



DOUGLAS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

TIM FREEMAN

CHRIS BOICE

TOM KRESS

Douglas County Courthouse, Room 217
1036 SE Douglas Avenue, Roseburg, Oregon 97470

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WHAT CAN DOUGLAS COUNTY GOVERNMENT DO FOR YOU? PART ONE: DOUGLAS COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE

(Douglas County, Ore.) – Douglas County Commissioners Tim Freeman, Chris Boice and Tom Kress are pleased to introduce our first feature story in a new series highlighting the wide-array of services provided by our County departments. Douglas County has 26 separate departments, plus an additional 19 divisions associated with those departments. For part one of our new series, “**What Can County Government Do for You?**”, the Commissioners chose to start with the vital services provided for our local heroes, our veterans, by featuring our **Douglas County Veterans Service Office**.

[Douglas County Veterans Service Office](#) (VSO), under the direction of the Douglas County Board of Commissioners and supervised by our Veterans Services Director Mary Newman-Keyes, operates as the key local office assisting and advocating for veterans in Douglas County. Mary is not only our Veterans Service Director, but a long-time federally accredited Veteran Service Officer. She is responsible for managing the department, supervising staff, implementing policies, making sure that their programs meet or exceed the needs of Douglas County veterans, and facilitating partnerships within the county to encourage citizen involvement and support for our veteran community. Mary considers serving veterans as her life’s work. She worked as Douglas County’s Veterans Service Officer from 2001 until 2013. She then worked as the Benton County Veteran Service Officer for five years, before returning home to Douglas County in January of 2018. Mary is also a recipient of the prestigious Legion of Honor, Four Chaplain’s Award recognizing her tireless work for veterans in our community. Our Commissioners make sure that all of the staff in the Douglas County VSO are federally accredited as Veterans Service Officers through the [United States Department of Veterans Affairs](#), as well as several other National Veterans Organizations. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs provides the required accreditation education, testing and certification program for Veterans Service Officers, and highly recommends that veterans use an accredited Veteran Service Officer, so that their claims can be expertly and competently completed.

“Mary and her staff do an outstanding job of prioritizing and helping our veterans receive the benefits and access to services they deserve”, commented Liaison Commissioner Tim Freeman. *“Additionally, Mary has gone above and beyond as a valuable member of our veterans advocate community in supporting and honoring our local veterans. In 2019, she took on the role as ‘next of kin’ in order to expedite and ensure that 28 forgotten veterans, whose remains were discovered in an attic at a local mortuary, were given well deserved military honors and proper inurnment services at our local VA.”*

The federally accredited Douglas County VSO provides the following free services for veterans with the goal of ensuring that veteran claimants have access to responsible and qualified representation for their veteran benefit claims and in obtaining the maximum benefit for each individual veteran, service member, dependent and/or survivor. Veterans in Douglas County are encouraged to schedule an interview with one of our federally accredited Douglas County VSO staff members to determine potential entitlement from the Federal VA or other agencies.

- Help veterans determine eligibility for Federal VA or other benefits
- Help veterans gather the information that supports their potential claims
- Educate and counsel veterans about the various claims processes and benefits law
- Help veterans write and submit their benefit claims

➤ Information (541) 672-3311

- Help veterans avoid delays that missing paperwork and/or improperly filled out claims can cause
- Once the claim is filed, they help veterans track the claim through the system
- Help veterans file an appeal if a claim is denied
- Act as the liaison and advocate between veterans and state and federal agencies
- Help veterans navigate and locate additional resources locally, and at the state and federal level

Douglas County VSO's commitment to veterans extends beyond the walls of the courthouse. Their community outreach program provides accredited VSO staff to outlying communities (by appointment) in Reedsport (2 days per month at the Douglas County Courthouse Annex – 680 Fir Avenue in Reedsport), Canyonville (1 day a month at the Cow Creek Wellness Center – 480 Wartahoo Lane in Canyonville), the Roseburg VA (1 day a month at the Roseburg VA Medical Center - 913 NW Garden Valley Blvd. in Roseburg) and at various locations around the county as requested for informational presentations. They conduct virtual (hopefully in-person soon) death benefit seminars quarterly, provide veteran information at local events, fairs and festivals and recently offered suicide prevention information and kits to veterans. Douglas County VSO is also your boots-on-the-ground local resource for all things veteran-related, including:

- Applying for medical care at VA Medical Centers
- Burial Benefits, Death Benefits and Survivor Benefits
- Education Benefits, including Vocational Rehabilitation
- Entitlements based on level of compensation or pension eligibility
- Home Loan Certificate of Eligibility and Oregon VA Home Loans
- VA Appeals and Retroactive Claims
- Referrals to programs for PTSD, post military reintegration and mental health support
- Referrals to veteran support groups, as well as other advocacy and service organizations or programs
- Referrals to local, state and federal resources

Douglas County VSO works collaboratively with our [Douglas County Veterans Advisory Committee](#) (VAC) to continually improve their veteran services. The Douglas County VAC is comprised of volunteers and veterans within our community who are appointed and are passionate advocates for veteran-related issues. The primary focus of the Douglas County VAC is to advise and assist the Douglas County VSO and our Douglas County Commissioners in accomplishing department goals, fine-tuning services and implementing new programs that reach out and help all Douglas County veterans. In addition to the VAC, the Douglas County VSO also works in conjunction and supports the following local agencies in order to advocate and improve the lives of our veterans: Douglas County Board of Commissioners, Douglas County Senior Services Department, Douglas County Clerk's Office, Douglas County Assessor's Office, Douglas County Parks Department, Douglas County Veterans Parade Committee, Douglas County Veterans Forum, Wings of Love, American Legion Post #123 & Post #16 and their Auxiliaries, American Women's Veterans Association, Vietnam Veterans of America – Umpqua Valley Chapter #805, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #2468 and Post # 9745 and their Auxiliary and the Roseburg VA Health Care System.

Douglas County's VSO provides services that are part of a larger subset of veteran services available from federal and state government agencies, as well as some nonprofit organizations. At the state and federal levels, services provided to veterans include healthcare benefits, GI Bill education benefits, financial compensation through pensions disability claims, employment services, and veteran case management. The United States Department of Veterans Affairs has a mission to fulfill President Abraham Lincoln's promise "*to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan,*" by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's Veterans. The Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs encourages veterans to first reach out to their local Veteran Service Office to learn about benefits and programs available to veterans in Oregon.

Mary and the federally accredited Douglas County VSO staff are here and proud to serve our veterans, our servicemen and women, their dependents and survivors. They endeavor to meet the unique needs of each and every veteran that walks through their doors or calls their office, with a goal to make a difference in the lives of the veterans they serve. For more information or to make an appointment, contact the Douglas County VSO at (541) 440-4219 or (800) 224-1619, extension 4219 or by email at: veterans@co.douglas.or.us.

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Media Contact: [Tamara Howell](#), Douglas County Emergency Communications & Community Engagement Specialist,
Douglas County Public Affairs Office | Office: (541) 957-4896 | Cell: (541) 670-2804 | Email: tjhowell@co.douglas.or.us
Photo Attached: Mary Newman-Keyes