

Dennis Antonino Honored as VSC's 2017 Veteran of the Year Recipient

Dennis "Gunny" Antonino isn't one to brag about himself, but a lifelong commitment to serving others has gained him quite a few fans willing to do it for him. After receiving numerous recommendations from those who've worked with him over the years, VSC has recognized Antonino as its 2017 Veteran of the Year.

Each fall, the VSC presents the Veteran of the Year award to a Summit County veteran who displays selflessness through service to their community, non-profit organizations and other veterans. Dedicating countless hours of his time volunteering with various veteran-oriented and other local organizations, Antonino has earned a reputation as someone reluctant to be celebrated for doing the right thing.

"Gunny is the perfect example of what a veteran is and a 'veteran helping other veterans,'" wrote Robert Casto, retired United States Marine Corps (USMC) master sergeant in one of many nomination letters. "Gunny deserves this honor from his fellow veterans because of his unselfishness – Gunny never seeks praise or recognition for any of his efforts."

True to form, when asked how he felt about receiving the award, Antonino said other local veterans

Veterans Service Commission Photo



Dennis "Gunny" Antonino, retired U.S. Marine Corps gunnery sergeant and VSC's 2017 Veteran of the Year.

were more deserving.

"I know a few people who I think deserve this award more than I do," he said. "There are other people who do a lot for veterans, and every time I'm at a function I see them there, too."

Antonino served in the U.S. Marine Corps Forces Reserve for 20 years between 1962 and 1985, retiring as an honorably discharged gunnery sergeant. While enlisted, he worked full time for the City of Akron's traffic engineering department, managing a road construction crew.

He filled his free time supporting the efforts of organizations such as the Marine Corps League, Summit County Stand Down for Homeless and Displaced Veterans, Toys for

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Coming Back from Tragedy

Retired VSC Service Officer Penny Haynes Recounts How Sister's Death Led Her to Seek Help and Serve Others

Over the course of a long career with the Summit County VSC, retired service officer Penny Haynes developed a reputation as someone always willing to talk to veterans impacted by traumatic experiences, offering comforting words and actively encouraging them to seek counseling. Talking with others about psychological issues came easy to her; however, that wasn't always the case.

For many years, Haynes said, she was reticent to even acknowledge her own emotional struggles, let alone assist others with theirs. That began to change in 1986, when her sister, Collean Field, was brutally beaten and raped by a man she encountered in her garage. When Haynes found out about the incident, she was at a complete loss for how to help her sister heal.

"It was so uncomfortable to see her pain that it was hard for me to even talk to her about it," Haynes recalled. "At that time, referring her to the rape crisis hotline didn't even occur to me. I had no idea how to get her the help she needed."

On Aug. 20, 1987, less than a year after her ordeal,

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Can I Get Travel Costs Reimbursed for VA Health Care?

Veterans often want to know if they can be reimbursed for travel costs related to VA health care services, and, in many cases, the answer is yes.

[The Beneficiary Travel program](#) is designed to help eligible veterans receive travel reimbursement for trips to and from VA health care facilities, or to VA-authorized non-VA health care centers they are eligible to use. When a privately owned vehicle is not reasonably accessible, or when travel by a common carrier such as a plane, train, bus, taxi or light rail is medically necessary, veterans may be reimbursed for their costs. In some cases, the program might even cover the cost of an ambulance or a wheel chair van.

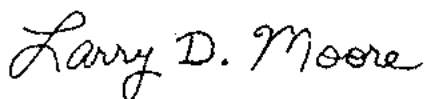
Veterans can apply for travel reimbursement by completing the Veteran/Beneficiary Claim for Reimbursement of Travel Expenses, or [VA Form 10-3542](#). Veterans usually will receive payment via an electronic fund transfer to a bank account or in the form of a debit card. Veterans who are eligible for reimbursement of travel expenses include:

- Those with a VA service-connected rating of 30 percent or higher, for travel related to any condition;
- Those with a VA service-connected rating below 30 percent, for travel related to their service-connected condition;
- Veterans receiving VA pension benefits, for travel related to any condition;
- Those whose annual income does not exceed the maximum annual VA pension rate;
- Those who are unable to defray the cost of travel (as defined in the Beneficiary Travel regulations);
- Those traveling in relation to a compensation and pension (C&P) examination; and
- Those faced with certain emergency situations.

In addition, certain non-veterans also may be eligible for reimbursement for travel related to care of a veteran. These include caregivers under the National Caregivers Program, medically required attendants, VA transplant care donors and other claimants subject to regulatory guidelines.

