May is Military Appreciation Month

This message comes with mixed feelings as I announce my retirement after 10 years as the County of Ventura’s Veteran Services Officer. My last day in the office is May 1, 2020.

It’s been a pleasure working for the Human Services Agency and for such leaders as Barry Zimmerman, Melissa Livingston, Marissa Mach, and Marcy Snider. I truly appreciate their support both personally and professionally, as well as the support provided by our Board of Supervisors and County Executive Officer to ensure the furthest reach of the Veteran Services Office (VSO).

It’s been a privilege to lead the highly dedicated and professional VSO staff, as we’ve helped more and more veterans every year become connected with the federal and state VA benefits and local services they have earned through service to our exceptional country. We have truly improved the lives of thousands of veterans and their family members.

It was an honor to serve 20 years in the Air Force and an even greater privilege to serve and assist fellow veterans and their families over the last 10 years. Honoring the service and sacrifice so many have made for our country is the very foundation of the VSO and helps meet America’s obligation to assist these brave men and women when they need it. The VSO will remain in good hands under temporary leadership as a recruitment for a new Veteran Services Officer is conducted. My wife and I will be leaving Ventura and moving closer to family.

Thank you, Mike McManus
Former County of Ventura Veteran Services Officer

We begin Military Appreciation Month on the heels of celebrating the Month of the Military Child and Gold Star Wives Day, which were both recognized in April. This year was the 75th Anniversary since the first meeting of Gold Star Wives. This organization is now open to all surviving spouses who lost their spouse either while on Active Duty, serving on military orders, or died because of service-connected disabilities.

May is filled with many opportunities to recognize and extend our heartfelt appreciation for the men and women who are both currently serving and those for whom we hold Memorial Day as a solemn day of remembrance.

This will be the first year we recognize the Space Force as a unified branch, under the Department of the Air Force signed into law by President Trump on December 20, 2019. According to their official website, the mission of the Space Force includes “developing military space professionals, acquiring military space systems [to include cyberspace], maturing the military doctrine for space power and organizing space forces.”

May 1 is set aside as a day to reaffirm our loyalty to the U.S. and to recognize those who have defended our American Freedom. As your County Veteran Services team, we reaffirm our commitment to do all we can to improve the quality of lives for our veterans and their families. We also recognize all combat wounded, ill or dying because of their service to our country on Silver Star Banner Day.

May 8 is the 75th Anniversary of Victory in Europe Day, where by Germany unconditionally surrendered to allied forces, ending WWII in Europe.

May 8 is also Military Spouse Appreciation Day, always the Friday before Mother’s Day. As a military spouse, we build a network, we become extremely independent, yet we learn to rely on each other. We become mom and dad, we pay bills, we send care packages, and sometimes we minimize the truth about what’s happening at home so our spouses can focus on the mission while we take care of the home front. Above all we recognize the significant role our spouse plays in our American Freedom and how the little parts from home can make the difference during a long deployment. We are caretakers of our children, and many of us either have or will become caregivers to our spouses due to injuries or illness sustained because of their service. These men and women give relentless. They care compassionately. We thank them. During this most unusual season, I ask that we all take extra time to thank all our essential workers, especially our healthcare workers and first responders.

May 13, while not recognized as a National Day, is recognized as Children of Fallen Patriots Day. Memorial Day originally began as Decoration Day and was commemorated on May 30. On June 28, 1968, Public Law 90-363, “provided for uniform annual observances of certain legal public holidays on Mondays.” Therefore, beginning May 1969, Memorial Day would be commemorated on the last Monday in May. Memorial Day is a day to honor those who demonstrated the greatest of love and loyalty to our country and died defending democracy around the world. We are to stop and pay homage to them. As many of you know, Naval Base Ventura County recently renamed their main gate, formerly known as the Sunkist Gate, to Knott Gate in honor of Seabees Third Class Eric Knott who died on September 3, 2004, while serving in Fallujah, Iraq. His family, friends and former Seabees and Shipmates Promise to Remember! Someone once said we die twice in our life: The first our natural death; the second when we are no longer thought of or talked about. This Memorial Day I ask you to Remember. Remember them by name, remember their sacrifice and remember the families they left behind.

Many who have worn this country’s uniform are unaware of the benefits and programs available to them because of their service. To those county employees who are veterans and to family members of veterans, I’d like to thank you for your courage, sacrifice and willingness to serve in our great nation’s Armed Forces. If you have questions about federal and state VA benefits, please contact the County Veteran Services Office at (805) 477-5155 and visit our website at www.vchsa.org/veterans.