



**ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY, MARYLAND
VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION
2022 ANNUAL REPORT
SUBMITTED ON January 31st, 2023**



Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the Veterans Affairs Commission (VAC) is to advocate and help to enhance the quality of life for military veterans and their families who live or work within Anne Arundel County by advising the County Executive and the County Council on the coordination and development of government policies, programs, services, and the allocation of resources for veterans and their families. Current objectives of the Commission are to continue working with the Anne Arundel County Community Engagement and Constituent Services and the Department of Aging and Disabilities to fully implement the Veterans Service Coordination Center (VSCC), broadening the Commission's outreach by engaging veterans' organizations in Anne Arundel County, and representing the County Executive at local commemorative ceremonies.

2022 Accomplishments

It was a busy year, VAC accomplishments included:

- The VSCC began serving county veterans on Veterans Day 2021. Fully supported by the County Executive and the Department of Aging and Disabilities, the VSCC initiated 260 veterans' cases during the year, clearly demonstrating the county's need for this service.
- Councilman Andrew Pruski introduced Resolution 64-21 at the January 18 County Council meeting. This Resolution established a change to the County Charter making the Anne Arundel County (AAC) Veterans Affairs Commission (VAC) "independent from the Executive and Legislative branches of AAC government." Before the November mid-term elections, Commissioner Dave Myers wrote an Op Ed to the Capital Gazette to explain the County Charter Amendment (to make the Commission a permanent part of the County Charter). Unfortunately, the piece was not printed. This Resolution appeared on the November 2022 ballot and was overwhelmingly passed by County voters. The County Charter Revision Commission convenes once a decade to recommend updates and improvements to the County Charter. The VAC appreciates Councilman Andrew Pruski, the County Council, and the voters of the County for this strong endorsement of the County's veterans.
- March: Commissioner Jones was presented the William Donald Schaefer *Helping People Award* (Anne Arundel County) for 2021.
- May: Commissioner Jones was recognized by the Daughters of the American Revolution for his support and assistance to veterans at American Legion Post #141. The recognition ceremony was at Turf Valley Country Club.
- August: County Executive Pittman announced the *Civic Engagement Awards* program to recognize volunteers serving on County boards and commissions. Mr. Pittman sought to recognize exemplary volunteers for service to AAC and its residents. The VAC Chairman, nominated three commissioners and one county employee. Each nomination was accepted and the individuals were recognized on October 10th at the Michael E. Busch Annapolis Library. John Church, VAC Chairman, was awarded the Distinguished Service Award recognizing individuals who have made a positive impact on the County

through long-term or significant volunteer service on one or more boards or commissions and spearheaded improvements that benefit a large number of residents, employees, and visitors of the county or groups that are typically underserved. Individual nomination packages can be found in Annex c, page 8.

- November: Commissioner Debra Luziatti-Myers wrote an Op Ed which highlighted Operation Green Light, November 7-13. That piece was printed in the Annapolis Capital Newspaper. See Annex B, page 6.

Members of the Commission accomplished several long-term accomplishments occurring at multiple meetings or events throughout 2022 (See Annex A, page 5)

- Met with state and county level organizations having potential long-term impact on regional veterans' programs. Including:
 - The Joint County Veterans Commission Leaders and veteran Services Specialist Program, hosted by the *Maryland Dept of Veterans Affairs*.
 - The Maryland Military Installation Council (MMIC), Crownsville.
 - The Central Maryland Veterans Collaboration Meeting, hosted by *Serving Together*.
 - The Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation.
 - The Chesapeake Region Community Veteran Engagement Board (CVEB), in conjunction with the Baltimore VA Medical Center.
 - The CVEB, the Chesapeake Veterans Alliance, with Director, Service Program, Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs Baltimore.
 - The Fort Meade Alliance (FMA) Military Family Committee.