VA Form 10-3542 may be presented in person or mailed to the VA health care facility where care was provided. Application for travel reimbursement must be completed within 30 days of travel. For assistance in completing the form, call 1-877-222-8387.

In Appreciation,



Executive Director



Services for Vets

We assist veterans with basic living needs; these services are available to eligible veterans, their dependents and widows. Services are subject to change.

- Financial Assistance
- Mortgage payments / Homeowner's insurance
- Rent
- Utilities
- Roofs
- Furnace (replacement and repair)
- Stoves and refrigerators
- Food
- Children's clothing
- Adult work clothing
- Car payments, repairs and insurance (limited)
- Medical / Dental (including dentures, glasses and hearing aids)
- Regularly scheduled transportation to VA medical facilities and Ohio Veterans Home
- Grave markers and flags

Veterans Affairs Assistance

- Assistance applying for Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits
- Preparation of VA forms and paperwork
- Supportive documentation of claims and pertinent data
- Proper submission of claims to the VA
- Service connected compensation
- Non-service pension
- Widows pension
- Burial benefits
- Headstones

If you are a veteran in financial need or need help with your VA claim, please visit us at 1060 E. Waterloo Rd., Akron, OH, or call

330-643-2830



Team Rubicon Responds to Recent Hurricane Disasters

When natural disasters strike, military veterans are often among those who rush into action to help save lives. And with the recent series of hurricanes impacting the U.S. and the Caribbean, those working with Team Rubicon have stayed busy doing just that.

Founded in 2010 by U.S. Marines William McNulty and Jake Wood, Team Rubicon is a veteran-led, international disaster response organization offering rapid relief to communities affected by major disasters. The organization deployed hundreds of volunteers to Texas communities in the wake of Hurricane Harvey, which made landfall in late August.

Initial response teams in Texas

composed largely of military veterans conducted door-to-door searches in and around Houston, performed evacuations and provided damage assessments. The organization has since sent additional volunteers to conduct a large-scale cleanup and repair effort.

As of mid-October, more than 200 Team Rubicon volunteers still were on the ground providing relief across Texas. In all, 1,835 volunteers have logged over 93,000 hours while serving more than 800 impacted families. Team Rubicon also has contributed to similar relief efforts in communities impacted by hurricanes

Irma and Maria in Florida and Puerto Rico, as well as Dominica, where the organization deployed two waves of personnel to provide medical assistance for residents.

Though disaster relief is Team Rubicon's primary mission, the organization is dedicated to helping military veterans re-integrate into civilian life by providing them with purpose and the sense of community and self-worth that comes through volunteering. Of its network of 50,000 volunteers, approximately 70 percent are veterans and active-duty military.

To volunteer with Team Rubicon, visit www.teamrubiconusa.org. ★



Haynes, from page 1

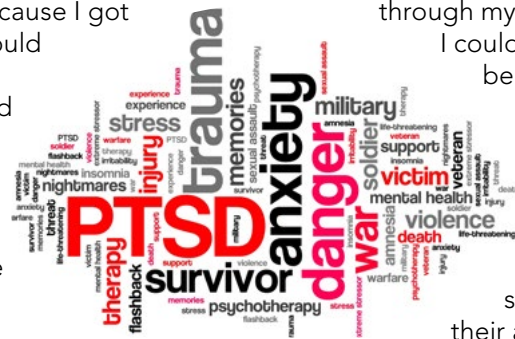
Field ended her own life. Devastated by the loss of her sister, Haynes sought help from her family physician, who directed her to a local suicide support group. For Haynes, the experience was enlightening in more ways than one.

"My sister's death opened my eyes to a lot of things I was oblivious about with myself," she said.

Haynes said her sister's death pushed her to seek psychological help for some of her own emotional struggles. "I tell people that she saved my life. In her death, she actually saved my life because I got the counseling I needed so that I could really live."

More than that, counseling helped Haynes discover a name for what she believes killed her sister – post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD is a condition that sometimes develops in people who experience traumatic events, leading sufferers to re-experience trauma through flashbacks and nightmares; actively avoid stimuli that bring back memories of the event; become easily startled; have difficulty sleeping; and experience severe mood swings. The condition commonly affects veterans with combat experience, along with civilian victims of violent crime.

