

# VETERANS CHRONICLE

NOVEMBER 20, 2020

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VETERANS CHRONICLE

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VETERANS CHRONICLE

A SUPPLEMENT TO THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW  
NOV. 20, 2020

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the third Friday of every month to increase awareness about veteran issues and to help veterans find hope and help.

To share a veteran story or information about resources for veterans, please contact [info@veteranshelpnet.com](mailto:info@veteranshelpnet.com) or visit [www.VeteransHelpNet.com](http://www.VeteransHelpNet.com).

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## VETERANS CHRONICLE



## WHAT VETERANS SAY

By Don Walker  
VETERANS HELP NET

What veterans say about accessing their benefits:

*"I tried once, but I gave up."*  
*"The VA took so long, I quit trying"*  
*"I don't want to take something from other vets."*  
*"They kept asking for more stuff."*  
*"I couldn't find my records, so I quit."*  
*"Is it really worth it?"*

What veterans say when they access their benefits:

*"I wish I would have kept trying."*  
*"I wish I would have known this 20 years ago."*  
*"How come nobody told me about this?"*  
*"I didn't know it would help my family also."*

Accessing VA benefits can be complicated. It requires a lot of paperwork and effort. But to anyone frustrated by the process ...

It is worth it! You do deserve it! You can get through it!

Veterans have earned their benefits in exchange for their service. Each of them is entitled to the appropriate support and compensation from the VA; another veteran doesn't lose anything when your claim is approved.

If you are feeling overwhelmed and don't know where to begin, contact a Veteran Service Center.

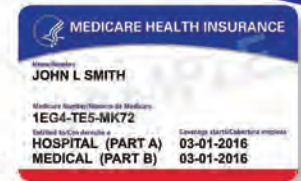
In Eastern Washington, call Spokane County Veterans Services at (509) 477-3690.

In North Idaho, call North Idaho Veterans Services and Benefits Office at (208) 446-1090.

Look for "How Can I Get Help?" on page 5 for additional resources.

## Do you have Medicare?

- ❖ **Part A** - Hospital stays
- ❖ **Part B** - Doctor visits
- ❖ **Part D** - Prescription Drugs



### These are some of the extra benefits you are entitled to:

- ✓ Dental Coverage
- ✓ Free Fitness Membership
- ✓ Health Care Products Credit
- ✓ Vision and Eyeglass Benefits
- ✓ Worldwide Emergency Coverage

Medicare Advantage plan



**Hurry! Open Enrollment ends December 7th!**

### Are you a Veteran who uses the VA for Prescription Drugs?



- ➔ You are eligible to enroll in a Medicare Advantage Plan
- ➔ \$0 Monthly Premium
- ➔ \$0 copay for Civilian Primary Care Visits
- ➔ \$60 Part B Premium Rebate



**Call for more information and Contactless Enrollment!**

**Lynn Bryan**  
**MSgt USAF, Retired**  
**509-855-9407**  
**lynn@mcmadeeasy.com**  
**McMadeEasy.com**





## VETERANS CHRONICLE

## HEY VETERANS, DID YOU KNOW ...?

**... The VA presumes an ALS diagnosis was a result of your military service?**

Veterans with an ALS diagnosis who served 90 or more days in any branch of the military and were honorably discharged are eligible for numerous VA benefits including:

- VA ALS clinics visits with ALS specialists at your nearest VA medical center
- Durable medical equipment for devices to serve respiratory, mobility, communication, daily living, and other needs
- Disability compensation as a monthly tax-free payment
- Specially adapted housing grant (SAH) to help build, buy, or remodel a home that meets your disability requirements
- Automobile grant with a one-time payment of up to \$20,000 to buy a disability-accessible vehicle
- Aid and attendance allowance to help pay for care at home

Does this sound like you or someone you know? See the "How Can I Get Help?" on page 5 to connect with Veteran Service Officers and other veteran support organizations.

