

NEWS

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For Immediate Release

San Mateo County Veterans Commission to Honor Veteran of the Year

Lt. Gen. Michael A. Rocco, USMC (Ret.) to deliver remarks at virtual event

Redwood City — Two San Mateo County veterans and a nonprofit that helps senior veterans will be honored this week by the San Mateo County Veterans Commission for their notable commitment and significant effort to improve the quality of life for those who serve our country.

The Sixth Annual Veteran Recognition Event will recognize Paul Harrell, Sue Digre and Peninsula Volunteers, Inc., during a virtual ceremony this Wednesday, Nov. 10, 2021. The ceremony will include a keynote speech by Lieutenant General Michael A. Rocco, USMC (Ret.) who is currently President and CEO of the Marines Memorial Association. He served some 37 years as an active-duty Marine in multiple tours around the country and globe, including the Middle East, Far East and Europe during which he flew nearly 4,000 hours as a pilot. Rocco earned many distinguished awards during his military service. In 2017, he was promoted to Lieutenant General and assumed the duties of Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

WHAT: Sixth Annual Veteran Recognition Event

WHEN: Virtual event video will launch at 10 a.m. Wednesday, Nov. 10, 2021.

This prerecorded virtual event is available for viewing at
<https://hsa.smcgov.org/veterans>.

The 2021 honorees are:

VETERAN OF THE YEAR, Paul Harrell: Paul Harrell grew up the son of an Air Force veteran, from whom he learned life lessons of taking responsibility for yourself and help those most vulnerable around you. He entered the Air Force during Vietnam and, like his father before him, was stationed at Travis Air Force Base. Harrell has great pride in serving in the Air Force and calls it an honor to have served his country. After military service,

Harrell started an in-home care facility for the elderly, again building on what he learned from his father. He also worked in information technology for the State Insurance Compensation Fund for many years. When he moved to San Mateo County, Harrell began volunteering for several organizations helping the community in impactful ways, spending hundreds of hours doing so. In his own words: “Helping people really means you are helping yourself.”

PATRIOT OF THE YEAR, Sue Digre: Sue Digre is the embodiment of a patriot – the consummate advocate for veterans and veteran in our community. She grew up as a military dependent with her father in the Navy and she is a military mom of three who served our country. As one of the founders of Pacifica Military Moms, she needed support when her children went overseas as U.S. military members. She knew that others felt the same way.

With other Pacifica Military Moms, Digre got busy – helping to organize care packages to be sent to troops overseas. In fact, Blue Star Moms of San Mateo County formed from the Pacifica Military Moms. She has also served her hometown of Pacifica as a mayor and councilmember for 16 years.

ENTERPRISE OF THE YEAR, Peninsula Volunteers, Inc.: Entering its 75th year serving vulnerable seniors, Peninsula Volunteers, Inc. (PVI) continues its mission to allow seniors to age in place. Many participants in their programs are veterans. For these veterans, PVI provides a safe space for them to reminisce about their service because none of their stories should be forgotten.

PVI serves seniors through four core programs, including Meals on Wheels that serves 700 meals a day to seniors; transportation to help seniors get to appointments and complete errands; day programming for seniors with memory impairment; and social programming. With more than 100 volunteers and dedicated staff, PVI ensures that seniors will be able to age in place in San Mateo County.

BACKGROUND: The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors established the Veterans Commission in June 2015 with a mission to promote programs and policies that address the unmet needs of veterans in the county. Established in 1946, the San Mateo County Veterans Services Office (CVSO) assists veterans in accessing state and federal benefits that help veterans, their spouses and family members. The CVSO also provides information and referrals to a wide range of services and connects veterans to programs such as the California Veteran College Fee Waiver for veterans and dependents.

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COUNTY OF SAN MATEO

