

Senior News



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*Ed Beck... Known
as an Athlete...
...Remembered as
a Christian!*

story on page 5

December 2019
Vol. 33, No. 12

Taking Care

Handling the holidays when you're hurting... Seek moments of joy to help ease pain!

by LISA M. PETSCHKE

Many people are filled with joyful anticipation and festive good cheer at this time of the year. But some are filled with anxiety and dread, and wish to get the holidays over with as quickly and uneventfully as possible.

They may have lost a loved one or experienced some other upheaval, such as physical or mental illness, unemployment or financial problems, involuntary relocation or the breakdown of an important relationship.

Their emotions put them completely out of step with those

around them, further intensifying their sense of grief and isolation.

More than any other time of the year, the holiday season embodies family togetherness and is steeped in ritual and tradition. It's a time of reaching out to others in a spirit of caring and generosity. But how can you embrace this spirit when you are hurting or feel empty inside?

Coping skills: The following is some advice.

Acknowledge that this year is different; don't try to act as if nothing has changed. Be prepared to lower your expectations.

Accept your feelings, including ups and downs from one moment or day to the next. Face your heartache and allow the tears to come, knowing they are a necessary part of healing.

Resist the urge to isolate yourself. It's important to stay connected to people who care. But do let loved ones know your limitations.

Evaluate the meaning of the season in your life. Decide what is most important to you, focus on it and forget the rest this year. Some people find it comforting to continue with familiar traditions, while others prefer to start new ones or mix old and new. Do what feels right for you.

Keep in mind that traditions are especially important to children during times of upset, providing them with much needed comfort and security. So although certain practices might now be a source of discomfort or hold little meaning for some of the adults in your family, they may still be worth continuing, perhaps with modifications.

Plan ahead to help reduce anxiety and stay focused. Whatever holiday-related tasks you decide to take on, ask for help and delegate responsibilities. Make lists to keep organized. Grief saps energy and affects concentration, and you don't want to create more stress for yourself.

Set aside quiet time each day. Nurturing your spirituality in this way will help keep you grounded.

One day at a time

If you accept an invitation, do so on the condition that you may back out at the last minute if you don't feel up to the occasion. Since it's impossible to predict how much energy you will have, be flexible and give yourself an out. Take things one day, and one event, at a time.

Guard your health

Overindulging in food or alcohol or getting insufficient sleep will only make you feel worse. Regular exercise, on the other hand, will help you feel better.

Express your emotions

Find someone who will listen and empathize, or write down your thoughts and feelings in a journal.

If applicable, turn to your faith for comfort, whether it's through private prayer, reflective reading, listening to hymns or attending worship.

Try to focus on the spiritual aspects of the season rather than those you find stressful or can't relate to.

Consider doing something nice for someone. Many people find it helps take their mind off their own situation for a while.

Take responsibility for your well-being by doing something nice for yourself.

Look for moments of joy and laughter, and relish them. Don't allow feelings of self-pity, bitterness or guilt to get the upper hand and rob you of the ability to feel pleasure. It's okay to experience enjoyment.

If you take time now to anticipate events and your reaction to them, and plan some coping strategies, you will make it through the Christmas season – perhaps even better than you expected. Just remember that there is no right or wrong way to do things.

Since everyone responds differently to loss and stress, be gentle with those around you who may also be hurting.

Lisa M. Petsche is a social worker and a freelance writer specializing in life transitions and caregiving.



Lisa Petsche

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Let us entertain you

by CLAIRE HOUSER-DODD

In case you have eaten too much or have had a drink too many during these holidays, and you're not quite up to par, do exactly what the Aspirin bottle says, "Take two aspirin and keep away from the children." It works every time.