**... A workers' compensation claim could affect a VA disability claim?**

If you sustain an injury while working at your post-service job and subsequently file for a workers' compensation claim against an employer, you could be precluded from filing for the same injury with the VA, especially if there is no medical evidence that the condition/injury is service connected. And, if you have a service-connected disability that has not been appropriately reported to your employer, you could be precluded from filing a workers' compensation claim for that disability as well.

If you have filed for and have been awarded workers' compensation through your employer, this is akin to the employer

admitting that the injury was caused during your employment at the employer's establishment, not the military.

Since your employer has admitted that the injury was caused by your job, you may be precluded from filing for the same injury with the VA at a later date. Knowingly filing for a condition caused by your employer, and not the military, could be fraudulent.

There are always exceptions. Both workers' compensation and VA disabilities groups have different methods for assessing the levels of disability. These two groups are not mutually exclusive. Veterans often return to civilian life and are deserving of the same protections other civilian workers receive. The only caveat is that if a veteran is injured on the job, the workers' compensation benefits he or she receives

may be offset by any VA benefits, and vice versa. It can get complicated!

If a Veteran Service Officer (VSO) suspects that a claim is fraudulent, they are prohibited from providing assistance.

Bottom line: Don't file for conditions that involve both workers' compensation and service-connected disability without knowing if you can do so. In complicated cases involving both, a veteran may need to seek appropriate legal counsel for assistance.

*Information provided by Tom Freeman and Terri Dickerson of Kootenai County Veterans Services Office, (208) 446-1098.*

**... The VA has already awarded more than \$664 million in "Blue Water Navy" claims?**

Nearly half of the more than

69,000 claims for "Blue Water Navy" Agent Orange benefits have been processed, and about 71% of those have thus far been approved for more than \$664 million in retroactive benefits, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced in October.

The Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act signed into law by President Donald Trump in June 2019 extended Agent Orange benefits already in effect for veterans who served on land or the inland waterways of Vietnam to veterans who served on ships that came within 12 nautical miles of the Vietnam coast.

Those whose claims have not been granted can resubmit them with added documentation or can ask for a review of the initial claim, said Chris Slawinski, executive director of the Fleet Reserve Association. He said

the main reasons for a claim not being granted would be a lack of documentation on the sailor's service record or lack of medical records.

To aid in claims, the VA also collaborated with the National Archives and Records Administration to digitize all Navy and Coast Guard deck logs for ships with known Vietnam service to make the information available at the National Archives Catalog.

More information on Agent Orange Exposure and benefits can be found by calling 800-827-100, and also can be found at <https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/hazardous-materials-exposure/agent-orange/>.

Do you know a Vietnam Navy veteran that might qualify? See "How Can I Get Help?" on page 5 in this publication.





VETERANS CHRONICLE



Common disabilities faced by Iraq and Afghanistan War veterans

According to the Costs of War Project at Brown University, 2.7 million American service members have been to the war zones of Iraq and Afghanistan since 2001. At least 970,000 Iraq and Afghanistan War veterans have some degree of officially recognized disability as a result, with many more living with physical and emotional scars.

There are many conditions and disabilities experienced by these veterans. A few of the most common are discussed below. We hope that understanding and awareness of these disabilities will lead to more veterans and their loved ones to seek help with a better understanding of what these veterans may be facing in their post-service life.

Exposures

The VA reports that veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars could have developed long-term health problems due to exposure during deployment, including but not limited to the following:

- Depleted Uranium: Damaged kidney function
- Noise: Permanent hearing loss or tinnitus
- Infectious Diseases: Including malaria and West Nile virus, among others
- Burn Pits: Respiratory, cardiovascular, and gastrointestinal issues

- Occupational Hazards: Skin, nose and eye irritation; respiratory diseases
- Traumatic brain injuries: Anxiety, depression, headaches, memory loss, impaired function, dementia, and other symptoms.

