



# Fillmore County VSO Newsletter - Winter 2008

## Fillmore County Service Office

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General Questions: [vso@co.fillmore.mn.us](mailto:vso@co.fillmore.mn.us)

**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](mailto: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 CVSO

The past 6 months has gone by very fast and has brought a lot of changes to the office. I continue to put a lot of my time into flood recovery issues as the Fillmore County Emergency Management Director. I am please to announce though that the Board of Commissioners has approved a part-time assistant Veterans Service Officer. On Monday January 14<sup>th</sup>, Richard Darling of Lanesboro started in that position. Over the next few months Heather and I will be training him on all things "VA". He will also be focusing on increasing our outreach to veterans. I will still be helping veterans as will Heather. You can find out more about Rick below. Rick, Heather and I encourage you to call or stop in with any questions or concerns. Take Care! Debbie

## NEW Assistant CVSO Rick Darling

My name is Rick Darling and as of January 14th, I am the Assistant Veterans Service Officer for Fillmore County. My family and I live in Lanesboro where we own and operate a restaurant. I also am a Guardian Ad Litem for the Third Judicial District and am a substitute teacher for several surrounding school districts. My wife, Victoria, works for Olmsted Medical Center in Chatfield. Our children range in ages from 23 down to 8. The oldest is in her first year of chiropractic school in Davenport, IA, and the youngest is a second grader in Lanesboro. The other six are in high school in Lanesboro. Needless to say we keep busy with everything going in their lives. We enjoy attending our kids sporting events, spending time with our friends, and cruising around in our Jeep. I like to tell everyone that I grew up in the Twin Cities (Burr Oak and Bluffton, Iowa!!) and moved to Minnesota after serving in the Navy.

I am in the process of learning all aspects of what it takes to be an Assistant CVSO. I look forward to working with Fillmore County Veterans and their families. Take Care! Rick

## 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.

### January, February, March 2008 Van Schedule

<u>January</u>	<u>February</u>	<u>March</u>
2 - Wednesday	6 - Wednesday	5 - Wednesday
3 - Thursday	8 - Friday	7 - Friday
9 - Wednesday	11 - Monday	10 - Monday
11 - Friday	13 - Wednesday	12 - Wednesday
14 - Monday	19 - Tuesday	18 - Tuesday
16 - Wednesday	20 - Wednesday	19 - Wednesday
22 - Tuesday	27 - Wednesday	26 - Wednesday
23 - Wednesday	28 - Thursday	27 - Thursday
30 - Wednesday		
31 - Thursday		

## **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.

## **QUILTS OF VALOR**

Quilts of Valor (QOV) is a national non-profit foundation ([www.qovf.org](http://www.qovf.org)) with a mission to provide quilts to ALL wounded and injured service members from the War on Terror. The hand or machine quilted lap size quilts are presented to veterans as a thank you for the sacrifices they have made in the defense of the freedoms and liberties we all enjoy. The foundation was established in 2004, and to date we have presented over 11,000 quilts. Most of these quilts were presented by chaplains at military hospitals, but if there weren't enough quilts at the hospital when they were needed, many veterans were sent home or returned to combat duty without one.

Since County Veterans Service Officers are usually a veteran's first contact when they return home they were hoping we could help to identify veterans who many not have received a QOV. If you know any veterans that may fall into the following guidelines, please refer them to us or to the QOV contact person listed below.

Quilt of Valor guidelines:

Ask every physically or psychologically wounded veteran of the Iraq or Afghanistan wars if he or she has already received a Quilt of Valor.

If not, please ask them if they would like to receive a QOV.

If the answer is, "Yes," contact your QOV contact person to request a quilt. If you no longer have the letter you were given at the conference and/or you don't remember who your contact person is, please reply to this email and I will send you the information. When you contact us, you may also provide additional information about the veteran so that we may choose an appropriate quilt. Is the veteran female? Does he or she have a special interest or hobby, i.e. hunting, fishing, racing, etc? We may be able to match a quilt to that interest. The quilt will be delivered or mailed to you and you can pass it on to the veteran with our thanks. Each of these quilts is enclosed in a pillowcase and will include a label on the back where the delivery date and veteran's name can be entered.

IOF and OEF veterans do not have to be medically approved by Veterans Services to receive a quilt.

These lap size quilts were made for veterans as a thank you for the sacrifices they have made in the defense of the freedoms and liberties we all enjoy. With your help perhaps a QOV can make a positive difference to the veterans as well as their families.

