

The Voice of Experience VETERAN VOICE

35 cents

VOL. 1/ISSUE 20

FRIDAY, MARCH 22, 2013



Photo courtesy of VAC Warbird Museum

Retired Lt. Col. Richard Cole, USAF Doolittle Raider, Tico Warbird Airshow 2012.

The stuff movies are made of

Doolittle Raiders pilot, subject of books, film is special guest at air show

**By Patrick McCallister
For Veteran Voice**

As people take their seats to watch the dangerous dance of

airplane acrobatics at the 36th annual Valiant Air Command Warbird Museum & TICO Air Show, a special guest will be among them: Richard “Dick” E. Cole.

He knows as much about dangerous flying than almost anyone. The name might not ring a bell at first, but almost every-

one’s seen him in movies. Well, seen people playing him, with or without the right name. While the bumper stickers claim God’s a co-pilot, Lt. Col. James “Jimmy” Doolittle had 2nd Lt. Cole as his on April 18, 1942 — the day of the famed Doolittle Raid on Tokyo, Japan.

“Doolittle wrote a book after-

ward and said, ‘I could never be so lucky again,’” Cole said in a *Veteran Voice* interview. “I don’t think he was any luckier than I was.”

By the time Cole retired from the military in 1967, he’d made

See COLE page 3



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OUR MISSION STATEMENT AND OUR OBJECTIVE

Veteran Voice is a weekly publication designed to provide information to and about veterans to veterans and to the broader community. Veterans are an integral part of their Florida communities, which currently have individual organizations of their own, such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, the Vietnam Veterans of America and many other groups with a narrow focus, but no convenient way to connect to a wider population of veterans and to the community in general within a limited geographic area, their community.

The mission of Veteran Voice is to publish a weekly source of information that will provide, in one place, a listing of resources available to veterans, articles about changes in policies or organizations affecting veterans and events of interest to veterans as well as articles about veterans of interest to the general public.

Veteran Voice LLC is organized as a partnership of experienced newspaper executives with an interest in veterans and in the communities of Florida veterans and friends. VV is a start-up intended to address a perceived lack of information readily available to veterans on programs and policies affecting them and objective reporting of veteran affairs to the public.

To our knowledge, and based on comments from leaders of local veterans organizations, there was no media or website currently meeting this need until the launch of VeteranVoice.

We hope you agree, and will support this publication with your subscription. Without subscriptions there will be a limited number of people we can help, without which this mission will not be realized. As part of our commitment to supporting local veteran communities, we will donate 10 percent of our profits each quarter to qualified veteran charities recommended by you, our readers and subscribers. Please let us know what you think by emailing editor@veteranvoiceweekly.com or mailing your comments to us at **1919 S.W. South Macedo Blvd., Port St. Lucie, FL 34984.**

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St. Lucie County, Donna Carlsen
Phone: (772) 337-5670
Fax: (772) 337-5678
veterans@stlucieco.org

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(formerly the Walton Road Annex Bldg.)
1664 S.E. Walton Road, Suite 205
Port St. Lucie, FL 34952
By appointment
Mon., Tues, Thurs, Fri * 8:30 am-4:30 pm
Wed * 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

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(Corner of Avenue D and 7th Street)
437 N. Seventh St., Fort Pierce, FL 34950
Walk-ins
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Brevard Veteran's Services Office
2725 Judge Fran Jamieson Way,
Bldg. B, Suite 102, Viera, FL 32940
Office: (321) 633-2012
Fax: (321) 637-5432
Mon., Tues. and Thurs., 8 a.m.-4 p.m.
Wed. and Fri, 8 a.m.-noon
Manager: Glenn McGuffie

Indian River County
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Vero Beach
2525 St. Lucie Ave.,
Vero Beach, FL 32960
Ph: (772) 226-1499
Fax: (772) 770-5038

Sebastian Square
11602 U.S. 1, Sebastian, FL 32958
Ph: (772) 589-6597 Fax: (772) 581-4988

Martin County
Tony Reese, Veterans Service Office Supervisor
Nick Ciotti, Veterans Service Officer
(772) 288-5448

Veterans Services Office
Martin County Community Services
435 S.E. Flagler Ave., Stuart, FL 34994
Office Hours: Mon-Fri, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

VA Life Insurance Ctr., Phil., PA -
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VA Regional Office - 1-800-827-1000

VA Medical Ctr, W. Palm Beach -
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Pharmacy, VA Medical Center -
1-800-317-8387

Military Retired Pay Activities,
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Navy, Air Force ONLY)
1-800-321-1080

Military Retired Pay Activities,
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1-800-772-8724

Survivor Benefits (SBP),
Denver, CO - 1-800-435-3396

Stuart VA Clinic - (772) 288-0304
Okeechobee County

Veterans Services office
(863) 763-6441, Ext 5.
Fax: (863) 763-0118.