Disabilities

Veterans can apply for disability service if experiencing conditions including but not limited to:

- Mental health issues: PTSD, depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, psychosis
- Gulf War syndrome: Chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, functional gastrointestinal disorders
- Orthopedic injuries: Injuries to neck, spine, back, hips and knees
- Amputations
- Ischemic heart disease

Does this sound like someone you know? You can seek answers and help for these issues and others at any of the resources listed at right (“How Can I Get Help?”). You will find resources to visit, call or contact online. Information is always available on VA.gov and by contacting a Veteran Service Officer.

Information in the article courtesy of Disabled Vets Helpline (www.disabledvets.com).

HOW CAN I GET HELP?

Every county and state has a Veteran Affairs office to answer questions about benefits and provide assistance. There are also other useful resources for veterans in the Inland Northwest.



GO ONLINE

VA.gov

The Department of Veterans Affairs website has resources on every topic relevant to veterans.

VA.gov/welcome-kit

The VA Welcome Guide covers all types of benefits and services available for veterans, new recruits, active service members and their families.

DAV9.com

Based in Post Falls, Disabled American Veterans Chapter 9 Fort Sherman shares links and information to both local and national help organizations for veterans.

Explore.VA.gov/benefits-navigator

Explore VA benefits and discover which ones you and your family may be eligible to receive.



IN PERSON

Spokane County Regional Veteran Service

1117 N. Evergreen Rd.,  
Spokane Valley, WA  
(509) 477-3690

Apply for emergency services, or have any benefits or service questions answered by 3 Veteran Service Officers (VSO) and staff.

North Idaho Veteran Services and Benefits Office

120 E. Railroad Ave., Post Falls, ID (208) 446-1092

Meet with a VSO or staff for help with VA benefits enrollment, claims or other veteran needs.

Goodwill Support Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)

130 E. Third Ave., Spokane, WA (509) 828-2449

SSVF helps homeless veterans and their families find housing and connects veterans with other support organizations.



BY PHONE

Spokane County Regional Veteran Service

(509) 477-3690

North Idaho Veteran Services and Benefits Office

(208) 446-1090

Veteran Crisis Line

1 (800) 273-8255, press 1

North Idaho Crisis Center

(208) 625-4884

Washington or Idaho 2-1-1

Dial “2-1-1” for health and human resources referrals.

“Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart.”

- Elizabeth Andrew





## VETERANS CHRONICLE

## HONOR TO A VETERAN: HERB STILES

By Ruth Aresvik

I come from an overflowing boatful of Navy relatives: my granduncle, "Pop," three uncles, one aunt, two cousins, and four nephews – one currently serving active duty. So, no surprise, a significant spark was created during my youth, leading me towards the same path. And Uncle Herb was a big part of this.

Herbert Emmett Stiles was born in Grenola, Kansas, on Dec. 2, 1917, moving to Filer, Idaho, in October 1929. He had an older brother Harold, and three younger sisters: Dorothy, Maxine (my mother), and Donna Faye.

The family grew up poor and humble. Herb delivered groceries and newspapers via his motorcycle. He loved to fish and hunt with his dad. At the age of 22, Herb joined the Navy – Sept. 11, 1939 – earning a monthly allotment of \$5.46 during San Diego boot camp.

His first ship duty was on a destroyer, the USS Childs, with his main occupation (NAVPERS 609) listed as "sailor."

And like so many American families, his mama Ruth would sit many nights around the radio to hear news during the war. From her letter dated June 13, 1940, she wrote, "How does the war news sound over there? Some claim it will be over by July 1." What heartache she and other Americans must have felt when Pearl Harbor was bombed on Dec. 7, 1941.

When the United States declared war on Japan in December 1941, Herb was aboard the USS Marblehead, a light cruiser. On February 4, 1942, the Marblehead was attacked by Japanese bombers in the Java Sea, Indian Ocean. With a 9-foot hole in her hull, 34 compartments flooded, steering and elec-



trical power reduced, the Marblehead would sail for 89 days and over 20,000 miles to New York for repairs.

