



Dakota County Post Service Officer's Association
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March 2010 Newsletter

***** ASSOCIATION MEETING *****

DATE: March 30th, 5th Tuesday
TIME: 7:00 p.m.
PLACE: Lyle Russell VFW Post 1210 located at 275 West 33rd Street, Suite I, Hastings, MN

Veterans Employment Representative, Harry Ostendorf of the Burnsville Workforce Center, will be the guest speaker.

Veterans' employment representatives are located at WorkForce Centers throughout the state to guide veterans through their employment and training options. They also work closely with employers to develop job opportunities for veterans and to advocate on their behalf.

For more information, please visit www.positivelyminnesota.com.

This is a tremendous opportunity to learn about assistance and meet your fellow veterans and your local service officers.

MINNESOTA VETERANS CAREER FAIR

DATE: Wednesday, May 5, 2010
TIME: 11- 3 p.m.
WHERE: Earle Brown Heritage Center
6155 Earle Brown Drive,
Brooklyn Center

The Veterans Career Fair is a free event open to all veterans. The event will feature employer exhibitors where you can interview with employers about job openings; college representatives who can speak about incentives offered to veterans; service providers, who can assist with your work and non-work related needs. In addition, workshops will be offered with tips from career experts and strategists.

Additional information can be found at www.positivelyminnesota.com/JobSeekers/Veterans/.

Employers should contact Char Morgan at (763) 785-6461 or char.morgan@state.mn.us for registration information.

THE GUIDE TO COMING HOME

For soldiers deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan, the prospect of returning home is a hopeful one. Yet once they have returned, many vets are surprised by the challenges of reintegrating into day-to-day life.

Minnesota Public Radio News is creating a place online where returning veterans and their families can tell stories of coming home from war, and share advice and tips for reintegration.

Please help with this project by sharing your experience. If you are a veteran or the family of a veteran and want to share your advice, please go to <http://bit.ly/VetsGuide>.

If you work with veterans, or otherwise have resources or expertise to share, please visit <http://bit.ly/HelpReturningVets>.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Andrew Haeg at (651) 290-1314 or ahaeg@mpr.org.

GI BILL UPDATE

When the Post 9/11 GI Bill became law over the summer, veterans and their families showed up in the masses to take advantage of it. As result, VA became clogged with a backlog of claims and only had estimates of exactly how many individuals were using the landmark legislation. To date, 164,144 individuals have enrolled in classes under the GI Bill; VA is paying about 4,500 students per day; 352,281 people have applied for a Certificate of Eligibility; \$517 million has been paid out to students, \$385 million to schools, and \$193 million advance funding to destitute individuals.

HIGHER EDUCATION VETERANS PROGRAM

The program was designed to support the success of veterans, current military members and their families at Minnesota's colleges and universities by providing on-campus Veterans Resource Centers, comprehensive information about benefits and resources as well as facilitating institutional readiness in support of the unique needs of these students. The program accomplishes this through outreach events and partnerships with host schools and other military and veteran organizations.

The Higher Education Veterans Program has annually assisted more than 5,000 Minnesota veterans transition to college since 2006. Last year was especially successful for the program with a 44 percent increase in individuals served from 2008.

The amount of incoming benefits has increased by over 20 percent, from \$51.6 million in 2006 to \$62.7 million in 2008. These funds make higher education possible for thousands each year and make a significant contribution to Minnesota's economy.

MINNESOTA C.O.R.E.

The Minnesota C.O.R.E. (Case Management, Outreach, Referral and Education) program has added caregiver support and respite services to better assist veterans, current service members and their families.

The Minnesota Department of Veteran Affairs has partnered with Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota to offer the Minnesota C.O.R.E. Program. This comprehensive program offers mental health counseling, financial counseling, case management, deployment and reintegration support, anger management and other supportive services statewide. Over 680 families have been assisted, and demand is growing across the state.

For more information about the Minnesota C.O.R.E. program and other state benefits and services, please contact the Dakota County Veterans Service Office at (651) 554-5601.