VAC Chairman Church's recommendation for 2023

Establishment of an Anne Arundel County Veterans Affairs Office within the County Executive's office is most strongly recommended. This will provide better management of the needs of the almost 50,000 county veterans; it will aid in attracting the local active-duty community to establish county residency; and ensure Anne Arundel County is "The Best Place - For All". I urge the county's 2023 budget, and all future budgets, include a funded position to advise and represent the County Executive regarding veterans affairs, the VSCC, the Veterans Affairs Commission, and all other veteran-related issues. This funded position would align AAC with adjacent counties that already fund and utilize a similar position.

Initiatives for 2023 the VAC will seek to:

- Nominate qualified candidates to fill commissioner vacancies.
- Support Veterans Criminal Court Advocacy.
- Increase and improve involvement with veteran students at AAC Community College.
- Work with CECS and the Dept of Aging and Disabilities to better serve AAC veterans
- Participate in Centreville American Legion Post #18 Sporting Clays Shooting Competition.
- Broaden the Commission's outreach and collaboration with other organizations in and beyond AAC that serve the county's veterans.
- Support the Maryland Veterans Caucus and the Maryland Military Coalition and keep the County Executive and CECS advised of legislative initiatives in the Maryland General Assembly pertaining to veterans.
- Advocate for women veterans and veterans who are homeless or have mental health issues.

ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY, VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

- Participate in County Memorial Day and Veterans Day ceremonies.
- Participate in Wreaths Across America in December.

2022 VAC Meetings

All VAC meetings were held virtually.

- The Commission met nine times: January 12, February 9, March 9, April 13, May 11, June 8, September 14, October 12, and November 16.
- **Guest Speakers:** During scheduled meetings, the Commission's agenda included presentations from various organizations serving veterans or from individuals related to veterans' interests. Details regarding speakers and related discussions are available in minutes and can be read at <https://www.aacounty.org/boards-andcommissions/veterans-affairs-commission/meeting-documents/index.html>. Below is a summary of key guest speakers and dates.
 - January 12: Joelle Ridgeway, Deputy Director of Aging and Disabilities for Anne Arundel County.
 - February 9: Aruna Miller, Candidate for Lt. Governor.
 - March 9: Roslyn Jones, Manager, Women Veterans / Inclusion Program, Maryland Dept of Veterans Affairs. Dana Schallheim, Board of Education of Anne Arundel County Dana Schallheim explained the Candace C.W. Antwine Military Service Award.
 - April 13: Celena Flowers, Family Advocacy Program Manager at Ft. Meade. COL Edna Cummings US Army (Ret.), Army Reserve Ambassador for the State of Maryland. Isabella Young (Health Planner, GVIT and OIT Program Coordinator, AACO Dept of Health) from the Gun Violence Intervention team.
 - May 11: Joelle Ridgeway, Deputy Director of Aging and Disabilities, Anne Arundel County.
 - Frank Sullivan Executive Director, Anne Arundel County Mental Health Agency (AACMHA).
 - Erin Karpewicz, CEO, Arundel Community Development Services (ADCS). Clifton Martin, CEO and President, Housing Commission of Anne Arundel County.
 - June 8: Bruce Morganstern, President, Anne Arundel County Emergency Response Team (AAACERT), Krista Roberts DNP, FNP-BC, Assistant Professor, University of Maryland School of Nursing, Yolanda Rayford, Chapter Director, Baltimore & Chesapeake Region, Blue Star Families.
 - September 14: Pam Jordan, Deputy CAO, Department of Health and Human Services.
 - Guest Speaker - Denise Robinson, Annapolis Resident; Topic: Gold Star Mothers and Families.
 - October 12: Admiral Tom Jurkowsky, USN Retired. Topic: Attracting and Retaining Retired Military in Maryland.
 - November 16: Hannah Breakstone, COC Planning & Grants Manager, ACDS. Pete Smith, Councilman District 1, Treanor, Marine Veteran and author of *A Quiet Cadence*.