In a letter to Herb, dated May 11, 1942, his dad Floyd wrote:

"I am so dammed (sic) glad that you are back, you should get out in the country some place, take off your shoes and dig your toes in the good old American soil and thank your lucky stars and stripes that you are alive."

Herb's reply? "Take good care of my gun and fishing rod so I can use them when I come home."

Herb would go on to serve on the USS Pilot and USS Invade before the end of the war. It was during shore leave from the USS Invade on May 29, 1945 – with victory in the air – when Herb and several fellow sailors missed the boat "confined by shore patrol due to the excessive use of intoxicants." This

would not be the only time Uncle Herb would be subject to a JAG letter in his service record. He did enjoy his beer with buddies!

Herb attended Yeoman school in 1951, and had various duty in Chicago, Seattle, New Orleans, California, Texas and Virginia. He went on to serve the seas on the USS Alstede, USS Romulus, USS Eldorado, and, finally, the USS Hamner.

Special memories of Uncle Herb remain in my heart. He always brought gifts – silk pajamas from China, a music jewelry box, a tea set that I inherited. At age 9, these gifts were a huge highlight. When he'd pull his motorcycle into the driveway for a visit, he was looking mighty fine in his Navy blues. Was that my spark?

Uncle Herb gave 20 years and 13 days to his country. He was released from active duty on Sept. 26, 1959, with

\$175 pay. Going through letters, photos, and his enlisted service record has been pure joy. I see his inked signature on his original DD214. In his record, a standard leave form dated July 19, 1955, made me smile – the same form I recall filling out for leave in 1970. Uncle Herb was but one of the many heroes who served during World War II, coming from the Greatest Generation, accepting orders as was his duty, performing said duties as was expected.

A family backyard barbecue, burgers grilling and children laughing ... a holiday parade, flags waving and horns honking ... a Sunday church service, a Bible reading and choirs singing. Casting a fishing line. Casting a ballot. Freedom and rights we have and must never forget due to the sacrifice of our military.

Thank you, Uncle Herb, for your service.



COURTESY PHOTOS

At left: The Stiles family poses for a family portrait, from left, back row: Dorothy, Floyd, Ruth, Herb, Maxine, Harold; in front, Donna Faye.

Above: Herb Stiles' letters, service records, and honors.

Below: Herb Stiles





## VETERANS CHRONICLE

# Update: Veterans First Board

By Brian Newberry

In March 2017, Veterans First Board was chartered at the behest of both the Veterans Benefits Administration here in Washington and the Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center for one singular purpose: "To improve the lives of veterans daily."

Veterans First is categorized as a Community Veterans Engagement Board and is composed of 15 Board members from all walks of life in the Inland Northwest including nonprofits, businesses, state veteran agencies and national government agencies. Three members are standing members: the Spokane VA Medical Center, the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs supporting the National Cemetery Administration and the Veterans Benefits Administration. Retired Colonel Brian Newberry chairs the committee and Goodwill Industries of the Inland Northwest graciously administratively anchors the Board.

Veterans First Board tries to work in concert with the plethora of nonprofits in the local area to uplift veterans. Its first initiative was to apply to the Spokane Transit Authority for a van through their generous annual grant lease program to help improve veteran transit. Successful in its application, the Board transferred the van to Inland Northwest Disabled

Veterans Sports Association who have been using the van for the past two years to provide transportation. One of the best benefits of the van has been the group's selfless service to transport veterans to the hospital and provide the needed transportation back and forth giving 24/7 support to veterans in failing health.

The Veteran First Board has also focused on legal support for our veterans. As veteran law pro bono clinics have dwindled in number in our region, the group, led by local attorney Thomas Jarrard advocated for more legal services. In the past six months, the Washington Attorney General's office has begun pro bono services for veterans conducting those services working with the County Veteran Services, using their vital office as a touchpoint to our veterans.

