



131st BW RAO Newsletter

January - March 2018, 1st Quarter Issue



The O’Fallon Veterans/131BW Retirees Activities Office (RAO) would like to wish all Veterans, Retirees and families a safe, healthy and Happy New Year.

Our staff of former members of the 131st and tenant units, Air Force, Army , Navy and Marines have put in 1924 hours for the past year and have serviced over 373 inquires either by phone, email or personal visits to our Office.

The RAO has an on-going need for volunteers to assist and inform the retiree community. If you are a retired military member or spouse from any military branch, and you are available 4 hours for 1 day a week from either 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. or noon to 4 p.m., contact the office to volunteer. Additional volunteers are needed substituting for staff needing to miss a day for other needs. Our phone number is 636-379-5577, or, emails us at veteransaffairs@ofallon.mo.us

Our office is open from 9 AM to 4 PM Monday thru Friday.

OUR STAFF:

Bennett, Roger
David, Jim
Davis, Michael
Detz, Lewis
Lamzik, Kenneth
Meier, Donald
Murat, Edward

Palermo, Mark
Riggs, Thomas
Riley, Stephanie
Rowe, Melvin
Springer, William
Wybierala, Thomas

APPRECIATION

The Air Force Retiree Council has started a program to show it’s appreciation for those volunteering in Air Force Retiree Activity Offices worldwide. We are proud to announce the following individuals are being recognized for their service to this office; Cmdr. Lewis Detz, USN Ret, 5 years; MSgt Edward Murat, USAF Ret, 5 years; MSgt William Springer, USAF Ret, 5 years; and SMSgt James David, USAF Ret, 11 years. They will receive their certificate of appreciation from O’Fallon Mayor Bill Hennessy at the January 25, 2018 City Council Meeting. A special thanks to them for continuing to serve.

2017 CHRISTMAS AIR GUARD/REUNION GATHERING

Thanks to everyone for another successful Christmas Party Reunion.

We had 125 people who enjoyed lunch and socialize. It appeared fun was had by all. Money from the 50/50 drawing will be sent to the Fisher House.

Thanks to all the people that help making the party a success. We don't have email addresses or phone numbers for everyone, if you know someone that isn't receiving an invitation that might be interested in coming, please ensure we get their contact information. Preferred method of contact is email & Facebook when we send out announcements; however, we know not all have the internet or computers. So, again, if you know of anyone not being notified have them/you shoot us an email to: 131christmas@gmail.com

Also, please keep us updated on your contact information. Every year we have those who cannot attend the event because they have to work. We will be sending out a survey offering several dates for the event. Option one is on a Wednesday (11:00 AM – 3:00 PM) or option two a Saturday (10:30 Am – 2:00 PM) If anyone has any recommendations for next year, please let us know. Additionally, if you would be interested in helping, let us know.

Morris Swofford/Scooter swoff757.scooter@charter.net 636-294-6084, Cell: 573-552-7986
Lisa Muschler lisa.muschler@yahoo.com 636-297-4870 or 636-357-5384
Any Christmas Party emails: 131christmas@gmail.com

Thank you, again, to all who came out to the party.

TRICARE NEWS BITES:

The Military Health System is modernizing TRICARE to better serve you and respond to changes in law and policy. Here are some of the key topics:

- Reducing Three TRICARE Regions to Two. The current three TRICARE regions in the U.S. will become two regions, TRICARE East and TRICARE West.
- Moving to TRICARE Select. On January 1st, TRICARE Select will replace TRICARE Standard and TRICARE Extra, both stateside and overseas.
- Enrollment Changes. Enrollments will shift from fiscal year to calendar year. If you currently have TRICARE coverage, you'll remain enrolled in your respective TRICARE plan in 2018.
- Updated Costs. Starting on January 1st, you'll fall into one of two groups based on when you or your sponsor first joined the military. Each group will have different enrollment fees and out-of-pocket costs.

AN EASY-TO-KEEP NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

Lots of people make New Year's resolutions. I'm going to eat less and exercise more. I'm going to watch television less and read more. By now, some of us have already faltered a little. Others have completely lost their resolve.

But, if you served in the U.S. Armed Forces, there's one resolution that's not too late to make and easy to keep: get your veterans benefits checkup. Regardless of your age, branch of service, assignment or post, if you were discharged honorably, you may be entitled to an impressive array of state and federal benefits. Veterans' benefits can put money in your pockets while compensating you for a service-connected disability, help you begin or resume your college education, get job training, find employment, care for your health, start a business, buy or improve a home, and live out your years with dignity and respect in a Veterans Home.

You may also qualify for free or reduced-fee licenses, state parks passes, property tax exemptions, specialty license plates and other considerations. What's more, if you are a service-connected disabled veteran, (even with a 0% rating) your dependents may qualify to attend community college, state college or university tuition free! That's a benefit that can make college a reality for many whose families could not have afforded it otherwise.