QOV Contact Person:      Page Johnson  
   651-423-5727  
   [pagej@frontiernet.net](mailto:pagej@frontiernet.net)

## HONOR FLIGHT

Honor Flight is a non profit organization created solely to honor America's veterans for all their sacrifices. We fly our heroes to Washington, DC to visit and reflect at **their** memorials. Top priority is given to the senior veterans – WW II survivors along with those other veterans that may be terminally ill. Honor Flight first flew in May 2005 with six small planes flying 12 WW II veterans, departing out of Springfield, Ohio. In 2006, with a waiting list of veterans expanding rapidly, we transitioned to commercial airline carriers to accommodate the maximum number of veterans as possible. Partnering with HonorAir in Hendersonville, North Carolina and Hero Flight in Provo, Utah, we formed the "Honor Flight Network." Together, we are aggressively expanding our programs to other cities across the nation in 2007. Based on recent statistics, we are losing WW II veterans at the rate of 1200 **per day**. Honor Flight will continue do whatever it takes to fulfill the dreams of our veterans and, very importantly, our senior heroes travel **absolutely free**.

Subsequent to the WW II veterans, our efforts will then focus on our Korean and then Vietnam veterans, honoring them similarly. HONOR FLIGHT – our way of paying a small tribute to those that gave so much; to take a memorable, safe, and rewarding FLIGHT with HONOR!!!

For more information contact us at the Veterans Service Office.

## **Military Credit: Eligibility**

You are eligible to receive a credit for military time served in a combat zone if:

You served in a combat zone or qualified hazardous duty area anytime on or after Sept. 11, 2001; and

The pay you received qualifies to be excluded as combat pay from federal gross income under Internal Revenue Code Section 112; and

Your home of record during your months of service was Minnesota.

The credit is equal to \$59 for each month of service. Partial months are counted as full months. For example, if you served one day in November, it would count as one month.

"We can't all be heroes. Some of us have to stand on the curb and clap as they go by." ---  
- Will Rogers

## **VA Publicizes Digital TV Switch**

Beginning Feb. 17, 2009, all television broadcast stations will end analog transmissions and broadcast only in digital format. Those who have old analog sets and do not subscribe to cable or satellite will have to purchase a digital-to-analog converter box to receive programming. VA is publicizing this change date to make sure older and lower income veterans know some help is available. That help comes in the form of a coupon issued by NTIA worth a \$40 credit toward purchase of a digital-to-analog converter box (two coupons per household). For more information and to apply for coupons, please see the attached brochure.

## Foundation Offers Financial Help

The American Soldier Foundation provides grants or interest-free loans for medical expenses, education, funeral expenses, marriage counseling, financial planning and a wide variety of other services. Through its website, the organization also offers resources for education, family life, employment, and personal finance. Military families can get advice on whether to buy or rent a home, check current mortgage rates or even determine how much a skill set is worth in different job markets. For more information, visit the American Soldier Foundation website at [www.soldierfoundation.org](http://www.soldierfoundation.org).

## Fitness Tip

For those of you who like to lift weights only, it is recommended to lift weights, stretch, and do cardiovascular activities like bike, swim, jog etc. to complete the workout. Mixing all of these components into your routine will build strong muscles and bones, create joint flexibility, and develop your heart and lungs into more efficient oxygen moving organs.

## Free SAT-ACT Software for Military Families

For the second year, a group of NFL, NFL Europe, AFL and CFL football players have sponsored several million dollars worth of \$199 SAT and ACT test prep programs to every family in the U.S. Military (all branches-active or retired). Specifically, the sponsorship allows any military person (active or retired) to request as many programs as they need for the students in their lives. The Department of Defense has created a secure website to quickly confirm a person's military status. Personnel can access the confirmation and request pages through several military related associations and organizations, including: Military Home Front, [militaryhomefront.dod.mil](http://militaryhomefront.dod.mil) for families, offers access to the forms to confirm military status and process the order. Programs ship to domestic U.S. addresses and APO addresses. The sponsorship covers the regular purchase price of \$199 and the family pays only the S&H. To learn more about the program and the NFL/CFL players who are providing this offer visit: [eknowledge.com](http://eknowledge.com).

## **Military Salute Project Launches Minnesota Veterans Literary Initiative**

Global War On Terror Veterans Invited to Submit Essays and Poems

September 25, 2007 - Woodbury, MN ... The Military Salute Project of Woodbury, MN is sponsoring the 2008 Minnesota Veterans Literary Initiative to encourage Minnesotans who served in the Global War On Terror to record and preserve their stories. Submissions will be accepted via e-mail from residents of Minnesota who have been awarded the National Defense Service Medal, the GWOT Expeditionary or Service Medals, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, or the Iraq Campaign Medal for service on or after September 11, 2001. Submissions will also be accepted from immediate family members (spouse, parents, siblings and children 18 years of age or older), including the immediate family members of Minnesotans who were posthumously awarded one or more of the decorations.

The Military Salute Project will present three awards each in Poetry and Essay categories. Submissions received by April 1, 2008 are eligible for the Freedom Award (\$500 and a certificate), the Liberty Award (\$250 and a certificate), and the Independence Award (\$100 and a certificate). Submissions received after March 31, 2008 will be displayed in the Military Salute Project Reference Forum but will not be eligible for awards. Recipients will be announced on April 14. Presentations will be made on May 17 during the Salute to Armed Forces Day event sponsored by Tribute To The Troops of Center City, MN.

