

Mississippi SALUTE



Mississippi VA



*Our mission is to honor
Mississippi veterans and
their dependents through
superior service, care,
and assistance.*

MISSISSIPPI

BOARD Members



James H. Garner
CHAIRMAN

Biloxi, Fifth Congressional District

Major General James H Garner, U.S. Army Retired, enlisted in the National Guard July 1951 and was commissioned in 1953. He retired in 2000. During his 45 years of service, General Garner served in various commands and primary staff positions. He was a charter member of 2d Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne) which he commanded for five years. Other commands include 192d Transportation Company, 31st RAOC, 114th Area Support Group, and STARC Troop Command. He served on active duty with Headquarters Company, XVIII Airborne Corps, Fort Bragg, N.C.

Major General Garner, was appointed adjutant general for the state of Mississippi by Governor Kirk Fordice in 1992 and was reappointed in 1996. His awards and decorations include Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Master Parachutist Badge and Special Forces tab.

He was appointed to the Veterans Affairs board by Governor Hayley Barbour and reappointed twice by Governor Phil Bryant. He currently serves as the chairman of the board.



James (Max) Fenn, Jr.
VICE-CHAIRMAN

Summit, Fourth Congressional District

James "Max" Fenn, Jr. is a protective security advisor with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. During his military career, Fenn served in the United States Marine Corps, Marine Corps Reserve, and Mississippi Army National Guard from 1980-1998. He attended boot camp at Parris Island, South Carolina. As a member of the Battalion Landing Team 2/6 and the 22nd Marine Amphibious Unit, Fenn responded to the 1983 terrorist bombing of the American Embassy in Beirut Lebanon as a quick reaction force member.

Fenn participated in the Battle of Khafji during Operation Desert Storm, 1991, as a member of 2nd Force Reconnaissance Company and II Marine Expeditionary Force. Fenn also participated in Operation Uphold Democracy in the Republic of Haiti as a member of ODA 2061, C Company, 2nd Battalion, and the 20th Special Forces Group. He attended numerous schools, including the USMC amphibious reconnaissance course, U.S. Army airborne school, U.S. Navy dive school, U.S. Army jumpmaster course, U.S. Army ranger school, and U.S. Army Special Forces assessment and selection followed by the U.S. Army Special Forces qualification course—18B, weapons sergeant.

Fenn lives in Summit, Mississippi, with his wife, Anita, and two sons. He was appointed by Governor Phil Bryant to serve on the Mississippi Veterans Affairs board.



Deborah Walley Coleman

Madison, At Large

Colonel Deborah Walley Coleman joined the Mississippi National Guard in 1985, retiring at the rank of colonel. She served as: administrative clerk with 114th Area Support Group, Hattiesburg, Miss; platoon leader with the 786th Transportation Company in Desert Shield/Desert Storm, Lucedale, Miss; detachment commander, Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 150th Quartermaster Battalion, Meridian, Miss; company commander, Headquarters and Headquarters Company 106th Support Battalion, Monticello, Miss. Additional positions included a tour during Operation Iraqi Freedom III with the 184th Container Management Element in the Baghdad area; distribution management chief, the 184th (E) Sustainment Command, Support Operations Division; and as counterdrug coordinator, Joint Forces Headquarters, Mississippi Army National Guard.

Coleman graduated from the University of Southern Mississippi with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, and graduated from Belhaven University in June 2013 with her Master of Business Administration. Coleman is currently employed with the Mississippi Joint Legislative Budget Office.

Coleman currently resides in Madison, Mississippi, and was married to the late Colonel Robert Stacy Coleman. They have two sons, Robert Hunt and Matthew Wiley. Coleman was appointed by Governor Phil Bryant to serve on the Mississippi Veterans Affairs board.



David H. McElreath

Oxford, First Congressional District

David Hughes McElreath, Ph.D., a native of Oxford, Mississippi, was commissioned in the U.S. Army National Guard 1975. After serving in the 155th Armored Brigade, he accepted a commission in the United States Marine Corps as an infantry officer, retiring as a colonel in 2004 after commanding at the platoon, company, battalion, and group levels. He is a graduate of the Marine Corps Command and Staff College, where he later served on faculty; the United States Army Command and General Staff College; the Joint Warfare School (United Kingdom); and the U.S. Army War College. Upon his retirement, McElreath returned to Mississippi where he served as the commander of the Mississippi State Guard within the Mississippi Military Department.

McElreath is a professor of legal studies at the University of Mississippi. He received a Bachelor of Public Administration and a Master of Criminal Justice from Ole Miss, a Master of Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College and a Ph.D. from the University of Southern Mississippi. His teaching and research interests are in homeland security, law enforcement and correctional operations.

McElreath currently resides in Oxford with his wife, Leisa. They have three daughters and three grandchildren.



George E. Irvin, Sr.
Jackson, Second Congressional District

Brigadier General George E. Irvin Sr. is U.S. Army, retired. He served in the Deputy Operations Office-multi-national force. General Irvin served in Iraq in Operation Iraqi Freedom from 2004-2005. During his service he received the Joint Service Commendation Medal.

General Irvin served for over thirty-six years and completed eighteen different military schools from 1978-2007. He later received a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture Education from Alcorn State University, a Master of Agricultural Education/Secondary School Administration from Mississippi State University, and a Master of Business Administration from Jackson State University.

General Irvin is retired from the USDA (rural development) where he was the national veteran's coordinator. General Irvin resides in Jackson, Mississippi, with his wife, Sarah. They have five children and ten grandchildren. General Irvin was appointed by Governor Phil Bryant to serve on the Mississippi Veterans Affairs Board.



Billy L. Pierce
Decatur, Third Congressional District

Brigadier General Billy L. Pierce (Ret.) is a lifelong resident of Decatur. He is a graduate of Decatur High School and East Central Junior College. He received a bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Southern Mississippi and a master's degree in school administration from Mississippi State University. He also holds a master's degree in strategic studies from the U. S. Army War College in Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

He began his military career when he enlisted in the Mississippi Army National Guard in 1968. He served as an enlisted soldier as a track vehicle mechanic until 1974 when he was commissioned as a second lieutenant after completing Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia. He has served in command and staff positions at every level, including battery, battalion, brigade, and major subordinate command elements. Leadership posts include Commander of C-Battery, 4-114th FA, Morton, MS; Commander of Service Battery, 4-114th FA, Decatur, MS; Battalion Commander, 4-114th, FA, Newton, MS; Battalion Commander, 1-204th ADA, Newton, MS; Brigade Commander, 631st FA, Grenada, MS; Chief of Staff, 66th Troop Command, Jackson, MS; and Deputy Commander, 184th Transportation Command Element, Laurel, MS. After 36 years of service in the Mississippi National Guard, he retired as a Brigadier General in 2004. In 2005, he was inducted into the OCS Hall of Fame at Fort Benning, Georgia. He has received numerous awards and decorations throughout his military career.



C. Allen McDaniel II
Flowood, At Large

Colonel C. Allen McDaniel II became the fifth executive director of the National Guard Association of Mississippi on January 25, 2017. A graduate of Mississippi College School of Law, Colonel Allen McDaniel is also state judge advocate, Mississippi National Guard.

Colonel McDaniel began his service in 1990 as a private second class in 2/114th Field Artillery Battalion. A graduate of Mississippi State University, Colonel McDaniel also served as aide-de-camp for former Adjutant General James Garner.

As company commander of Company A, 890th Engineer Battalion, Colonel McDaniel led his company to a construction mission to the demilitarized zone, Republic of Korea. Colonel McDaniel was also deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Colonel McDaniel has been awarded the Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, and Combat Action Badge, among other various awards and decorations.

Colonel McDaniel is married to the former Tara Kirby and father to Ford and Cloe. They are members of First Baptist Church in Jackson, Mississippi.



Operation Family Reunion





In March of 2020, MSVA made the difficult, but all too necessary decision to shut down visitation at all four of the Mississippi State Veterans Homes in Collins, Jackson, Kosciusko, Oxford. For the next year, uncertainty swirled around residents and their families as they wondered when they would be able to see each other in person again. While window visits and video calls were the safest alternative to in-person visits, it would soon become increasingly difficult and emotionally taxing each time a resident and family member were truly not able to be together. There is no doubting the emotional difficulties our residents and their family members endured as the COVID-19 pandemic seemed to charge on, unrelenting.

MSVA's Director of Nursing Pam Thrash and her team worked tirelessly to implement in-person visitation that followed CDC and Mississippi Health Department guidelines. By January of 2021, all four veterans homes had dealt with numerous challenges with COVID-19 outbreaks. The experience with the containment and prevention of the virus and the eventual distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine allowed our veterans homes to begin planning for the first in-person visits in over a year.

