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## THE BIG E'S OPENING DAY HONORS ACTIVE MILITARY AND VETERAN PERSONNEL

Military Appreciation Day, presented by *VA New England Healthcare System*, is The Big E's way of showing appreciation to all of those who have served or currently serve in the United States Armed Forces. On September 13, the Fair's Opening Day, free admission is provided, with veteran or military ID, to:

- Active duty and retired military personnel
- Dependents of active duty military personnel
- Veterans (no dependents)

Acceptable forms of ID include a copy of DD214, a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs photo ID, or proof of membership to any veterans' organization.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has been represented at Military Appreciation Day for the past seven years at the Exposition. VA representatives will be stationed along the Avenue of States from 8 a.m. to – 4:30 p.m. to answer questions and provide information on both national and state veteran resources. They will also help veterans enroll in VA health care or assist veterans with filing a claim for a service-connected disability. Veterans are encouraged to stop by and bring a copy of their DD214, "Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty," to help VA representatives determine eligibility for VA benefits. VA officials have indicated that this is the largest VA outreach event for veterans in the nation. At the 2018 Military Appreciation Day, VA estimates more than 3,500 veterans visited the VA outreach area and more than 500 received assistance with veteran benefits or services.

Military Appreciation Day highlights planned for this year's Fair include:

- 70-plus VA personnel from throughout New England conducting outreach and helping veterans connect with their benefits, representing every major program, including the regional Mobile Vet Center from West Springfield
- Pharmacists from a local Walgreens will be on-site with VA medical staff to administer vaccines and answer questions about immunizations
- Award-winning military photographer and disabled combat veteran, Stacy Pearsall, will take free portraits of veterans as part of her national touring Veterans Portrait Project
- More than a dozen state and community partners including the state Department of Veterans' Services and the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke, will be available to speak with veterans at the Massachusetts State Building at a "Veterans Commons" area
- Free Veteran commemorative T-shirts and a chance for military members and veterans to win tickets to a regular season New England Patriots home game and other prizes
- The Rock 102 Road Crew will be set up with VA from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. with chances to win additional prizes
- Bruce Marshall from Valley's Classic Hits will be broadcasting live from the VA outreach area

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The Department of Veterans Affairs Mobile Vet Center – known as the “MVC” -- is a 35-foot "office on wheels" equipped with satellite communications hosting audio-visual equipment, encrypted phone and fax lines, computers and wireless internet.

Information and Vet Center services include:

- Counseling and referral services pertaining to post-traumatic stress
- Military sexual trauma counseling
- Bereavement counseling
- Marriage and family therapy
- Resources for suicide intervention
- VA health care eligibility and enrollment
- VA disability compensation
- Local and State Department of Veterans’ Services benefits
- Community activities and referral agencies to assist veterans and family members

Readjustment Counseling Services are provided for veterans who served in combat as well as for immediate family members.

The VA New England Healthcare System is one of 21 Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) and is comprised of eight medical centers accredited by Joint Commission located throughout the six New England states. For more information on VA healthcare in New England, call 1-844-VA-CARES or go to [www.newengland.va.gov/outreach](http://www.newengland.va.gov/outreach)

Opening Day is also “Be a Kid for a Day.” All guests pay \$10 for admission tickets at the gate. Tickets can also be purchased online or at all Big Y® World Class Markets®.

The Big E takes place Sept. 13 – 29 in West Springfield, Mass. and will be jam-packed with food, entertainment, and so much more! Visit [TheBigE.com](http://TheBigE.com) to sign up for emails and connect on social media to be the first to get exclusive information. Join us with #BigEMoments.

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