

A close-up photograph of the American flag, showing the stars and stripes, draped diagonally across the frame. The flag is set against a dark, textured background.

VETERANS CHRONICLE

Veterans Day Issue

Celebrating
our veterans with
thanks and support



The future of Veterans' health care begins here

On October 24, 2020, Veterans receiving care at Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center and community-based outpatient clinics will have access to a new online health management experience, **My VA Health**.

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VETERANS CHRONICLE

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VETERANS CHRONICLE

A SUPPLEMENT TO THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW
OCT. 16, 2020

VETERANS HELP NET
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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 or visit www.VeteransHelpNet.com.

For advertising information, please contact advertising@spokesman.com or (509) 459-5095.

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VETERANS CHRONICLE

THE INCREDIBLE IMPACT OF VOLUNTEERS

By Don Walker

VETERANS HELP NET

This Veterans Day Special Edition of the Veterans Chronicle is published on the two-year anniversary of Veterans Help Net. In the last 24 months, we have provided most of the information and content for 22 monthly Veterans Chronicles in The Spokesman-Review and 16 Veteran Press in the CDA/Post Falls Press. We have provided the stories and articles for three Veterans Day publications and two Memorial Day editions. We have a vibrant and informative website (www.VeteransHelpNet.com) and an active and impacting Facebook page (facebook.com/veteranshelpnet).

The Veterans Help Net team is committed to the mission of expanding the awareness to veterans and their families about the benefits and services they have earned.

On this second anniversary, I need to reflect on my observations about the hundreds of citizen volunteers I have met (some veterans, many not).

A couple things became clear...

First, there are a lot of passionate, committed Americans out there spending their time and money to find ways to better the lives of those that have served our country.

Second, there is a big difference between saying "Thank you for your service" and doing something to help.

That principle was never stated better than in a speech given by former President Theodore Roosevelt on April 23, 1910, in Paris, France, printed at right.

Roosevelt's sentiment has reverberated in my mind and made me think about how our "veteran volunteers" have done exactly that ... they have entered "The Arena."

It isn't the critic or the cynic that enacts change – it is the person who steps up and tries



to do something about it.

Many have great ideas and incredible insight, but few are willing to actually enter the Arena and do something to help.

Ideas and good thoughts are nice, but doing and acting are what makes the difference.

It's not "Thank you for your service," although that is thoughtful.

It's not, "I wish they had treated you better," even if it is true.

It is, "HOW CAN I HELP?"

There are hundreds of volunteers that have jumped into the Arena and are trying to find a way to help. They comment with their actions and they express thanks with their deeds. Instead of offering good words, they offer a hand to help.

The volunteers work every day to make the veteran's world

better. They have "entered the Arena" and they are making a difference.

One day at a time. One veteran at a time. One family at a time.

Find a place. Find a group. Find an organization. You can be "The Man in the Arena."

Veterans Help Net tries to recognize and support those volunteers by highlighting their missions and their good works. Let us know about your organization. Tell us about an impacting volunteer in the hope we can inspire others to enter "The Arena" and add good works to their good words.

We invite Veteran Service Organizations to share stories about their volunteers. Let's fill "The Arena" and see what great things we can accomplish. We plan to regularly feature volunteer stories about why they

jumped in and how they are helping veterans and families.

We hope these stories will inspire others to volunteer.

Thank you for your service and, "How can we help?"

Contact us

If you know of a Veteran Service Organization that needs volunteers or support, please contact us so we can include the information in future publications and on our website.

Don Walker

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Cell: (509) 990-6739

www.VeteransHelpNet.com



"The Man in the Arena"

By Theodore Roosevelt

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.

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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.

Who is eligible for VA health care?

You may be able to get VA health care benefits if you served in the active military, naval, or air service and didn't receive a dishonorable discharge.

If you enlisted after Sept. 7, 1980, or entered active duty after Oct. 16, 1981, you must have served 24 continuous months or the full period for which you were called to active duty, unless any of the descriptions below are true for you.

This minimum duty requirement may not apply if any of these are true. You:

- Were discharged for a disability that was caused – or made worse – by your active-duty service
- Were discharged for a hardship or "early out"
- Served prior to Sept. 7, 1980

If you're a current or former member of the Reserves or National Guard, you must have been called to active duty by a federal order and completed the full period for which you were called or ordered to active duty. If you had or have active-duty status for training purposes only, you don't qualify for VA health care.

