



VETERANS NEWS AND VIEWS

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Stars and Stripes Honor Flight Continues 2009 Flight Schedule

The Stars and Stripes Honor Flight Program has completed two flights and is still intending to fly 2 more times in 2009..

The dates of the flights are as follows:

September 26 and November 7.

The Honor Flight Program seeks to honor the service of any WWII veteran, as well as any terminally ill veterans by providing a one day trip to Washington D.C. to visit their memorials. This, at NO COST to the veteran.

As of this writing, there are approximately 650 veterans on the “waiting” list for flights.

Fundraising continues in an effort to clear this waiting list and accommodate as many veterans as possible. WWII veterans are dying at the rate of nearly 900 per day, nationwide, so there is a sense of urgency in the efforts of the program.

NOTE : We need volunteers to come to the home-coming events for these returning veterans!!



We invite any and all to come join us at Mitchell Field the nights of September 26 and November 7. The flight is scheduled to land at about 8:00 P.M.

ALS (Lou Gehrig’s Disease)

In one of the most sweeping announcements the Veterans’ community has ever seen, The Department of Veterans Affairs announced on September 23, 2009 that any veteran who has 90 days or more of active duty during any period of time, no matter where they were stationed, and they later develop ALS, the VA will recognize their disease as being service-connected. Thankfully ALS is a fairly rare disease, but none the less, this

was a stunning announcement.

The other side of the coin, if a veteran died of ALS, their surviving spouse will be eligible to apply for DIC, which is a monthly benefit paid to the surviving spouses of veterans who die of a service connected condition. It amounts to about \$1150 per month.

If you know of someone who suffers from ALS, please have them call my office. See the attached.

VA SUICIDE PREVENTION HOTLINE

WASHINGTON – To ensure veterans with emotional crises have round-the-clock access to trained professionals, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has begun operation of a national suicide prevention hot line for veterans.

“Veterans need to know these VA professionals are literally a phone call away,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson. “All service members who experience the stresses of combat can have wounds on their minds as well as their bodies. Veterans should see mental health services as another benefit they have earned, which the men and women of VA are honored to provide.”

The toll-free hot line number is 1-800-273-TALK (8255). VA’s hot line will be staffed by mental health professionals in Canandaigua, N.Y. They will take toll-free calls from across the country and work closely with local VA mental health providers to help callers.

To operate the national hot line, VA is partnering with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

“The hot line will put veterans in touch – any time of the day or night, any day of the week, from anywhere in the country – with trained, caring professionals who can help,” added Nicholson. “This is another example of the VA’s commitment to provide world-class health care for our nation’s veterans, especially combat veterans newly returned from Iraq and Afghanistan.”

The suicide hot line is among several enhancements to mental health care that Nicholson has announced this year. In mid July, the Department’s top mental health professionals convened in the Washington, D.C., area to review the services provided to veterans of the Global War on Terror.

VA is the largest provider of mental health care in the nation. This year, the Department will spent about \$3 billion for mental health. More than 9,000 mental health professionals, backed up by primary care physicians and other health professionals in every VA medical center and outpatient clinic, provide mental health care to about 1 million veterans each year.

Shake up At King

In case you missed it, the Commandant at King, Bill Crowley, has resigned.

There have been several instances, over the past couple of years, that precipitated this announcement, the latest of which was reported in the newspapers, about purchasing equipment for the Home, that they did not have the budgetary authority to do.

WDVA has begun a search to find a qualified replacement.

New Camp Director at Camp American Legion

Camp American Legion is preparing to bid a fond farewell to the Camp Director Jim Youngquist, at Camp American Legion. Jim has served the veterans for several years, as they go to the camp for rest and rehabilitation. Kebin Moshe has been named as the new Camp Director, and will assume his new duties in conjunction with the closing of camp this fall.

We welcome Kebin to his new position. It is a challenge that not many are willing to undertake!

Changes in PTSD Rules

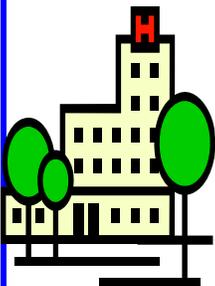
The Department of Veterans Affairs has recently published a proposed rule change in the Federal Register, that MAY make it easier for veterans to receive a diagnosis and compensation for PTSD. While this appears to be a major step forward, the devil remains in the details. Until we see the final language, and until that language is officially incorporated, AND the VA Regional Of-

fices start adhering to the new rules, I will not hold my breath for major change. PTSD has been called many things over the years, shell shock, battle fatigue and is frequently not recognized for the difficulties it causes our veterans. The latest trend from at least the US Army is to call it an "adjustment disorder" or "depression", that way, the vet does not get any benefits.... See the attached.

