005 died in Iraq
- Staff Sergeant Jerry Lee Bonifacio, US Army National Guard, 10/10/2005 died in Iraq
- Private First Class Robbie Mariano, US Army, 01/05/2006 died in Iraq
- Sergeant Shawn Adams, US Army, 07/22/2007 died in Iraq

- Sergeant Ryan J. Connolly, US Army, 06/24/2008 died in Afghanistan
- Captain Francis Dee Imlay, US Air Force, 03/28/2012 died in Afghanistan

Ted Puntillo is director of Veteran Services for Solano County. Reach him at 784-6590 or TEPuntillo@SolanoCounty.com. The Solano County Veteran Services Office, 675 Texas St. in Fairfield, is open from 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

#