To learn more visit www.va.gov/health-care/eligibility/

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:**

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VETERANS CHRONICLE



RENEE BARTON: NATIONAL GUARD MEMBER RETURNS HOME TO GUIDE STUDENTS

Earlier this year, Sgt. 1st Class Renee (Huggins) Barton (Class of 2007) extended her military contract while flying in a Blackhawk helicopter over Whitworth University. As a proud Whitworth alumna and Washington Army National Guard collegiate advisor, she figured it was a fitting way to take her oath.

"I wanted this oath of extension to be memorable," Barton said, "and what better way than with my military crew and my Whitworth crew over the Pine Bowl."

In 2018, Barton asked to return to her hometown of Spo-

kane to work as the collegiate advisor for Whitworth and Gonzaga University.

Her job involves helping current and prospective students with military-related interests.

"My role is to assist future hometown heroes who want to stay in their communities, serve their country and attend college," she said.

One aspect of that assistance is helping secure scholarships for students. Recently, Barton helped Luke Miller (Class of 2023) receive the full-tuition Minuteman Scholarship.

"It was a very proud moment

for me to make the call to tell him he would be receiving a full ride to Whitworth," she said.

Attending Whitworth changed Barton's worldview, and she values providing opportunities for students to come to Whitworth and experience their own transformations.

"My time at Whitworth got me out of my shell," the former English major said. "Before I became senator of Warren Hall, I was a 'people-pleaser.' During my stint on Associated Students of Whitworth University, I learned the hard way that you cannot please everyone; you

have to pick your battles wisely."

Barton appreciates the similar connection she shares with the Whitworth and military communities.

"Both are a family," she said. "During military training, you are going through something that only a handful of others have gone through and completed. When I see another veteran or service member, there is an unspoken connection like, 'Hey, I got you ... I've been there.'"

She feels the same when she speaks to current Whitworth students. "I remember what it is like to sit through a Core 250

lecture after a midnight game of frolf, or to take off running when you hear a pinecone break free from a tree," Barton said.

Barton is grateful to be able to serve both of her communities through her role as an advisor, and she wants students to know she is an available resource to them.

"Ask me all the questions," she said. "There is never anything wrong with getting all the facts before you do something."

Find more Whitworth University Veteran Stories at www.whitworth.edu/cms/our-stories/.

VETERANS CHRONICLE



WorkSource helps veteran on career path

By Seth Maier

WORKSOURCE SPOKANE

"Bob" had a difficult time deciding what to do after his release from the Army. Injuries prevented him from pursuing a career using his existing welding and fabrication skills. He tried and changed his mind several times with various training programs, including Ultrasound Sonography and Aircraft Mechanic, but continued to struggle with job performance due to past injury. Each new field he tried put him in danger of exhausting his VA education benefits without a new career to show for it.

WorkSource helped Bob assess his skills, abilities, and limitations and determine which occupations would be a good fit. His unique skills in fabrication and eye for detail made him a promising candidate for the Orthotics and Prosthetics program at

Spokane Workforce Center

Where: 130 S. Arthur Street, Spokane, WA 99202

Phone: (509) 532-3120

Fax: (844) 704-6784

Email: WSSpokane@esd.wa.gov

Online: worksourcespokane.com/contact

Spokane Falls Community College. Job opportunities in this field are rare in Spokane, but Bob's willingness to relocate and his aptitude for the subject made it a great fit.

Two years later, Bob returned to WorkSource for help finding a practicum required for graduation. A team effort resulted in a virtual interview with a hospital in Michigan, Bob's home state. They were so impressed that they offered him a paid practicum while he finished his certification, a promise of full-time employment after certification, and relocation cost reimbursement. We are proud to have been able to support this honorable

veteran in achieving a sustainable and long-term career solution.

Here in Washington state, WorkSource helps thousands of military veterans – including disabled veterans – find jobs each year.

As a veteran, you can get priority access to WorkSource services. This includes priority referrals to jobs that are listed with WorkSource, as well as other employment services, including resume, application and interviewing assistances; use of computers, photocopiers and phones; and skills assessment and referrals to training. These resources are also available to military spouses.



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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 nation's 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 to view VA qualified homes in your preferred area

VETERANS CHRONICLE

HEY VETERANS, DID YOU KNOW ...?

... Vietnam veterans with Parkinson's or prostate cancer are eligible for additional benefits?

If you had "boots on the ground" in Vietnam or served on a Blue Water Navy vessel offshore of the Republic of Vietnam, or on another U.S. Navy or Coast Guard ship operating in the coastal waterways of Vietnam (between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975) and you have Parkinson's disease or prostate cancer, it is presumed to have been caused by Agent Orange exposure and you are automatically eligible for VA Healthcare benefits and a monthly disability check.