Membership of the Commission

In 2022, VAC membership was comprised of twelve men and four women. Of these, one member represented Fort George G. Meade (at one point he resigned as directed by the Ft Meade JAG, but was later reinstated) and one member represented the Anne Arundel Community College (AACC) and the large veteran student population there. The member representing AACC is not a voting member. One commissioner resigned when relocated from Maryland.

Four VAC members are U.S. Air Force veterans; five are U.S. Navy veterans; three are U.S. Army veterans; three are U.S. Marine Corps veterans. The AACC representative is a non-veteran.

The Commission is chaired by John Church; Leah Ballard is Vice Chairman and Nathan Atkins serves as Secretary. At the end of December 2022, there are three voting vacancies. Current membership of the Commission may be found at <https://www.aacounty.org/boards-and-commissions/veterans-affairscommission/members/>.

Special Thanks

The Commission wishes to thank the following individuals for their support during 2022.

- Peter Hill, US Army (Ret) and Veterans Affairs Liaison to the County Executive.
- Pam Jordan, Office of the County Executive, Deputy CAO of Health and Human Services, for ensuring oversight of this commission into 2022.
- Sandra Heisch and Heidi May, County Executive staff, who assisted VAC throughout the year.
- Kelly Mackall, Dept of Aging and Disabilities Director, Communication & Community Relations
- Gloria Dent, Chairwoman, iCommunity Connection Veteran Services (“iCCVS”), for ensuring the VSCC became a reality in 2022.
- Commissioner Curtis “Gunny” Jones and American Legion Post #141 for his continuous active support during 2022.
- Debra Luziatti-Myers and Dave Myers for hosting the Hail and Farewell social event in December.

For more information regarding the Anne Arundel County Veterans Affairs Commission, please visit the VAC website at: <https://www.aacounty.org/boards-and-commissions/veterans-affairscommission>.

Submitted by:



John R. Church
Chairman, Veterans Affairs Commission
Anne Arundel County

ANNEX A: Activities during 2022

During 2022 VAC was an active participant in many activities. Including these month-by-month events:

- January: Interment Ceremony for the unclaimed Veteran Remains, Crownsville Cemetery.
- March: AA Community College celebrated Women's History Month. Guest speaker was Dr. Ann Armstrong, a 20-year Air Force veteran.
- April: Commissioner Gunny Jones, American Legion Post #141, sponsored a Youth Leadership Summit and Dinner
- April: AMVets *Award of Excellence* for Denise Nooe, Advocacy and Outreach, Maryland Dept of Veterans Affairs, at the Turf Valley Resort, Ellicott City, MD.
- May: Memorial Day Commemoration Event at Crownsville Veterans Cemetery. Captain Nate Atkins read the Governor's Proclamation.
- May: Memorial Day Commemoration Event at the Annapolis WWII Memorial. Clarence (Tiger) Davis, NABVets was the speaker, followed by a reception at American Legion #141, Annapolis.
- May: Reconvening, at the end of COVID restrictions, of MOAA, Annapolis Chapter.
- May: Marla Abell's *Picnic for Veterans and Families*, American Legion Post #226, Mayo, MD.
- May: Vet Center (Department of Veteran Affairs), Annapolis, re-opening ceremony to mark end of renovations.
- May: *Sporting Clays* shooting competition sponsored by American Legion Post #18.
- June: *National Cancer Survivors Day* with Maryland Oncology Hematology and Wellness House of Annapolis.
- September: County Council meeting, Arundel Center, prepared to testify against Councilman Volke's proposed Flag Legislation on county flag displays.
- September: Welcome *Hidden Heroes* to Maryland.
- September: Buddy Poppies at the Anne Arundel County Fair, with VFW Post #304.
- October: Senator Sarbannes' *Veterans Benefit Workshop*, Elks Club, Glen Burnie.
- November: Community Organization Resource Event with VFW Post #304 at Westfield Mall, organized by MDVA's Dana Burl.
- November: *Operation Greenlight*, signifying Veterans are Seen, Appreciated, and Supported. Sponsored by the National Association of Counties (NACo), and the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO).
- November: Travis Manion Foundation's *Operation Legacy*, landscaping / cleanup of the Gold Star Memorial Monument adjacent to the WWII Memorial.
- November: Veterans Day Ceremony. Brooks Tucker, LtCol, USMC Retired, read the Governor's Proclamation at Crownsville Veterans Cemetery. The 229th Army Band, Maryland National Guard played at the Maryland WWII Memorial, Annapolis and The Maryland Defense Force Band played at Crownsville, as coordinated with the Commission.
- November: Candace Antwine Support Program.
- December: MOAA -MOWW Holiday Gala Dinner, Walden Country Club, Crofton, MD.
- December: *Toys for Tots*, POC is Major Pete Smith, USMC Reserve.
- December: Wreaths Across America, at Crownsville Veterans and USNA Cemetery.