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Uniform of a different color

They're all veterans — and they're all inmates — at American Legion Post 398, Martin Correctional

By Patrick McCallister
For Veteran Voice

The Indiantown American Legion Post 398 is located at 1150 S.W. Allapattah Road. The Martin Correctional Institution is at the same address. No mistake there. Not many would clamor to join

the post — it takes a felony conviction that's landed one a prison sentence.

"There are some guys who were career military guys," said Frank Maitland, American Legion Department of Florida District 11 vice commander. "One guy was an officer. Another was a pilot on a bomber."

Maitland helps oversee the post's finances, because of Florida Department of Corrections rules, and makes regular visits.

See POST 398 page 5



Part of the ceremony at American Legion meetings around the world is the covering of the POW/MIA chair, signifying that the 73,000 American service members still listed as missing in action have not been forgotten.

Staff photo
by Tammy Raits

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lieutenant colonel.

In one of the most famous moments of aerial warfare, Doolittle commanded 16 modified B-25B Mitchells that took off from the U.S.S. Hornet. The planes had to be modified because bombers were simply not made to take off from aircraft carriers' relatively short decks. None of the pilots, including Doolittle, had ever done it before 8:20 a.m. that April morning.

While the raid did little material damage to Japan, it was a tremendous psychological blow to a nation's leadership that believed itself invulnerable. Divine, actually. Reports hold that while over Japan, the Raiders met less resistance than expected. However, anti-aircraft fire and fighters were only two of the many problems the Raiders faced.

While launching bombers from an aircraft carrier was dicey, landing them was impossible. The plan was for the surviving Raiders to continue to Zhejiang Province in China, refuel, and continue to Chongqing. The trip was by B-25B standards a long one that all knew were going to push the fuel tanks to fumes.

Night and fog set in. Plans were quickly scrapped and pilots went for the safest options they could think of. Doolittle, unable to find an airfield, ordered his crew to bail out into the night over a part of China occupied by Japanese forces.

"The Chinese were fairly helpful," Cole said. "We were in occupied territory and they kept us one step ahead of the Japanese until we got to Free China."

The Japanese massacred about 250,000 Chinese in retaliation for protecting the Americans. Amazingly, 69 of the 80 airmen who participated in the raid escaped capture or death.

Two drowned after bailing out of their aircraft.

"The fact I was not injured and made it back home is the name of the game."

Dick Cole

Eight were captured by the Japanese. Three were executed. One died in Japanese captivity. One of the planes landed in the Soviet Union, which had a neutrality pact with Japan and was legally unable to repatriate the five-man crew.

After Cole escaped, he flew supply missions between India and China for a while.

"In my case, it was 14 months before I got to come home," he said.

Hollywood had an immediate interest in the Doolittle Raid. The amazing story has inspired and been featured in numerous movies since 1944, including 2001's "Pearl Harbor." For the most authentic recreation of the raid in film, Cole recommends one of the earliest, "Thirty Seconds over Tokyo."

Cole, who's now 97, said he doesn't much think about the historical significance of the daring raid. He'd gone on to get married and have five children. By then, his enduring aim was to have as boring a military career as possible.

"The fact I was not injured and made it back home is the name of the game," he said.

The official website for the remaining Doolittle Raiders is doolittleraider.com.

Gates open at 8:30 a.m. each day. Advance tickets are available through Ticket Derby on line at our website or through ticketderby.com. Come and see all the vintage warbirds, great flying, vendors and family activities -- AND help us honor Robert Morgan and the great B-17 Flying Fortress.

For additional information contact: (321) 268-1941, or visit our website at www.vacwarbirds.org.



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Surviving Spouse (Death Pension):

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Pension with Housebound: \$851/month

Pension with A&A: \$1,113/month

The kid from Brooklyn and segregation in D.C.

Editor's note: This is a first-person account originally written for publication in February in honor of Black History Month by U.S. Navy veteran and St. Lucie West resident Domenick Scarlato.

It was a bleak day in 1944 when I was expelled from High School.

I couldn't face my parents, especially my father. How to solve this dilemma?

I forged my birth certificate and at 16 years old, joined the U.S. Navy. During WWII, no recruiter checked anyone enlisting in the service.

I served on the Underwater Demolition Team as a Seaman First Class. After a violent experience of being blown out of the water while clearing underwater mines left over from the Normandy invasion, I was sent to the Bethesda Naval Hospital in Maryland.

After my recovery, I was based at the Naval Receiving Station, Anacosta, Washington, D.C. It was in Washington, D.C., that I experienced first-hand the meaning of segregation.

I did not even know what the word segregation meant. I was raised in Brooklyn, N.Y., in a very poor area, along the wharfs, called Greenpoint. On my block were Italians, Irish, Polish, Jews and African-American people. I played, went to school and worked with all ethnic and racial groups. To me, there was no segregation anywhere. I was ignorant



Photo courtesy of Domenick Scarlato

Domenick Scarlato, left, with bandleader Lionel Hampton, center, and Johnny Weciano, circa 1946.

to the fact that there was segregation in the South.

