



Veterans Service Office Newsletter

VSO Newsletter

July 2006

The Douglas County Veterans Service Office strives to provide excellent service to the County's veterans and their families. Staff serves as advocates for veterans. One important goal of the office is to ensure that Douglas County veterans receive the maximum amount of entitlements for which they are eligible. Making a difference in veterans' lives is a program focus.

Veterans Day Parade Awarded 2005 Mayor's Award

The Douglas County Veterans Service Office was presented with the 2005 Mayor's Award on May 31, 2006. The award was given for the annual Veterans Day Parade.

Mayor Larry Rich, presented the award to Mary Newman and her staff. The award was for "a local event that has contributed to the promotion of the area as it relates to tourism..."

Welcome New Staff Member – Nanci Staples

You will notice a new friendly face in the Veterans Service Office on your next visit. Nanci Staples joined the Office during the first part of May.

Nanci will be filling the receptionist position vacated by Tracy Van Dolah who was promoted to Veterans Claims Specialist in May.

We look forward to the new organization and are happy to offer the assistance of a larger office.

Please stop in to meet Nanci next time your near the Office.

What Does a Veterans Service Officer do?

There is a great deal of controversy and misunderstanding today surrounding the filing of V.A. claims.

Since the V.A. is such a large bureaucracy and Veterans Law is filled with intricate complexities, it is highly recommended that veteran seeks the services of a trained Service Officer to assist them with the filing of their claim.

The Service Officer has many duties and responsibilities, some of which are:

1. To assist the veteran in the V.A. claims process and explain for the VA works.
2. To interpret veterans law under Title 38, Code of Federal Regulations as it pertains to the veterans claim.
3. To see that the claim is properly and timely filed.
4. To review the claim when granted to assure that all benefits the veteran is entitled to have been awarded.

5. If necessary, in the event the claim is denied, to assist the veteran through the appeals process.

The most important point to remember is the Service Officer exists to protect veterans' rights and serve veterans in their community.

Military Uniforms, Memorabilia Collection Displayed at the Capitol in May

SALEM -- The Greater Salem Area Veterans Organizations (GSAVO) is once again hosting an educational military display in the Galleria area at the Oregon State Capitol. The display is an historic collection of military uniforms, artifacts, and memorabilia and is open to the public weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. through June 1.

The extensive collection has received recognition and numerous compliments for its educational value. "Mac" MacDonald, from GSAVO and one of the collection's curators said the display includes complete uniforms from all branches of military service and from different eras.

"We also have authentic military equipment, handbooks, medals, headgear, and more, which seems to capture the attention of all Capitol patrons," MacDonald said. "This display is especially appealing to young people who often stand for long periods of time to view the collection."

The display items at the Capitol will be rotated so visitors may return throughout the month-long exhibition and see something different. For several years, pieces of this same collection have been a regular attraction at the Oregon State Fair. This year's fair display will feature items from World War II.

The GSAVO also welcomes donations of artifacts, uniforms, or historic photographs which can be added to the display. Monetary donations are also

appreciated and used to maintain these valuable pieces of history.

VA Benefits

Perhaps the most visible of all VA benefits and services is health care. It is the number one benefit sought by veterans, especially with the skyrocketing costs of private health care or lack of health care programs through private sources such as employers.

VA's health care system now includes 154 medical centers, with at least one in each state, Puerto Rico and District of Columbia. VA operates more than 1,300 sites of care, including 875 ambulatory care and community-based outpatient clinics, 136 nursing homes, 43 residential rehabilitation treatment programs, 2006 Veterans Centers and 88 comprehensive home-care programs.

VAHC enrollment

For most veterans, entry into the VA health care system begins by applying for enrollment. To apply, complete VA Form 10-10EZ, application for Health Benefits, which may be obtained from any VA health care facility or regional benefits office, or by calling 877 222-8387. It may also be filled out online at the VA.gov website under health care. Once enrolled, veterans can receive services at VA facilities anywhere in the country. There are three categories of veterans that are not required to enroll in VAHC, but are urged to do so to permit better planning of health resources:

1. Veterans with a service-connected disability of 50 percent or more.
2. Veterans seeking care for a disability the military determined was incurred or aggravated in the line of duty, but which the VA has not yet rated, within 12 months of discharge.
3. Veterans seeking care for a service-connected disability only.



During enrollment, veterans are assigned to priority groups VA uses to balance demand with resources. Changes in available resources may reduce the number of priority groups VA can enroll. If this occurs, VA will publicize the changes and notify affected enrollees. Veterans will be enrolled to the extent Congressional appropriations allow. If appropriations are limited, enrollment will occur based on the following priorities:

Priority Groups 1-8

Group 1: Veterans with service-connected disabilities rated 50 percent or more and/or veterans determined by VA to be unemployable due to service-connected conditions.

Group 2: Veterans with service-connected disabilities rated 30 or 40 percent.

Group 3: Veterans with service-connected disabilities rated 10 and 20 percent, veterans who are former POW's or awarded a Purple Heart, veterans awarded special eligibility for disabilities incurred in treatment or participation in a VA Vocational Rehab program, and veterans whose discharge was for a disability incurred or aggravated in the line of duty (as recognized by VA).

Group 4: Veterans receiving aid and attendance or housebound benefits and/or veterans determined by VA to be catastrophically disabled. Some veterans in this group may be responsible for co-pays.

Group 5: Veterans receiving VA pension benefits or eligible for Medicaid programs, and non service-connected veterans and non compensable, zero percent service-connected veterans whose annual income and net worth are below the established VA means test thresholds.

Group 6: Veterans that are seeking care solely for conditions associated with certain Service in the military mostly deemed presumptive to conditions (Example: Diabetes Type II associated with exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam). The list is long for some of these special categories.

Group 7: Non service-connected veterans and non-compensable, zero percent service-connected veterans with income above VA's national means test threshold and below VA's geographic means test threshold, or with income below both thresholds, but who net worth exceeds VA's ceiling (currently \$80,000) who agree to pay co-pays.

Group 8: all other non service-connected veterans and zero percent, non-compensable service-connected veterans who agree to pay co-pays. (Note: Effective Jan. 17, 2003 VA no longer enrolls new veterans in priority group 8). If you are in this category and enrolled prior to that date, you are "grand fathered" into the VAHC system for the present.

Enrollment fee proposed twice

As a side note, the President has asked Congress for a annual VAHC enrollment fee of \$250 for Group 8 veterans in the 2006 and 2007 budget requests. So far, Congress had not approved such a fee. However, as health care costs continue to escalate, and budget matters and deficits become more acute, veterans in this latter group could be faced with paying such a fee in addition to co-pays. I fear many veterans would opt to drop from VAHC if this happened, and would be "flushed" from the system as perhaps some in Washington desire.

HAPPY 4TH OF JULY!



