



Fillmore County VSO Newsletter - Spring 2008

Fillmore County Service Office

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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!

Greetings from your Assistant CVSO

Spring has finally arrived!! It has been a long winter and I hope everyone is as excited to see the green grass as much as I am. Before long farmers will be busy in the preparing the fields for planting while others will be planting their gardens.

I have been very busy learning all aspects of my new job and am starting to feel a little more comfortable assisting our veterans. Currently, I am in the process of developing an outreach program to help spread the word about benefits available to all veterans. One way of achieving this is to attend service organization meetings. I attended a Legion birthday dinner given by Fountain Legion and Auxiliary and also was present for a meeting with Chatfield American Legion. It would help me tremendously if I could get information on meeting nights and time of the meeting, name and phone number of the person in charge of Fillmore County VFW's and Auxiliary, American Legion and Auxiliary, and the Sons of American Legion. My email address is rdarling@co.fillmore.mn.us and my phone number is 765-4937. I look forward to hearing from all organizations.

The Fillmore County Veterans Service Office is here to assist our veterans and their families so let us know if there is anything we can do for you. Remember, as the spring approaches so does the treat for violent weather. Make sure you have a plan in place for you and your family.

Take Care, Rick

**Thank you to the Chatfield VFW
Auxiliary for your generous donation
towards a new Fillmore County
Veterans van!!**

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 \$40 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.

April, May, June 2008 Van Schedule

<u>April</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>June</u>
2 - Wednesday	2 - Friday	2 - Monday
4 - Friday	5 - Monday	4 - Wednesday
7 - Monday	7 - Wednesday	10 - Tuesday
9 - Wednesday	13 - Tuesday	11 - Wednesday
15 - Tuesday	14 - Wednesday	18 - Wednesday
16 - Wednesday	21 - Wednesday	19 - Thursday
23 - Wednesday	22 - Thursday	25 - Wednesday
24 - Thursday	28 - Wednesday	27 - Friday
30 - Wednesday	30 - Friday	30 - Monday

TRAVEL PAY INCREASES!

As of February 1, 2008 the Veterans Administration has authorized an increase in Travel Pay. Previously the rate was 11 cents per mile from your home to the VA Medical Center. Congress has now approved to raise that amount to 28.5 Cents per mile.

What this means is that instead of receiving about \$21.00 when you collect your travel pay, you will now be receiving about \$50 depending on where you live.

Due to this increase we will also be raising our minimum donation for those of you that receive Travel Pay when you go to the VA Hospital. The new amount will be \$40.00 per trip if you receive travel pay. You will now also have about \$10 to keep for your mileage to the van pick up location instead of the previous \$6.

With this increase we are planning on making a proposal to the County Commissioners to allow us to make emergency trips to the VA Hospital on days that we don't normally have a van going up. This of course would depend on availability of a driver. With this change we are hoping that you will be able to keep some of your non van day appointments that are hard to reschedule in a timely manner. The only way that this will be possible is if everyone who rides the van and is eligible to receive travel pay from the VA gets their money and makes sure to give it to the County Veterans Van Program (van driver) on that day.

If you have any questions regarding the rules to receive travel pay please let us know and we can find out if you are eligible for it. Also, if you are at all confused about the new donation amounts please give us a call.

Economic Stimulus Payments for veterans and their families

Congress passed, and the President signed into law, a provision to pay “rebates” to Americans who file tax returns. In so doing, they also extended the payments to include veterans and Social Security recipients who ordinarily do not have to file a tax return. The minimum payment for those who qualify is \$300 for individuals and \$600 for married couples filing a joint income tax return.

The payments will be calculated by the IRS based on tax returns filed now through the end of 2008 reporting income received and taxes due for the 2007 tax year. But since some veterans and their survivors don't make enough income to have to file a tax form there is great concern that they might miss the opportunity to receive money coming to them.

This year, veterans who do not otherwise have to file anything with the IRS will want to send in a tax form in order to receive a stimulus payment, according to the Internal Revenue Service. This applies to veterans and their survivors who receive certain pension and disability payments which are not taxable.

Veterans who have income other than veteran's benefits and are required to file a tax return and pay taxes for 2007 have nothing more to do. They will automatically receive their economic stimulus payments after they file their tax forms, beginning this summer. This would include people who receive non-taxable pension or disability payments from the VA, but who also work and earn enough to have to file and pay taxes.

The Economic Stimulus payment does not count as income for Disability Pension or Healthcare Benefits!!

Income from the Economic Stimulus Act of 2008, Pub. L. 110-185, does not count as income for any of VA's need-based benefits (i.e., healthcare, pension). The applicable provision is Section 101(d) of Title I of the public law. It reads: "(d) Refunds Disregarded in the Administration of Federal Programs and Federally Assisted Programs- Any credit or refund allowed or made to any individual by reason of section 6428 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (as amended by this section) or by reason of subsection (c) of this section shall not be taken into account as income and shall not be taken into account as resources for the month of receipt and the following 2 months, for purposes of determining the eligibility of such individual or any other individual for benefits or assistance, or the amount or extent of benefits or assistance, under any Federal program or under any State or local program financed in whole or in part with Federal funds.