If you're not getting benefits, find out what you're entitled to and how to file a claim. If you are getting benefits, find out whether there have been any changes to the benefits you are entitled to receive. It's easy! Go to: www.benefits.va.gov/benefits/

DFAS ASK, IS YOUR BROWSER UP TO DATE?

If you're using Internet Explorer, make sure it's version IE11 before accessing your *myPay* account. Beginning July 12, IE10 (and earlier versions) of internet explorer won't be able to get you to your account .Updated browsers lower the risk from potentially compromised security protocols. Make sure you're using the latest version of your favorite web browser.

BEWARE! Smart Docs Scam: Several *myPay* customers have informed DFAS that fraudulent SmartDocs email messages are being sent that could put your information and finances at risk. The reported invalid emails contain what appears to be from a valid SmartDocs email address. The originators of these emails have "spoofed" their messages to hide their true origin and placed the SmartDocs address in the "From" line to make the email appear legitimate. Valid SmartDocs messages from DFAS are always sent in plain text, do not include attachments and do not ask you to send any information in response. Your email program may automatically convert a valid SmartDocs message into HTML and convert some text into clickable links. We recommend that you do NOT click on any links within any email message. To access a site referenced in an email, open your browser and type the link (URL) directly into the browser.

Don't get fooled. If you receive a SmartDocs message that contains a link, don't click on it. If a URL is listed in the message type it in manually within your browser. Delete unexpected or unsolicited messages that contain attachments or that request you to send information back.

Becoming a victim is easy. Utilizing a few basic precautions with email handling are critical to protecting your information, finances and identity. [Source: DFAS]

VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA) PRIORITIZES IMPROVING VETERANS ACCESS TO PRO BONO LEGAL SERVICES

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), together with the American Bar Association, The Veterans Consortium and National Law School Veterans Clinic Consortium, signed a Memorandum of Agreement aimed at improving Veterans access to free legal services.

Veterans often face stressful legal problems such as eviction, foreclosure, child support, or driver's license revocations that can affect their ability to gain or maintain employment and housing or focus on

medical treatment. In VAs annual Community Homelessness Assessment, Local Education and Networking Groups survey, legal assistance repeatedly tops the list of homeless Veterans unmet needs. We are encouraging VA Medical Centers and other VA facilities to engage with their local communities to establish legal clinics and Medical Legal Partnerships to address Veterans legal needs that threaten their health and well-being, said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. By signing this agreement, we are documenting a shared commitment to better facilitate Veterans access to legal services. Currently, VA hosts at least 165 free legal clinics in its VA Medical Centers, Community Based Outpatient Clinics and Vet Centers across the country by partnering with external, legal-service providers, such as local bar associations, legal-aid organizations and law school clinics. If a Veteran needs legal assistance, they may contact one of the listed legal service clinics, visit www.statesidelegal.org * or Pro Bono Resources for Veterans*. You may also contact your local VJO Specialist who may know of community resources for legal assistance. More information on VAs coordination of legal services for Veterans at VA facilities may be found at <https://www.va.gov/OGC/LegalServices.asp>. [Source: VA News Releases]

VA HEALTH CARE ENROLLMENT UPDATE - IS FOR LIFE

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) operates the largest health care system in the country, with over 1,400 sites of care nationwide. When you become enrolled in the VA health care system, it's for a lifetime. You are instantly and automatically entitled to receive care at any VA location without ever having to register for VA health care benefits again. Learn more about enrollment by going to http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/division_flsh.asp?dnum=1. After you enroll, you can immediately start receiving your health care at a VA facility, or at a later date - the choice is yours. Enrolling in the VA health care system is quick and easy - just complete an online Application for Health Benefits online at: <https://www.1010ez.med.va.gov/sec/vha/1010ez>. Need help enrolling? Contact the VA toll free at 1-877-222-VETS (8387). [Source: VVA 154 | PI Officer | December 13, 2017 ++]

VA TO INCREASE ACCESS TO SAFE AND EFFECTIVE LUNG SCREENING PROGRAM

VA has announced a new partnership to increase access to lung screening for Veterans. Sponsored by the Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation, the project brings together experts from within and outside VA to develop the VA-PALS Implementation Network (VA-Partnership to increase Access to Lung Screening). Its goal is to develop early-detection programs for lung cancer, a malignancy with an 80 percent cure rate when caught early. This new project will launch lung-screening services at the [Phoenix VA Health Care System](#) by December 2017, and then extend these services to nine additional VA medical facilities starting in 2018. Once fully implemented, the project has the potential to become even more widely available throughout VA. “This partnership is another example of VA’s work to improve Veterans health and well-being,” said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. “The VA-PALS lung screening initiative demonstrates our priority to

work together with outside organizations to provide more efficient care aimed at addressing serious health concerns.”

