



Fillmore County VSO Newsletter - Fall 2008

Fillmore County Service Office

Greetings from your CVSO

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The Fillmore County Veterans Service Office is located in the Fillmore County Office Building. This building is located across from the sheriff's office in Preston. We are located in the lower level of the building. Parking is available on the east side of the building on the corner of County 17 and Farmer's Street. We are immediately inside the doors on the right.

We are open from 8:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. No appointment is required to be served, however if you would like to know for sure if we are available, please do give us a call.

We now have a web page on the Fillmore County web site. You can reach it off the main Fillmore County Web page under departments or you can go there directly via this link. <http://www.co.fillmore.mn.us/Veterans/Web/default.htm>.

Note: Once a quarter we be sending out a newsletter with any updated information we have received. This newsletter will be sent to all the Fillmore County Veterans Service Posts and Auxiliaries. Please contact us at vso@co.fillmore.mn.us if you would like to receive this newsletter or be removed from the mailing list. Also, if you have any notices for special events etc. please contact us and we would be happy to include them!

VA Medical Center Important Phone Numbers

MINNEAPOLIS

Toll Free Main Number

1-866-414-5058

By dialing the main number you get the following options to speed up your call.

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------------|
| 1 Medications | 2 Cancel Appointments |
| 3 Eligibility | 4 Health Concerns |

Toll Free Pharmacy Refills

1-800-661-0827

Toll Free Urgent Care

1-866-NURSE-VA (687-7382)

Telephone Care

1-612-725-2242

Appointment Confirmation

1-866-414-5058 ext 92095

Primary Care Call Center

1-866-414-5058 ext 91100

Remember, you now need to dial "9" before any extension you use.

We also have a full list of extensions to each clinic within the VA Hospital. If you need to have a direct number, please contact us and we will be happy to give you the extension you need.

OTHER FACILITIES

**Rochester VA Primary Care Clinic
(507) 252-0885**

**Tomah VA Medical Center
(608) 372-1777**

**LaCrosse VA Primary Care Clinic
(608) 784-3886**

Fillmore County Van Transportation

Fillmore County has a van that transports any veteran to the VA Hospital in Minneapolis twice a week. Any veteran that has an appointment is more than welcome to ride this van. There is no direct fee to ride the van, however we do ask, that if you receive travel pay, you donate at least \$70 of that money to the van fund.

Our current van has been purchased with our county's gracious Post and Auxiliary donations as well as money from the county funds. It is our hope that everyone will know about this van and the service it provides.

If you have an appointment on a van day, or would like an appointment changed to ride the van, please contact our office and we will be glad to add you to our van list as well as change any appointment you may have.

Influenza Vaccination Season Almost Here

The Influenza Vaccination season is almost here. The vaccine is due to arrive at the Minneapolis VAMC yet this week or early next week. As soon as it arrives, vaccinations will be given to employees, scheduled outpatients and inpatients.

The start of the veterans' walk-in vaccination clinic in the flag atrium will be 10/27, ending on 11/21.



Energy Assistance Programs

With winter around the corner and the price of energy rising, visit these websites to find the nearest Energy Assistance Programs:

www.state.mn.us/portal/mn/jsp/content.do?id=-536881374&agency=Commerce

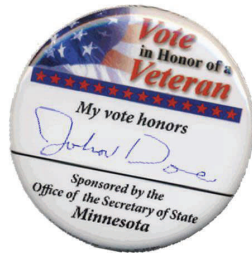
www.liheap.ncat.org/profiles/Minn.htm

EAP helps pay home heating costs. Households with the lowest incomes and highest energy costs receive the greatest benefit. Households who are at or below 50 percent of the state median income are eligible (Currently, a family of 2 would be \$27,702 a year).

Funds are available for renters or homeowners. Minnesota residents also may obtain an application and more information by calling 1-800-657-3710.

"VOTE IN HONOR OF A VETERAN" BUTTONS

Last May, we began the "Vote in Honor of a Veteran" initiative by giving away buttons that had the "Vote in Honor of a Veteran" slogan on them. Here is a copy of the button:



As you can see, the button can be personalized by writing the name of the veteran you intend to honor on the button. You can order individual buttons by going to the following Website: <http://www.four51.com/UI/Custom.aspx?autologonid=b2405fa6-7c2d-46ad-ad42-18c30654f2bd>



PERSONAL TRIBUTES TO VETERANS

The Minnesota Secretary of State's newest initiative for honoring veterans is to give Minnesotans the opportunity to write a tribute to the veteran they intend to honor with their vote this November. We will post all of the tributes on our Website. If you know of individuals who would like to honor a veteran with a personal tribute, please encourage them to use the following Web link to submit their tribute.

http://www.sos.state.mn.us/survey/user_survey.asp?nSurvey=142

To view tributes that have already been submitted, please go to the following link: <http://www.sos.state.mn.us/home/index.asp?page=960>