Jeff Seeber, founder and director of the Military Salute Project said, "We who served throughout the Cold War, and especially during the Vietnam War, owe a debt of gratitude to those who have defended us since America was attacked in 2001. Their sacrifice enabled many of us to receive the Welcome Home we thought was never coming. Because of them, we are finally able to share our stories. However, the passage of time has clouded our memories and much of our history has been forgotten or mistaken. By launching this initiative, we hope to prevent that from happening to their history. We learned that writing about what we experienced may be painful, but it is also therapeutic. We hope that encouraging them to submit their stories will help them cope with their changed lives as well as provide a way for them to tell their families at least some of what they have seen and done."

Complete information about the 2008 Minnesota Veterans Literary Initiative is available at:  
<http://home.att.net/~militarysalute2/index.html>

Related information:

Military Salute Project Reference Forum ... <http://militarysalute.proboards45.com>

Tribute To The Troops ... <http://www.tributetothetroops.org>

## GREYHOUND DISCOUNTS

**Military Discount:** Active duty and retired military personnel and their dependent family members may receive a 10% discount off the Greyhound walk-up (unrestricted) fare. Another option for military personnel is to travel on Greyhound for a maximum fare of \$198 round trip anywhere in the continental United States. The following restrictions apply:

1. Fares are valid on Greyhound schedules and those of participating interline carriers. Not available on Greyhound Canada routes.
2. This fare applies only to active and retired members of the United States Armed Forces, which includes the U.S. Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marines, and Navy; members of the National Guard, reservists and bonafide identifiable spouses and dependents of the above. A valid military picture identification card must be presented upon request.
3. A 40% discount for children of military personnel referenced above is available. Discount not available with \$198 maximum military fare. No other discounts apply.
4. Only totally unused tickets may be refunded to the location of the original purchase. A 15% penalty fee applies upon refund. No refund will be allowed if any portion of the ticket has been used.
5. Departure date and time may be changed for a charge of \$10 per ticket provided that the advance purchase requirement is not violated.
6. Advance purchase tickets purchased over the phone require a minimum of ten days for delivery by mail and for online orders.
7. Casino, commuter, Discovery Pass, student or other special military fares do not qualify for the military discount.
8. Fares are subject to change until purchase and may be higher during peak holiday travel periods.
9. Ten-percent discount may not be used in conjunction with the \$198 maximum fare.

## Something cool that Xerox is doing

If you go to this web site, [www.LetsSayThanks.com](http://www.LetsSayThanks.com) you can pick out a thank you card and Xerox will print it and it will be sent to a soldier that is currently serving in Iraq . You can't pick out who gets it, but it will go to some member of the armed services.

How AMAZING it would be if we could get everyone we know to send one!!! This is a great site. Please send a card. It is FREE and it only takes a second.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if the soldiers received a bunch of these? Whether you are for or against the war, our guys and gals over there need to know we are behind them...

## NEW GUIDELINES FOR REQUESTING MILITARY DOCUMENTS FROM NATIONAL RECORDS CENTER

Just received a call from a NPRC employee explaining the new policy they have effective November 1, 2007.

When a veteran or Next Of Kin (NOK) requests a copy of their DD214, ALWAYS state on the reason for request that it is for "Benefits." Does not need to state VA benefits, just benefits. If it is for "Personal Use" they will charge for it.

The same with 201 personnel records - state it is for "Benefits". If for personal use, the veteran/NOK will be charged \$15 for 5 or less pages, and \$50 for 6-plus pages.

Medals request: Only veterans are eligible for a replacement set of their medals. NOK requests will not be filled - they will have to order through a military medals dealer. Any requests not worked by NPRC as of today, even though they were submitted prior to today will not be issued to NOK.

## PURPLE HEART NATIONAL PROMOTION

The Military Order of the Purple Heart National Service Organization is currently offering a \$50 Life Membership promotion to all eligible Purple Heart recipients with an honorable discharge. If you know any veteran with a Purple Heart and an Honorable Discharge that would like to take advantage of this offer, please have them contact my office for an application. (National MOPH Promotion)

ALSO,

If the eligible veteran meets the above criteria, the MN Department of the Military Order of the Purple Heart is prepared to cover the remaining balance of the already reduced cost of \$50.00 from the National Organization's promotion. This means an eligible applicant will receive a FREE LIFE MEMBERSHIP. Once again, If you know any veteran with a Purple Heart and an Honorable Discharge that would like to take advantage of this offer, please have them contact my office for an application. (MN MOPH Department Promotion)

Both of the above offers expire 06/30/2008.

Please contact our office or the name below to take part in this promotion.

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