We had assumed that Thanksgiving Day started in 1621 with the Pilgrims and had been celebrated every year since. But no, Thanksgiving did not become a national holiday until our first President, George Washington, 168 years later on Oct. 3, 1789, made the following proclamation and created the first Thanksgiving Day designated by the National Government: *The United States of America to be celebrated the fourth Thursday in November to give thanks to the Lord for watching over America.* Guess we never really thought about the time element. Good to think about and be thankful for more than the turkey.

EG Knight is playing at the Rookery in Macon on Dec. 5. Can't seem to get anymore news. We just saw her, Gary Portea and Ken Wynn at the United Methodist Church in Macon and can't wait to see them again. They are so awesome and more fun than a barrel of monkeys. We've got quite a group going from here.

That is also the night for the Middle Georgia Camellia Society's Christmas Party. We hate to miss it, but when a friend like EG is playing, we have to be there. That will be one of our main Christmas presents.

*St. Anthony, St. Anthony
Please come down.
Something is lost and needs to
be found.*

We have spoken this little begging plea so often; St. Anthony is probably considering moving in. We need him constantly. It is certainly a several-a-day thing. Usually many times. Everything we own needs to be lit in blinking red and ringing.

When Barbara Davidson took yours truly to vote last month, we overheard Dennis Herbert say he had lost something. We swirled around simultaneously and said, "You're too young. It's OK for us to misplace everything, but not you. You're way too young." Guess not. It is not only for us older individuals, but for our children's ages, too!

We're all too busy. Just got too much going on. Probably Dennis needs a rest after playing his heart out at Marion Allen's birthday the night before. He and his Celebration Band outdid themselves and put on a great show with all the great music we all love.

Guess we'll have to lend St. Anthony out!

We all love to hear from old friends. How do you tell if they are GOOD old friends? If they are, we pick up right where we left off as if there's been no time lapse at all.

Clarice Durden from Forsyth called. We got her right back and had a two-to-three hour phone visit. We had to catch up on us and children and grands. More fun! Clarice had just seen a play which reminded her of one we had won in a State Drama Contest. One in which Carol Ann Alexander had to sit in a huge gold frame for 30 minutes. The one she saw was not nearly as good and they lost to Perry. Sorry about that. We had lots of backing in Forsyth. Clarice's grandmother, Mrs. Newton, opened her beautiful home and told us to take what we needed. We trucked unbelievably beautiful antiques to wherever the contests were held, and never put a scratch on anything! We worked hard and had loads of fun. But we were all determined to win. Hard workers usually do!

Anyway, we're invited up to lunch at the new Italian restaurant and then a tour of her youngest daughter's Art Guild which is in the old Bank's Store, and her other two venues of art. We can't wait to see it all and meet with a wonderful person, to boot! We're also going to try to get a friend and cousin by marriage, Eva Persons, to meet with us.

If we can't work that one out, at least we will visit with her. We

taught Girl Scouts with her every week for 15 years and took our girls on camping trips at their cabin area for many many weekends. Can't wait! You'll get a heads up.

Aren't friends wonderful. Here is an old adage you've heard before:

*Make new friends but keep the old.
One is silver, the other is gold.*

And, a few quotable nuggets of wisdom from Ralph Waldo Emerson:

*A friend is a person with whom
I may be sincere.
Before him I may speak aloud.
The only way to have a friend
Is to be one.
A friend may well be reckoned
the masterpiece of nature.*

Lots of friends got together at William and Sandee Khoury's wonderful home in Byron for the judges' reception of the Middle Georgia Camellia Society. We had people from all around Middle Georgia who belong and people from all over the Southeast who came to judge. The members outdid themselves cooking to show their appreciation for those Camellia lovers who gave up valuable time to make the trip to judge the show in Byron. There were over 1100 blooms to be judged, each one more beautiful than the one before.

A Winter Wonderland Holiday Bazaar Experience at the Macon Coliseum! Holiday Fun for the Whole Family... December 15th!