A final area of focus for the steadfast group is education. The Board is strategically composed of a variety of veteran advocates with experience in Red Cross, end of life benefits, legal and VA benefit matters. With this broad background of veteran knowledge, the members matched up with Spokane's 2-1-1 service operators to educate them on veteran services so they are better prepared to handle queries from Spokane citizens.

While it continues to look for projects to help veterans locally, the en-

ergetic board also took to fundraising to have the ability to help in other ways. It has been successful in the past two years gaining grants from the supportive Bob Woodruff organization, which serves veterans nationally. With these funds, Veterans First became a principal funder of the first ever Spokane Stand Down last January.

The Stand Down, created by a group of patriotic and visionary citizens, was a tremendous service on a very cold day. Dave Lucas, private citizen, and Jennifer Martin of Goodwill were two board members who were central connecting between both groups. Food, fellowship, and most importantly, access to all the veteran resources Spokane has was offered to our veterans under one roof. The worst result of the day was there was not enough parking spots. The best part of the day was the team made an incredible difference in so many veterans' lives who had access to so many services in one spot.

Veterans First saw its first major financial investment be a complete return of red, white and blue profits. The smiles on every veteran told the tale, some even sporting new haircuts provided that day. Veterans First always look to the future and is focused on generating a public service announcement to help get the word out on burial benefits as their next goal



COURTESY PHOTOS

Veterans First Board in a February 2019 photo.



Veterans First helped to put on Spokane's first Stand Down in January 2020, connecting local veterans with necessary services and information, including free haircuts.

of improving the lives of veteran families daily. Spokane stood up for their first Veteran Stand Down, and veterans stand taller to this day because of it!

The Board pledges our

commitment as a small but committed band of mighty patriots to help veterans any chance they can. Two years in, Veterans First feel privileged to work with so many other supporters in the

region who put veterans first, knowing we are the land of the free because of the brave!

For questions of Veterans First, please reach out to Brian Newberry [bnewberry@gsewni.org](mailto:bnewberry@gsewni.org).



## VETERANS CHRONICLE

## THE IMPACT OF AGENT ORANGE ON VETERANS

By Jim Absher

MILITARY.COM

*Editor's Note: Over the last two years Veterans Chronicle has published numerous articles about the horrible impacts of Agent Orange exposure for many veterans and their families. What follows is a recap of associated conditions, benefit requirements and other resources. Many of us know Vietnam veterans and their loved ones that have been diagnosed with Agent Orange-related illnesses. Please share this information with them so they can access their earned VA benefits.*

The VA offers health care and disability benefits for veterans who may have been exposed to Agent Orange and other herbicides during military service. Dependents and survivors also may be eligible for benefits.

If you served in Vietnam between Jan. 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975, you may be eligible to enroll in VA health care.

### What is Agent Orange and how were people exposed to it?

"Agent Orange" refers to a blend of tactical herbicides the U.S. military sprayed in the jungles of Vietnam and around the Korean demilitarized zone to remove trees and dense tropical foliage that provided enemy cover. Herbicides were also used by the U.S. military to defoliate military facilities in the U.S. and in other countries as far back as the 1950s.

For the purposes of VA compensation benefits, veterans who served for any length of time anywhere in Vietnam be-

tween Jan. 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975 are presumed to have been exposed to herbicides, as specified in the Agent Orange Act of 1991. Locations include:

- In the Republic of Vietnam

- Aboard a U.S. military vessel that operated in the inland waterways of Vietnam

- On a vessel operating not more than 12 nautical miles seaward from the demarcation line of the waters of Vietnam and Cambodia (Blue Water Navy)

- On regular perimeter duty on the fenced-in perimeters of a U.S. Army installation in Thailand or a Royal Thai Air Force base, including U-Tapao, Ubon, Nakhon Phanom, Udorn, Takhli, Korat, or Don Muang

Veterans who meet these criteria do not need to show that they were exposed to Agent Orange or other herbicides in order to get disability compensation for diseases related to Agent Orange exposure.