In 1946, my stay at the Receiving Station was boring, plus I was tired of hearing "hillbilly" music. One day I saw an advertisement showing Lionel Hampton, a great "big band" leader, was performing at the Washington Ballroom.

I was so excited that I decided to go to see Lionel Hampton. I asked a girl I was dating to go with me. This girl was a Wash-

ingtonian and very Southern. She told me she could not go to the Ballroom because it was segregated and for "Negroes" only. I, being from the North and raised with black people, told her there was no such law. The girl informed me that Washington, D.C., was below the Mason/Dixon line. I could not believe the nation could have segregation. I told my girlfriend that if she didn't go with me, that I would go alone. I didn't feel comfortable to go to a dance hall alone. So I asked Johnny Weciano, who was a corpsman from Jersey City, N.J., to go.

When the two sailors arrived at the cashier's window of the Washington Ballroom, we were met by a black woman. She said, "Are you sure you want to come in the ballroom? You boys are white and it is supposed to be for black people only."

"Where we come from, there are no difference," we told her. "So here's \$4; give us the tickets."

She smiled and gave us two tickets. I said to Johnny, "Boy, was my girlfriend right. We have a lot to learn. I wonder where the Mason/Dixon line is located?"

As we entered the ballroom, we saw about 500 black men and women dancing. They were doing the "Jitterbug." We moved close to the bandstand and close to an exit door. All eyes followed the two sailors as we moved close to the bandstand. We were nonchalantly watching everyone dancing when a large black man

approached us. I said to Johnny, "Be ready for a fight and get out fast."

The black man asked us, "What is wrong with you guys?"

We said, "Nothing. What is wrong with you, man?"

"Hold on! You guys have got me wrong," the black man said. "I'm not looking for trouble. I just want to know how come you are not dancing?"

I said, "Well, we don't know who to ask. We don't want to ask someone's girl or wife."

The black man introduced the two sailors to two girls. Johnny was a terrific dancer and he made the girl look good. I wasn't a good dancer, so I faked most of it. I managed to get by.

When the two sailors were on the dance floor, Lionel Hampton, who was leading the band, spotted the two white sailors and he had to do a double-take. He yelled at us, "Hey boys, what 'cha doin here?"

I yelled out, "I'm from Brooklyn!" and Johnny did the same, yelling, "I'm from Jersey City!"

Lionel Hampton came down off the bandstand and shook our hands and hugged us. Lionel Hampton told the waiter to give us a table and anything we wanted on the house. After talking to us, we were honored to take a picture with this great jazz band leader.

I and Johnny learned a great

See SCARLATO page 6

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Veteran Voice is a newspaper for veterans, active military, their families and their friends.

We are published weekly by Veteran Voice, LLC.
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POST 398 from page 3

He'll be the district commander in June.

Martin is one of the state's five correctional facilities that have the department's Veteran's Dormitory programs. The others are Santa Rosa, Gulf, Sumter and Lowell. Among them, they have space for about 400 program volunteers.

John Haddox, Martin county commissioner, was a county veterans service officer when the dorm program started.

"I wish I had time to keep working with them," he said. "It's a great bunch of guys. The first time I drove up there, I thought, 'What have I gotten myself into?'"

To qualify for the dorms, veterans must have been honorably discharged and have three years or less remaining on their sentences. The corrections department program is in cooperation with the federal Department of Veterans Affairs and Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, formerly called the Agency for Workforce Innovation.

Among other benefits, the program participants get services such as cognitive-thinking training, post-traumatic stress counseling, visits with county veterans service officers for help applying for benefits, and with veteran employment specialists for help find-

ing work when they're released.

N. Dixon, classification officer for the Martin facility and liaison for its American Legion post, said Martin has about 140 identified veterans. About 40 are in the post. She's certain there are more veterans at Martin who haven't come forward.

"There are some in the system that don't even want to let us know that they're veterans," she said.

(Editor's note: As a protective measure because of the nature of her job, corrections department rules discourage use of Dixon's first name in a news story.)

The U.S. Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics last published a study about incarcerated veterans in 2007, using 2004 data. The bureau reported that in 2004 about 10 percent of incarcerated Americans were veterans. The bureau said that was down from about 20 percent in the peak year for veteran incarcerations, 1986. Of the 140,000 incarcerated veterans the bureau identified in 2004 records, more than half served in the military during wartime.

That statistic leads the Vietnam Veterans of America's Veterans Incarcerated Committee to speculate that PTSD may lie at the heart of many veterans' problems that become involvements with the criminal-justice system.

"A number of these veterans' crimes and incarceration may be attributable (at least in part) to this condition," the organization reported. "A simplistic definition of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is 'a normal human reaction to very abnormal circumstances,' meaning that the rational reaction to extreme trauma may be to become irrational."