ANNEX B: Articles Submitted by VAC Commissioners

Commissioner Dave Myers authored this Op Ed article and submitted it to The Capital Gazette Newspaper on October 26. However, the newspaper failed to publish.

Supporting Anne Arundel County Veterans

During the upcoming election cycle an opportunity has been provided by the Anne Arundel County Council to make the Anne Arundel County Veterans Affairs Commission (the "VAC") a permanent part of the County Charter. The purpose of the VAC is to advocate for and help to enhance the quality of life for veterans of military service and their families who live or work within Anne Arundel County. The VAC advises the County Executive and the County Council on the coordination and development of government policies, programs, services and the allocation of resources for veterans and their families. Simply put: The Question is set out as Resolution 64-21, which is designated on the November 8, 2022, ballot as Anne Arundel County Question A. A "YES" vote on Question A will support amending the Anne Arundel County Charter to require the Anne Arundel County Veterans Affairs Commission be added to the County Charter as a permanent Commission. The proposed change lies within Article VI of the County Charter. Under that Article, there is a list of "Special Boards, Commissions and Committees." It is a concise list which currently does not include the VAC. The listed organizations are required. Specifically, SEC. 612 would state that "THERE SHALL BE AN ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION THAT IS INDEPENDENT OF THE LEGISLATIVE AND EXECUTIVE BRANCHES OF COUNTY GOVERNMENT" and that "THE COMMISSION SHALL PERFORM THE DUTIES AND FUNCTIONS SET FORTH IN THE COUNTY CODE." A "YES" vote supports amending the Anne Arundel County Charter to require the presence of a County Veterans Affairs Commission. We believe that the inclusion of this Question on the ballot shows how important veterans are to this County and recognizes the significance of the Veterans Affairs Commission in aiding them.

Commissioner Debra Luzietti-Myers authored this Op Ed article re: Operation Green Light and submitted it to The Capital Gazette Newspaper. The newspaper published on November 13, 2022.

Support those who have served our nation

In 1954, President Eisenhower signed a bill proclaiming Nov. 11 as Veterans Day, calling on the nation to "solemnly remember the sacrifices of all those who fought so valiantly, on the seas, in the air, and on foreign shores, to preserve our heritage of freedom." Let us come together to honor these brave individuals who have served our country in uniform. More than ever, our veterans and their families need our support. Certainly, we can all agree that these men and women who risked everything deserve our support and gratitude. That's why Anne Arundel County is joining the National Association of Counties and the National

ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY, VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

Association of County Veteran Service Officers in launching Operation Green Light for Veterans, an initiative designed to shine a light on the service of our veterans. As part of the OGL, Anne Arundel County is illuminating the Arundel Center in green to remind the veterans and their families we are here for them. We encourage individuals and businesses to join us by changing one light bulb in an entryway to a green light to let veterans know that they are appreciated and supported. While this event is focused on the week of Nov. 7-13th, we encourage individuals to continue to shine the green light year-round. Operation Green Light is also intended to raise awareness of resources for the approximately 60,000 veterans we proudly serve in Anne Arundel County. Throughout the year, Anne Arundel County staff is busy connecting veterans to federal and state benefits, helping them manage employment and medical needs, as well as finding peers to assist with the transition to civilian life. Veterans can learn about available services at 410-222-3500 (the Anne Arundel County Veterans Service Center) and through the Anne Arundel County Commission on Veterans Affairs. This Veterans Day weekend and thereafter, please join us in Operation Green Light and turn Anne Arundel County green for our veterans.