Parkinson's disease or prostate cancer are only two of the 14 "presumptive" diseases that are associated with Agent Orange. Visit www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/conditions/ to learn more about other qualifying conditions.

For more information or to get help filing a claim, contact the Spokane County Regional Veteran Services office at (509) 477-3690, or the North Idaho Veteran Services and Benefits Office in Post Falls at (208) 466-1090. They can help you enroll in the VA medical system and get you to a Veteran Service Officer to help file your claim.

... Veteran Service Officers (VSOs) are here to help?

Veteran Service Officers (VSOs) are trained, certified and accredited advocates for veterans! They are not VA employees and their assistance is free.

Every state and most counties have a Veteran Affairs department and many veteran service organizations, like the DAV, VFW or American Legion, also have VSOs on staff.

In Eastern Washington, Spokane County Regional Veteran Services Center is located at 1117 N. Evergreen Road in Spokane Valley. They have five VSOs and a great staff to help you.

In North Idaho, North Idaho Veteran Services and Benefits Office is located at 120 E. Third Ave. in Post Falls, with three VSOs and excellent support staff to serve veterans.

See "How Can I Get Help?" on page 5 to find more contact information.

... Purple Heart recipients are exempt from home loan funding fees?

If you are in the market for a VA home loan and have been awarded a Purple Heart, you will be able to save thousands of dollars on your loan. The Purple Heart Medal is a combat decoration awarded to members of the armed forces of the U.S. who are wounded by an instrument of war in the hands of the enemy. Purple Heart recipients will be exempt from the funding fee that the Department of Veterans Affairs charges on its guaranteed home loans.

...Emergency room visits require notification within 72 hours?

During a medical emergency, veterans should immediately seek care at the nearest medical facility. A medical emergency is an injury, illness or symptom so severe that without immediate treatment, you believe your life or health is in danger. If you believe your life or health is in danger, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Veterans do not need to check with VA before calling for an ambulance or going to an emergency department. During a medical emergency, VA encourages all veterans to seek immediate medical attention without delay. A claim for emergency care will never be denied based solely on VA not receiving notification prior to seeking care.

If you are enrolled and actively using VA health care and you need to go to a local non-VA emergency room (ER), even if your VA doctor tells you to go, you must let the VA know within 72 hours from discharge or as soon as possible if you are admitted for treatment to a non-VA facility. This allows VA to assist the veteran in coordinating necessary care or transfer, and helps to ensure that the administrative and clinical requirements for VA to pay for the care are met.

Failing to notify the VA will result in you getting stuck with the bill and the VA refusing payment on your behalf.

The VA has established an automated call center that requires veterans to call and report their care ER visit. The VA 72-Hour Notification Call Center Num-

ber is 844-724-7842.

There are several ways to report your treatment to the VA:

- You can call for yourself.
- A family member can call for you.
- A hospital social worker or staff member can call for you.

NOTE: This process does not apply to receiving treatment from an in-network "Urgent Care" facility. Please visit www.va.gov/find-locations/ to get the latest information on In-Network Urgent Care Facilities recognized by the VA.

... The VA has a benefit for a non-service connected pension?

A non-service connected pension helps low-income veterans get to a prescribed income level set by law. A World War II couple visited North Idaho State Service Officer Darryl Heisey to get registered for VA Healthcare. Heisey discovered the couple only received between the two of them \$720 a month.

"I asked them if I could help them with this and they smiled and said yes. A few months later they came back to the office and stated that this year they would be able to buy their grandchildren Christmas presents. The benefit increased their income by 120 percent. The sad part about this story is the couple were eligible for this benefit for over 35 years and didn't know it."

Make sure any veterans you know receive the benefits they have earned. See "How Can I Get Help?" on page 5 to connect with a VSO.

... You can qualify for tax breaks by hiring veterans?

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a federal tax incentive for businesses that hire candidates from certain target groups, including qualified veterans. Your company can reduce federal business taxes from \$2,400 to \$9,600 per eligible employee.

Apply online through a Secure Access Washington (SAW) account. All applications must be submitted within 28 days of the employee's start date. If you don't have a SAW account, register through WorkSourceWA.com.

... Survivors will need a copy of your DD214?

A veteran's DD214 – Certificate of Release or Discharge – is required to file for burial and funeral benefits, or to request military honors, rifle salute and/or flag presentation, at your funeral or memorial service.