Special to Senior News

Submitted by PEYTON JETER
Director of Marketing, Macon
Centreplex - Coliseum & Auditor-
ium, Spectra Venue Management
Peyton.jeter@spectramp.com

"T is the season to celebrate everything holiday! Join us Sunday, December 15 for the inaugural Winter Wonderland Holiday Bazaar at the Macon Coliseum. Perfect for the entire family, attendees can ice skate, snap a photo with Santa and Mac from the Macon Mayhem,

make holiday cards, shop from small, local businesses for the perfect holiday gift, enjoy delicious hot chocolate and yummy cookies, and more! For a complete list of activities, visit www.macon-centreplex.org/coliseum.

Tickets are available for purchase online at ticketmaster.com, in person at the Macon Coliseum box office, or the day of the event. All-inclusive ice skating and Holiday Bazaar entry is \$15*, entry just to the Holiday Bazaar is \$5. Make sure to bring a canned food donation item to help support Middle

Georgia Community Food Bank and earn yourself an entry to win a four-pack of tickets to a Macon Mayhem home hockey game, free parking, and concession vouchers!

We are currently accepting applications for vendors interested in having a space at the holiday market. Spaces are limited, so be sure to submit your application soon! Ice skaters will have two

skate sessions to choose from, one from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., the second from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The holiday market will take place from 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Come on out and enjoy this holiday season of festivities with us on Sunday, December 15!

Visit www.maconcentreplex.org/coliseum for more information.

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Senior News & Views of Georgia

Opinion

"What A Wonderful World!"

by DANIEL W. GATLYN, USN Ret.
Minister/Journalist

When one views the massive ruins and oblique condition of this planet, it is difficult to agree with Louis Armstrong's song:

What a wonderful World! "I see trees of green, red roses too, I see them bloom for me and you, and I think to myself, what a wonderful world.

Skies of blue, clouds of white, the bright blessed day, the dark sacred night, and I think to myself, What a wonderful world!!!

There is more (Rainbows, faces, friends); but, you get the idea.

There is evidence that the world was created in a much better condition than we view today. When composing those words, and more correctly, singing those phrases with feeling, you would have to know that Mr. Armstrong was viewing something beyond the shadows of fear, bedlam hate, and despair. Perhaps through some distant spiri-

tual scene, the original plan of God was momentarily presented to the occupants of the globe, while words and melodies warmed the occasion.

Obviously, the song paints an abstract scene from that which is on our doorstep; for the Twenty-First Century transports a throng of misplaced, disenchanted, dysfunctional characters who awake each morning with the expressed desire to cause as much havoc as possible. The original garden was only a foretaste of the world at large, saturated with an ample supply of food, fauna, and flowers; graced with opportunity and potential for every soul passing this way.

No question, the emanation of our "home place" was fully furnished. The day before us (as in every day) is a view to become transfixed in our vision; and, the success on the horizon is predicated upon what (and how) we scan the scope.

This Song Title (and heading for my column) also brings to mind another... "If I could see the world through the eyes of a Child," written by Sammy Masters, and made famous by Patsy Cline... for it speaks in concert with the theme of

a Wonderful World.

If I could see the world through the eyes of a child, smiling faces would greet me all the while; and like a lovely work of art, it would warm this weary heart, just to see through the eyes of a child! I could see right, no wrong, I could see good, no bad. (and more).

I am not suggesting, in any manner, that one closes out the realities of conditions before us; but, do keep in mind that the drastic and vile conditions with which we are confronted are inventions brought about by an ill mannered persona; and, are far from the intent of an omnipotent Creator. We are quartered with an indiscreet population who have chosen to separate themselves from a virtuous following, but we are not forced to become an unethical and immoral subject. Through faith, a promise, and absolute practicality; we can become a credible Ambassador for positive values and a purpose driven existence.

So sing the song of a brighter day... casting your eyes upon fertile ground for a Wonderful World!