Almost all of the incarcerated veterans the bureau identified for the 2007 report were male. Although veterans are generally believed to have higher than average rates of PTSD, the bureau has consistently found that they are about half as likely to enter state and federal prisons as others.

Maitland said that PTSD does seem to be a common thread that binds members of Post 398.

Dixon said that the veterans dorm and the American Legion post have helped Martin reduce overall inmate discipline issues. She said the veterans and Legionnaires often offer inspiration and become role models to other inmates. Word has gotten to the state's correctional facilities.

"There's so many facilities trying to get the veterans dorm," she said. "I get a lot of phone calls from facilities wanting to do the same thing we do."

She said the most visible part of the post is its color guard rais-

ing the facility's flag. One member plays the trumpet during the flag raisings.

"They give more people respect for the flag," she said. "A lot of staff members will stop and take time to honor the flag," as do inmates.

"It touches other inmates and they stop," Dixon said. "Just imagine if you're there."

Maitland said a benefit for the Post 398 members is an automatic connection to the community after they're released.

"When they get out, it gives them a place to go," he said. "When these guys get out, they get \$50 and a bus ticket. A lot of these guys have no family, no place to go to. It's a rehab thing for them — it gives them something to look forward to. Once you're a card-carrying Legionnaire, you can go into any post in America."

Most of the post members, Maitland said, seem to be incarcerated for drug offenses.

"You don't go up to these guys and say, 'Hey, what did you do?'" he said.

Haddox is convinced that the veterans dormitory program has helped many to become productive members of society. He said participants could use additional help.

See POST 398 page 7

TO OUR TROOPS, WE'D SIMPLY LIKE TO SAY

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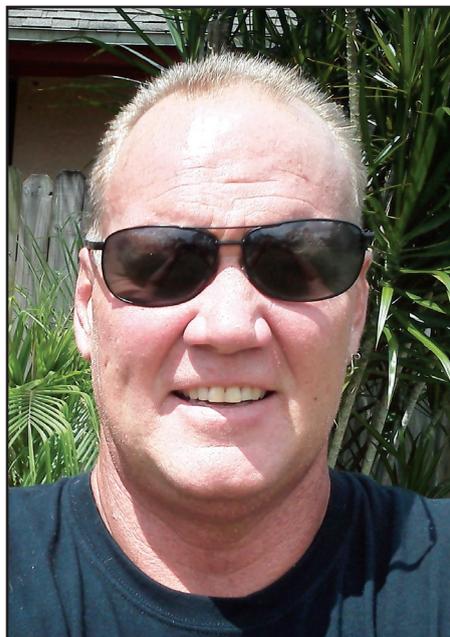
By Shelley Koppel
Staff writer

PALM CITY — Tom Wiegerink is a modern-day Johnny Appleseed.

The graduate of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy is an estimator for an asphalt company from Monday to Friday. He also helps out with security at the Lyric Theatre.

On the weekends, he tends to Victory Garden International, an organization he has founded. His goal is to teach families and individuals to grow their own food gardens, collect seeds and replant them so they can be self-sustaining.

Wiegerink came up with the idea for the gardens two years ago, when the economy was so bad. He saw the statistics on hunger in the United States and wanted to do something. He took the name for his plan from the



Tom Wiegerink

Victory gardens citizens grew during World War II to help in the war effort.



Bean seedlings.

“My grandfather and uncles were farmers,” he said. “I was growing vegetables since I was old enough to dig a hole. I started it in my backyard, collecting seeds from everyone.”

Members of Palm City Presbyterian Church contributed seeds and he put out requests for additional seeds to grow corn, beans, tomatoes and just about anything that could be sent to his post office box. He prefers that they not be hybrids, as hybrids do not give off seeds.

“I started growing seedlings and took them to East Stuart and Indiantown,” he said. “I partnered with Habitat Angel.”

On its website, Habitat Angel, based in Stuart, describes itself as a faith-based nonprofit that initiates an annual neighborhood restoration project each year. They do an “Extreme Makeover” in the designated community and Wiegerink is collecting and

growing the seeds for a community garden.

This year’s Extreme Makeover, held in February and March, was in Booker Parker in Indiantown.

“The Angels introduced me to the volunteers who will maintain the garden and distribute the food,” Wiegerink said. “I’m there to build it, not to run it.”

Eventually, Wiegerink hopes every home will have a garden.

“If you take a green pepper and open it, there may be 100 seeds,” he said. “If you grow 100 plants, it multiplies and it is self-sustaining. People share seeds. The great thing about Florida is that you can grow anything. There would be a seed bank, because not everybody likes everything.”

Wiegerink has several goals for his organization.

“I’d like to teach people how to grow their own food,” he said.