Annex C: County Civic Engagement Awards Nominations Submitted by John Church, Chairman, Veterans Affairs Commission

Outstanding Volunteer Service Award, Veterans Affairs Commission

Debra Luzietti-Myers

1. Biographical summary of the nominee.

Debra Luzietti-Myers, LCDR, US Navy (Judge Advocate Generals Corps). is a volunteer member of the Veterans Affairs Commission, Anne Arundel County. Debra served on active duty for 8 years. She is a member of the Maryland Bar and a retired member of the Illinois bar. As a member of this Commission since April 2019, Ms. Luzietti-Myers has attended all scheduled meetings. She maintains memberships in the Reserve Organization of America and the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA). As the Associate General Counsel of Paralyzed Veterans of America, Ms. Luzietti-Myers stays current on veterans issues and has been accredited by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to represent veterans.

2. An activity or initiative the nominee has accomplished, connected directly to the work of the board or commission, to merit this recognition. Within the Veterans Affairs Commission, Debra co-drafted the Commission's submission for the County Code revisions and then drafted the Commission's Bylaws. Both were difficult. Debra's legal experience served her well. Now, since 2021, the commission functions with county-approved bylaws, which impact all aspects of commission activity. The bylaws provide guidance which affect Debra as the Chairman of the Nominating Committee. In this capacity she is charged with identifying and then nominating candidates to include the Commission Chairman and Vice Chairman. A difficult task. This process requires a working knowledge of the Commission Bylaws and knowing the character of individual commissioners - to nominate responsible leadership. Debra is also Chair of the Legal and Legislative Committee, i.e., the Commission expert on legislative issues. She offers current summaries and advises Commission members of pending legislation at the Federal, State, and County levels. From 29 years of working with the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), she is able to stay current on veterans' issues and communicate regularly with veterans.

3. Explain why this nominee is making Anne Arundel County The Best Place - For All.

Anne Arundel County and the Veterans Affairs Commission are extremely fortunate Debra Luzietti-Myers cares enough about veterans in this county to volunteer her time and knowledge to oversee their welfare. In this capacity, Debra regularly highlights selective Federal legislation to commissioners and to county officials. When pending legislation pertaining to veterans' issues would benefit from an endorsement by commissioners, Debra tells us and provides a suggested statement. Debra ensures the Veterans Affairs Commission implements its mission in compliance with county guidance. Debra has not lost touch with veterans on the ground. She has participated in a number of outreach activities. On Veterans Day, November 11, 2021, for example, she represented the Commission by providing pro bono legal information at American Legion Post 141, Annapolis. This is why I believe Debra Luzietti-Myers is helping make Anne Arundel County The Best Place For All.

Outstanding Volunteer Service Award, Veterans Affairs Commission

Kathleen Schorr

1. Biographic Summary of the nominee.

Kathleen (Kat) Schorr completed a Master of Science degree in Adult and Higher Education at the University of Maine (Farmington) in 2009. That experience and training has served her well at Anne Arundel Community College (AACC), and led to her position as Manager of the Military/Veteran Resource Center (M/VRC). When this commission sought a representative from AACC, the Dean of College Transitions nominated Kat, who joined in November 2019. Kat is also a volunteer member of the Maryland Defense Force. And, importantly for veteran students at AACC, Kat is a member of the Maryland College Collaboration for student Veterans Commission, charged by the Governor of Maryland to ensure the educational success of veterans and their eventual graduation. Kat was appointed to this commission by the President, Anne Arundel Community College.