"My sister suffered a lot of trauma in her life, and I believe – and my psychologist believed – that she suffered from PTSD. At that time, I had never heard of it. I knew something was wrong with my sister, but I didn't know what it was. It was only when I got help for the pain and grief of her death and when I sought to take care of my own issues that I realized what she was dealing with was PTSD."



Two years after her sister's death, Haynes began volunteering for Akron's rape crisis hotline. Helping others who were struggling with traumatic experiences became part of her healing process. She carried this experience, along with her continued desire to help others, to her job at the VSC.

"I saw my sister – the symptoms that I had grown to know in her – in these veterans," she said. "Had I not had the experiences I had with the suicide support group and through my volunteering with the rape crisis center, I could never, ever have been as helpful as I believe I was for the veterans I worked with."

Haynes will never know whether psychological treatment would have made a difference for her sister, but she has found peace in her work with the VSC and rape crisis hotline. She urges veterans experiencing crises to seek help rather than trying to deal with their anguish alone.

"Getting help for PTSD is one of the hardest things a veteran can do, but it's also one of the best things they'll ever do because it helps them get centered again, find their balance and find a sense of joy and peace that they've lost," Haynes said. "You can never change what happened, but you can make your future better."

Veterans who believe they are suffering from PTSD can find valuable information on getting help at www.ptsd.va.gov. Anyone contemplating self-harm should reach out to the Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or the Veterans Crisis Line by dialing that number and pressing 1. Veterans also can text 838255 for help or use the confidential Veterans Chat at www.veteranscrisisline.net. ★

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Tots, the Salvation Army, the National Super Kids Classic Soap Box Derby and the Young Marines youth program, among others. He also spent eight years driving disabled Summit County veterans to Iowa and back for the National Disabled Veterans TEE (Training, Exposure, Experience) Tournament golf outing and has routinely planted cemetery flags and attended funerals for fallen soldiers.

"The opportunity arose to help out, and I never had anything that prevented me from doing it," Antonino said of his volunteerism efforts over the years. "It felt good being able to work with and help with kids and doing stuff with the VA, like taking blind veterans out for the TEE Tournament."

Antonino also has been an active member of American Legion Post 281 in Cuyahoga Falls for 35 years and currently serves as post commander. Ask him why he dedicates so much time helping other veterans, and he'll tell you: "Most of my friends are veterans."

And most of Antonino's veteran friends know him as a man who always goes above and beyond the call of duty.

"Through the many years of service and volunteerism, he has always been a shining example of rising to a higher standard," wrote Raymond Dray, a retired gunnery sergeant who served with Antonino in the USMC Forces Reserve. "Marine Antonino has brought honor to the Marine Corps and the Marine Corps reserve program." ★



Tip of the **H.A.T.** Helping America's Troops

James Seminaroti Golf Outing Raises Over \$1,000 for ALS

The First Annual James Seminaroti Golf Outing, held Sept. 1 at the Fox Den Golf Course in Stow, brought in more than \$1,000 in support of the fight against amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). All proceeds from the event went to the ALS Association Northern Ohio Chapter.

"We were very pleased with the turnout at this year's inaugural James Seminaroti Golf Outing, and even more so that the money raised during this event has gone to support such an important cause," said David Burden, project manager, VSC. "ALS is a devastating condition that has impacted many veterans and their families over the years, and we're hopeful that events like this will lead to improved treatments in the future."

The golf outing is named after James C. Seminaroti, an Akron native and World War II veteran who stormed the beaches of Normandy on June 6, 1944 as a member of the Second Rangers Battalion, earning a Purple Heart for his service. After leaving the military, he returned home but continued to look for ways to

serve his community and other service members.

Seminaroti was an active member of local posts for the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), even helping to found the Fred W. Reese VFW post 3310 in Akron. In addition, he contributed his time to the American Legion, the Military Order of the Cootie of the United States and The Salvation Army. As a member of The Salvation Army's Akron advisory board for more than 15 years, he organized a program called Operation Concern that aimed to make soldiers' send-offs more pleasant by providing breakfast and free necessity kits.

Seminaroti died Nov. 4, 1981 following his own battle with ALS. His legacy of service led the VSC to name its annual Veteran of the Year Award after him. The VSC presents the award each fall to a Summit County veteran who displays selflessness through service to their community, non-profit organizations and other veterans.

"Though he's been gone for more than 30 years, the lasting effects of James Seminaroti's contributions



as an advocate for Ohio military veterans and active-duty service members can still be felt to this day," Burden said.

If you want to donate to the ALS Association Northern Ohio Chapter, visit webnoh.alsa.org. ★