We wanted to ensure that this reopening event would be safe for residents, staff, and visitors while also allowing residents and their families to not feel restricted by protocols. Operation Family Reunion was held in each home over the span of three days so that we could have visitation one wing at a time. All visitors were given a COVID-19 rapid test prior to entering the facility. These measures were critical to maintain social distancing and create a respectful, calm, and safe environment for our residents and family members.

MSVA's Executive Director Stacey Pickering said, "Keeping our residents safe has been our number one priority during the pandemic. But, I can truly say that bringing families back together was right there at the top of the list, as well. Our team members go home every day and see their loved ones, face to face, in the same space. Our residents and their families have not had that opportunity for over a year, and we have done everything in our power to make this moment as safe as possible."

We want to thank every single staff member that made this event possible, but we especially want to thank each and every resident and family member for their patience and understanding throughout the pandemic.

Around the HOMES

Mississippi Veterans Home **COLLINS**

3261 Highway 49
Collins, MS 39428



Tommie Carr ADMINISTRATOR

TCarr@msva.ms.gov
(601) 765-0519

Tommie Carr has served the Mississippi Veterans Home at Collins since 2012. A graduate of the University Southern Mississippi, Carr holds a degree in healthcare administration. Carr has over 25 years of healthcare experience. As a proud daughter of a veteran, Carr is devoted to provide superior service to the veterans in the home. Carr's personal connection to veterans greatly influences and drives her passion to serve. When she is not hard at work in the Collins home, Carr likes to spend any free time she has with her family. Carr is originally from Ellisville but presently resides in Seminary. We thank Tommie Carr for her hard work in keeping the veterans in Collins healthy, happy, and dignified.

Kevin Kelly

VSO/ Admissions
jkelly@msva.ms.gov
(601) 765-0403





Around the HOMES

Mississippi Veterans Home

JACKSON

4607 Lindbergh Drive
Jackson, MS 39209



Gerald Johnson

ADMINISTRATOR

GReed@msva.ms.gov

(601) 353-6142

Gerald Johnson has served the Mississippi Veterans Home in Jackson since 2009. A graduate of University of Southern Mississippi, Johnson holds a degree in social rehabilitation services. She has a long and distinguished career in public service, holding licenses in social work and nursing home administration. It is evident that she has passion for service to others. When asked how she is able to so effectively lead the Jackson home, Johnson responds, "When you put the veterans needs above everything else, the rest takes care of itself." Johnson is a proud former resident of McLain, Mississippi, but currently resides in Jackson. MSVA is lucky to have a seasoned and dedicated public servant to lead and serve our Jackson home.

Harvey Smith

VSO/ADMISSIONS

HSmith@msva.ms.gov

(601) 354-7205

10 • Mississippi's SALUTE





Around the HOMES

Mississippi Veterans Home

KOSCIUSKO

310 Autumn Ridge Drive
Kosciusko, MS 39090



Tadé Ward

ADMINISTRATOR

Tward@msva.ms.gov

(662) 289-7044

Tadé Ward has served the Mississippi Veterans Home in Kosciusko since 2021. Prior to being promoted to administrator of the Kosciusko home, Ward served as the assistant administrator of the Mississippi Veterans Home at Collins, where she distinguished herself as a leader. Ward holds a Bachelor of Science from the University of Southern Mississippi and a Master of Business Administration from the University of Mississippi. Originally from Lagos, Nigeria, Ward has lived in the United States since 1995. Ward is the newest member to our administrative leadership at MSVA. We are so happy to be able to share her eagerness and passion to serve as she assumes her new position in Kosciusko.

Amanda Hughes

VSO/ADMISSIONS

AHughes@msva.ms.gov

(662) 289-7044





Around the HOMES

Mississippi Veterans Home

OXFORD

120 Veterans Drive
Oxford, MS 38665



Brent Avant

ADMINISTRATOR

BAvant@msva.ms.gov
(662) 236-1218

Brent Avant has served the Mississippi Veterans Home at Oxford since 2019. A graduate of the University of Mississippi, Avant holds a Bachelor of Arts in Leisure Management a Master of Arts in Parks and Recreation Management. Unsurprisingly, Avant is a lover of outdoor recreation. Originally from Winona, Avant is a long-time resident of Oxford where he has lived since 1999. His professional history details 20 years of healthcare experience in mental health, hospice care, and long-term care. Avant has been a licensed nursing home administrator since 2015. According to Avant, it is an honor to be able serve the men and women who have sacrificed so much. MSVA thanks Avant for his dedication to our veterans.

Regina Tutor

VSO/Admissions

RTutor@msva.ms.gov
(662) 513-8783





What's Next for MSVA? We're Growing!

As our communities, cities, states and nation continue to learn about the needs of our veterans when their service is over, we at Mississippi Veterans Affairs (MSVA) are preparing to best meet those needs. Whether it be long-term nursing care, planning for end-of-life decisions, or our agency simply preserving the history of our heroes, MSVA is ensuring we are ready for what is next. As we enter an unprecedented time in construction and expansion, here are some of our more significant growth projects taking place throughout our great state.



Future Mississippi Veterans Home at Tradition

Close to 35% of Mississippi's 186,000 veterans live in our three coastal counties (Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson). Such a large percentage justified a state-owned and operated facility to serve that community. Late next year, we will open our fifth state veterans home. The newest addition will be located in the Tradition community of the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Coordination and partnership from the federal, state, local and private sectors was the key to setting this project in motion. When the project was a mere concept, we began looking for land owned by the state. Businessman and Biloxi native Joe Canizaro was critical in MSVA acquiring the 25 acres for the project in the Tradition community.

Senators Cindy Hyde-Smith and Roger Wicker, and Representative Steven Palazzo (MS-4) supported us at the federal level. Through their championing our agency,



Mississippi VA was awarded \$29.3 million through the State Veterans Home Construction Program offered by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

Our state leaders proved their support of Mississippi's heroes as well. The legislature appropriated the matching funds for the future veterans home project, totaling \$15.8 million. And through the Mississippi Development Authority, Governor Tate Reeves authorized the construction of the roadway to the new veterans home and installation of utilities, costing approximately \$9.4 million.

The future veterans home will genuinely be state-of-the-art. To provide better quality, in terms of living spaces, the Tradition Home will feature 100 single-occupancy rooms (our four current homes are mainly double-occupancy). And once completed, the Mississippi Veterans Home at Tradition will pump an estimated \$14 million annually into the Mississippi Gulf Coast economy. MSVA is proud to partner with state architects, engineers, and construction companies to build this facility. The anticipated completion date for our Mississippi Veterans Home at Tradition is slated for fall 2023.

Renovation of Existing Mississippi Veterans Homes

While we are very excited about the future of our fifth Mississippi veterans home, we have also made it a priority to enhance our current homes located in Collins, Jackson, Kosciusko and Oxford. This year, we have begun renovating our Mississippi Veterans Home at Collins and will continue to upgrade each of our other locations. Each veterans home will undergo close to \$3 million in renovations, thanks to unanimous approval from our Veterans Affairs board.

Upgrades will include:

- New sports bar area for residents
- Physical therapy/area
- Renovated dining hall
- Upgraded chapel
- Expanded library area
- Modernized main lobby/entrance area/main hallway

When they aren't in their rooms, these shared spaces are where our residents spend their time. We continue to provide the best possible living experience possible for our residents with these upgrades.

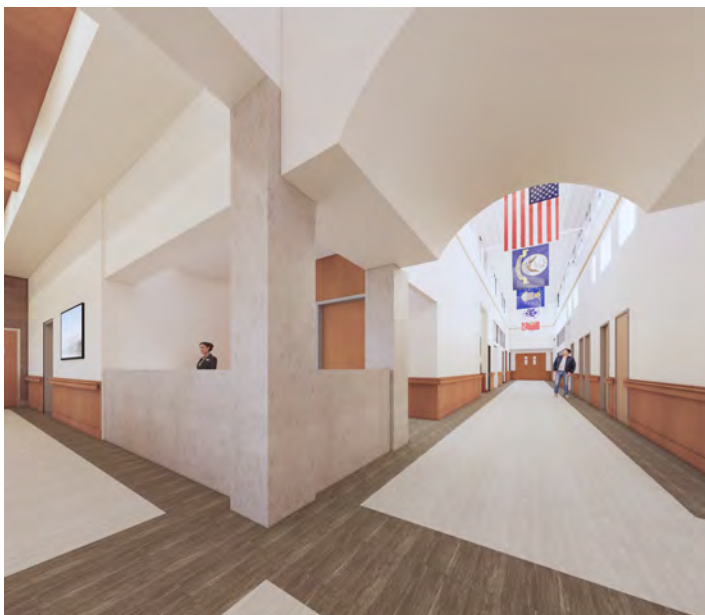
At MSVA, we pride ourselves on providing our aging hero with a high quality of life long-term nursing care experience. In fact, this year, all four veterans homes were once again awarded Pinnacle Quality Insight's "Customer Service Award." They even ranked in the top 15% of over 250,000 long-term care facilities – not just veterans homes. The accolade represents the third year in a row that our homes have been recognized for the award.