Vietnam Transformed: The Art of Richard J. Olsen

Special to Senior News

Born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1935, Richard J. Olsen began his journey in art in his youth. He attended the University of Wisconsin, where he earned a bachelor of science degree in 1958 and a master of fine arts degree (with a concentration in painting and printmaking) in 1966.

He was a child during World War II and a teenager during the Korean War. At Wisconsin he signed up for ROTC, the Reserve Officers' Training Corps, and he graduated a commissioned officer at the beginning of America's involvement in the Vietnam War. He became a helicopter pilot, serving tours of duty over the next few years in Vietnam. He returned to school on the completion of his service obligation to get his graduate degree.

In 1969 he joined the faculty of what has

become the Lamar Dodd School of Art at the University of Georgia, Athens, as an instructor. Over the years, he rose through the ranks, first as an assistant professor (1973-1978) and associate professor (1978-1994), before being named a full professor. He held the General Sandy Beaver Teaching Professorship from 1998 until his retirement in 2001, when he was named professor of art emeritus.

Since 1965 his work has been included by invitation in more than one hundred group exhibitions and has been the

subject of numerous solo exhibitions. It is included in public, private, and corporate collections around the world. He is the recipient of many honors and awards.

The exhibition *Vietnam Transformed*, organized by guest curators Hatha and Andrew Hayes, is rich with allegory, symbolism, and allusion, and comes out of Olsen's *Wall Series*. Begun in 1976 the series now includes more than two hundred paintings, conceived and executed on a monumental scale.

His work is as much concerned with process as product; and, as he has noted, "there is always the 'trying to make a painting' element in it."

Vietnam Transformed: The Art of Richard J. Olsen; through February 16, 2020.

Venue: Morris Museum of Art, 1 Tenth Street, Augusta, GA; 706-724-7501; Website: <https://www.themorris.org>.



Richard J. Olsen, *Wall CCXXIX (229) State 3, In Country*, 2015. Oil on canvas. Courtesy of the artist.

On the Cover

Ed Beck... Known as an Athlete Remembered as a Christian!

by CLAIRE HOUSER-DODD

COVER: Ed Beck

A *Love to Live By* was a book written in 1958 by Ed Beck when he lost his beloved wife Billie Ray to Hodgkin's Disease, says it all for Ed Beck and his faithful Fort Valley friends. Bill McGhee brought over a pile of papers when he was notified that Ed, a Fort Valley boy and best friend, had passed away in Colorado on October 17, 2019.

Ed Beck was born in 1936 and became quite an athlete. When the Becks were leaving for a job in Jacksonville, Florida, and Ed was so involved with the basketball team of the Fort Valley Green Waves, nobody wanted him to leave. Most of all Ed! He was a good friend of James and William Khoury and was asked to move in with them. He did, a wonderful friendship grew, and William

and Lorraine visited Ed in Colorado two weeks before he passed away. They were so happy to have made that trip and so very impressed with all of Ed's works he shared with them. Fifty years of devotion and hard work.

Another good friend in The Valley was Nick Strickland who played basketball with him when he was a Senior and Ed was a Freshman. Nick remembers him as a fine person, considerate, patient, knowing how to take his place and an overall good person. That is one thing everybody agrees on.

Fort Valley won the State Championship when Ed was a Senior. He had always wanted to go to the University of Kentucky, and was honored when Coach Adolph Rupp came to Fort Valley himself to sign up Ed when Ed's beloved wife died in the off season between 1957 and 1958, Rupp and assistant coach Harry Lancaster returned to Georgia to attend Billie's funeral. He returned to Lexington in time to speak at the

team's banquet where he discussed what Billie meant to the team, and at this time dedicated the opening 1958 season to her memory.

