

For Immediate Release

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## San Mateo County Veterans Service Office Provides a Host of Services

**Belmont, Calif.**— As Veterans Day approaches, the San Mateo County Veterans Service Office (CVSO) is reaching out to community members to ask for their help in connecting county veterans with services. Over 75% of San Mateo County veterans are 55 years of age and older and many have never accessed veterans' programs or benefits. Over the last year, the office has helped more than 2,000 local veterans recapture \$778,000 in retroactive payments and over \$1,200,000 in awards. They have also helped 88 dependents attend college through a fee waiver program. But there are many more veterans and families in need of assistance.

The CVSO—an access point to federal and state veterans services as well as county-administered social services—connects local veterans with benefits and programs, ranging from financial compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs to locally-administered in-home care.

Most new referrals to the CVSO are not veterans of engagements in Iraq or Afghanistan. Instead, they are aging veterans of the Vietnam War or World War II. The majority of these are Vietnam veterans who may be unaware that they can file claims for post-traumatic stress disorder or that an ongoing medical condition like diabetes or respiratory cancer can be attributed to Agent Orange, a chemical defoliant used extensively during the Vietnam War. Elderly World War II veterans are the second largest group of service seekers. Many are either homebound or in long-term care, entirely unaware of the continuum of services available to them. In some cases, county veterans services staff will go to the facility or the home to ensure that supports are in place for both the veteran and family.

In addition to serving as navigators, County Veterans Service staff fill a much-needed advocacy role. They have helped veterans find the documentation needed to substantiate a claim, sometimes involving in-depth research, persistence and interactions with various entities from the Department of Defense to a local doctor's office. In a recent case, a county veteran service representative called a medical provider, twice a week for six weeks to ensure that needed paperwork was completed for a 91-year old homebound WWII Navy veteran. Last month, a veteran's wife contacted the CVSO to request burial assistance for her hospitalized husband, she was provided with case management services that led to not only assistance with burial arrangements, but also aid and assistance for her husband and a lifelong spousal pension for her.

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Veterans of all ages may be eligible for a range of services and benefits, compensation, pensions, and medical services. They may also receive in-home care, vocational counseling, home loans and college fee waivers for their dependents. To learn more about services and benefits, the Department of Veterans Affairs offers an online benefits screener and information clearinghouse at [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov). To contact the San Mateo County Veterans Service Office, call (650) 802-6598. Appointments are available Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – noon and 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm at 260 Harbor Blvd., Bldg A, Belmont. The County Veteran Service Officer is stationed at the Menlo Park Veterans Affairs Campus, Bldg 323A, 795 Willow Road, Menlo Park on Mondays and at the Peninsula Vet Center, 2946 Broadway Street in Redwood City on Wednesdays.

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