The daily pricing rate of our homes compared to privately-owned facilities is unmatched. For an honorably discharged veteran, it costs them \$50 a day to live in our home; and for a 70% service-connected veteran, there is no cost. We even offer the spouse of a veteran to live in our veterans home system at a daily rate of \$168. Each of our four current homes can house 150 residents

If you or your loved one is a veteran and has considered making one of our homes yours, we hope you will seek eligibility. Admission to any of our homes requires each veteran:

- To be or have been a Mississippi resident
- Have qualifying military service
- Have been discharged under other than dishonorable conditions
- Be the spouse of a veteran who resides in one of the state veterans homes
- Have a medical examination by a physician within 30 days of admission and, as a result, demonstrate that he/she:
 - Does not have a communicable disease
 - Does not require medical or hospital care for which the home is not equipped or staffed to provide
 - Does not have traits that may prove to be dangerous to themselves, other residents, and employees

Out-of-state veterans may be admitted to the homes if no Mississippi residents are waiting to accept a bed/room. For more information on our homes, including admission paperwork and contact information, visit the "Veterans Homes" section of our website, www.msva.ms.gov/homes.



Expansion at the Mississippi Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Newton

Another project currently underway is the expansion of our Mississippi Veterans Memorial Cemetery located in Newton. In October 2020, our Veterans Affairs board and executive leadership broke ground on a location at the cemetery that will feature 1,500 new crypts covering five acres. Most of the estimated \$4 million project is covered by a federal grant through the United States Department of Veterans Affairs – National Cemetery Administration.

“Our memorial cemetery is one of the best in the entire country. This expansion will allow 1,500 more of our veterans to have a final resting place worthy of American heroes,” said Mississippi VA Executive Director Stacey Pickering.

“We appreciate the support of the National Cemetery Administration and the rest of our federal partners at the VA.”

Each crypt holds two coffin spaces, one for the veteran and another for the veteran's choice dependent. The expansion also will include new landscaping, irrigation, and supporting infrastructure. And the standard remains the same: Burial and crypt space come at no cost to the veteran/family and includes a headstone with the care of the site into perpetuity. Together, our Mississippi Veterans Memorial Cemeteries at Kilmichael and Newton can serve as the final resting place for 300,000 heroes.

We are anticipating a completion timeframe of spring 2022.



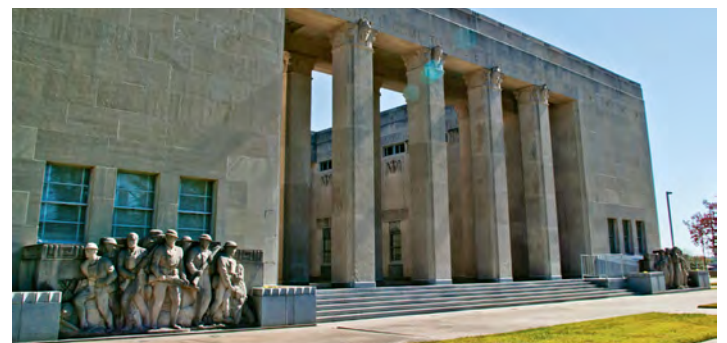
Renovation of the Mississippi War Memorial Building

Before the beginning of the COVID pandemic, the Mississippi Legislature appropriated \$7.5 million to restore the state's Mississippi War Memorial building. Opened in 1940 in downtown Jackson next to the Old State Capitol, The War Memorial building stands as a monument to the memory of the men and women of Mississippi who made the ultimate sacrifice in giving their lives in the name of American freedom.

Over the years, the two-story flat-roofed limestone building has experienced natural wear and tear, both on the exterior and inside the facility. The restoration project to correct and upgrade these issues will take 10 to 12 months to complete. The ultimate goal is to have all major veterans service organizations under one roof, ready to serve the state's 186,000 veterans.

Mississippi Veterans Affairs has partnered with the Mississippi Legislature, Mississippi's Bureau of Buildings, the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled Veterans of America, and the Mississippi National Guard Association on this project. We look forward to seeing this memorial restored to its former glory to properly honor those heroes who gave their lives in defense of our nation's freedom.

These projects, along with many other current plans, tie directly to our mission: to serve Mississippi's 186,000 veterans and their dependents through superior care, service, and assistance. These American heroes deserve the best, and we look forward to providing it for them.



Mississippi Veteran Benefits

MISSISSIPPI DISABLED VETERANS BENEFITS

For updated veterans benefits, please visit www.msva.ms.gov/benefits

Ad Valorem Taxes

Any veteran having a service-connected total disability, who has been honorably discharged from military service shall be exempt from all ad valorem taxes on the assessed value of homestead property and to extend such exemption to unremarried surviving spouses of such veterans.

Miss. Code Ann., §27-33-75 and §27-33-67

License Plates

Any legal veteran resident of the state of Mississippi with a service-connected disability (100%) from the Veterans Administration and evaluated as permanent and total by the VA; or a rating of total (100%) based on individual unemployability and evaluated as permanent and total by the VA; and the unmarried surviving spouse of such person as long as he/she remains unmarried, is privileged to purchase annually one (1) motor vehicle license plate or tag for a private passenger motor vehicle or pickup truck in his or her county of residence for the sum of one dollar (\$1.00) in total cost. **Miss. Code Ann., §27-19-53**

Any legal resident of the state of Mississippi who is a veteran of service in the Armed Forces of the United States, and who is rated as having one hundred percent (100%) permanent service-connected disability by the Veterans' Administration is privileged to purchase annually under this subsection one (1) motorcycle license plate or tag in his or her county of legal residence, for the sum of one dollar (\$1.00) in total cost for plate or tag. The registration year of such motorcycle shall commence the first day of the month in which application for registration is made, as provided in Section **Miss. Code Ann., §27-19-31** and **Miss. Code Ann., §27-19-53**

Hunting and Fishing License

Veterans who have a total service-connected disability from the Veterans Administration are not required to purchase hunting or fishing license, but must have on their person proof of age, residency and disability status while engaged in hunting or fishing. **Miss. Code Ann., §49-7-5**

MISSISSIPPI VETERAN BENEFITS

Privilege Tax

Persons who are 65 or older, blind, deaf, dumb, or with loss of hand or foot, or loss of use of the hand or foot or who can provide documentation that they are 50% disabled to perform physical labor and whose annual gross income is \$900 or less are exempt from payment of privilege tax for specified businesses.

Miss. Code Ann., §27-15-227

Honorary High School Diploma

The school board of a local school district may award an honorary high school diploma in a form prescribed and supplied to school districts by the State Board of Education to veterans of World War II, the Korean Conflict and the Vietnam Conflict who were unable to complete their education due to their military service. The honorary diploma is available to any honorably discharged veterans residing in Mississippi who was (a) scheduled to graduate between 1941 and 1955 but was inducted into military service before completing the necessary graduation requirements, or (b) was scheduled to graduate between 1963 and 1973 but volunteered for military service and received the Vietnam Service Ribbon. Family members of deceased eligible veterans may apply for the diploma to be awarded posthumously.

Miss. Code Ann., § 37-16-13

Authorization of In-State Tuition for Nonresident Students Who Are United States Veterans or Persons Entitled for Veterans' Educational Assistance

Any veteran, as defined by Title 38 of the United States Code, or a person entitled to education benefits under Title 38 of the United States Code is authorized in-state tuition.

Miss. Code Ann., § 37-103-25

Educational Assistance

Children of any member of the armed services whose official home of record and residence is within the state of Mississippi and who is officially reported as being either a prisoner of war or missing in action can receive an eight-semester scholarship, without cost, exclusive of books, food, school supplies, materials and dues or fees for extracurricular activities at any state supported college or university within the State.