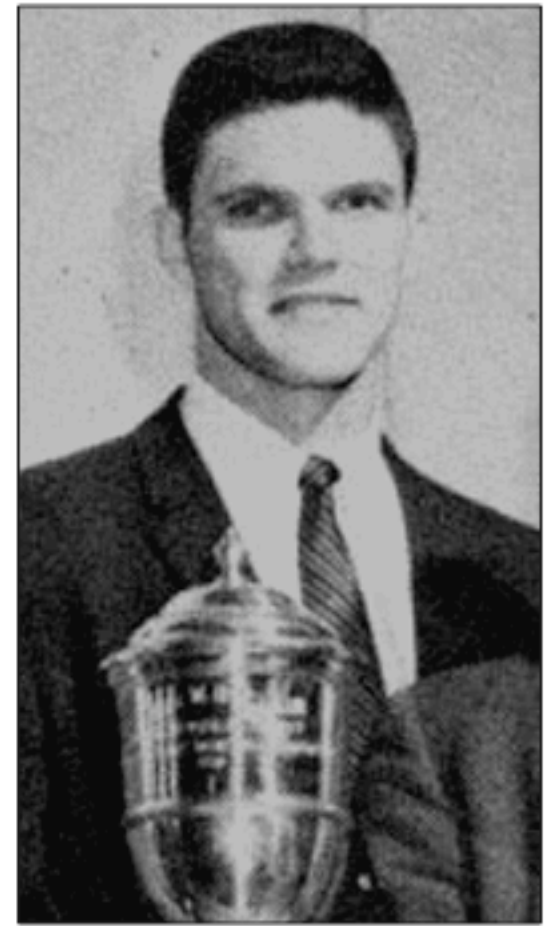
Beck was captain for two years (1956-1958) under legendary head coach Rupp and was a tremendous leader for The Wildcats, particularly for the 1958 "Fiddlin' Five" who went on to claim the national title.

Beck was voted an ALL-SEC Second Team performer by the Associated Press in 1957 and the SEC Defensive Player of the Year in 1958 finishing his career with an average of 10.0 rebounds per game. It was the third highest total in the history of The University of Kentucky at that time.

It was 1958, the University of Kentucky won the NCAA championship and Ed was offered a contract by the New York Knickerbockers to play professional basketball. He turned it down. The Venture for Victory tour to six countries of the Orient was just before his entrance to theological seminary.

Ed had always planned to go to Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta but was unable financially. He attended Asbury Theological Seminary at Wilmore, only 14 miles from the University of Kentucky. After one year there, preaching every weekend at local churches and community centers, he had earned the money to enter Candler Methodist Seminary at Emory University the following year. While there he was invited to speak throughout the nation, plus being invited by World Visions, Inc. to be their college-high school speaker for the Tokyo, Japan Crusades during the Spring of 1960.

In the Summer of 1962, he became a staff member of the General Board of Evangelism at the National Headquarters of the Methodist Church in Nashville, Tennessee, and helped organize the Department of New Life Ministries. He did many things in this vein, plus touring Europe and our North Africa military bases to conduct "Christian Leadership Training Labs," but by 1968 he had married the for-



mer Faye Stakley of Newport, Kentucky, and had four sons. He was called away from home too often and was happy to accept the pastorate of Warren United Methodist Church in Denver, Colorado.

Ed was involved with so many Christian endeavors in his fifty years of service to God it would take a book to list and discuss his gifts to humanity.

At 83 years young Beck returned to Rupp Arena in February for the 1958 National Championship Reunion. He spoke glowingly of the team chemistry that propelled the Wildcats to the National Championship. "You can imagine back in the 50's how close this team was," Beck said in February. "You have to remember we had 11 people on that team who graduated in 1958. It was the main reason we won the tournament because we had played together for four years and knew each other's moves. I knew what Vernon (Hatton) was going to do before he was going to do it. It all came together. The maturity of the team was a big, big part of the championship."

Ed Beck will long be remembered here in Fort Valley by his many friends but honored nationally as well as Worldwide for his service to God and God's people. A life well lived. As his book title states: *A Love to Live By*.



