



131st BW RAO Newsletter

April-June 2017, 2nd Quarter Issue



The O’Fallon Veterans/131BW Retirees Activities Office is staffed with former members of the Air Force, Army, Navy, Marines and civilians to support veterans, retirees and their families providing information services ranging from ID Card renewal to assistance for veterans.

Our office is open from 9 AM to 4 PM Monday thru Friday except for the 2nd Friday of the month which is committed to the Veteran’s Service Officer helping veterans needing VA help. If you are in the area and would like to see what we are currently doing feel free to stop by the office. Otherwise contact us by phone or email and let us know how we can help you. If you live in the local area and would like to volunteer some time to answer the phone and assist other veterans, retirees and spouses give us a call at 636-379-5577. Volunteers are needed substituting for individuals needing to miss a day for other needs.

VETERAN’S SERVICE OFFICER

The Missouri Veteran Commission, Northeast Region, Service Officer Dan “Mac” McFarland, has transferred to a new position and is no longer at the St. Charles County Administration Building, 201 N. Second Street, Suite 203. Mr. David Taylor has assumed his duties and can be contacted at (636) 340-7900 ext. 7213.

Mr. McFarland will still be in the Veterans Office at the O’Fallon City Hall on the 2nd Friday of every month from 9 AM till 4 PM. Call (314) 253-4450 for appointment. Mr. McFarland’s new location is at the St. Louis VA Regional Office, 9700 Page Ave. Overland MO.

MESSAGE FROM THE COMMANDER

Sorry it has been a while since I provided any updates to the Commander's Corner. Thanks for continuing to provide me feedback on ways we can make our wing better. Here are a couple of updates I thought you'd like to know. We rolled out the revised Newcomers Orientation that does two things. First, it splits Whiteman and JB into separate events so we can focus solely on one installation. Second, it divides the class in two sections so transfers don't have to participate in subjects they are already familiar while still providing it to the new troops. Thanks to MSgt Pliemling for getting this going. We recently held our 3rd NCO Orientation class (2nd at Whiteman AFB) and the HRA team is working hard to make some significant modifications based upon the feedback from the attendees. Starting next class, you should see these changes implemented; please continue to provide constructive feedback so we ensure you are provided the best product. Thanks to SMSgts Morgan and Hampton for their tireless efforts to make this a benchmark program. In an effort to improve communication, we rolled out a wing App. Please

ask your orderly room for instructions on installing the app. Once installed, wing administrators will approve your 131 BW access and you will be able to see all of the posted data (wing calendar, job postings, CC comments, RSD significant events, etc.). Thanks to MSgt Fanoele for all her work on setting up the app.

I've mentioned before the plan to provide specific training to the wing, focused on mentoring and feedback. We have finally bid that contract out and are in the process of selecting the company to provide the training. Please keep in mind, this new training opportunity is not intended to create more programs or requirements; it is specifically intended to help you do what is already required more effectively. I understand we are rolling a lot out this year; please work with me as we establish a solid foundation of purposefully developing our Airmen. This will make our great wing even better.

As I post this update, we have 71 Mogarians around the globe in 5 different theaters of operation. Please keep them in your thoughts and please ensure we are checking on their families. Thanks for what you do; everyday...you are truly making a difference!

Willie B

131st BW SELECTS OUTSTANDING AIRMEN OF 2016

Col. Ken Eaves, 131st Bomb Wing Commander (left) and 131st Command Chief Master Sgt. Jessica Settle (right) recognize winners of the wing's 2016 Outstanding Airman of the Year awards during the Missouri Air National Guard's OAY Banquet held at Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri, Jan. 6. From left to right, winners are: Capt. Amy Cottrell, 131st Medical Group, Company Grade Officer of the Year; Staff Sgt. Heather Campbell, 157th Air Communications Squadron, Noncommissioned Officer of the Year; Senior Airman Travis Hugh, 157th ACOMS, Airman of the Year; Master Sgt. Thomas DuMont Jr., 157th Combat Operations Squadron, Senior NCO of the Year; and Master Sgt. Matthew Kuensting, 239th Combat Operations Squadron, First Sergeant of the Year. Not pictured is Field Grade Officer of the Year Maj. David Thomas, 157th COS. In subsequent competition, Campbell received the all-new Missouri Air National Guard Command Chief's Award, and DuMont took honors as top SNCO of the year across the Missouri Air National Guard, and will advance to compete at the Air National Guard Outstanding Airman of the Year level.

131ST BW ACTIVITIES DURING 2016

The 131st Bomb Wing began the year by flawlessly executing the first Air Force Global Strike Command no-notice Nuclear Surety Exercise, Hectic Roller. This event was followed by a successful unit effectiveness inspection, the first-ever for Team Whiteman.

In January, Airmen from four units at Jefferson Barracks supported relief efforts in response to the historic flooding in the St. Louis area.