Miss. Code Ann., §37-108-1

The Adjutant General of Mississippi is authorized to pay the tuition for certain members of the active Mississippi National Guard who are enrolled within the state of Mississippi in an accredited institution of higher learning, vocational education school or junior college. **Miss. Code Ann., §33-7-405 and §33-7-407**

Military personnel stationed in Mississippi are classified as state residents for the purposes of payment of tuition at state colleges and universities. **Miss. Code Ann., §37-103-17**

Recording and Retrieving Documentation

The Mississippi Dept. of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics is to furnish, without charge, copies of birth and death certificates when they are needed to establish claims for dependency, disability, or survivors benefits for any veteran who is a legal resident of the state of Mississippi or their claimants.

Miss. Code Ann., §35-3-9

The State Bureau of Vital Statistics is to furnish, at no expense, and immediately upon application a certified copy of birth certificates for any person volunteering for service in one of the Armed Forces of the United States. **Miss. Code Ann., §41-57-25**

Chancery and circuit clerks are to furnish, without charge, copies of marriage licenses, divorce decrees, adoption decrees and any and all other records when the same are needed to establish claims for dependency, disability or survivors benefits for any veterans who are legal residents of the state of Mississippi or their claimants. **Miss. Code Ann., §35-3-11**

Chancery clerks shall record, without cost whatsoever to any person of the Armed Forces of the United States residing in the same county, all honorable discharges and all certificates of service of any and all members of the Armed Forces of the United States. Certified copies will be furnished free without cost to the soldier, sailor, marine, coast guardsman, or nurse.

Miss. Code Ann., §35-3-13

Concealed Weapon Training, State Residency Exemption

Concealed-carry permit qualification requirements have been revised to authorize any member, honorably retired member or veterans of any active or reserve component branch of the United States of America Armed Forces having completed law enforcement or combat training with pistols or other handguns as recognized by such branch after submitting an affidavit attesting to have read, understand and agree to comply with all provisions of the enhanced carry law. **Miss. Code Ann., §97-37-7**

Miss. Code Ann., § 45-9-101

Concealed Weapon Permit Fee Exemption for Service Connected Disabilities

Any veterans having a service-connected disability shall be exempted from concealed weapon permit fees and renewal fees. The veteran must be a resident of the state for 12 months or longer immediately preceding the filing of the application. However, this residency requirement may be waived, provided the applicant possesses a valid permit from another state, is active military personnel stationed in Mississippi, or is a retired law enforcement officer establishing residency in the state.

Miss. Code Ann., §45-9-101

Concealed Weapon Permit Fee Exemption for Active Duty Military

Active duty members of the Armed Forces of the United States shall be exempt from the payment of concealed weapon permit fees and renewal fees. **Miss. Code Ann., § 45-9-101**

The Use of Support Animals

Any Armed Services veterans that are blind, mobility impaired, diagnosed with PTSD or hearing impaired that uses a support animal specifically trained as a guide, leader, listener or for any other necessary assistance in day-to-day activities shall be entitled to the full and equal accommodations, advantages, facilities and privileges of all public conveyances, hotels, lodging places, businesses open to the public for the sale of any goods or services and all places of public accommodation, amusement, or resort and other places to which the general public is invited, and may take the support animal into conveyances and places, subject only to the conditions and limitations applicable to all persons not so accompanied, except that: the support animal shall not occupy a seat in any public conveyance, the support animal shall be upon a leash or otherwise sufficiently restrained in a manner appropriate for the animal while using the facilities of a common carrier. Support animal trainers shall have the same rights of accommodations, advantages, facilities, and privileges with support animals-in-training as the veteran. **Miss. Code Ann., §43-6-155**

Re-employment

Any person who is a member of any reserve component of the Armed Forces of the United States who, in order to perform duties or receive training with the Armed Forces of the United States or of the state of Mississippi, leaves a position other than a temporary position in the employ of any employer, and who shall give evidence of the satisfactory completion of such duty or training, and who is still qualified to perform the duties of such position, shall be entitled to be restored to his previous or a similar position, in the same status, pay, and seniority. Such period of absence for military duty or training shall be construed as an absence with leave but may be without pay.

Miss. Code Ann., §33-1-19

Professional License Reciprocity

As passed by the Mississippi Legislature (2013 Regular Session) and signed into law by the governor: Senate Bill 2419 provides that military and military spouses who are moving or have moved to Mississippi due to an active-duty transfer may more quickly obtain licenses for many professions such as teaching, accounting, cosmetology, engineering and real estate brokerage. Licenses for physicians, nurses, dentists, dieticians, and other medical jobs are also included. The bill also provides that individuals with military training may (subject to guidelines set by licensing boards) count their experience toward requirements for various job licenses, certifications, and registrations. State licensing boards can grant either a permanent or temporary occupational license. People with temporary licenses can start working while applying for permanent ones. To view the complete bill: <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/documents/2013/html/SB/2400-2499/SB2419PS.htm>. Licensing for specific professions is regulated by cognizant boards/agencies. Individuals must contact individual licensing boards for information and eligibility.

Mississippi Veterans Memorial CEMETERIES

Mississippi VA operates the state's two veterans memorial cemeteries in Kilmichael and Newton. Our cemeteries serve as a tribute to America's history of military service and sacrifice, featuring men and women who dedicated their lives to preserve our freedoms. Over 1600 resting heroes are buried at our two locations. Currently, 36 of the state's counties are represented, and 20 states from across the country have veterans buried in Kilmichael and Newton.



Mark Lawson

DIRECTOR OF CEMETERIES
mlawson@msva.ms.gov

Mark Lawson serves as our director of cemeteries. Lawson joined MSVA in 2012 and oversees all operations at both our Kilmichael and Newton locations. Lawson is a veteran himself, having served as an air traffic controller in the United States Navy for 20 Years. He deployed in support of the following operations: Restore Hope, Operation Southern Watch, and Iraqi Freedom. He resides in Kilmichael with his wife, Penny.

If you have questions about burial options, necessary documentation, or qualifications, please contact our cemetery representatives.

For more information on our cemeteries, visit www.msva.ms.gov/cemeteries

Newton

248 Honor Circle
Newton, MS 39345

Franceania Moncrief

CEMETERY REPRESENTATIVE

FMoncrief@msva.ms.gov
(601) 683-2959

Kilmichael

2 Legion Road
Kilmichael, MS 39747

Lady Nix

CEMETERY REPRESENTATIVE

LNix@msva.ms.gov
(662) 262-4232



MSVA State APPROVING AGENCY

660 North Street, Suite 200
Jackson, MS 39206



Cathy McGruder, Ed. S.

DIRECTOR

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cmcgruder@msva.ms.gov

Cathy McGruder has served MSVA as director of the State Approving Agency (SSA) since 2013. MSVA's SSA Division promotes and safeguards quality education and training programs for veterans; ensures greater education and training opportunities for veterans, and protects the integrity of G.I. Bill. In short, it safeguards veterans' valuable educational benefits by ensuring that eligible programs offer worthwhile degrees and training.

MSVA could not have found a more passionate advocate of education to safeguard veterans' educational benefits. A graduate of Jackson State University, McGruder-Jones holds a Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood & Family Education (2008), a Master of Science in Education and Special Education (2011), and a Specialist in Education in Psychometry (2018). Presently, McGruder-Jones is pursuing a Doctorate in Psychology with emphasis on brain and behavior. McGruder-Jones is the mother of a beautiful baby girl and is fluent in American Sign Language.



The State Approving Agency (SAA) inspects and approves new education and training programs at higher learning institutions, community and junior colleges, vocational-technical schools, flight schools, on-the-job training and apprenticeship programs for veterans education eligibility. SAA also serves as the state's guardian of the G.I. Bill.

If you have questions concerning a school or a training program being approved to teach veterans, reservists, and dependents under the G.I. Bill, please contact the Mississippi VA State Approving Agency.



Ruth Braxton

VSO II / SAA

rbraxton@msva.ms.gov

(601) 576-4855

States Agency Honors America's Heroes



Recreation is a huge part of our quality of life component within our Mississippi Veterans Homes System. Whether it be game or movie night, holiday festivities, or outdoor activities, we try to provide a well-rounded experience for our residents. Part of that outdoor activity includes our ponds at our Collins, Jackson and Kosciusko locations. The ponds serve as relaxing sitting areas, scenic views and on-site fishing locations for our residents. When it comes to the care and upkeep of the ponds, one of our state partners has stepped up to serve Mississippi's veterans. Throughout the year, the Mississippi Department of Wildlife,

Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP) sent biologists to perform fish sampling at our homes to evaluate current fish populations and assist in pond management.

These subject matter experts provided us recommendations, such as fish harvest or fish stocking advice, instructions on controlling aquatic vegetation, enhancing fish habitat, fertilizing and more to help promote a quality fishery for our residents. They even went above and beyond their mission by adding new fish to our ponds to help promote population growth. "We were happy to promote fishing opportunities for our veterans, and we look forward

to a continued relationship with Mississippi Veterans Affairs," said MDWFP Fisheries Bureau Director Jerry Brown.