VA GRAVELINER ALLOWANCE

The Department of Veteran Affairs provides a monetary allowance towards the private purchase of an outer burial receptacle to encase the casket for use in a VA National Cemetery. The cost is equal to the average cost of government-furnished grave liners less any administrative costs to the VA. A veteran's survivor has the option of selecting a government-furnished grave liner. The allowance payable for qualifying interments is \$255.00.

KEYS TO RECOVERY

"How Do You Support Your Loved Ones?"

By Erlana Hart, MSW, LICSW, CPRP, VA

Have you taken time to consider ways you can support your loved ones lately? Maybe it's a close friend, family member or spouse who's involved in your life. If you are facing a mental health condition, the whole support system is affected and your loved ones may experience many of the same emotions and questions that you do.

Anxiety and confusion

What does this diagnosis mean for my loved ones? How will it affect me?

Guilt and Anger

Did I do something to cause this? Why did this happen to my loved one?

Sadness

"I can see he doesn't feel like his usual self. It hurts me to see him struggling. Will it ever be the same?"

There are several ways to support your loved ones by helping them to address their questions and concerns. One way is to invite those individuals who know you well to meet with your providers. This is a way for your loved ones to ask questions and receive information that may increase their understanding of the obstacles you have faced as well as he gains you have made. Information can also relieve anxiety that some family members experience when they are supporting a loved one with a mental health condition.

There is also a new service available to our family members and close friends called SAFE (Support and Family Education). The group's purpose is to provide family members, close friends, and significant others with a place to receive information on a variety of topics related to living with a mental health condition. It is also a place where your loved ones can receive support from other family members and significant others who may have had a similar experience.

SAFE covers topics related to information about different mental health conditions as well as communication and problem solving skills. There are also topics about what it is like to support someone with a mental health condition and how to talk to friend, family and professional. Your loved ones can choose to attend sessions regularly or attend individual topics of interest. To keep SAFE a confidential place for loved ones to receive support, it is asked that veterans not attend the groups.

Another way to support your loved one would be to join a group together. If you would like to be involved in a group or meeting with your family member or close friend, please contact Arlana Hart at (612) 467-1752 or Tasha Nienow at (612) 467-1004.

(SAFE) WORKSHOPS

SAFE workshops offer support and education to family members and friends of veterans. We ask that veterans not attend these workshops as they are intended for loved ones only. This allows for a safe and supportive environment that is confidential. Loved ones are welcomed to attend any or all session that are of interest. They are free of charge, but the veteran must be enrolled in VAMC health care program.

Workshops are held on Monday evenings from 5:30 p.m. – 7 p.m. in Room 1J-114.

March 8 What to Do When Help is Turned Away?
March 22 Taking Care of Yourself

VOCATIONAL GROUP

The VAMC Vocations Group is a monthly educational group for veterans and providers that focus on vocational resources and programs with the VA and in the community.

It is held the third Wednesday of each month in room 1P-168 from 2-3 p.m.

Each month, representatives from the Minnesota Resource Center's Job for Veterans will be present to provide information and answer questions. If you would like additional information, please call (612) 725-2010.

March 17 State of MN Vocational Rehab
April 21 VA Human Resources
 Learn about Federal Employment

KEEP MINNESOTA STRONG – HIRE A VETERAN

For reasons why to hire service members as part of your team, please visit www.beyondtheyellowribbon.org.

VA PENSION UPDATE

Pension is a benefit paid to wartime veterans who have limited or no income, and who ages 65 or older are, or, if under 65, who are permanently and totally disabled.

For eligibility, countable income includes income received by the veteran and his or her dependents, if any, from most sources. It includes earnings, disability and retirement payments, interest and dividends, and net income from farming or business. There is a presumption that all of a child's income is available to or for the veteran. VA may grant an exception in hardship cases. There is no set limit on how much net worth a veteran and his dependents can have, but net worth cannot be excessive. The decision as to whether a claimant's net worth is excessive depends on the facts of each individual case. Veterans who are more seriously disabled may qualify for aid and attendance or housebound benefits. These are benefits that are paid in addition to the basic pension rate. The 2010 pension base rate remains the same as they were in 2009.