Agent Orange and other herbicides used in Vietnam were used, tested or stored elsewhere, including some military bases in the United States. Other locations/scenarios in which veterans who did not serve in Vietnam were exposed to Agent Orange may include:

- Korean Demilitarized Zone: Exposure along the demilitarized zone in Korea between April 1, 1968 and Aug. 31, 1971

- Thailand military bases: Possible exposure on or near the perimeters of military bases between Feb. 28, 1961 and May 7, 1975

- Herbicide test and storage sites outside Vietnam: Possible exposure due to herbicide tests and



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

**A U.S. Air Force C-123 flies low along a South Vietnamese highway spraying defoliants on dense jungle growth beside the road to eliminate ambush sites for the Viet Cong during the Vietnam War in this May 1966 file photo.**

storage at military bases in the U.S. and locations in other countries

- Agent Orange Residue on airplanes used in Vietnam War: Possible exposure of crew members to herbicide residue in C-123 planes flown after the Vietnam War

### What diseases and conditions can Agent Orange exposure cause?

VA presumes the following diseases to be service-connected for such exposed veterans:

- AL amyloidosis
- Chloracne or other acneiform disease similar to chloracne

- Chronic B-cell leukemias (including, but not limited to, hairy-cell leukemia and chronic lymphocytic leukemia)

- Diabetes mellitus (Type 2)
- Hodgkin's disease
- Ischemic heart disease
- Multiple myeloma
- Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
- Parkinson's disease
- Peripheral Neuropathy, Early-Onset
- Porphyria cutanea tarda
- Prostate cancer
- Respiratory cancers (lung, bronchus, larynx, trachea)
- Soft-tissue sarcoma (other than osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or mesothelioma)

VA offers health care benefits for veterans who may have been exposed to Agent Orange or other herbicides during military service. These services include an Agent Orange

Registry health exam and clinical treatment at VA's War Related Illness and Injury Study Center.

Registry health exam and clinical treatment at VA's War Related Illness and Injury Study Center.

### What is the Agent Orange Registry health exam?

VA's Agent Orange Registry health exam alerts veterans to possible long-term health problems that may be related to Agent Orange exposure during their military service. The registry data helps VA understand and respond to these health problems more effectively.

The exam is free to eligible veterans and enrollment in VA health care is not necessary. Although the findings of your exam may be used to inform your subsequent care, they may not be used when applying for compensation

as a separate exam is required.

### Is disability compensation available for Agent Orange exposure?

Veterans who want to be considered for disability compensation for health problems related to Agent Orange exposure must file a claim. During the claims process, VA will check military records to confirm exposure to Agent Orange or qualifying military service. If necessary, VA will set up a separate exam for compensation.

### Can the effects of Agent Orange impact the children of veterans?

Children who have spina bifida or certain other birth defects and are biological children of veterans with qualifying service in Vietnam or Korea may be eligible for a range of VA benefits, including:

- Compensation: A monthly monetary allowance based on the child's degree of disability

- Health care benefits
- Vocational training, which provides up to 24 months of full-time training, rehabilitation and job assistance with the possibility of an extension up to 24 months if needed to achieve the employment goal. The child may not begin vocational training before his or her 18th birthday or the date he or she completes secondary schooling, whichever comes first.

Find out more about your potential Agent Orange-related benefits by contacting the VA at 800-827-1000 or see "How Can I Get Help?" on page 5 to find support resources for veterans.