The fisheries bureau also assists private pond and lake owners to help achieve their goals. In addition to on-site visits, they can provide guidance and expertise over the phone, email, etc. These services are free, but a "request for service" application may need to be submitted for the on-site visit option.

For more information on the MDWFP pond management program, visit www.mdwfp.com/fishing-boating/pond-assistance-program/



MSVA Hosts Annual VSO Training Conference

In November 2021, Mississippi Veterans Affairs (MSVA) hosted its annual Veterans Service Officer (VSO) Certification Training Conference at Biloxi's Golden Nugget Hotel and Casino.

This yearly training event updates all county, state, and tribal service officers of changes, processes, and regulations that provide and allow county veteran services certification. There was invaluable information and discussions by representatives of

the Jackson VA Regional Office (Federal), Federal VA Debt Management, Federal VA Pension Management, Federal VA Caregiver Support, Federal VA Board of Veteran Appeals, Federal VA Healthcare and more.

Over 90 attendees were present, all with the goal of better serving Mississippi's 186,000 veterans and their families as they navigate the process of veterans benefit claims and other areas. Every certified VSO in Mississippi always provides their service

on benefit claims at no cost to the veteran. There is a VSO close by no matter where you live in our state. MSVA has strategically placed a VSO at every major university in Mississippi and all three VA Hospitals that serve our state.

For more information on locating the veterans service officer nearest you, visit our website, www.msva.ms.gov/serviceofficers.



Company SPOTLIGHTS

KLLM Transportation Services

KLLM Transportation Services is one of the largest and most prestigious truckload, temperature-controlled carriers in North America with services also into Mexico. Headquartered in Jackson, Mississippi, KLLM offers a range of transportation solutions including over-the-road (OTR), regional, dedicated, intermodal, and logistics. KLLM delivers unrivaled service to some of North America's largest brands each day and has done so for more than 55 years since its founding in 1962.

KLLM President and CEO Jim Richards "KLLM has the utmost respect for veterans and their service and sacrifice to this great country. We love hiring veterans, whether they're experienced Class-A drivers or just learning how to be a truck driver as part of our KLLM Driving Academy. Veterans are on time, organized, and have a strong work ethic that sets them apart from their peers in many ways. The quality of candidate with veterans is usually a cut above, and we would expect nothing less from those

who have served in the United States Armed Forces."

During orientation to KLLM, veteran drivers receive a KLLM Veteran duffel bags with several gifts with the KLLM Veteran logo emblazoned on them. Also, veteran drivers have a KLLM Veteran decal/watermark on the driver's side of their tractor letting the motoring public proudly know they're a veteran. This distinguishes them from the rest of our KLLM tractors at a glance.



Southern Pipe & Supply

Southern Pipe & Supply has partnered with the Mississippi VA and the Mississippi Department of Corrections to sponsor the Housing Unit for Military Veterans program. Located in Pearl, Mississippi, HUMV is a job-focused reentry program at the Central Mississippi Correctional Facility providing education and skills to incarcerated veterans nearing the end of their sentence.

The program enrollees are moved to a private on-site campus away from the general prison population. Over the 18-month program, applicants are enrolled in courses that cover skills in much needed trades like HVAC repair, welding, iron work,

masonry, and other necessary skills for construction and contract work.

In addition to financial support for this life-changing program, Southern Pipe & Supply has also provided HVAC equipment to be used in the courses, allowing veterans to get hands-on experience in real-world scenarios and applications. The veterans now can completely disassemble and then reassemble modern HVAC equipment during class. This allows program graduates to hit the job market with an extraordinary level of skill and product knowledge to bring to their future employers.

After completing the program, Southern Pipe will also assist graduates in returning to society by connecting them with Southern Pipe's customers for potential job interviews.

Southern Pipe is incredibly proud of the monumental work HUMV is doing to help incarcerated veterans and looks forward to seeing the programs' first round of graduates hit the job market soon.

SOUTHERN
PIPE & SUPPLY

Veterans Appreciation Games and University Honors

Last year marked the 20th anniversary of the September 11th terror attacks on our nation. In honor of the commemoration, several of our universities and colleges held their version of Armed Forces/Veterans Appreciation Games during football season. Mississippi State, Ole Miss, and Southern Miss lead the way in honoring American heroes from each branch of service, including retired veterans, active-duty, reservists, and guardsmen. American flag-themed helmets, logos at midfield, and firework shows added to those evening festivities on campuses across the state.

The support of our veterans goes beyond the public events at these institutions of higher learning. In the latest rankings of the nation's best colleges and universities for service members and veterans, the University of Southern Mississippi, the University of Mississippi and Mississippi State University all ranked in the Top-30.

- The University of Southern Mississippi
– Ranked 3rd in the nation
- The University of Mississippi
– Ranked 23rd in the nation
- Mississippi State University
– Ranked 26th in the nation

Add the fact that just about every college and university in the Magnolia State has a specific, on-campus location for assisting its student-veterans. It is clear that the state of Mississippi supports its heroes.



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY PHOTOS
Megan Bean / Mississippi State University

Supporting Our Heroes

STATE VETERANS CLAIMS DIVISION

MSVA claims department employs veteran service officers to provide free advice and guidance to veterans and dependents regarding VA claims, casework, hearings, appeals, and discharge upgrades. Claims division employees with MSVA hold accreditation from the following veteran organizations:

- Ex-Prisoners of War
- American Legion
- American Red Cross
- Fleet Reserve Association
- Veterans of Foreign Wars

Brin Jones

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Chris Ellis

GOVERNMENTAL CLAIMS LIAISON
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STATE VETERAN FIELD OFFICERS

MSVA has placed trained field officers throughout the state to aid both veterans, county veteran service officers, and congressional representatives.

Teddy Reed

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Glenn Robinson

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Gina Kelley

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VA HOSPITAL STATE VETERANS FIELD OFFICERS

The MSVA Hospital service officers provide free advice and guidance to veterans and dependents with VA claims, pertaining to VA medical care and treatment problems, hospitalization, and nursing home placement issues. Our hospital service officers provide free representation to veterans on issues of disagreement and at personal hearings held in the VA Hospitals in Biloxi, Jackson, and Memphis.

Cathy Adams

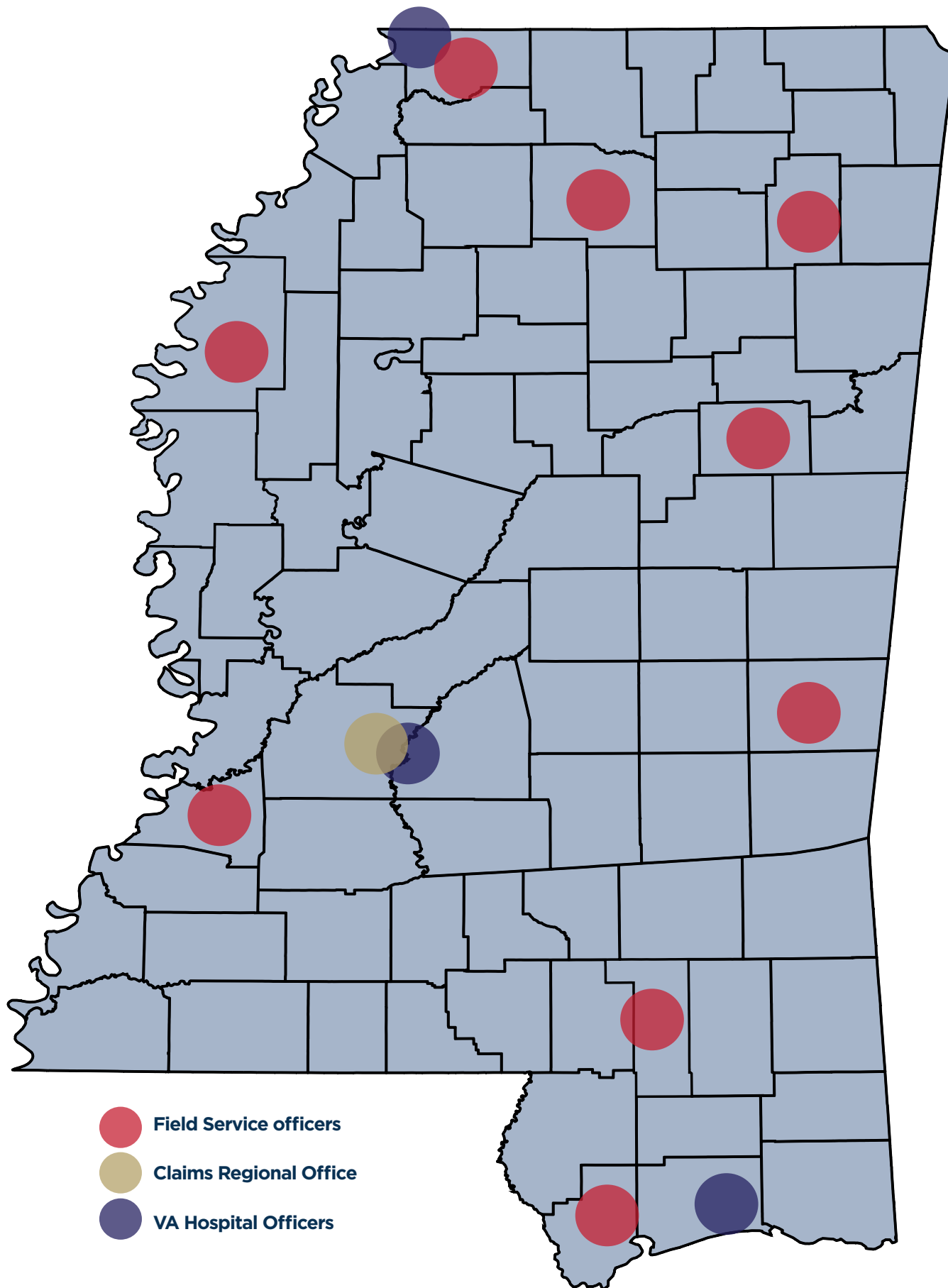
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Luis Torres & Honora Mayfield