Keep a copy in a safe place for your loved one. If you don't have a copy, you can request it at www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/, or contact a Veteran Affairs offices (see "How Can I Get Help?" on page 5).

... Vietnam veterans who have had a heart attack are eligible for benefits?

Ischemic heart disease is one of the 14 presumptive diseases associated with Agent Orange exposure in Vietnam. If you are diagnosed with it you will qualify for VA medical and disability benefits. Ischemic Heart disease is characterized by a reduced supply of blood to the heart that leads to chest pain. To find out more, contact one of the Veterans Service Officers (VSOs) listed in "How Can I Get Help?" on page 5.

... Agent Orange survivor benefits are available?

When veterans don't realize that they are eligible for disability benefits based on ailments added to the VA's Agent Orange list, their survivors also miss out on monthly payments under a program called Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC), which provides lifetime tax-free income to survivors of veterans who had service-related disabilities or diseases.

Tens of thousands of survivors are unaware they are eligible for benefits because their spouses had diseases that the VA linked to Agent Orange only after their death. Survivor benefits can be higher depending on their situation, including whether they need a caregiver to assist them with everyday activities like bathing and dressing.

If you know of a veteran who was diagnosed with an Agent Orange-related condition and passed away, their survivors may be eligible for some benefits. Share this information with them and

VETERANS CHRONICLE



connect with a Veteran Service Office (see "How Can I Get Help?" on page 5).

... A type 2 diabetes diagnosis may qualify you for VA benefits?

If Vietnam veterans develop Diabetes Mellitus (Type 2), they are eligible for VA health care benefits and a monthly disability check. Due to presumed exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam, there are currently 14 listed diseases that automatically qualify veterans to receive compensation. Conditions second-

ary to diabetes are also covered, including neuropathy, chronic kidney failure and heart disease. Contact your Veterans Service officer (VSO) for more information or for assistance in filing a claim. This is a free service.

See "How Can I Get Help?" on page 5 for contact information.

... The Veterans and Military Crisis Line is available?

If you, or anyone you know, are experiencing thoughts of suicide, please reach out for

help immediately.

The Veterans and Military Crisis Line is a toll-free, confidential resource, with support 24/7, that connects veterans, service members, National Guard and Reserve, and their family members with qualified, caring responders.

The Veterans and Military Crisis Line, text-messaging service, and online chat provide free VA support for all service members, including members of the National Guard and Reserve, and all veterans, even if they are not registered with VA or enrolled in VA health care.

There are three ways to connect:

- Call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1
- Send a text message to 838255
- Chat online at www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/chat

The Veterans and Military Crisis Line is staffed by caring, qualified responders from VA. Many are veterans themselves. They understand what service members have been through and the challenges that members of the military and their loved ones face.

... You can locate veteran gravesites online?

The VA has a website that makes it easy to search for burial locations of veterans and their family members in VA National Cemeteries, state veterans cemeteries, various other military and Department of Interior cemeteries, and for veterans buried in private cemeteries when the grave is marked with a government grave marker (burials beginning in 1997). Visit gravelocator.cem.va.gov/ to search.

VETERANS CHRONICLE

Community helps children in foster care honor veteran grandfather

By Don Walker and
Houston Scrudder

VETERANS HELP NET

This is a story about the desire of two kids in foster care from Deer Park who wanted to arrange the cremation and internment of their Vietnam veteran era grandfather in the Washington State Veterans Cemetery in Medical Lake. They needed some help to make it happen.

It started with a phone call to Alene Alexander, the Executive Director of Embrace Washington, a foster care support organization in Spokane, from a social service specialist with the Department of Children, Youth and Families in Spokane.

The specialist asked Alene if Embrace could help with funding the cremation, internment and transportation cost that would allow the children's grandfather to be buried at Washington State Veterans Cemetery in Medical Lake.

Alene immediately said "Yes, we can help" and so started this story of caring, cooperation and commitment of many individuals, social services and veteran organizations to help these kids honor their veteran grandpa.

With only a few days'

notice, Alene sent out the call for help. With her husband Houston Scrudder, one of the founders of Veterans Help Net, the couple requested help from individuals and organizations and quickly received commitments to fund the costs for this memorial.

Not stopping there, and with the help of Veteran Cemetery director Rudy Lopez and his staff, they organized a very special internment ceremony for June 12, which was not an easy task during COVID-19 limitations and restriction.