The VA-PALS initiative builds upon lessons learned from currently available screening programs, including those of VA’s Office of Rural Health, which is supporting the project’s goal to reach Veterans living in rural areas. It also adds to a portfolio of other major VA lung cancer initiatives, which include the VALOR Trial (Veterans Affairs Lung Cancer Or Stereotactic Radiotherapy) and the APOLLO Network (Applied Proteogenomics Organizational Learning and Outcomes).

“Research shows that with comprehensive lung screening programs, early identification of lung cancer leads to more effective treatments and, ultimately, saves lives,” said John Damonti, president of Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation. “The Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation is proud to partner with the VA-PALS Implementation Network in this important step to increase access to state-of-the-art screening for Veterans at risk of lung cancer.” [Source: Dept. of Veteran Affairs]

VADIP UPDATE – DENTAL PROGRAM REVIVED & EXTENDED THROUGH 2021

The VA Dental Insurance Program (VADIP) is a private dental insurance program that offers discounted dental insurance to certain veterans and their dependents. It began as a pilot program in 2013 and ended as scheduled in January 2017. However, recent legislation revived the program and extended it through 2021. Veterans who are enrolled in VA healthcare and their dependents enrolled in CHAMPVA are eligible to enroll in the VADIP program. Those enrolled in the previous pilot program are required to re-enroll in the new one if they want coverage, re-enrollment is not automatic. VADIP is only available in the U.S. and its territories.

Like all insurance programs there are many options available at varying costs. The VA says VADIP covers "diagnostic services, preventive services, endodontic and other restorative services, surgical services and emergency services." The VA also says "while the insurance providers will remain the same [as under the pilot program], plan options, fees and other factors may have changed from those offered under the pilot program." We did some research and found that the monthly premiums for 2018 are nearly double the 2016 premiums, but they are still cheaper than many other dental insurance plans.

VADIP is being offered by Delta Dental of California [<https://feds.deltadentalins.com/vadip>] and MetLife [<https://www.metlife.com/vadip>] you can check out their websites for more information, including costs, services, participating dentists and to enroll in a program. For more information check out our VADIP details page or the VA's VADIP page <https://www.military.com/topics/benefits>. [Source: Military.com | Jim Absher | December 13, 2017 ++]

INFORMATION ON TRICARE, COLA AND OTHER HEALTH ISSUES

Other newsletters have covered the new TRICARE and COLA CHANGES AND UPDATES that we felt would be redundant to show them in our newsletter this quarter. Please refer to the other Retiree Newsletters Links including “NEWSWIRE”.

TAPS FOR 131ST MOANG PERSONNEL AND SPOUSES WHO PASSED AWAY IN 2017

ARGENT, Kathleen, wife of Jack Argent 28 Aug 2017
BIONDO, Vito 23 Feb 2017
BRANNUM, Bobby 28 Jan 2017
CHEEVER, Earl
CHEEVER, Zola
DREMEL, Joseph 1 Nov 2017
FARMER, James 21 Dec 2017
GOELINER, William TSGT 26 May 2017
GROCEMAN, Mark S. MSG 31 May 2017
GROJEAN, Daniel C. 18 Jun 2017
HARTY, John J. LT Col 14 Sep 2017
HEISLER, Charley SMS 15 Oct 2017
KRUSE, Edward (Ray) 20 Aug 2017
LOVELAND, Norman 12 Jan. 2017
MAYER, Paul 19 Nov 2017
SHELBY, Jack Ford LT Col 24 Feb 2017
SHILLITO, Dean M. 17 Aug 2017
THIELE, Sr. Richard Dean MSG 22 Jul 2017
VOLLMAR, Gary A. 3 May 2017
WALTERS, Jimmy MSG 3 May 2017

Note: These are the only people that we know passed away. If you have any knowledge of others, contact Larry Kelley with the information at lk001@mail.win.org.

LINK TO RETIREE PUBLICATIONS

<i>Army Echoes</i>	http://soldierforlife.army.mil/retirement
<i>Navy Shift Colors:</i>	www.shiftcolors.navy.mil
<i>Air Force Afterburner:</i>	www.retirees.af.mil/afterburner
<i>Marine Corps Semper Fidelis:</i>	<u>www.manpower.usmc.mil/portal/page/portal/M RA HOME</u>
<u>MM/H SR</u>	
<i>Coast Guard Evening Colors:</i>	http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg1/psc/ras

INPUT: If you have any suggestions for any type of additional articles you may like to have included in the future newsletters please email us. We look forward for more input from you and other agencies. We will publish this newsletter four times a year if the supply of information is available.

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