2. An activity or initiative the nominee has accomplished, connected directly to the work of the board or commission, to merit this recognition

As the M/VRC Program Manager, Kat is an important liaison for veterans' issues between the county and the Anne Arundel Community College. Kat has a direct and significant impact on veteran students in this county. During COVID, in 2020, the number of veteran students at AACC fluctuated as VA tuition and housing policies changed, which then impacted veteran finances and their ability to remain enrolled. At the high end, Kat dealt with approximately 900 veteran students. Kat helped them select classes matching their goals, manage their GI Bill, receive scholarships and other federal funds for college, and aim them towards graduation. Kat made the GI Bill and the AACC education system work for many veterans. In addition, Kat participates in the Anne Arundel County/VA Suicide Prevention Coalition, a new group to support suicide prevention among veterans in the county.

3. Explain why this nominee is making Anne Arundel County The Best Place - For All
As Program Manager, Kat exceeded the Collaboration for Student Veterans mandate. By her initiative AACC was designated a "Military Friendly School" for the 2021-2022 academic year. This year, AACC regained that designation and ALSO was designated a "Military Spouse Friendly School." In 2003, a private, veteran-owned program started this rating system to promote veteran education. The standards are more stringent each year. In 2021, some 2,000 schools were evaluated, yet only 750 schools received the "Military Friendly" designation. By taking the initiative and meeting the challenge of nation-wide competition, Kat proved AACC to be a distinctive educational resource, supporting active-duty military, veterans, and their families in Anne Arundel County. Few of us support our community in such a positive manner. This is why I believe Kat Schorr is making Anne Arundel County The Best Place - For All.

Brooks Tucker

1. Biographic Summary of the nominee.

Brooks Tucker, LTC, USMC, served 20 years as an Infantry Officer on both active and reserve duty in the U.S. Marine Corps. He is a veteran of the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf War, the Iraq Campaign during 2007-2008 and the Afghanistan Campaign in 2012. He is a former Chief of Staff of the Department of Veterans Affairs and former Senate confirmed Presidential appointee

ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY, VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

as the Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs for Congressional and Legislative Affairs. Prior to his service at the Senior Executive level, he was an adviser on defense and veterans' policy in the United States Senate and a U.S. Marine Corps Congressional Fellow. Mr. Tucker was employed by Merrill Lynch and Deutsche Bank for thirteen years before his civil service career in government. He is a graduate of University of Maryland and Marine Corps Command and Staff College.

2. An activity or initiative the nominee has accomplished, connected directly to the work of the board or commission, to merit this recognition

After becoming a Commissioner in April 2021, Brooks quickly took steps to join the Community Veterans Engagement Board (CVEB), Baltimore, representing the Veterans Affairs Commission. The CVEB monitors VA activities on a national-level and provides a collaborative network between the VA and communities. By attending Board meetings, Brooks demonstrated his knowledge of the VA system and how to monitor VA activities affecting Anne Arundel County. In attendance, Brooks inquires about macro issues for the Chesapeake region, paying attention to significant emerging issues and solutions raised by the attendees and VA representatives. Afterwards, he distributes updates to Veteran Service Officers in Anne Arundel County, ensuring we all benefit from his oversight. Most recently, in 2022, Brooks ensured the newly established Maryland VA's Mental Health Council was highlighted by VA Public Affairs in Baltimore to board members of the CVEB. The object was to ensure general awareness and to generate Veteran participation from regional communities. Since May 2021, Brooks has consistently represented the Veterans Affairs Commission on the Chesapeake CVEB. *The Chairman, VAC, did not know about the CVEB, before Brooks asked to participate in their meetings.