VFW Post 51 area chaplain Wes Anderson led the service and Col. Brian Newbury, from Rotary 21 of Spokane, performed the military honors. Col. Newbury, a former Fairchild AFB Commander, presented each of the boys with a memorial flag in a proper display case. The ceremony also included a moving bagpipe rendering of "Amazing Grace" by piper Fred Freeman.

When Col. Newbury presented the flags to the boys, he said, "The markers on a grave contain two dates and a dash. The dates, we know, represent the birth and death of your Grandpa. The dash rep-

resents the life he lived. I don't know much about your Grandpa's dash, but I do know two things. He loved his country and he loved you two."

After the ceremony a meal was arranged off-site by Alene and her team of helpers. It was attended by the two boys, the ceremony participants and some of their grandpa's friends.

This is a wonderful example of a group of committed and caring folks showing respect and honor to a veteran and leaving his grandsons with an impacting and powerful memory of their grandfather.

Thank you, Alene, for organizing and making this happen. Thank you all for stepping up when asked. God bless you all and God bless America.



The service for the Vietnam veteran included military honors, and a memorial flag was presented to each of his grandsons.

COURTESY PHOTOS

VETERANS CHRONICLE

4 TIPS WHEN WORKING WITH THE VA

By Amy Goyer

AARP FAMILY AND CAREGIVING EXPERT

I learned so much about how to work with the VA to maximize available support for my dad. Here are a few of my hard-earned tips.

1. Stay positive and be patient.

Yes, the VA system can be complicated, and sometimes you don't get help right away. But I found that everyone I interacted with – from the call center representatives to the doctors – really wants to help. They all have heavy workloads because so many veterans need help. Give them patience and understanding and you're more likely to get the same in return.

2. Document everything.

I learned to take detailed notes about every conversation and appointment because multiple

calls were usually needed, and sometimes one VA office isn't aware of what another has done or can do. I needed to be able to connect the dots. I then followed up to make sure all steps were taken and no balls were dropped.

3. Always ask if other services are available.

I kept finding out about additional benefits or services for Dad. For example, the social worker, not the doctor, informed me that we could be provided with certain incontinence supplies. And the pharmacist told me about other available assistance that the social worker wasn't aware of. Just keep asking questions.

4. Never give up.

Someone at VA told me once that “the squeaky wheel does get the grease,” and I definitely found this to be true. Dad's A&A application was mired in a lot of red tape, but I persisted, and ultimately

he started getting a monthly stipend to help pay for his care.

Here's another example: At one point, I tried to set up respite care and arrange help with Dad's bathing, but the VA's local contractor did not work out. They wouldn't provide respite care on Saturdays, when I really needed it. Honestly, I gave up after two tries. But more than a year later I decided to try again, and with a new contractor it was much easier to arrange care. Overall, the benefits Dad received were crucial supports both for him and for me and the rest of his caregiving team. I can't imagine how we would have maintained his care without them.

If you need help getting started with VA health care and benefits, contact one of the Veteran Service offices listed in “How Can I Get Help?” on page 5.

This article was originally published by AARP in November 2016 and was updated with new information in 2019.



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VETERANS CHRONICLE

Does PTSD happen to get worse with age?

Many older veterans find they have PTSD symptoms even 50 or more years after their military experience. Some symptoms of PTSD include having nightmares or feeling like you are reliving the event, avoiding situations that remind you of the event, being easily startled and loss of interest in activities.

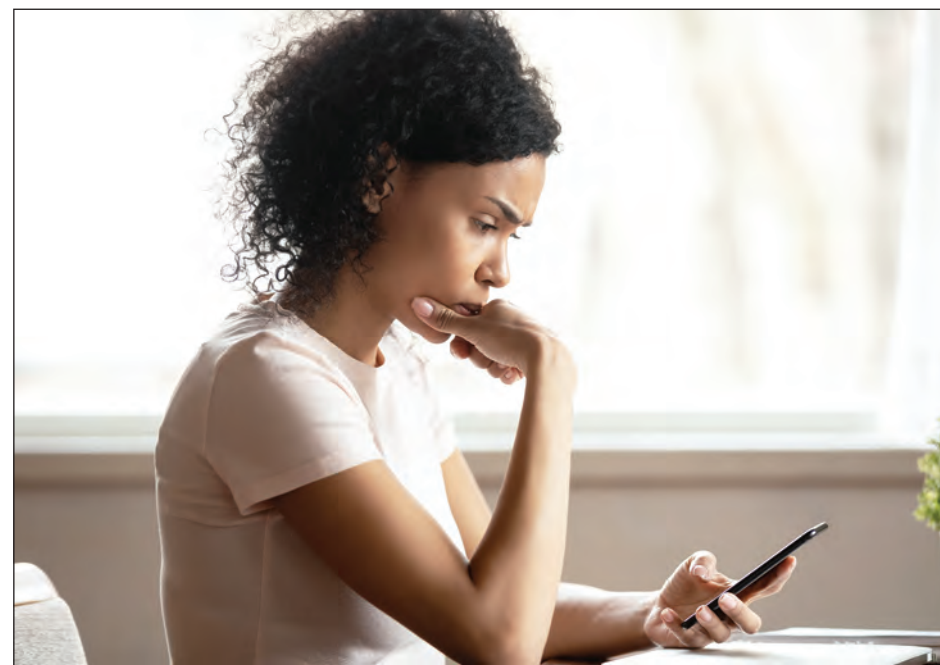
Changes that come with aging can make you feel more vulnerable, and make your PTSD symptoms more noticeable.