Wreaths Across America at Andersonville National Cemetery call for Volunteers Annual ceremony scheduled for Saturday, December 14, 2019

Special to Senior News

Submitted by Charles Barr
Cemetery Administrator
Andersonville National Historic Site, 496
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ANDERSONVILLE, Georgia

Andersonville National Historic Site invites you to remember and honor our military veterans during this winter season by participating in our Wreaths Across America event on Saturday, December 14, 2019.

At 12:00 pm the Civil Air Patrol will conduct a brief ceremony in Andersonville National Cemetery to honor America's armed forces. This ceremony is open to the public. Attendees are encouraged to bring a wreath for placement on a veteran's grave. After the ceremony, attendees can help remember our fallen veterans by placing wreaths sponsored through Wreaths Across America on graves in the national cemetery.

Andersonville National Cemetery would like your help in placing the wreaths from Wreaths Across America this year. Park entrance and the event are free, and we encourage everyone to come out and be a part of this special opportunity to remember the military men and women who are buried in our cemetery and in national cemeteries across the nation.

Wreaths Across America is a national program that encourages individuals, community groups, and families to sponsor wreaths for placement in national cemeteries throughout the United States. These wreaths may be placed on specific graves, or left undesignated to place on one of thousands of unvisited veterans' graves. Each year, between 1,000 and 10,000 wreaths are donated through this program for placement at Andersonville National Cemetery.

Our goal is to ensure that each of the more than 20,000 gravesites in the cemetery is decorated with a wreath at least once. To accomplish this, undesignated wreaths are placed sequentially and rotated from one cemetery section to the next each year. For 2019, undesignated wreaths will be placed in Sections A, B, C, R, D, E, and F and in the Memorial Section.

Beginning December 1, 2019, wreaths no larger than 20 inches and floral blankets no larger than 2 feet by 3 feet are permitted in the cemetery. Wreaths should be brought in person, or delivered by a florist, directly to the gravesite. To find the location of a specific grave, please visit <http://gravelocator.com.va.gov>, or call or stop by the National Prisoner of War Museum for assistance.



"For more than 240 years, the men and women of our nation's armed forces have spent countless holidays away from loved ones, protecting our freedom," said Acting Superintendent Barbara Hatcher. "Placing a wreath on these veterans' graves is a touching and beautiful way to honor all those who have sacrificed so much in service to our country."

Andersonville National Historic Site is located 10 miles south of Oglethorpe, GA and 10 miles northeast of Americus, GA on Georgia Highway 49. The national park features the National Prisoner of War Museum, Andersonville National Cemetery and the site of the historic Civil War prison, Camp Sumter. ?Andersonville National Historic Site is the only site within the National Park System to serve as a memorial to all American prisoners of war. Park grounds are open from 8:00 a.m. until

5:00 p.m. The National Prisoner of War Museum is open 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., daily. Admission is free. For more information on the park, call 229 924-0343, or visit our website at www.nps.gov/ande/. Visit us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/Andersonville. NPS

About the National Park Service

More than 20,000 National Park Service employees care for America's 419 national park sites and work with communities across the nation to help preserve local history and create close-to-home recreational opportunities. Learn more at www.nps.gov Visit us on Facebook www.facebook.com/nationalparkservice, Twitter www.twitter.com/natlparkservice, and YouTube www.youtube.com/nationalparkservice.

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From Homeless to Hired! VA Employee shares his story of Resilience and Dedication!

Special to *Senior News*

by J. W. HUCKFELDT,
Deputy Public Affairs Officer
Carl Vinson VA Medical Center
1826 Veterans Blvd, Dublin, GA

DUBLIN, Ga

Chances are good that if you walked into the Carl Vinson VA Medical Center's Main Entrance at building five, you've seen or spoken with U.S. Army and Vietnam Veteran Thomas Edmond. Mr. Thomas, as he's known by Veterans and staff alike, serves as the Information Receptionist and spends his days answering questions and providing directions to those navigating Dublin VAMC's 4.2 miles of hallway.