The 157th Air Operations Group deployed for a six-month tour to the Middle East in support of Operation Enduring Freedom where they supported on-going in-theater air operations.

The wing participated in the spring bomber assurance and deterrence deployment as a part of U.S. Strategic Command's continuous regular bomber rotate through the Indo-Asia-Pacific region.

The 110th Bomb Squadron flew eight B-2s on 18-hour missions to meet all mission objectives, a first in the history of the wing. The 131st Bomb Wing conducted the first wing-wide state emergency duty training at Camp Clark in May, training 200 Airmen from all five groups. This two-week event culminated with a tornado response exercise where members were tested on all aspects of the mission, to include convoy, joint operations center, and self-aid buddy care training.

In June, the 131st Medical Group conducted training at the FEMA Centers for Domestic Preparedness Facility in Alabama, a first for the Missouri Air National Guard. During this week-long event, the group participated in health care field training scenarios, and conducted hazardous material, law enforcement, and incident command training.

In August, the wing executed Polar Roar, an event designed and closely coordinated with the nation's allies to ensure integration of bomber capabilities with their military assets. The event provided real-time training with North American Aerospace Defense Command and NATO, and enables the U.S. to build enduring relationships to confront the broad range of global challenges.

The 231st Civil Engineer Flight provided engineering design and construction management support to Air Forces Southern and Army Forces Southern during humanitarian and civic assistance exercises New Horizons

Additional information can be found in the Missouri National Guard 2016 Annual Report. Source: Missouri National Guard 2016 Annual Report.]

**131ST BW LINDBERGH'S OWN MISSOURI
AIR NATIONAL GUARD 2ND ANNUAL PICNIC**

MARK YOUR CALENDAR:
Saturday August 26th. noon
Wapelhorst Park, shelter 1
St Charles, MO.

The 131st BW Lindbergh's Own Missouri Air National Guard is again holding its annual picnic at Wapelhorst Park Shelter 1 and looking forward to a larger crowd than the last one which had approximately 175 people. The picnic is a Family Fun Day for former guard member's families

and friends with food, drink and entertainment. Hope you will put this on your calendar to attend.

The collected funds will provide food, desserts, non-alcoholic beverages and entertainment. Donations can be made to the following GoFundme site:

<https://www.gofundme.com/2nd-annual-lindberghs-own-picnic>

I you need any additional information contact Chris Boehlein at: cboehlein@hotmail.com

VA APPOINTMENTS

Veterans Administration's new Veterans Appointment Request app helps veterans to schedule appointments with the VA care team from the convenience of their mobile phone, computer, tablet or any device with an internet connection. Veterans can use VAR to:

- Schedule primary care appointments
- Request dates and times for primary care and mental health appointments
- See details for all pending, confirmed and upcoming appointments (both those requested through the app or through a VA scheduler), including date, time, clinic, care team and reason for visit
- Send up to two messages to a VA scheduler about requested and booked appointments
- Get email notifications about appointment updates
- Cancel an appointment if you are unable to make it to that appointment

To use VAR, you must be a VA patient and have a DS Logon account. There is no cost to register. Visit <https://mobile.va.gov/dslogon> to learn more about registering. If you are having trouble you can call the help desk at (877) 470-5947 weekdays from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. The Veteran Appointment Request (VAR) App is available to Veterans at select locations. To see if it is available at your VA facility refers to <https://mobile.va.gov/app/veteran-appointment-request>. [Source: <https://mobile.va.gov/appstore> | February 9, 2017 ++] RAO Bulletin 170215

DFAS ANNOUNCES NEW ADDRESS FOR RETIREES, ANNUNITANTS

INDIANAPOLIS (March 7, 2017) – Military retirees and annuitants corresponding with the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) will use a new address beginning May 1. The old addresses in London, Ky., have been used for years but are being discontinued and will be replaced by addresses in Indianapolis to help speed up receipt and customer service. The new mailing addresses (beginning May 1) will be:

Retired Pay correspondence:

Defense Finance and Accounting Service
U.S. Military Retired Pay
8899 E 56th Street
Indianapolis IN 46249-1200

Annuitant Pay correspondence:

Defense Finance and Accounting Service
U.S. Military Annuitant Pay
8899 E 56th Street
Indianapolis IN 46249-1300

Mail received at the old mailing addresses after May 1 will be forwarded to the new address. Current phone and fax numbers are not changing.

Military retirees and annuitants can use the mailing address to submit any of the following information:

- Written requests for 1099R Forms (Retiree tax statement)
- Change Survivor benefit Plan information
- Correct a 1099R (Retiree Tax Statement)
- Establish a Retired Pay account
- Manage Arrears of Pay (AOP) Beneficiary designation
- Manage allotments
- Report a retiree’s death
- Report a Survivor Benefit Plan beneficiary’s death
- Submit a retiree or annuitant change of address
- Start/change Direct Deposit
- Start international Direct Deposit enrollment

Use of the new addresses before 5/1 or use of the old addresses after 5/1 may add three to five days of processing time to requests.