See WIEGERINK page 15



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SCARLATO from page 4

lesson on American history the real way. This lesson was brought back to our hometowns. Johnny and I vowed to tell all our friends, Congressmen and whoever would listen about our experience.

Possibly this may have helped, maybe, because I was married in 1949 and part of my honeymoon was to visit Washington, D.C. When my wife, Victoria, and I visited Washington, D.C., it was desegregated. Victoria said to me,

“Were you really telling the truth about Washington, D.C., being segregated?”

I was speechless. Could it all have been a dream? No, I still believed Johnny and I played a small part, though small as it was, in Washington, D.C., becoming desegregated and possibly helped a little the 1960s civil rights movement.

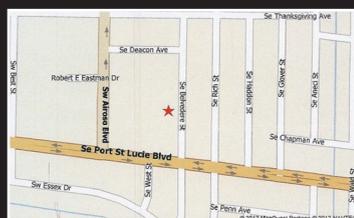
Domenick Scarlato served in the U.S. Navy on active duty from 1944-48 and later in the Naval Reserve and National Guard.

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Honored



Photo courtesy of Facebook

The Daughters of the American Revolution honored retired U.S. Air Force Col. Marty Zickert, president of the Veterans Council of Indian River County, at their State Convention recently with the prestigious Service to Veterans award. There were more than 400 attendees, one of which was Zickert's granddaughter, Syd, who escorted him to the podium. 'I introduced her and embarrassed her. Thanks to the DAR for the recognition,' Zickert quipped on his Facebook page.

POST 398 from page 5

"All in all, they're not getting everything they could to help them not go right back to prison," he said.

A membership official at the American Legion's national office said that Post 398 isn't the only one at a correctional facility. He was uncertain how many others at correctional facilities there are, because state departments handle individual posts.

Maitland said the Martin post is run like any other, except that it has a high turnover rate of officers, due to releases and transfers. It also deals with unusual financial concerns.

"There are some guys eligible to join, but they don't have funds to pay dues," he said. "They're getting donations from families and friends."

He said that members of the public are welcome to donate to the post.

"These guys do a lot of artwork," he said. "They need paint and paintbrushes. Sometimes they can get it from the state and sometimes they can't. We have to go through a lot of loopholes just to give them a can of paint. It has to be a certain size, a certain color."

To donate, contact Post 398's sponsoring post, Aaron Vaughn Post 399 in Palm City at americanlegionfl399@yahoo.com.

Republican Party of Florida to donate \$300,000 to Veterans Foundation

For Veteran Voice

TALLAHASSEE — The Republican Party of Florida will donate \$300,000 to the Florida Veterans Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit group, after learning that political contributions had been raised from an organization that now stands accused of using veteran's charities as a front for alleged illegal activity.

"RPOF respects our nation's veterans, and we have zero tolerance for this kind of activity," said chairman Lenny Curry. "It is outrageous to all Floridians that anyone would use our veterans as a front for criminal actions."

After a thorough review of financial records in connection with this case, The Republican Party of Florida has received approximately \$271,000 during the

"(The party) has a history of supporting the men and women who serve in the military, and we will always do everything we can to support America's veterans."

**Chairman
Lenny Curry**

current and most recent campaign cycle from entities currently under investigation.

"This is a complex, ongoing case and new facts may develop," said Curry. "But (the party) has a history of supporting the men and women who serve in the military, and we will always do everything we can to support America's veterans. That is why we will contribute a total of \$300,000 to this great organization and the heroes they help."

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FDVA is here to help the state's veterans

By Patrick McCallister
For Veteran Voice

Their missions are alike, to help veterans, but many mistake the state Department of Veterans Affairs for the national Department of Veterans Affairs.

More precisely, the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs, FDVA is a state cabinet department with no relation to the federal agency that has a similar name, although the two do have a relationship.

"We have gone out of our way especially in the last six months to do a branding campaign," Steve Murray, communications director, said. "It's an ongoing process. We continue to work to make our agency known to the general public, especially Florida veterans and their families."

Florida's estimated 1.6 million veterans that is, almost 9 percent of the state's population. The state is one of four with a million or more veterans, and has the third largest population in the country.

The FDVA started back in 1944. Thousands were returning from World War II and the state Legislature wanted to do everything it could to ensure they got the federal benefits their service earned them by providing service officers familiar with the then Veterans Administration's offerings and rules. Over the years, the mission grew, and by 1988 voters enshrined the department into the state's constitution.

By then, those World War II veterans were getting older and many needed nursing care. In 1990, the department expanded its operations to what is now its most visible function, the State Veterans' Homes Program.

The department operates six nursing homes with 120 beds each, and an assisted living facility with 150. Those facilities are in Pembroke Pines, Daytona Beach, St. Augustine, Port Charlotte, Land O' Lakes, Lake City, and Panama City.

Murray said the nursing homes program is the department's largest budget item.