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Marcus Richardson

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MISSISSIPPI STATEWIDE INCARCERATED VETERANS PROGRAM



HUMV

MSVA HOUSING UNIT FOR MILITARY VETERANS
VETERANS CAREER EDUCATION TRAINING CENTER
AT CENTRAL MISSISSIPPI CORRECTIONAL FACILITY, PEARL, MS

A Job-Focused Veteran Reentry Project

The idea of a job-focused reentry project for incarcerated Veterans that focuses on both becoming a better person and becoming better prepared for work is one that MDOC has fully embraced.

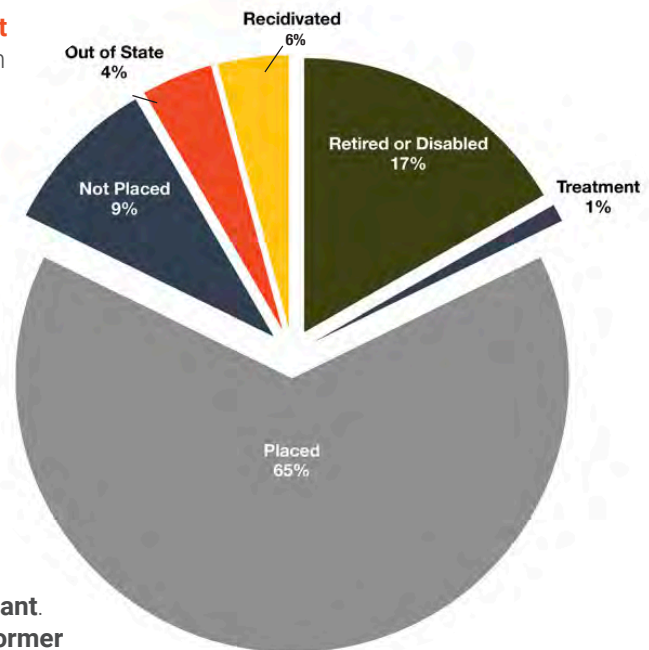
HUMV boasts of a **6% recidivism rate** and a **65% workforce placement rate** for those Veterans completing the program and able to work upon release.

The state's average recidivism rate between 2017 and 2020 was 37.4%. The average annual cost of incarceration today is \$18,480. Since HUMV's inception in 2016, 258 participants have been enrolled, and 106 have completed the program and been released. **Six have returned to prison.** The annual cost benefit to the state based solely on the **reduction of the recidivism rate is \$572,880.**

The economics of a fully operational, sustainable, NCCER credentialed, employer driven career education training center inside Mississippi's most populated prison are persuasive. Of the 106 in the "free-world", 72 were placed into the workforce at an average hourly wage of \$13.81, or an annual salary of \$28,725. Alan Barefield, Extension Professor, Department of Agricultural Economics at Mississippi State University, estimates the direct annual affect of that salary on the state's economy to be **\$57,416 per participant.** The added value to the state's economy of 72 trained and **employed former felons is estimated at \$4,133,952.**

There are **3,515** Veterans currently under supervision of MDOC. As of Jan. 4, 2022, there were **1,012** Veterans in custody in the 21 state facilities. MDOC and MSVA have stepped outside of traditional parameters to create an **unprecedented collaborative trust** among state and federal agencies, not-for-profits, education communities, volunteer networks, industry, and employers to provide a reentry program tied to development of job skills, national certification, and **workforce placement** for Veteran offenders **prior to release.**

HUMV, as a Statewide Incarcerated Veterans Program, is not limited to just serving Veterans currently in custody. There are **2,503** formerly incarcerated Veterans on parole or probation. The program is also committed to developing methods to provide assistance with workforce education, training, placement, benefits, and health care referrals to those Veterans, too, when needed.



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VCET: Veterans Career Education Training

The goal of the job-focused Veteran reentry project is to reduce recidivism through development of job skills and workforce placement prior to release.

Employment difficulties among justice-involved Veterans occur within the interrelationship of unemployment, homelessness, and recidivism. Neglecting needs in any of these areas, or minimizing the difficulty of navigating these processes, can limit positive outcomes in the other areas. Ultimately, **workforce placement is the key component** in reducing



recidivism as well as serving to enhance overall quality of life.

Inspired by the reentry program at **Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola**, which provides trade craft training and national certifications to offenders, CMCF has committed 11,000 square feet of space inside an unused building to be converted into the Veterans Career Education Training Center (VCET).

VCET's instructors are offenders who possess verifiable experience and have been certified as NCCER instructors by the Mississippi Construction Education Foundation (MCEF) based on their skill and qualifications. MCEF is a primary partner whose role is to **maintain quality and program integrity**.

Remarkable Returns on Workforce Investment

The **VCET is a workforce training, education, and placement program** targeting those most in need. It is estimated that fully operational, the VCET will be capable of placing **175 felons** (Veteran and non-Veteran) into skilled jobs each year at a living wage **before he or she is released from prison**, which represents remarkable returns on workforce investment.

Employer buy-in has been overwhelming. Companies, employers, and program partners have contributed more than \$100,000 in private dollars, and in excess of \$45,000 in donated materials, supplies, and equipment. The annual operating budget request from **workforce development funding resources is \$413,515.00**.



Profiling HEROES

Corporal Quentin W. McCall

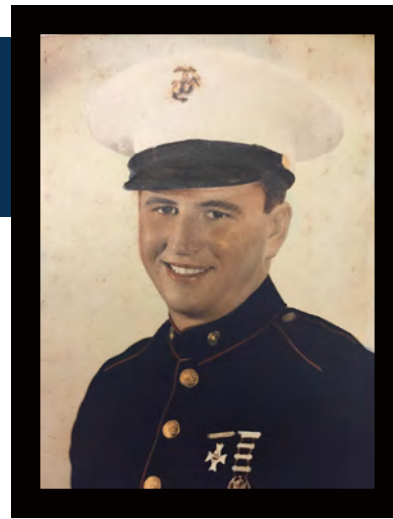
407,316. That is the number of American military casualties in World War II.

Over 400,000 heroes made the ultimate sacrifice in the name of freedom. And unfortunately, there are thousands of families that are still awaiting the opportunity to be reunited with their loved ones.

As of December 2021, the United States Department of Prisoners of War/Missing in Action Accounting Agency said there were still over 72,000 U.S. servicemen and civilians still unaccounted for from World War II.

Since the end of the war, various identification and recovery organizations have made it their mission to find these heroes, whether they be alive or not, and reunite them with their families. Recently, a family in Mississippi experienced this mission, firsthand.

Quentin Weldon McCall of Union, Mississippi, was 21 years old when he enlisted in the United States Marines Corps. His service registration card provides the physical description of a five-foot-eleven, 168-pound man with brown hair and brown eyes. Under the “complexion” option, the choices were – sallow, light, dark, freckled, light brown, dark brown, black, or ruddy. McCall was deemed to be ruddy or having a healthy red color. He listed Mrs. Effie McCall, his mother, as the person who would always know his address.