Strategies that once seemed to help you avoid thinking about the trauma, like long hours spent at

work or self-medicating with alcohol or drugs, may no longer work. Even positive coping strategies, like exercising or friendships with supportive peers, can be more difficult to maintain as you get older.

For an overview of PTSD and aging, including examples of how aging can affect PTSD, download the Understanding PTSD and Aging booklet at www.ptsd.va.gov/publications/print/understandingptsd_aging-booklet.pdf

Does this sound like someone you know? You can find them help in the "How Can I Get Help?" on page 5.



'BE THERE': REACH OUT AND CONNECT WITH A VETERAN

For a veteran facing hard times, your support can provide hope when it's needed most – and you already have what it takes to show you care. Take a few minutes to check in today.

Here are some ideas to help you get started with a call, text or email:

- Talking on the phone with your veteran loved ones can strengthen your connection. Calling to just catch up is important – especially during this unpredictable time. Not only does an open and honest conversation help people feel less alone, but it also can give you a window into their experiences.

- If you're worried about someone, you might need to have a more serious conversation.

- Remind them you are there for them, even if physically apart. It's easier to feel isolated these days – so reaching out is more important than ever.

- Validate their experience. Listen more than you speak – don't dominate the conversation. Even if you can't relate to what they are going through, you can tell them you understand that they went through something difficult and show them you respect their feelings about it.

- Let them decide how much informa-

tion to share. Supportive and encouraging comments, rather than invasive personal questions, will create a space for open communication and avoid putting them on the defensive.

- If you're concerned, it's OK to ask directly if they are thinking about suicide. Asking questions about thoughts of suicide does not increase a person's suicide risk, and the answers can help you determine the next steps to take.

See "How Can I Get Help?" on page 5 to find local resources to help a veteran in your life. You can also visit www.veteranscrisisline.net/support/be-there to learn about supporting veterans and share the Veterans Crisis Line with them.

How to connect with Veterans Crisis Line

Call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1

For deaf and hard of hearing, call 1-800-799-4889

Text 838255

Chat online at www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/chat



Veterans get a \$20 Gift Card!

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5TH – WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11TH

Stop by our Coeur Rewards booth between 8 am to 10 pm to show your valid Veteran's ID from any branch of the US Armed Forces and your Coeur Rewards card to receive your \$20 gift card.

Limit one redemption. Must be a Coeur Rewards member. See cdacasinocom for promotion rules.

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VETERANS CHRONICLE



VETERANS CHRONICLE BULLETIN BOARD

Spokane Area Veterans Honor Guard needs volunteers for funeral honors

The Spokane Area Veterans Honor Guard (SAVHG) supports military funeral honors throughout the greater Spokane community and is a primary fixture at the Washington State Veterans Cemetery in Medical Lake. SAVHG conducts approximately 300 honors services annually. Volunteers to participate in military funeral honors are always needed. For additional information, contact Tom Christie Sr. at (509) 280-8162, or Tom Christie Jr. at (509) 216-7609.

Stories for Veterans Chronicle

Veterans Help Net helps The Spokesman-Review gather stories and information for this monthly publication. We are always looking for more stories about veterans who discover a benefit, or how a veterans service organization has helped veterans in our community. These stories are told to increase awareness and to help veterans find hope and help.

If you have a veteran story to share, please send it to info@VeteranHelpNet.com or visit www.veteranhelppnet.com.

Women Veterans Call Center

Women are the fastest growing group within the veteran population. The Women Veterans Call Center staff is trained to provide women veterans, their families, and caregivers about VA services and resources specifically for women who served.