"It is more than 90 percent of our budget and 90 percent of our personnel," he said. "All of that runs from trust funds. No (state) general revenue goes to the homes."

The homes program is financed through a mixture of federal VA, Medicare, Medicaid, insurance and private dollars. For example, when Floridians purchase military-related specialty plates for their automobiles, they help fund the homes. How implementation of the Patient Protection

and Affordable Care Act will affect funding for the veterans homes is unclear.

The department's next largest function is its Agency for Benefits and Assistance. The agency has about 100 veteran service officers working mostly at federal VA medical facilities. They also train the state's county veterans service officers.

"They go help Florida veterans bring in additional federal benefits they earned to the state," Murray said. "We train and accredit annually all of the county veteran service officers out there. We meet with them twice a year and they go back to their counties."

It's impossible to calculate how many dollars the state's services officers have helped veterans collect, but Florida's veterans give the state a substantial economic boost.

"During the last federal fiscal year, (veterans) brought in about \$13.7 billion federal dollars into Florida's economy," Murray said.

The department is also active in the Florida Cabinet and Legislature advocating for veterans' interests.

"It is very important as part of our outreach campaign to reach state legislators to help them advocate for the state's veterans," Murray said. "Sometimes we sponsor the legislation that positively impacts veterans and their families."

For example, the department helped craft Amendment 2, which appeared on the 2012 general election ballot. In November's general election, voters weren't in the mood for more state constitutional amendments. They rejected eight of 11 ballot measures offered. Of the three voters passed, two extended additional property tax discounts to veterans and their spouses.

Previously, some veterans 65 or older with service-connected partial disability ratings from the VA could get a discount on the remaining portion of homesteaded property taxes after exemptions were subtracted. Those honorably discharged veterans had to have some portion of their disability rating due to combat-related injuries and been Florida residents when they entered the service.

That was the big rub — they had to be Florida residents when they entered the service.

"There were only about 1,200 veterans in Florida who met that criteria," Murray said.

Amendment 2 changed that number substantially.

"There could be an additional 74,000 veterans who could benefit from this exemption now,"



Above, the cover of the 2013 guide published by the state's department of Veterans Affairs. At left, the home page of the mobile application available for download through the FDVA's website, floridavets.org.

Photos courtesy of the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs

Murray said.

As its functions grew, the FDVA kept encountering instances of veterans and their families it couldn't help, veterans whose needs were outside the scope of either federal or state benefits. In 2008 the state legislature created the Florida Veterans Founda-

tion, a not-for-profit corporation to assist the FDVA in those instances.

"It is a direct-support organization for the FDVA," Murray said. "It allows us to help veterans and

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FDVA from page 9

their families in several ways. They're able to reach veterans in a way we as an agency cannot statutorily."

In 2012, the foundation received about 140 requests for financial help with housing, utilities and other expenses. It gave veterans and their families almost \$90,000. Among others, the foundation helped 43 homeless veterans gain housing. The foundation also sponsored the 2012 Florida Veterans' Forum in Tallahassee. About 125 of the state's veterans attended.

This fiscal year, the FDVA is operating on an \$83.7 million budget with 1,088 full-time positions. The governor recommended a slight increase to the legislature for the 2013-2014 fiscal year. When Gov. Rick Scott, a Navy veteran, rolled out his \$74.2 billion proposed budget, named *Florida's Families First*, it recommended adding three more service-officer positions to the FDVA.

Murray said it's easy for Floridians to keep up with the FDVA's activities.

"If they wish to stay informed, they can check our website, Facebook page and mobile app," he said.

The website is floridavets.org. The mobile app can be download-



Photo courtesy of FDVA

The FDVA started back in 1944. Thousands were returning from World War II and the state Legislature wanted to do everything it could to ensure they got the federal benefits their service earned them by providing service officers familiar with the then Veterans Administration's offerings and rules. Over the years, the mission grew, and by 1988 voters enshrined the department into the state's constitution.

ed there. Murray said all Florida veterans should take time now and again to read the Florida Veterans' Benefits Guide, which is at the site.

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From US1, turn East on Ohio Ave., Directly behind TD Bank

Tattoo shop offers free ink to memorialize fallen deputy

By Nicole Rodriguez
Staff writer
nrodriguez@yourvoiceweekly.com

ST. LUCIE WEST — Not even death could part St. Lucie West business owner Mike Placido, 30, from his slain friend Sgt. Gary Morales, 35, who was shot and killed Feb. 28 during a Fort Pierce traffic stop that went horribly wrong.

Two days after Morales's public funeral that attracted thousands of law enforcement officers from around the country last week, a still-grieving Placido disrobed making his chest a blank canvas for inkster John Garappolo, who owns Inzane Tattoo in Port St. Lucie.

"If he were still here, he would have made fun of me and laughed at me. That's the type of person he was," Placido said. "He was always a jokester. He probably would have wanted a picture of himself on me."