3. Explain why this nominee is making Anne Arundel County The Best Place For All.

Brooks Tucker has unique and important administrative and operational experience. His experience as a military veteran and Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs for Congressional and Legislative Affairs enables him to identify issues many of us would not recognize. When he attends the CVEB meetings, Brooks applies a level of knowledge that few of us can offer. In doing so, Brooks is functioning as an advisor having a "global" vision as he follows national level changes and proposals which could impact on a local level. I believe this county benefits greatly from Brooks' experience which helps ensure the county doesn't miss strategic indicators of change to veterans benefits and services. In this way, I believe Brooks Tucker is helping to make Anne Arundel County The Best Place For All.

Outstanding Public Service Award

Sarah Stein, Department of Aging and Disabilities, Anne Arundel County Government

1. Biographical summary of the nominee.

Sarah Stein has a Bachelor's in Psychology from Duke University and a Master's from the School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago. She started working for the Anne Arundel County Department of Aging and Disabilities in 2017 as the Director of Aging and Disability Resource Center Planning and Programming, and was promoted in 2021 to Assistant Director of Aging and Disability Resource Center and Long-Term Care. Prior to 2017, Ms. Stein worked at AgeOptions, the Area Agency on Aging for suburban Cook County (outside Chicago) for 10 years, first as Coordinator of Caregiver Support Programs and then as Manager of Community Programs. Ms. Stein's first work with veterans was at AgeOptions where she

ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY, VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

oversaw a volunteer-based respite program specifically for veterans, and also coordinated a veteran's self-directed care program.

2. An activity or initiative the nominee has accomplished, connected directly to the work of the board or commission, to merit this recognition.

Sarah Stein had a primary role in establishing the county's Veterans Services Coordination Center (VSCC). Sarah helped prepare and guide the county's Department of Aging and Disabilities to succeed as they implemented the VSCC and the new veteran phone line (410-222-3500). Sarah ensured that the Department's Information and Assistance staff received additional training on veterans' resources, and she helped coordinate the referral process for veterans to receive more intensive, ongoing support with accessing VA benefits. Sarah participated on Veterans Day, 2021 (at American Legion Post #141, Annapolis), when an announcement was made that the county had contracted with iCommunity Connect Services (iCCS) to implement "veteran specific" claims process within the VSCC. Since then, Sarah has responded to the growing number of referrals for veteran case management, as more and more veterans use the telephone number (x3500) and as services provided by iCCS become known.

3. Explain why this nominee is making Anne Arundel County The Best Place - For All.

Sarah Stein, with help of team-mates like English Harper, has been instrumental in developing a county-level capability to actively respond with competent help when veterans in AA County call the Veterans Services Number (x3500). Incoming calls are recorded and the appropriate department within the county government respond. Resident veterans welcome this support. Mr. Pittman's goal to make Anne Arundel County the Best for All includes needy veterans, a small percent of the veteran population in AA County. The number is small, but vastly important to each man and woman who receives help from the county. This why I believe Sarah Stein is helping make Anne Arundel County The Best Place For All.

Distinguished Service Award. Submitted by VAC Commissioner Brock McMunn

John Church, Chairman VAC

John Church was commissioned in 1970 through Air Force ROTC Detachment 330, University of Maryland, College Park. As a career US Air Force intelligence officer, he had assignments in Thailand during the Vietnam War, Riyadh (ree-ad) during Desert Storm, and in Japan and Germany. He has participated with the Veterans Affairs Commission (VAC) since 2018 and served as its Chair since 2019. John is a critical cog in all county veterans' support activities. Upon assuming the commission Chairmanship, he revitalized the Commission by being a tireless and vocal advocate to enhance the quality of life for veterans of military service and their families who live or work within Anne Arundel County (AACo). He advises the County Executive and the County Council on the coordination and development of government policies, programs, services, and the allocation of resources for veterans and their families. He worked intently to create the county Veterans' Service Coordination Center (VSCC), and singlehandedly broadened the Commission's outreach by ensuring VAC engaged with Anne Arundel County veterans' organizations. In his unrelenting efforts to ensure military veterans and their families receive the support and benefits they deserve, John Church constantly reminds us that Anne Arundel County is, The Best Place For All!