Call or text 1-855-829-6636 or visit www.womenshealth.va.gov to find help. The Call Center is available Monday through Friday 8 a.m. - 10 p.m. ET, and on Saturdays from 8 a.m. - 6:30 p.m. ET.

VetNow: A digital resource for veterans & their families

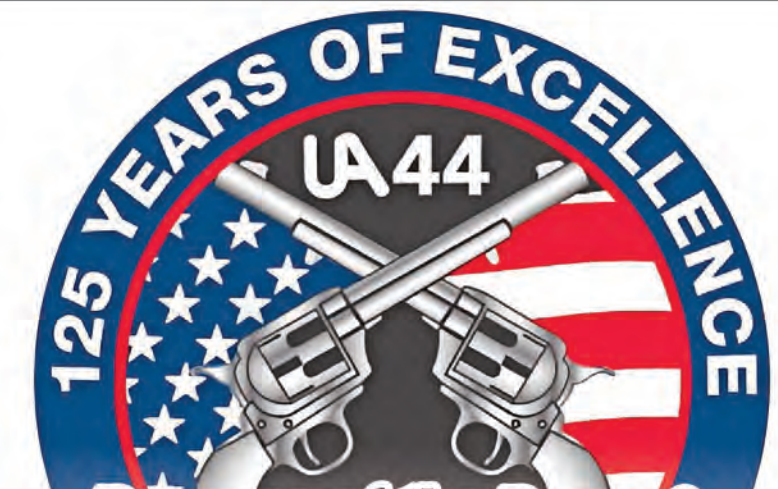
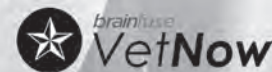
Connect with a live Veteran Navigator for help with eligible VA benefits & community resources.

Get live, online help with transitioning to a civilian career, including writing resumes & interviewing.

Practice for college entrance exams: SAT, ACT, GRE & more.

Available at no cost with your library card.

www.sclid.org/vetnow



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VETERANS CHRONICLE



JESSE TINSELY/THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Veterans and their families and friends decorate graves on Memorial Day, Monday, May 29, 2017, at the Washington State Veterans Cemetery in Medical Lake.

WDVA Veterans Cemetery expands

The Washington Department of Veterans Affairs was recently notified it will receive a \$3.5 million federal grant for expansion of Washington State Veterans Cemetery in Medical Lake, Washington.

This is the second expansion grant, representing Phase III of the site's development, awarded by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

The cemetery's master plan relies on a series of federal grants, timed to develop the property and sustain the burial needs of veterans in Eastern Washington in a programmed approach.

The scope of the project is to add capacity to existing interment types, and provide new infrastructure to offer access to new burial areas and assist with operational needs. This expansion will add over 1,000 pre-placed burial crypts for casketed burials.

Two additional burial areas will be developed to accommodate 2,300 in-ground plots

for cremated remains.

Also included in the project are four new memorial walls, to memorialize veterans whose remains are scattered and unrecoverable, or buried at sea. An interior roadway will be constructed to provide access to burial areas along the western end of the property.

These and other smaller elements of the project represent capacity that will allow the cemetery to extend every interment option available to qualifying veterans and family members for the next 10 years.

Additional grants will be requested for subsequent phases. WDVA is committed to meeting the burial needs of veterans in eastern Washington, through a master plan that will extend the cemetery's capacity for the next 60 years or more.

Construction began Aug. 10 and is expected to be completed within 12 months. The public is advised to avoid entering construction areas for safety.

Illnesses and health conditions associated with military service eligible for disability compensation

The Department of Veterans Affairs has determined that certain illnesses and health concerns have been associated with military service.

Some injuries are common to all wars – examples include amputations, traumatic mental health disorders such as TBI, PTSD (including Military Sexual Trauma), and vision and hearing loss. The VA can make monthly monetary payments, or “service-connected disability compensation” for these and other illnesses and diseases directly related to the unique circumstances of your military service.

In addition, many veterans suffer from chronic diseases later in life as the result of exposure to toxic chemicals and biologics used during their wartime service.

In Vietnam, veterans (Feb. 28, 1961 – May 7, 1975) were exposed to Agent Orange and other toxic herbicides and pesticides. Many who now suffer from various cancers and other maladies, such as Type 2 diabetes, ischemic heart disease, and Parkinson's disease, can file for compensation benefits and health care with the VA. Children born with birth defects to a veteran parent exposed to Agent Orange may also be eligible for certain VA benefits and health care.