Instead, Placido opted for a tattoo that reflected Morales's many years of public service, not his boyish good looks. Morales served in the United States Air Force from 1995 to 1999.

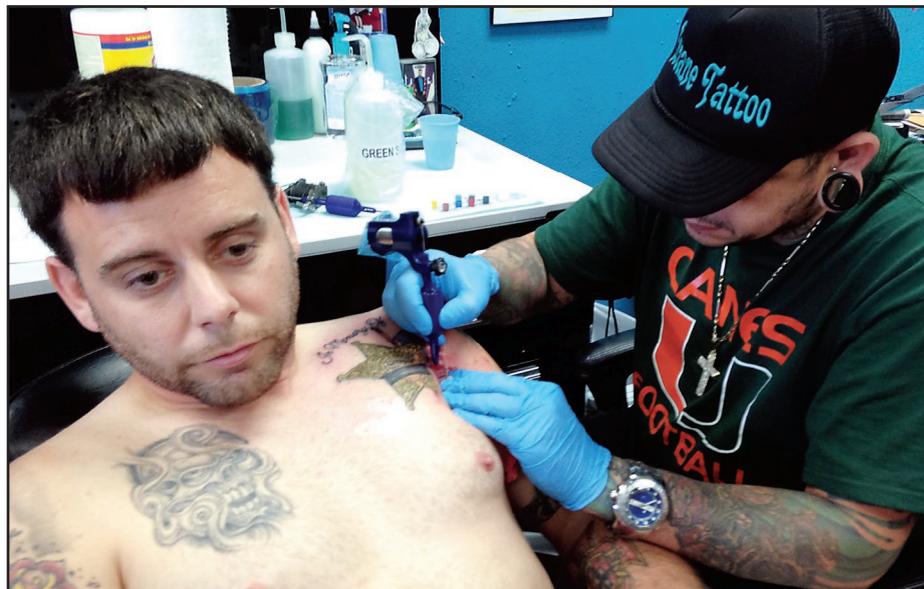
He joined the St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office in October 2000.

"It's something that he dedicated his life to and something he was always passionate about. Being a deputy was closest to his heart," as he peered down at his own chest, now branded with an intricate gold sheriff's badge etched with Morales's name. An American flag flies adjacent to the piece that symbolizes the father of two's military service.

"I went on a couple of ride-alongs with Gary when he was on the Special Investigations Unit," Placido said. "I got to see how he approached the job and how he was still the same guy in and out of the uniform."

"People getting arrested were laughing," Placido smiled.

Garappolo, who didn't know Morales personally, said a loss of his own lead him to offer free Sgt. Gary Morales memorial tattoos to anyone who'd like to honor the fallen hero. Garappolo said he would offer the free tattoos indefinitely. "I kind of know what Mike is going through. One of my friends who was a military police officer passed away



Nicole Rodriguez/Staff Photo

Close Morales friend Mike Placido, part-owner of American Top Team Legacy gym in St. Lucie West, memorializes his fallen friend with a permanent art piece above his heart at Inzane Tattoo in Port St. Lucie. Shop owner John Garappolo (pictured right) is offering free Sgt. Gary Morales memorial tattoos indefinitely.

and as soon as he passed, I did a memory piece on my leg for him," Garappolo said above the buzz of the tattoo gun used to pierce and infuse Placido's skin with the permanent ink.

"It's a shame. It's sad. You

don't want to see anybody lose their lives over something stupid like this," Garappolo said.

Inzane Tattoo is located at 8599 South U.S.1, Port Saint Lucie. For more information, call (772) 249-4115.

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Showing the colors

Geoff Quartraro of White's Tackle in Fort Pierce was recognized by Megan Elam of the American Legion Post 40 as the Americanism Award Winner for his participation in flying the American flag outside their business. The presentation took place during the Coffee with the Mayor sponsored by Main Street Fort Pierce and the Fort Pierce Jazz & Blues Society Friday, March 15, at Old City Hall.

Mitch Kloorfain
chief photographer

at The Lyric

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For Veteran Voice

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The Valiant Air Command and Tico Warbird AirShow apologizes for any inconvenience that this may cause. If you have any additional questions please contact the museum (321) 268-1941 or email us at vacwards@bellsouth.net. Visit our website at www.vacwarbirds.org to purchase advance tickets online and for more AirShow information.