POST 9-11 GI BILL UPDATE

1. Who is eligible for the Post 9-11 GI Bill? Service men and women who have active duty service of at least 90 days since Sept. 10, 2001 qualify for Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits. Benefits range from 100% for 36 months cumulative service to 40% for 90 days service.
2. Are military retirees and National Guard/Reserve service members eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill? Yes, if they have post-Sept. 10, 2001 federal active duty service of at least 90 days.
3. Can currently serving members transfer Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to family members? Those who qualify for the Post-9/11 GI Bill, have six years or more of service, and agree to extend their service for four years may be eligible to transfer their benefits to a spouse and/or dependent children subject to DoD regulations. Only currently serving members who agree to reenlist/extend after August 1, 2009 will be eligible. DoD may adjust the service criteria for Post-9/11 GI Bill transferability. Critical skill criteria no longer apply to the transferability program.
4. Will veterans, including military retirees, be permitted to transfer Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits to dependents? No. Post-9/11 GI Bill transferability is a force management tool that works just like a reenlistment bonus.
5. Are Service Academy/ROTC Scholarship commissioned officers eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill? Officers from these commissioning sources can qualify for the Post-9/11 GI Bill. But, time spent satisfying their initial active duty service obligation does not count towards the service necessary to qualify for the benefits.
6. How does the Post-9/11 GI Bill compare to the current Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB)? The Post-9/11 GI Bill pays benefits based on active duty service performed after Sept. 10, 2001. Benefits are tailored to a veteran's specific school and location. MGIB benefits, on the other hand, are elective upon enlistment and require a \$1,200 payroll reduction. MGIB rates are based on the enlistment contract and the course load taken regardless of the institution's tuition/fees and location.

Minnesotans' Military Appreciation Fund

The nonprofit and nonpartisan Minnesotans' Military Appreciation Fund (MMAF) is a statewide fundraising initiative that shows our troops how much we appreciate and respect their efforts by providing cash grants to all soldiers deployed in combat zones such as Iraq and Afghanistan, and to the families of soldiers who are killed in combat.

MMAF has raised over \$8 million, making it the nation's largest-ever statewide fundraiser of its kind. MMAF has provided over \$4 million in grants to more than 7,000 recipients.

In order to provide appropriate grants to every eligible soldier, it will take the generous contributions of as many caring Minnesota citizens as possible. Thousands already have participated. Please join us in saying "thanks."

MMAF has launched a new Web site, which is easier than ever to access and navigate. When you visit www.thankmntroops.org, you'll notice that they have added a very special Thank You Wall to allow people to thank those that serve, and to honor the memory of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice. Please consider posting a message of thanks for the troops, or you can honor those that have fallen by viewing their individual page and leaving a personalized message.

Please help spread the word about the new Web site so that friends and supporters of our military can post messages of thanks and keep updated on the latest MMAF news. And by doing so, you'll also help us in the efforts to make sure every Minnesotan who has served in a combat zone since 9/11 is aware of the thank you grants made available by MMAF.

If you have any questions or need help filling out the paperwork for a grant, please contact us and we will be more than happy to help you with the application.

Places to Visit

Moving Wall to Visit Minnesota State Cemetery in Little Falls Oct. 25

The Vietnam Moving Wall is making a special stop at the Minnesota State Cemetery in Little Falls Saturday, Oct. 25 at 1 p.m. The cemetery is located at 15550 Highway 115, Little Falls, MN 56345. Sponsored by the Sons of the American Legion, Post #46 in Little Falls, the event will include a special program honoring military men and women who have served.

The Moving Wall is the half-size replica of the Washington, D.C. Vietnam Veterans Memorial and has been touring the country for more than twenty years. When John Devitt attended the 1982 dedication in Washington, D.C., he felt the positive power of "The Wall". He vowed to share that experience with those who did not have the opportunity to go to Washington, D.C.

John Devitt, Norris Shears, Gerry Haver and other Vietnam veteran volunteers built "The Moving Wall". It went on display for the first time in Tyler, Texas in October 1984. Two structures of "The Moving Wall" now travel across the country from April through November, spending about a week at each site. For more information visit: www.themovingwall.org

Fitness Tip

A little friendly competition can inspire us. Competition and sports are ways to get motivated and be more active. With that in mind, the Department of Veterans Affairs has formed HealthierUS Veterans Fitness Challenge groups for you to use.

- If you are new to the President's Challenge, click on the Find Your Group tab to select your group located on the President's Challenge registration page.

About groups

- You can join more than one group and you can even create your own group.
- To join an existing group you need the Group ID Number and your User Name.
- To create a new group, log on to the President's Challenge website and follow the instructions found on the Your Groups tab.

So, c'mon, be a physically active role model for your family and friends and have fun!

Go to this website to check out the President's Challenge*.
<http://healthierusveterans.presidentschallenge.org/>

Suicide Hotlines Becoming Available

WASHINGTON (July 25, 2008) - Veterans and other residents of metropolitan Washington, D.C., have begun seeing outreach information on buses and inside subway cars about the suicide prevention hotline of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The red-white-and-blue displays, the centerpiece of a new three-month outreach campaign, will highlight VA's suicide prevention hotline -- 1-800-273-TALK. If the campaign is successful in raising awareness, VA officials plan to extend the promotional campaign to other parts of the country.