There was even a section on the card that asked for “other obvious physical characteristics that will aid in identification.” McCall decided to note the “scar on left leg.”

In the summer of 1942, McCall was training with the Marines in San Diego. Judging by his known military pictures, he was skillful in multiple firearms. By the end of his training, Private McCall bore the insignia of rifle sharpshooter and pistol expert on his uniform. He would be assigned to the Item Company of the 6th Marines and, in October 1942, began his journey overseas, ready to join the fight. He experienced his first combat in early 1943 Guadalcanal and earned his promotion to private first class because of his valor in battle.

In November of 1943, McCall and the Fighting 6th Marines landed on the island of Betio in Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. They were immediately met with extreme resistance from the Japanese. According to the Defense Prisoners of War/Missing in Action Accounting Agency, approximately 1,000 Marines and Sailors were killed and another 2,000 wounded. Among the dead, Corporal Quentin Weldon McCall; killed on the fourth day of battle on the small island. According to a letter sent to McCall's family, he was killed while delivering cover fire for six of his fellow Marines. Those

six Marines managed to escape because of McCall's ultimate sacrifice. In a short-form documentary titled “To Home Soil Waiting,” a family member of the late McCall had this to say about the young corporal at a memorial service in his honor: “He lived a life that shined for the Lord, I believe, through his actions and behavior. It's one thing to talk the talk, but he walked the walk. And then, he gave the ultimate sacrifice, the ultimate love, by laying down his life for his brothers in arms.” After the battle ended, a burial site was created for the soldiers who lost their lives on

REGISTRAR'S REPORT	
DESCRIPTION OF RECRUITMENT	
RACE	WHITE
HEIGHT (Approx.)	5'11 1/2
WEIGHT	168
COMPLEXION	Ruddy
HAIR	Brown
EYES	Brown
Build	Slender
Complexion	Light
Other	Scar on left leg
Complexion	Dark
Complexion	Freckled
Complexion	Light brown
Complexion	Dark brown
Complexion	Black



Cpl. Quentin W. McCall

THANKSGIVING is Memorial Day For The McCall's: One year ago this Thanksgiving day, Cpl. Quentin W. McCall, son of Mr. and Mrs. J. T. McCall was killed in the Battle of Tarawa. Cpl. McCall was a graduate of Union Church High school. His one brother, Thomas J. McCall has been overseas for eight months and at the present time is in France. In memory of her son, Mrs. McCall writes the following:

Your last parting wish we would like to have heard, And breathed in your ear our last parting

Only those who are able to tell, The pain saying farewell, years would less But it can for the who shall ed, though the tears, Memoried open, d years, sadly m sister at

Memorial Will Be Held For Corporal McCall At Union, July 2

Memorial services for Corporal Quenton W. McCall, USMC, of Union Church, will be conducted from the Methodist church there on July 2. Corporal McCall was killed in action during the Battle of Tarawa in the Gilbert islands November 23, 1943.

Basket flowers will be used in the services. Rev. Ulmer will officiate, assisted by a chaplain from one of the army camps. Marine officers and marine enlisted men from the Mississippi office in Jackson will also attend the ceremony.

One brother, Pvt. Thomas J. McCall, is now in England with the engineers and a brother-in-law, Sgt. Wilmer D. Cupit, participated in the invasion of France.

Cpl. McCall is survived by his mother and father, Mr. and Mrs. J. T. McCall of Union Church, two brothers, James McCall and Carroll McCall, and four sisters, Mrs. H. P. Herbert, Brookhaven; Mrs. T. F. Erwin, Brookhaven; Mrs. L. J. Crawford, Union Church; and Mrs. Wilmer Cupit, Jackson. He also leaves two neices and a nephew, Carolyn Sue Herbert and Barbara Jean Erwin and GERALD Dean Crawford.

the island. Along with close to 30 brothers in arms, McCall was buried in a mass grave. The location was called "Cemetery 33, Burial Site Row D."

According to missingmarines.com, That burial site was destroyed and covered in the following months of the Battle of Tarawa, as a naval airbase was quickly built to support the war efforts. McCall's body could not be found, and he was declared permanently "non-recoverable" in 1949. It would take 70 years, but thanks to DNA technology and the non-profit group History Flight, a hero's return home was once again made possible. On September 29, 2019, Corporal Quentin McCall's remains were positively identified, and the McCall family was notified.

Finally, on Monday, October 25th, 2021, Corporal McCall and his family received a proper memorial and burial service. He was buried at our Mississippi Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Newton with full military honors. "It is both humbling and inspiring to be a part of his homecoming," said Mississippi Veterans Affairs Executive Director Stacey Pickering. "Corporal McCall will be forever remembered for his service and ultimate sacrifice." After nearly 80 years, McCall is finally back home, where he belongs, amongst over 1200 resting heroes that date back to his era, World War II. Mississippi Veterans Affairs is proud to play a tiny part in this heartfelt story of an American hero.



Military Records, Combat Details, and Identification Details - Courtesy of missingmarines.com

Profiling HEROES

According to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, of the 16 million Americans that fought in World War II, only an estimated 240,000 are still alive.

In our state, that number drops to less than 1,500. And in our four Mississippi veterans homes, we have only 29 World War II Veterans. You've heard it many times over, but that generation features heroes from our greatest military generation.

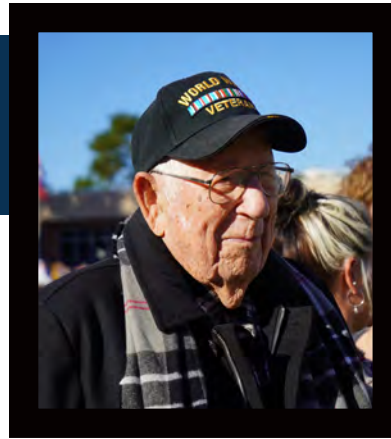
A great example of that generation is Mr. Henry Howard Bennett, a 99-year-old resident at our Collins home. Born the day after Christmas in 1922, he was raised in Sumrall, Miss., on the Bennett family farm with his 16 siblings (he has one surviving sibling – his sister, Rene).

1943 was a life-changing year in the life of Henry Bennett. In November of that year, he married the love of his life, then-Miss Gay Stephens. And earlier that year, on March 17th, he began his military service as he joined the then-Army Air Corps (now the Air Force).

At just 20 years old, Henry Bennett signed up to fight the evils of tyranny and was trained as an airplane and engine mechanic during his basic training. He left America to join the fight overseas on April 6th, 1944, and arrived in the European Theatre of Operations – United States Army on April 18th (to provide the perspective of travel time, that 12-day trip via ship is now the equivalent to a 7-9 hour flight, today).

We recognize 1944 as the year of perhaps the most pivotal moments in World War II. D-Day - the allied invasion of Europe across five beaches that stretched 50 miles with over 156,000 American, British and Canadian troops was one of the largest amphibious assaults in military history. But in the air is where Bennett fought for his country and the world's freedom.

As a front/nose gunner for his aircraft, he flew over missions, including over 30 battles/campaigns in the air offensives of Europe, Normandy, Northern France and the Rhineland offensive. Those missions earned him the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with three oak leaf clusters, and the Good Conduct Medal. Henry Bennett accomplished all of this in just one year, 18 months and ten days in the Air Corps.



He would officially exit military service on September 19th, 1945. Over 70 years later, his service was recognized by one of the highest

branches of our government and a foreign government. In October 2020, Bennett stood before families, friends, fellow residents and staff at the Mississippi Veterans Home at Collins to receive the "Medal of Liberated France" from United States Congressman Steven Palazzo (MS-4th Congressional District).

The medal is awarded to French, foreign nationals, and soldiers of allied armies who served and made a notable contribution to the liberation of France from the German occupation during World War II. "I never expected this, but I sure do appreciate it," said Bennett. As an added gesture of appreciation, Keltoum Rowland, honorary consul to France, was in attendance to thank Bennett for his service and sacrifice in the name of freedom. "They don't just hand these out to anybody," said Congressman Palazzo. "But for Mr. Bennett, it is very much deserving. When we look back, and we see all the things that we have today, we owe it to one generation; the World War II generation," Palazzo said. "You left everything — your farms, left your family — and you went over there and fought. And to be a nose gunner in a B-24 Liberator bomber aircraft? Look, this isn't a ride at Walt Disney; this is the real deal."