The DFAS website <https://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary.html> provides information and links to any additional paperwork that might need to be submitted. The website also provides additional ways to contact Retired and Annuitant Pay including self-service options or by phone (1-800-321-1080). [Source: DFAS visit <http://www.dfas.mil> or on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/DefenseFinanceandAccountingService>)]

WHEN IS A GOOD TIME TO START RECEIVING SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS?

Enjoying a comfortable retirement is everyone's dream. For over 80 years, Social Security has been helping people realize those dreams, assisting people through life's journey with a variety of benefits. It's up to you as to when you can start retirement benefits. You could start them a little

earlier or wait until your "full retirement age." There are benefits to either decision, pun intended.

Full retirement age refers to the age when a person can receive their Social Security benefits without any reduction, even if they are still working part or full time. In other words, you don't actually need to stop working to get your full benefits.

For people who attain age 62 in 2017 (i.e., those born between January 2, 1955 and January 1, 1956), full retirement age is 66 and two months. Full retirement age was age 65 for many years. However, due to a law passed by Congress in 1983, it has been gradually increasing, beginning with people born in 1938 or later, until it reaches 67 for people born after 1959.

You can learn more about the full retirement age and find out how to look up your own at www.socialsecurity.gov/planners/retire/retirechart.html
Caution-<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/planners/retire/retirechart.html> .

You can start receiving Social Security benefits as early as age 62 or any time after that. The longer you wait, the higher your monthly benefit will be, although it stops increasing at age 70. Your monthly benefits will be reduced permanently if you start them any time before your full retirement age. For example, if you start receiving benefits in 2017 at age 62, your monthly benefit amount will be reduced permanently by about 26 percent.

On the other hand, if you wait to start receiving your benefits until after your full retirement age, then your monthly benefit will be higher. The amount of this increase is two-thirds of one percent for each month -- or eight percent for each year -- that you delay receiving them until you reach age 70. The choices you make may affect any benefit your spouse or children can receive on your record, too. If you receive benefits early, it may reduce their potential benefit, as well as yours.

You need to be as informed as possible when making any decision about receiving Social Security benefits. Read the publication *When to Start Receiving Retirement Benefits* at www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/EN-05-10147.pdf
Caution-<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/EN-05-10147.pdf>.

If you decide to receive benefits before you reach full retirement age, you should also understand how continuing to work can affect your benefits. Social Security may withhold or reduce your benefits if your annual earnings exceed a certain amount. However, for every month benefits are withheld, it increases your future benefits. That's because at your full retirement age Social Security will recalculate your benefit amount to give you credit for the months in which benefits were reduced or withheld due to your excess earnings. In effect, it's as if you hadn't filed for those months. You can learn more at www.socialsecurity.gov/planners/retire/whileworking.html
Caution-<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/planners/retire/whileworking.html>.

Social Security's mission is to secure your today and tomorrow. Helping you make the right retirement decisions is vital. You can learn more by visiting our Retirement Planner at

Caution-www.socialsecurity.gov/planners/retire,
Caution-[Http://www.socialsecurity.gov/planners/retire](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/planners/retire)

MEDICARE ISSUING NEW ID CARDS IN 2018

Removing Social Security numbers to prevent identity theft

Medicare ID cards will remove Social Security numbers in 2018.

Medicare is preparing to stop using Social Security numbers for identification next year and will send new cards to patients with Medicare ID numbers. The move is required by a law enacted two years ago to discourage identity theft.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) recently updated its web page to help health care providers prepare for the change. The agency plans to begin mailing the new cards with Medicare beneficiary identifiers (MBIs) in April 2018. During a transition period through 2019, providers can use the MBIs or health insurance claim numbers (which are based on Social Security numbers) on transactions such as billing and claims.

The 2015 law, the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act, requires CMS to remove Social Security numbers from Medicare cards by April 2019.

“We’re now figuring out the best way to mail the cards,” the agency advised providers. “We’ll keep you posted about critical information so you can be ready to ask your Medicare patients at the time of service if they have a new card with an MBI.”

CMS plans a “wide-scale outreach” to let beneficiaries know that they need to bring their new Medicare cards when they get care and how to get MBIs if they lose their cards.

AARP’s Fraud Watch Network ambassador, Frank Abagnale, advises consumers not to share Social Security numbers unnecessarily. “And don’t carry your Medicare card unless you are on your way to a health care appointment,” he wrote last year. “Instead, make a copy and black out all but the last four digits.” AARP, March 17, 2017|Getty Images

[Source: AARP Health | <http://www.aarp.org/health/medicare-insurance/info-2017/new-medicare-id-cards.html>]

We have the newest copies of the **Missouri Benefits and Resources Guide for Veterans & Military** in our office and Kiosk located on the 1st floor of the O’Fallon City Hall. Also available are **Military Times magazines** and other veteran and retiree information.

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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