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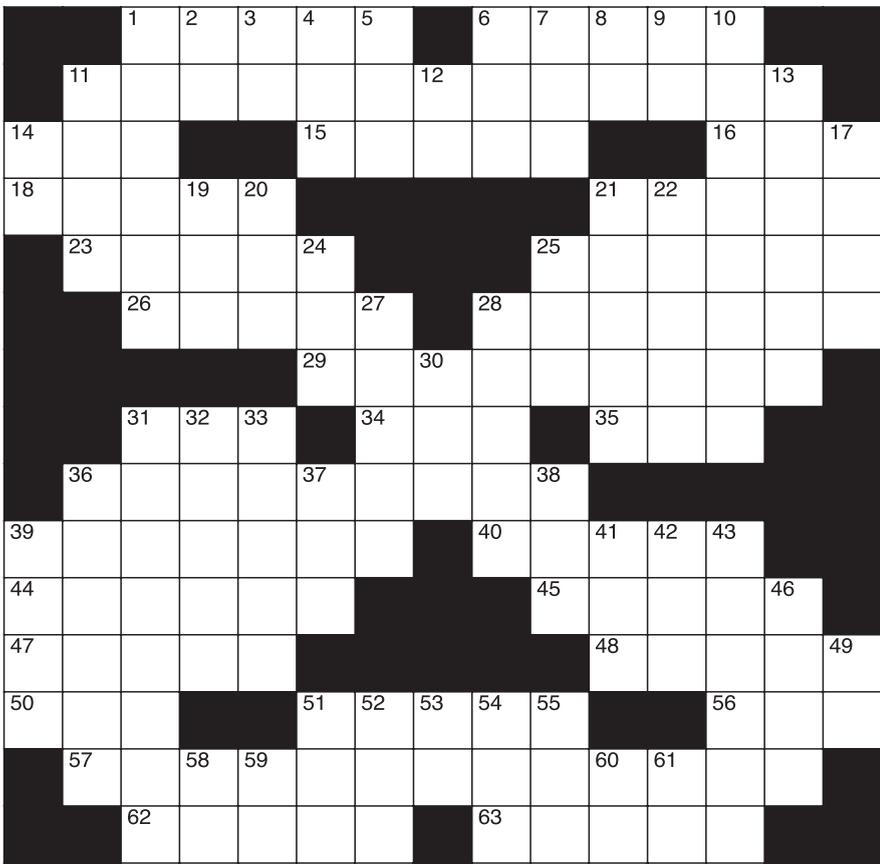
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CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Mexican President Camacho
- 6. Egyptian statesman Anwar
- 11. March 17, 2013
- 14. Don't know when yet
- 15. Russian country house
- 16. No longer is
- 18. E.g. club soda or fruit juice
- 21. Hindu holy man
- 23. Viverridae cat
- 25. Long sound diacritical mark
- 26. Yellow-fever mosquitos
- 28. Dead and rotting flesh
- 29. Those who are present
- 31. Royal Mail Service
- 34. Not in
- 35. Slope stability radar (abbr.)
- 36. Fast ballroom dance
- 39. A writ issued by authority of law
- 40. Lots
- 44. Concrete ingredient
- 45. Counterweights
- 47. Lower in esteem
- 48. Having the head uncovered
- 50. A way to plead
- 51. Henry ___ Lodge, American politician
- 56. Before
- 57. Portable communicator
- 62. Marten having luxuriant dark brown fur
- 63. Game table fabric

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Inability to coordinate muscular movement
- 2. Biden or Cheney
- 3. Farm state
- 4. Confined condition (abbr.)

CLUES ACROSS

- 5. Macaws
- 6. Space Center Houston
- 7. Alias
- 8. "Chevy Show" star initials
- 9. A public promotion
- 10. More meretricious
- 11. Invests in little enterprises
- 12. Integrated circuit
- 13. Rednecks
- 14. Atomic #69
- 17. Legume hemp
- 19. Adam's garden partner
- 20. The color of blood
- 21. Orange-red chalcedony
- 22. Units of land area
- 24. Green, sweet or Earl Grey
- 25. Any member of the family Hominidae
- 27. Received thrust (Geology)
- 28. Mexican treasury certificates
- 30. Ancient Egyptian king
- 31. Searches through
- 32. Silent actors

- 33. Biscuitlike tea pastry
- 36. Largest Canadian province
- 37. Chess horseman (abbr.)
- 38. Theater orchestra area
- 39. One who replaces a striker
- 41. The bill in a restaurant
- 42. A major division of geological time
- 43. Imperturbable
- 46. Used esp. of dry vegetation
- 49. Delaware
- 51. A passage with access only at one end
- 52. Brew
- 53. Common degree
- 54. Shape of a sphere
- 55. Yearly tonnage (abbr.)
- 58. City of Angels
- 59. Pound
- 60. Hello
- 61. Wizard of ___

SUDOKU

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Event to benefit the Navy SEAL Museum and Trident House (Rain date: April 28)

For Veteran Voice

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peaceful and a restful setting for families during their stay.

The National Navy SEAL Museum is the only museum in the world dedicated exclusively to the U.S. Navy SEALs and the elite warriors of Navy Special Warfare. Our continuing mission is to preserve the history of the U.S. Navy SEALs and their predecessors, including the Underwater Demolition Teams, the Naval Combat Demolition Units and Amphibious Scouts and Raiders.

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See SEAL page 15

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