VA adds AL Amyloidosis to Agent Orange List

The DVA has officially added another disease to the ever growing list of maladies associated with exposure to Agent Orange. AL Amyloidosis is a fairly rare blood disorder, thankfully. The Department of Veterans Affairs is also currently evaluating several other recommendations for the National Institutes on Health for possible inclusion to the list of Agent Orange related diseases. We are awaiting their decision regarding Parkinson's Disease and Ischemic Heart Disease.

VA HEALTHCARE New Eligibility Rules



We now have the new "rules" in place, so here they are.

As a resident of Ozaukee County, you are eligible to enroll in the VA Healthcare program IF:

1. You have a service connected condition, recognized by the VA.
2. You had service "in-country" in Vietnam (boots on the ground).
3. You household annual income from ALL sources is less that \$40,000 for a single vet or less than \$48,000 for a married veteran.

The VA has the ability to electronically review your federal income tax filings. Hardship waivers are possible, and if you are recently unemployed, I would encourage you to apply for teh

COME GET YOUR FREE MONEY !!!

It has come to my attention that there are now at least two separate groups who are circulating in our area, who purport to be able to get all veterans and their surviving spouses qualified for VA pensions.

What they are doing is not illegal.

At least one of these groups does use an accredited lawyer (out of Michigan) to insure that the submit the correct paperwork and documentation.

They are however, both trying to sell you something. One of them specializes in family trusts.

These benefits that they offer, are not new, not unique, and like most VA programs, have a whole list of "qualifiers" in order to obtain them.

CVSOs do the same thing that they do, and we won't try to sell you anything...

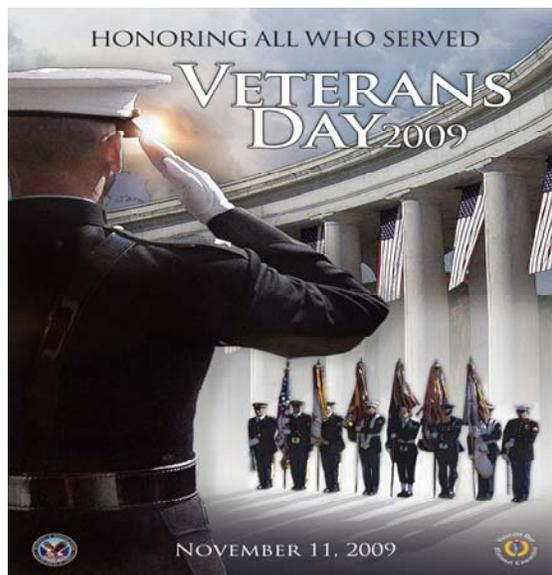


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In the coming weeks we have the Annual Flag Retirement ceremony in Fredonia, this will be held on Thursday October 1st. Contact Joe Schneider, Commander of Post 410 for further details.

We will also be coming up on Veterans Day here in the County.

I suspect that all of you have made your basic plans for the local ceremonies to recognize our fellow veterans. And, as usual, I certainly hope you are planning on using this opportunity to educate the youth of our county.

Honor Flight Establishes new “HUBS”

Thanks to the tireless efforts of Mark Grams and Steve Deutsch, two members of the Stars and Stripes Honor Flight Board of Directors, there are now 4 Honor Flight hubs in the State of Wisconsin. Madison and the Fox Valley have stepped up to the plate and are now officially recognized hubs for the Honor Flight Program.. Both of these new hubs plan on getting their first flights off the ground before the end of this year.

All 4 hubs have waiting lists, and with our WWII veterans dying every day, there is an extreme sense of urgency amongst the various boards to get as many of these heroes to D.C. as we can.

A PARTING THOUGHT

There were several references in this newsletter as to new diseases that have been added by the Department of Veterans Affairs to their ever growing list of diseases that deserve service connection. These things do not occur in a vacuum. Your Service Organizations do a tremendous amount of “nudging” in the process to get illnesses and injuries recognized. If you ever wonder where a portion of your annual dues go to, look no further than changes that come out every year from the VA.

All of the service organizations have as part of their “charters” the need to assist our disabled comrades, their widows and their families.. If it were not for these organizations, we would be far worse off as a community of veterans.

Next time you meet a vet, who does not belong to a Post, as him why not. If you need ammunition to convince them to join, just cite all the work that is done in D.C. on behalf of the veterans community at large by our service organization representatives.

SEE YOU AROUND THE COUNTY. Ken