Armed with a charming smile and friendly demeanor, Edmond happily mans his post at the reception desk performing his duties as if he does not have a care in the world. But life has not always been unicorns and rainbows for Edmond. In 2005, he enrolled in the homeless program at Dublin VAMC.

"You have to want to get help," Edmond said. "I wasn't ready to throw in the towel. When I opened one door for help, more doors for treatment started to open up for me."

Once Edmond completed the homeless program, he enrolled in the substance abuse program and then the PTSD program. In 2014, Edmond started volunteering at Dublin VAMC.

"I made the choice to never go back to where I started so I kept enrolling in programs that were really challenging," Edmond said. "After conquering a few challenges with those programs, my life started to get back on track."

Edmond's hard work paid off when he qualified for the VA's Compensated Work Therapy - Transitional Work (CWT-TW) program in 2016. Compensated Work Therapy is an umbrella of Vocational Rehabilitation Programs in place where the primary goal is competitive employment with the objective of rapid, follow-along services for as long as the Veteran expresses and identifies barriers to employment.

"I believe there is a job for everyone who is willing to work and has the goal to live independently," said Lead Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist Karen Jackson. "We have to work collaboratively with the Veteran to discover their skillsets and expertise."

Compensated Work Therapy consists of five major components to provide different levels of therapeutic opportunities to work depending on the Veteran's

unique situation and identified limitations. Compensated Work Therapy - Transitional Work allows Veterans to work in a temporary role at the Carl Vinson VA Medical Center up to 35 hours per week. Other programs include Supported Employment, Community Based Employment Services, Supported Self Employment (entrepreneurism), and Supported Education. For the Supported Education program, Veterans are connected to the Veterans Benefits Administration for education and other training benefits.

"I was asked by former Chief of Voluntary Services Dean Swann if I wanted to work my CWT hours at the front desk assisting Veterans," Edmond said. "I was only too happy to accept."

Edmond made a significant difference assisting Veterans at the main entrance that a full-time position was created, and he was permanently placed as a direct hire. As a Vietnam Veteran who completed several programs at Dublin VAMC, Edmond has a knack for identifying critical situations and providing immediate support. On one occasion, a Veteran showed up for an appointment to see his primary care physician, but Edmond could "see" something more. After a brief conversation, Edmond felt the Veteran was in

crisis and escorted him to mental health where Edmond worked with the front-line staff to have the Veteran seen immediately.

"Thomas is a great asset to the Veterans visiting Carl Vinson VA Medical Center and to Voluntary Service," said Chief of Voluntary Services Keith Griffin. "He works proactively assigning volunteers to escort Veterans around the facility and provides unparalleled customer service to Veterans experiencing difficulty navigating VA healthcare."

Edmond walks through the doors every day determined to make a difference in someone's life. Many Dublin VAMC Veterans seek his guidance and counsel because Edmond has been through many of the challenges Veterans face today and found success through hard work and dedication.

"I know how challenging life can be, and I'm here to share the different programs and resources available to Veterans who might be struggling," Edmond said. "I've been there before and it's my mission to make sure that every Veteran who wants to overcome obstacles in their lives has someone in the VA who can steer them in the right direction."

Edmond's story is not only remarkable, but an inspiration to any Veteran with the willingness to work to achieve success.



U.S. Army and Vietnam Veteran Thomas Edmond (left) reviews a report with U.S. Air Force Veteran and Chief of Voluntary Services Keith Griffin.

Carl Vinson VAMC to hold ribbon cutting for Mental Health Building

Special to *Senior News*

Submitted by Scott Whittington
Public Affairs Officer
Carl Vinson VA Medical Center
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DUBLIN, Ga

The Carl Vinson VA Medical Center will hold a ribbon cutting for the Mental Health Building on December 12, 2019 from 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. at its front doors near the facility's main entrance. All furniture, fixtures and décor is complete. Staff has already begun moving into the new offices.