"It takes the courage and strength of a warrior to ask for help," said Dr. James B. Peake, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. "That's the message of this outreach."



HOUSE PASSES WALZ LEGISLATION TO IMPROVE VETERANS' PAIN CARE

On July 30, 2008 the House of Representatives approved legislation authored by Congressman Walz that will improve veterans' pain care at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Veterans Pain Care Act of 2008, was included in H.R. 6445, the Veterans Health Care Policy Enhancement Act of 2008.

The bill requires the Secretary of the VA to develop and implement a comprehensive policy on pain management for veterans enrolled in the VA health care system, and to carry out a program of research, training and education on acute and chronic pain – training and education both for providers, and for veterans and their families.

Walz continued, "The VA recognizes that chronic and acute pain among our veterans is a serious problem, and I applaud VA's existing pain care programs. This legislation builds on those to give VA the necessary tools to provide comprehensive pain care on a uniform basis throughout the VA's health care system."

This bill has wide support from dozens of organizations, including the Pain Care Coalition and the American Cancer Society, as well as patients and numerous Veterans Service Organizations.

The Senate passed the 2009 National Defense Authorization Act which contains the Military Pain Care Act of 2008 provisions. Both pieces of legislation are expected to be signed by the president.

Minnesota Telephone Equipment Distribution Program

The Minnesota Telephone Equipment Distribution Program is a state-wide program that provides special amplified phones (corded and cordless), telephone ring signalers, captioned telephones, speaker phones, TTY's, voice amplified phones, deaf blind equipment and other special telephone equipment to MN residents of all ages at NO CHARGE.

If you are interested you can visit the TED website at www.tedprogram.org or call (800) 657-3663, (888) 206-6555 TTY to learn how people can qualify for a no cost telephone. Or, you may contact Sharie Hawkins directly at sharie.hawkins@state.mn.us or ted.program@state.mn.us and she would be happy to send you some brochures with applications.

The applications are updated each year with the new income guidelines. For this year, the household (gross) income guidelines for October 1, 2007 – September 30, 2008 are:

1 person	\$40,245,	or less
2 person	\$52,629,	"
3 person	\$65,012,	"
4 person	\$77,395,	"

This program is administered by the Dept. of Commerce - Telecommunications Access Minnesota (TAM) and funded by a telephone surcharge.

As always, if you would like to come in to our office for help with this program just give us a call or stop in and we will be more than happy to help you.

The Military Order of the Purple Heart in MN has officially extended the Free Lifetime Membership promotion until June 30th 2009.

Please contact our office and we will be happy to fill out the form and get this sent in for you. You will need to have a copy of your Honorable Discharge along with proof that you have received the Purple Heart. This offer is for ANY veteran that has received a Purple Heart.



Caffeinate for a Cause

Honor Grounds Coffee Benefits Minnesota Veterans

Honor Grounds coffee, which features the personal stories of Minnesota war veterans on the packaging, can now be bought at all 66 Cub Foods locations around the state. The stories aim to raise visibility and funds for Minnesota veterans and those now serving in the National Guard and Army Reserve. Through a partnership with a Minnesota-based nonprofit, Tee It Up For The Troops, Inc., 50 cents of the purchase price of each bag of Honor Grounds go to support Minnesota veterans and their families.

The program was created by Dan Boudreau and John Salterio, partners in Consolidated Services Group.

“Hometown Hero stories honor both the service and the sacrifices these men and women have made,” noted Dan Boudreau, who is also a veteran. “We wanted to show our appreciation to veterans, and those currently serving our nation, by recognizing their sacrifices and generating financial support.”

“It’s a simple way for our customers to help Minnesota veterans and their families as they transition into and out of deployment,” added Brian Huff, president of Stillwater, Minn.-based Cub Foods. According to Kathleen Vitalis, Executive Director of the Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans, “There are more than 410,000 veterans in the state of Minnesota. Approximately 1 percent will experience homelessness every year. The others may struggle with unemployment, rising health care, housing, and utility costs or foreclosure. Dollars generated by the sale of Honor Grounds coffee mean increased outreach to help us serve more veterans and their families.”

Sustained by state agencies supporting veterans in Minnesota, Vermont, Iowa, Indiana, and Maine, Honor Grounds coffee is available in such varieties as Five Star Joe, Reveille Dark Roast, and D-Day Decaf.

Veterans Career Fair October 9, 2008

Veteran friendly career fair 11 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. at the Earle-Brown Heritage Center, 6155 Earle Brown Drive, Brooklyn Center, MN. Veterans and employers are welcome. For more information, contact Gary at 763.785.6465 or gary.quernemoen@state.mn.us.

Also see www.mdva.state.mn.us/Events/.



Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day June, 2009

Save the date for the Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans event June 13, 2009, on the State Capitol grounds. Events will include the Vietnam Memorial traveling wall, a parade of colors, KIA roll-call, fly-overs, meeting opportunities with units and platoons and more. Stay tuned for more information!