In November 2021, The University of Southern Mississippi recognized Bennett during the halftime of its Armed Forces Appreciation Game. Bennett's military accomplishments and accolades were read aloud as he stood at midfield with other current and former service members of the United States Army. Once the announcement was made, many of those same service members made sure to stop and shake hands with Bennett, thanking him not only for his service but for setting a noble example of valor, dignity and selflessness. Because of his service and sacrifice, Bennett is recognized as a 100% disabled veteran. But that has not shaped the way he lived his life, post-war. He worked as a farmer, factory worker, and gasoline truck driver. He also served as a deacon at his church for over half a century. He and his wife, Gay,



loved to travel, and every year they would visit a different part of our great nation (the Smokey Mountains were their favorite destination). They even made it a point to visit England together.

A man who always put his family first, Bennett retired in 1989 to care for his wife, who had become ill. They celebrated 74 years of marriage before she passed away in 2017.

Henry Bennett is still surrounded by love. His four children all live in south Mississippi (son – Jimmy, daughter – Linda Stringer, son – Steve, and daughter – Sue Long), and he has a total of 11 grandchildren, 19 great-grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Bennett is still a member of the American Legion (Post 90 in Columbia, Miss.) and the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). And he is well known throughout our Mississippi State Veterans Home in Collins as a man that never met a stranger.

Henry Bennett's courageous, incredible life story is just one of many that our World War II veterans lived so that we could have a better way of life. We are beyond proud to serve 29 heroes from our greatest generation in our veterans homes. And we hope that you discover, like us, that their unforgettable pasts can help shape our promising future.



On the MOVE

MSVA understands the importance of human capital.

Our leadership team is constantly striving to recruit and develop talent—and 2021 was no exception. In 2021, MSVA was pleased to add new leaders to our ranks and to move existing employees into exciting new roles. Featured are three such individuals who we felt were representative of the whole.



Shawuanna Williams-Lewis

Nursing Services Director

Shawuanna Williams-Lewis has been employed with the MSVA for over six years. Shawuanna's role in the veterans homes system is essential to ensuring that the veterans receive the superior care they deserve. Her years of service inspired her desire to be a greater asset to veterans by expanding her education in mental health. She graduated from the University of South Alabama, December 11, 2021 with a Master of Science in Nursing; was inducted into the Sigma Theta Tau International Nursing Honors Society, and named one of the American Psychiatric Nurses Association Board of Directors Scholarship recipients. She obtained her Advanced Practice Nursing License as a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner on February 3, 2022. Shawuanna feels that her job is rewarding because she "is able to contribute to and witness a quality of life those most deserving, our nation's veterans." She is excited about her practice and looks forward to providing quality care for veterans with mental health needs.



Teddy Reed

Director of Field Services

Teddy Reed oversees the planning and implementation of outreach services. He is responsible for connecting veterans in the broader community by cultivating relationships with businesses, individuals, and other relevant organizations. As a veteran himself, Teddy more than understands the importance of building and maintaining those relationships. He is also the chairperson for the Mississippi Workforce Development Committee, which is a MSVA joint partnership with various state agencies. This partnership promotes gainful employment opportunities for veterans and their dependents. Under his leadership, MSVA has also partnered with Building Healthy Military Communities (BHMC), establishing nine veteran task forces in Mississippi. Teddy feels the most rewarded by leading a team of eight field service officers (FSO) located on the campuses of the major universities in the state. He stated, "The FSO's are the key to promoting our outreach program. They are all veterans and know first-hand the sacrifices of those who have served."



Tadé Ward

Mississippi Veterans Home, Kosciusko Administrator

Prior to being promoted to administrator of the Kosciusko home, Tadé served as the assistant administrator of the Mississippi Veterans Home at Collins, where she distinguished herself as a leader. But, her journey with MSVA started in 2016, when she was hired on as a certified nursing assistant. She garnered an abundance of knowledge of the nursing home system and decided she would move towards the administrative side of the nursing home operation. Tadé has been a loyal and dedicated employee for many years, and MSVA is more than grateful for her devotion to the veterans in the homes. It is rare that you have an administrator gradually rise through many roles in the same system, and her experience within the veterans home system has proved to be invaluable. Tadé believes that “one of the best and absolutely most rewarding parts of my job is being able to check on our residents daily, listening to them about their needs, and catering to those needs. That allows our VA team to provide the best care on an individual basis to all our veterans.”



Jayy Williams

Front Desk Receptionist

Jayy has been an essential addition to MSVA team. In May of 2020, she moved from Memphis, Tennessee, to Brandon, Mississippi. She began a temporary position at MSVA's front desk in January of 2021, and her work ethic and exceptional job performance led to her being offered a position as a full-time MSVA employee in April of 2021. She is responsible for greeting and assisting office guests, distributing time sensitive correspondence, and directing a constant influx of phone calls to the appropriate staff member. Jayy has many clerical and office management duties that are essential to the efficiency needed for MSVA to optimally function. Additionally, she is responsible for processing requests and procuring military records, such as DD214s, for Mississippi's veterans. Reflecting on the various aspects of her position, Jayy shared that serving and assisting the veterans, while working in a supportive, professional environment, has been very rewarding and inspired confidence for her to continue to progress professionally.



THIS YEAR with Friends of Mississippi Veterans



In December, the Department of Agriculture, and Friends of Mississippi Veterans, came together and held a benefit concert with Lee Greenwood and Travis Tritt. All proceeds went to the state veterans home systems.





This past year, Friends of Mississippi Veterans held its annual sporting clays tournament along with the inaugural golf tournament. If you would like to be a part of this event, please go to www.msva.ms.gov/general-inquiries





Mississippi VA

Are you receiving compensation payments from VA? Do you feel you may be eligible?

If so, please contact one of our Claims or Field Officers

Types of Service Connection:

Direct Service Connection

There was an event or injury on active duty

You must have a current condition

**There must be medical evidence connecting the two
Presumptive Conditions**

Certain conditions are presumed to be due to exposure to toxic substances and can be service connected.

Some examples are:

Herbicide Exposure – typically Agent Orange

Exposure to particulate matters

Exposure to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune

Aggravation of pre-existing injuries

Service connection for secondary conditions

It is the veteran service officer's responsibility to guide the veteran in preparing a claim with the best chance of success.

When you come to your appointment, please bring a copy of your dd 214, a picture ID, and any relevant evidence that you have.

We look forward to serving Mississippi's veterans.

Veterans can also access our claims and field officers by visiting our website

www.msva.ms.gov/serviceofficers



Mississippi VA
SERVING OUR HEROES

Veterans Legal Clinic

Open every Friday at
Mississippi College School of Law
151 East Griffith Street, Jackson, MS
9:30am to 2:30pm

FREE LEGAL SERVICES FOR VETERANS

Veterans can also access free legal advice by visiting
www.msva.ms.gov/legal

2022 EVENTS

Memorial Day

MAY 30, 2022

Will be held at the Mississippi Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Newton, Mississippi, and the North Mississippi Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Kilmichael, Mississippi. Please visit www.msva.ms.gov for more information.



Suicide Prevention Training

SEPTEMBER 2022

In observance of Suicide Prevention Month, we have created a virtual training session for clergy and the general public who would like to learn more about suicide awareness—and how to help. This year we will be inviting all clergy to Jackson, Mississippi, for a one-day training. For more information on how to signup, please visit our website at www.msva.ms.gov

Wreaths Across America

DECEMBER 17, 2022

REMEMBER the Fallen...

HONOR those who Serve...

TEACH our children the value

of Freedom. Wreaths Across America

will take place at both of our cemetery locations in Newton and Kilmichael

Mississippi. It is always a free event and open to all people. For more information

on how to volunteer locally or sponsor a wreath for a hero, please visit

www.msva.ms.gov



Salute to Mississippi Gold Star Families with Mississippi Braves and Biloxi Shuckers

BILOXI SHUCKERS - MAY 28, 2022

MISSISSIPPI BRAVES - JUNE 4, 2022

MSVA is proud to partner with the Mississippi Braves and the Biloxi Shuckers for a fourth season as we recognize Mississippi Gold Star Families. For more information on this event,

please check our website at

www.msva.ms.gov



Friends of Mississippi Veterans Sporting Clays Competition

OCTOBER 10-11, 2022

Each year, MSVA, in partnership with Friends of Mississippi Veterans and

Mid-South Rehab Services, host our golf tournament and sporting clays

shoot to support the Veterans in the Mississippi Veterans Home System.

The golf tournament will be held on October 11th with the sporting clays

competition to follow on October 12th.

There will be a raffle, door prizes, and more. We hope to see you there!



Show pride in your service with a new veterans car tag.

Visit your local tax collector to purchase a veterans license plate.
All proceeds go to support the State Veteran Home System and
State Veteran Memorial Cemeteries.





Mississippi VA

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