## VETERANS CHRONICLE

# Do VA benefits cover nursing home care?

VA benefits provide for a range of long-term services which include Nursing Home Care, Domiciliary Care, Adult Day Health Care, Geriatric Evaluation and Respite Care. Nursing home benefits may be provided if one of the specific qualifications are met:

- A veteran needs such care and is seeking nursing home care for a service-connected (SC) disability
- A veteran has a 60% service-connected disability rating and is unemployable
- A veteran is has a 60% service-connected disability rating and is permanently and totally disabled (PT)
- A veteran has a combined service-connected disability rating of 70% or more for any condition

The care will be provided in a VA nursing home or contract nursing home. Veterans who do not have a service-connected disability and non-compensable zero percent service-connected veterans can apply for long term care in the VA, but could be subject to long term care co-payments. Veterans with a compensable service-connected disability are exempt from long term care co-payments.

Not service-connected veterans applying for Extended Care or the Nursing Home Care Unit may be required to complete VA Form 10-10EC



to determine the family's current income and assets. Veterans may be discharged from a VA Nursing Home Care Unit (NHCU) without consent when VA nursing home care is no longer needed; for example, if the veteran's needs can be met at home or in a private nursing home close to the family.

Veterans requiring nursing home care for a service-connected condition or a veteran with a 70% or more service-connected disability rating have mandatory eligibility for admission to Extended Care Services; and, those veterans are eligible to have indefinite care provided to them in the VA or in a VA contracted nursing home.

To learn more, visit [www.va.gov/health-care/about-va-health-benefits/](http://www.va.gov/health-care/about-va-health-benefits/).



## New online health management portal for veterans

On Oct. 24, 2020, the Mann-Grandstaff VA Hospital in Spokane became the first VA facility to launch the new electronic health record, My VA Health. All veterans receiving care at the facility and outpatient clinics will use the new online portal to schedule, review and cancel health appoint-

ments; refill prescriptions; send secure messages and manage current health records. My VA Health complements the familiar My HealtheVet portal experience.

Find out more about how to access and use My VA Health with [www.spokane.va.gov/services/EHRM.asp](http://www.spokane.va.gov/services/EHRM.asp).

## VETERAN RESOURCE GUIDE AVAILABLE ONLINE

The Mann-Grandstaff Veterans Affairs Medical Center (MGVAMC) has prepared a timely and important resource guide for you to find local, regional and national help resources for veterans and their caregivers.

These 20-plus page PDF documents contain general information about VA services, COVID-19 support, healthy living strategies, emergency food resources, veteran

support organization contact information and much more.

Three guides are available at [www.spokane.va.gov](http://www.spokane.va.gov) with information for distinct communities: Spokane area; Bonner, Kootenai, and Lincoln counties; and Wenatchee area.

Contact MGVAMC at (509) 434-7000 for more information.

**THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW**  
**VETERANS CHRONICLE**

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509.456.0438 hospiceofspokane.org

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The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers home loans to active military members, reservists, and retirees, as a benefit of service in our nations' Armed Forces.

Many service members are not aware this earned benefit is available to them; many sellers are not aware of the advantages to VA loans in the transaction process.

We encourage all Spokane realtors - to become familiar with this loan type so that we can all join in saying "We believe in VA financing!"



Visit [www.spokaneopen.com](http://www.spokaneopen.com)  
to view VA qualified homes in your preferred area

## VETERANS CHRONICLE

# TECH EDUCATION PROGRAM OPPORTUNITY AVAILABLE

If you want to gain computer experience to start or advance your career in the high-technology industry, find out if you're eligible for our new Veteran Employment Through Technology Education Courses (VET TEC) program that matches you with a leading training provider to help you develop high-tech skills.



### Am I eligible for this program?

You may be eligible for VET TEC if you meet all of the requirements listed below. All of these must be true. You:

- You aren't on active duty
- You qualify for VA education assistance under the GI Bill
- You have at least one day of unexpired GI Bill entitlement
- You are accepted into a program by a VA-approved training provider

Note: Your VET TEC training won't count against your GI Bill entitlement, and you need only one day of unexpired GI Bill benefits to participate.

