



DOUGLAS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

TOM KRESS CHRIS BOICE TIM FREEMAN

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Keyes Honored with Award From Vietnam Veterans of America

(Douglas County, Ore.) Douglas County Commissioners Tom Kress, Chris Boice and Tim Freeman are excited to announce that Mary Newman-Keyes, the Douglas County Veterans Service Office Director was recently honored with the prestigious ‘**Honorary Life Membership**’ award from the [Vietnam Veterans of America](#) (VVA). The award was presented to Keyes by the Umpqua Valley’s VVA Chapter #805. The “Honorary Life Membership” award from the VVA is a prestigious honor only awarded to a select number of individuals each year who dedicate their lives to helping and serving veterans, but would not otherwise be eligible to obtain a VVA membership.

Bill Duncan, President of Umpqua Valley’s VVA Chapter #805 presented Keyes with this award during a recent VVA meeting. The National VVA Board of Directors approved the award in January this year and the certificate and letter were sent to VVA Chapter #805 by National VVA President, John McManus. Keyes was presented with this award for her dedicated service to Veterans as the Douglas County Veterans Service Officer and for her continued support of local veterans and veteran organizations. Duncan was instrumental in nominating Keyes on behalf of himself and other members of VVA Chapter #805.

“Our veterans are often faced with challenges and obstacles and at times they do not know where to turn for help. As Vietnam Veterans, we work hard to advocate for our fellow service members, and make sure that those who serve our great nation receive the care and respect they deserve. But, we also need assistance from our community to help our veterans. All of us at Chapter #805 are proud to call Mary one of our own. She is an angel. She does so much for the veterans of our community. What she does, she does not out of duty, but from her heart. She has calmed our fears and gone to bat for us when we felt we were not being appreciated. We’ve never heard a bad word spoken about Mary, she goes above and beyond. This is a rare honor, and we are very proud to be able to honor her with this membership award,” stated Roger Boucock, Vice President, VVA Chapter #805

According to the VVA, the honorary life membership requires the signed recommendation and approval from the National VVA Board of Directors. Inducted VVA honorary life members will be able to attend meetings and speak, but will not be able to make motions, vote, or hold an office.

An Honorary Life Membership to VVA may be requested from the following:

- A VVA National Officer, National Board Member, the Conference of State Council Presidents, a State Council, or a Chapter for an individual not otherwise eligible for VVA membership.
- A VVA State Council for a DoD-designated MIA veteran who resided in said state or by a Chapter for a DoD-designated MIA veteran who resided in the Chapter’s community or areas served.

Criteria for consideration for an Honorary Life Membership to VVA:

- An individual who has provided support through the public or social media (radio, TV, Internet, newspaper) on veteran issues and other veteran-related endeavors undertaken by the National organization, State Council, or Chapter.
- An individual who is elected or appointed governmental duties (national, state, or local) that allow him/her the opportunity to encourage/support veteran-related legislature that improves or impacts the lives of VVA members, their families, or all veterans.

- An individual who by their own monetary stature has continually provided “financial or pro bono” support to VVA National, State Council, or Chapter that has assisted us with our mission to provide service to veterans and families.
- An individual who has been instrumental in providing veterans with support and/or services that improves or beneficially impacts the lives of veterans.

“Mary is an exemplary employee and a trusted ally among the Veterans of Douglas County. She is affectionately referred to as “Saint Mary” by many of the local veterans for whom she has helped. Mary is often praised for her compassion, thoroughness and knowledge when helping Veterans. My fellow Commissioners and I congratulate her on this well-deserved honor,” commented Commissioner Tim Freeman.

Keyes served as the Douglas County Veterans Service Officer (VSO) from 2001 to 2013, when she left to take on the same role for Benton County. In January 2018, she returned as Director and VSO for the Douglas County Veterans Service Office. She continues to serve local veterans in that role today. Douglas County has always been a hot spot for retired veterans from all over the country. The motto on our welcome sign as you enter Douglas County reads, “We Honor Veterans” and we mean it. Our Commissioners and Veterans Service Office place a high priority on putting veterans first, and our local veteran service organizations and community members spend countless hours focusing on the needs of veterans and their families.

“I would consider this one of the greatest honors of my life. I’m so grateful to serve these Veterans and listen to their stories,” said Keyes. *“All throughout my life I have been awe-struck by how their stories and personal recollections of military service are filled with acts of valor and unselfish duty all in the name of protecting our great country. Their acts of bravery and decency are so moving and important and need to be shared with future generations. I feel honored to acknowledge the incredible deeds the Vietnam Vets and all Vets have done for us.”*

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Photo: ©K.Trenkle-Douglas County. Attachment: Letter from VVA.

Vietnam Veterans of America

VVA’s goals are to promote and support the full range of issues important to Vietnam veterans, to create a new identity for this generation of veterans, and to change public perception of Vietnam veterans. VVA strives to achieve the following: Aggressively advocate on issues important to veterans; Seek full access to quality health care for veterans; Identify the full range of disabling injuries and illnesses incurred during military service; Hold government agencies accountable for following laws mandating veterans’ health care; Create a positive public perception of Vietnam veterans; Seek the fullest possible accounting of America’s POWs and MIAs; Support the next generation of America’s war veterans and serve our communities.