The \$9.5 million construction

project includes 21,000 square feet of space, 45 counseling and two group rooms along with 10 new offices for staff.

"I'm overjoyed that this project is ready to better serve our Veterans with a more appropriate facility for our outpatient mental health services," said David L. Whitmer, medical center director. "Some Veterans have injuries you can't see, and this new space will help us serve those Veterans. Whitmer added, "We want to remove the negative stigma for receiving mental health care. This will allow us to have more appropriate meeting space for our group therapy and for individual, one-on-one sessions with mental health professionals."

Five ways to avoid delivery scams and package thefts this holiday season

by KELVIN COLLINS
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For holiday shopping, most consumers love the convenience of making purchases online and having them shipped straight to their doorstep. But with millions of packages delivered each year, con artists and thieves have developed many ways to steal from shoppers. Fortunately, there are also many ways to protect yourself from their shady tactics.

Popular Delivery Scams

Delivery scams and theft are particularly prevalent at the holidays, when more packages are being shipped. Scammers are hoping shoppers are busy or distracted and will act without thinking.

The first scam to look out for are phishing emails that pose as official notices from delivery companies. These either contain a "tracking link" or a message that the shipper is having difficulty delivering a package to you. Clicking the link either takes you

to a form that asks for personally identifying information, or to a site that downloads malware onto your computer.

Another delivery scam involves fake "missed delivery" tags. Scammers place a note on your door that claims they are having challenges delivering a package to you. They ask you to call a phone number to reschedule your delivery, but it's really a ruse to get your personal information.

Another issue holiday shoppers face is package theft. Many consumers have had their packages stolen before they arrive home from work. Thieves snatch packages from doorsteps or lobbies of apartment or condo complexes. Criminals even follow delivery and postal trucks. When the truck leaves, the crooks move in and grab the parcels.

How to Avoid Delivery Scams

Take precautions to ensure a safe delivery: If you are having a valuable or fragile item delivered to your home, purchase shipping insurance. In addition, always get tracking numbers for your purchases and check the shipping progress periodically.

Watch out for calls or emails

about a missed delivery. Legitimate delivery services usually leave a "missed delivery" notice on your door. If you receive a missed delivery notice, examine the form carefully to make sure it is authentic and only then follow their instructions. Keep track of what you've ordered so you have a better idea of what is coming and when.

Request a Signature: Chances are this feature may come with a price tag, but it may be worth the extra fee. Requesting a signature means that a delivery service won't be able to drop a package on your doorstep unless someone is around to sign for it.

Don't leave packages sitting on your doorstep. Packages left sitting outside are particularly vulnerable to theft. To ensure safe delivery, have your package delivered to your workplace, or to a trusted friend or neighbor who will be home to accept delivery. Some delivery companies now have lockers where your packages can securely wait for you to pick them up using a one-time code to open the locker.

Open your delivery upon receipt to check for damage or signs of tampering. Contact the seller immediately if you believe something is wrong

with the shipment or if it's not what you ordered. Also, be sure to review the seller's return policy for damaged or unwanted items.

For More Information

To learn more about how to avoid scams, visit BBB.org/AvoidScams. If you've been the victim of a delivery scam, please report it at BBB.org/ScamTracker. Your report can help others avoid falling victim to similar scams.

Kelvin Collins is President/CEO of the Better Business Bureau serving the Fall Line Corridor, serving 77 counties in East Alabama, West Georgia, Southwest Georgia, Central Georgia, East Georgia and Western South Carolina. This tips column is provided through the local BBB and the Council of Better Business Bureaus. The Better Business Bureau sets standards for ethical business behavior, monitors compliance and helps consumers identify trustworthy businesses. Questions or complaints about a specific company or charity should be referred directly to the BBB at Phone: 1-800-763-4222, Web site: www.bbb.org or E-mail: info@centralgeorgia.bbb.org.

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