The same is true for any Persian Gulf veterans (Aug. 2, 1990 to present) and OIF/OEF veterans (Sept. 11, 2001 to present) exposed to depleted uranium munitions, or the toxic fumes and chemical smoke released from oil well fires and “burn pits,” and who now experience from debilitating illnesses such as ALS (sometimes called Lou Gehrig's disease), fibromyalgia and other neurological disorders.

The amount of compensation depends on the severity of a veteran's service-connected disability and in some cases the number of qualifying family members.

Also, if a veteran dies of a medical condition that the VA considers to be service-connected, the spouse (and their children) may be eligible for monthly compensation payments through the VA's Dependency and Indemnity Compensation program (DIC).

To file a claim or learn more, contact one of the Veteran Service offices listed in “How Can I Get Help?” on page 5.

Information provided by the Veterans Health Council, which is a program sponsored by the Vietnam Veterans of America.

VETERANS CHRONICLE

The high cost of not applying for your earned disability benefits

By Seth Maier

WORKSOURCE SPOKANE

When we service members solemnly swore our oath in supporting and defending the Constitution of the United States, we didn't think that we might potentially leave military service with fewer abilities than we had at the start.

Imagine that a carbon copy of yourself was created right when you signed those enlistment papers. Fast forward to your military exit. Compare your post-military self to the carbon copy that had not experienced military service. What are the differences?

Perhaps there is a physical difference, such as a paratrooper with a bum knee and back spasms from all the voluntary airplane leaps. Perhaps there is something invisible, such as witnessing the hell of combat and the ongoing trauma of reliving those experiences and painful memories. We might not see the physical difference from our carbon copy, but internally there is certainly something changed.

It is these differences that the VA disability compensation system was designed for. It's in the VA motto, a quote from President Lincoln: "To care for him (her) who shall have borne the battle and for his (her) widow (widower), and his (her) orphan." (Emphasis rightly added for my Women Warriors!)

It breaks my heart to hear a brother or sister in arms tell me that they won't apply for a service connection because they feel like they are taking something away from another veteran, believing that "They deserve it more than I do."

No vet is getting anything taken away from them when another vet applies. It simply doesn't work that way!

I bugged a veteran buddy for three years to apply for service connection from his exposure to Operation Iraqi Freedom burn pits. He could hardly breath – the burn pits had a major impact



on his health – but he always said, "Some other vet needed it more." He finally applied and, three months later, he was 100% service-connected disabled.

Here is a metaphor that helped change his perspective:

If you leased a car from a dealership, you made an agreement on the maximum number of miles driven and if you get a ding in the car, you'll have to fix it before it's returned. If you return it with unrepaired damages and/or more miles than agreed upon, you are going to have to pay extra. Our enlistment contract is like a lease with the government. Uncle Sam leased our minds and our bodies in exchange for a signed blank check, payable for up to our mortal life. If we left military service with dings, cracked headlights, or more miles used – guess what?

Our Uncle will compensate for that! The problem is our Uncle won't just pay it – we have to apply to obtain service-connected disability.

We calculated that because my buddy waited those three years, he lost over \$70,000 in compensation. It will never be paid back to him. Every month a member waits from filing is a month of compensation they'll never get! Don't wait, apply now!

It further breaks my heart when I encounter a veteran whose home is being foreclosed on because of the cost of their medical treatments, such as cancer. If they had a cancer that has been directly connected to exposure to Agent Orange and they had applied for a service connection, those medical bills have been covered and they

would've been able to keep their home.

Additionally if that service member clocks out in life because of that cancer, I can sleep at night because I know their spouse and their dependents will be taken care of, as they'll continue to receive survivor benefits. That part is really important to me – if my death is related to an injury or disease associated with my service, I need my family to be able to sustain themselves after I'm gone. The service-connection disability I applied for and was awarded benefits all for my family.

VA disability compensation is a tax-free benefit paid to a veteran because of injuries or diseases that happened while on active duty, or were made worse by active military service. Recognized service-connected

disabilities will be fully covered medically for the rest of the vet's life, followed by a plethora of additional benefits that can't even be enacted until a service claim is made.

I urge veteran readers (and their support systems) to meditate for a moment on the idea of that carbon copy self made at military enlistment. What is different? Does it still impact you today? Has it gotten worse?

Meet with a Veteran Service Officer to discuss these differences at no cost; you don't have to be a member of their organization, nor is there pressure for you to join their organization. VSOs took the exact same oath as you did upon entering service. They'll understand and recognize if your experiences will qualify. It is incredibly valuable to have that talk!

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