### What types of training does VET TEC cover?

You can get training in one of these high-demand training areas:

- Computer software
- Computer programming
- Data processing
- Information science
- Media applications

### What benefits can I get through this program?

With VET TEC, you can get:

- Tuition for a full-time high-tech training program
- Money for housing during your training

If you attend your training program in person, your housing stipend will be equal to the monthly military Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) for an E-5 with dependents. This is based on the zip code where you attend your training.

If you participate in an online program, your stipend will be half of the BAH national average for an E-5 with dependents.

Note: If you don't attend a training for a full month, we'll prorate your housing payment for the days you train.

### How do I apply?

You can apply for the VET TEC program online at [www.va.gov/education/about-gi-bill-benefits/how-to-use-benefits/vettec-high-tech-program/apply-for-vettec-form-22-0994/introduction](http://www.va.gov/education/about-gi-bill-benefits/how-to-use-benefits/vettec-high-tech-program/apply-for-vettec-form-22-0994/introduction).

If we determine that you're eligible for VET TEC, you'll then apply to the VA-approved training provider of your choice. Your training provider may review your qualifications to assess whether they think you'll be able to successfully complete their training program and find meaningful, relevant employment.

VET TEC is a five-year pilot program. You can participate as long as the funding is available.

Note: If you haven't already applied for VA education benefits, you'll also need to fill out an Application for VA Education Benefits (VA Form 22-1990) or apply online at [www.va.gov/education/apply-for-education-benefits/application/1990/introduction/](http://www.va.gov/education/apply-for-education-benefits/application/1990/introduction/).



VETERANS CHRONICLE

# NEW AGREEMENT PROVIDES TRANSITION HELP AND SERVICES TO FAIRCHILD AFB PERSONNEL

**By Chris Dorcheus**  
SCRVSC OPERATIONS MANAGER

Spokane County Regional Veterans Service Center (SCRVSC) is celebrating the recent formalization of their partnership with the Airman and Family Readiness Center (A&FRC) from Fairchild Air Force Base (FAFB).

SCRVSC has a goal to provide transition assistance to separating and retiring service members. FAFB's Transition Assistance Program (TAP), a mandatory, outcome-oriented program that provides education and opportunities for

soon to be civilian veterans. The claims and benefits services and education that participants receive supports the successful transition out of the military and prepares service members for future employment, higher learning, or other opportunities that align their military career with civilian goals.

Anyone that has served in our military understands that transitioning into civilian life can be daunting and stressful. With this collaborative effort SCRVSVC intends to lessen this stress by committing to provide accredited Veteran Service Of-


ficers (VSOs) to visit FAFB and provide this critical education and services to our transitioning service members.

In early 2019, Claudette Becker, a VSO from SCRVSVC, identified a need to provide Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) education to transitioning service members at FAFB. BDD is a VA benefits pre-discharge claim program that allows eligible active-duty service members to file for disability benefits between 180 to 90 days prior to leaving the military, which may speed up VA processing. In an innovative effort Claudette started pro-

viding BDD briefings at FAFB monthly TAP classes on a volunteer basis and communicated this demand with Heather Drake, the previous Operations Manager at SCRVSVC, who understood how important it is to provide this type of education and started to negotiate a Memorandum of Understanding affiliation with FAFB's A&FRC.

Heather and A&FRC's outstanding networking paved a foundational start to ensure connecting veterans to their earned benefits as they transition into the civilian community.

As of Oct 22, 2020, an agreement has been endorsed that allows SCRVSVC to conduct pre-discharge transition assistance briefings, provide education on policy and procedures of BDD, and assist with the completion of VA applications based on a veteran, service members and families' eligibility status at FAFB. SCRVSVC is thrilled to formalize this fantastic relationship to provide claims & benefits services to transitioning service members. This important milestone is another way Spokane County is taking care of our local military and veterans.




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# We salute our veterans. Thank you.

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