Disabled American Veteran Plates now available

The Disabled American Veteran plates are now available for passenger class vehicles, RVs, and one-ton pickups.



Disabled American Veteran plates will be mailed from the Minnesota Department of Public Safety Central Office.

The initial plate costs will be:

1. **\$10.00 plate fee**
2. **\$8.50 filing fee**
3. **Registration fee (if applicable)**

The customer must supply proof of membership in the Disabled American Veterans organization.

NOTE: *The plates are available with the disability logo for those that qualify however the plates themselves do not convey any special parking privileges.*

Minnesota Disabled American Veterans HQ: www.davmn.org

Minnesota Department. of Public Safety - Driver and Vehicle Service:

www.dps.state.mn.us/dvs/

Information for veterans, their families and others about VA health care programs related to Agent Orange.

Agent Orange Overview: Approximately 20 million gallons of herbicides were used in Vietnam between 1962 and 1971 to remove unwanted plant life and leaves which otherwise provided cover for enemy forces during the Vietnam Conflict. Shortly following their military service in Vietnam, some veterans reported a variety of health problems and concerns which some of them attributed to exposure to Agent Orange or other herbicides. The Department of Veterans Affairs has developed a comprehensive program to respond to these medical problems and concerns. The principal elements of this program include quality health care services, disability compensation for veterans with service-connected illnesses, scientific research and outreach and education.

Patriot Express Pilot Loan Initiative Overview

The U.S. Small Business Administration has announced the SBA's Patriot Express Pilot Loan Initiative for veterans and members of the military community wanting to establish or expand small businesses. Eligible military community members include:

- ~ Veterans
- ~ Service-disabled veterans
- ~ Active-duty service members eligible for the military's Transition Assistance Program
- ~ Reservists and National Guard members
- ~ Current spouses of any of the above
- ~ The widowed spouse of a service member or veteran who died during Service or of a service connected disability
- ~ The SBA and its resource partners are focusing additional efforts on counseling and training to augment this loan initiative.

Start with a Self Assessment You've got an idea for a business. Now it's time to evaluate if your dream of starting a business can be a reality. The Checklist for Starting a Business is a comprehensive tool designed to prepare you for self employment by analyzing your responses in key areas and providing a menu of supporting resources.

Places to Visit

~Soldiers Field Veterans' Memorial~

The Soldiers Field Veteran's Memorial was created to honor Veterans from Southeast Minnesota who died serving our country and dedicated to all who served our country to help keep us free. We remind future generations that we must not only protect ourselves from outside forces who would deny us our freedom, but we must understand that like the downfall of the Roman Empire, our freedom can also be lost from within if we allow our moral and ethical standards to decay. We can not tolerate bigotry or corruption in any form. Those who say they have no influence on our society have forgotten that we each control our own conduct, which then becomes part of our country's weakness or strength.

----- Ken Zubay

Soldiers Field Veterans Memorial is dedicated to all veterans for their service in the Armed Forces of the United States of America.

The Memorial Wall displays the names of service men and women who perished as the result of injuries sustained in the service. Names of the deceased shall be from Southeast Minnesota within a 50-mile radius of Rochester.

Walk Pavers and Tree Pavers have been donated to honor specific veterans who have served their Country.

The formal dedication of Soldiers Field Veterans Memorial took place on June 25, 2000.

Fitness Tip

Make smart choices from every food group.

- ▶ Find your balance between food and physical activity.
- ▶ Get the most nutrition out of your calories.
- ▶ Stay within your daily calorie needs.

Omnibus Tax Bill

On, Friday, March 7, 2008 the governor signed into law the Omnibus Technical Corrections Tax bill. This bill had two provisions of interest to veterans.

First, the bill provides full or partial valuation property tax exclusion for homesteads of disabled veterans with a disability rating of 70 percent or greater, as determined by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

This new benefit consists of two tiers:

- \$150,000 market value exclusion, for a veteran with a service connected disability rated at 70 percent to 100 percent; or
- \$300,000 market value exclusion, for a veteran with a service connected disability rated as being total and permanent.

Upon the death of a veteran qualifying for the exclusion because of a total and permanent disability, the market value exclusion carries over to the person's spouse, if the spouse co-owns or inherits the home and permanently resides in the home. For an agricultural homestead, the market value exclusion applies to only the house, garage and surrounding one acre of land.

The bill also provides that property qualifying for valuation exclusion under this bill is not eligible for the market value credit. The property owner must apply to the assessor each year, unless the person's disability is rated as total and permanent. This is effective for assessment year 2008, taxes payable in 2009, and thereafter.