

Golf cart to make visits to veterans cemetery easier

◆ **Vetmobile:** It will be available to those who need it at the New Hampshire State Veterans Cemetery.

By **SHAWNE K. WICKHAM**
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BOSCAWEN — This Memorial Day, elderly or disabled visitors to the New Hampshire State Veterans Cemetery can get around with a little help from their friends.

Veterans service organizations have donated a golf cart, dubbed the Vetmobile, for the cemetery to provide rides to those who can't easily walk to their loved ones' graves.

Peter Burdett, past president of the New Hampshire chapter of Military Officers Association of America, got the idea after reading about a similar project in Virginia. Burdett chairs the state Veterans Advisory Committee, so he brought up the idea at a committee meeting.

"Everybody gave it a 'yup, let's do it,'" Burdett said.

The Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association's Chapter 5-1 quickly offered to fund the purchase, and North Country Golf Cart of Bow was on board to deliver the Vetmobile at a "bargain price," Burdett said.

Other veterans groups put up some money to create a maintenance account at the cemetery, and a good idea quickly became a reality.

Burdett said the golf cart officially was donated to the New Hampshire Cemetery Association, which in turn gave it to the state of New Hampshire; the Governor and Executive Council accepted the gift.

Cemetery employees will drive the cart when someone requests a ride. "I think it's going to be a wonderful service," Burdett said.

"They don't even have to get out of the cart at the other end if they don't want to. The point is now, instead of looking out across 100 yards of green grass, they can go right to the site, have their moments and then be carried back to their car."

"I think it's going to make the cemetery so much more accessible, and isn't that what we really want?" Burdett said.

Mike Farinola of the CVMA said the idea was "a no-brainer" for his group, which in the past has purchased therapy equipment for the state veterans home, funded scholarships and organized deep-sea fishing trips for veterans.

At the Boscawen cemetery, Farinola said, "there are a lot of older vets who visit their friends. You see them with their walkers there on the holidays, and they can't walk up to the sites."

"If you can actually help either veterans' families or the veterans themselves visit their loved ones, it's a natural. We couldn't resist."

Mike Horne, director of the veterans cemetery, said the new Vetmobile will also come in handy during military burial ceremonies. "We can use the golf cart to escort processions from the administration building out to the gravesite, as well as to assist those ... that can't walk as far."

And as the cemetery expands, Horne said, he expects the vehicle will get even more use. "It's another nice feature that keeps our cemetery in the lead of being a really special veterans cemetery," he said.

• The New Hampshire State Veterans Cemetery will hold its Memorial Day observance on Thursday, May 30, at 11 a.m. Seating is limited; those who attend are invited to bring lawn chairs for their comfort. Refreshments will follow.

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