The VA provides compensation and pension benefits to over 3.8 million veterans and other beneficiaries. Presently, the basic monthly rate of compensation paid to veterans ranges from \$123 to \$2,673. Annual income limits for disability begin at \$11,830 for a veteran without dependents and increase for veterans who have dependents, who are housebound, or who need regular aid and attendance.

NEW STATE TAX CHANGES FOR MILITARY MEMBERS

Members of the Minnesota National Guard and Reserves can also claim a subtraction of compensation that is included in federal taxable income for training and meetings whether they are held in Minnesota or outside of the state. Training includes annual training and drill weekends and state active service includes natural disaster emergency response and missing people searches.



MILITARY TAXES DONE FOR FREE

The Twin Cities military community is welcome to use the FREE Tax assistance and filing resources at the 934th Airlift Wing's Airman and Family Readiness Office. Any military service member (Active, Guard, Reserve, Retired), DoD employee, or spouses/surviving spouses are welcome to take advantage of the services.

Appointments are scheduled for Fridays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., February through April. To schedule an appointment, please call (612) 713-1515/1517.

For a listing of free locations, please visit www.taxes.state.mn.us/taxes/vita/free_tax_prep.shtml

DAKOTA COUNTY VETERAN SERVICE OFFICE

The staff at Dakota County Veteran Services provides advice and assistance for veterans or their families filing claims for state and/or federal benefits, social security supplement income benefits, and other public and private programs.

Our mission is to act as an advocate and provide resources to the veterans of Dakota County, their families and survivors by assisting them in getting the benefits they are entitled to under the law.

For questions, please contact the West St. Paul office from 8 a.m. to 4:45 p.m., Monday through Friday. We are available in Apple Valley and Hastings by appointment only. Please call (651) 554-5601 to schedule an appointment at any of these locations.

Please visit Dakota County's website at www.co.dakota.mn.us as it offers citizens additional ways to learn about county government issues. Visitors can also sign up to receive updates via e-mail.

To sign up to receive e-mail updates or to be removed from this service, please go to www.co.dakota.mn.us/eNews.



EVENTS

For a list of events through Beyond the Yellow Ribbon, please visit www.beyondtheyellowribbon.org.

Please visit the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs website at www.mdva.state.mn.us for various events happening in your community.

FREE MONTHLY VETS DINNER

This is a free monthly dinner offered to all military veterans and an opportunity for area veterans to gather and eat together.

When: March 1, 2010
Where: Episcopal Church of the Advent
412 Oak Street, Farmington
Time: 6-8:00 p.m.

Please RSVP to <http://farmingtonw2c.org> or contact Annette Kuyper at 651-460-2248.

April's dinner will be April 5th at The River Community Church, Farmington.

If required, free transportation will be provided.

2ND ANNUAL WARRIOR TO CITIZEN MOTHER & GRANDMOTHER LUNCHEON

All mothers and grandmothers of active service members are invited.

When: Saturday, May 8, 2010
Where: St. Michael's Catholic Church
22120 Denmark Avenue
Farmington
Time: 11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Please RSVP to <http://farmingtonw2c.org> by April 17th or contact Annette Kuyper at 651-460-2248.

Returning soldiers of the 34th Infantry Division are invited on Sunday, March 14 at noon to reconnect with our great American hunting tradition by enjoying an all expressed paid Pheasant Hunt at Wild Wings of Oneka Shooting Preserve in Hugo.

For more information, please Contact Chuck Haas at (651) 247-0354 or charles.haas@ci.hugo.mn.us

The Scott County of Pheasants Forever is inviting Minnesota military personnel who have returned from active serving abroad within the past two years to participate in their 2nd Annual Operation Upland Pheasant Hunt at the Caribou Gun Club and Hunting Preserve in Le Sueur on Saturday, March 27th.

To register, log onto www.scottcountypf.org or contact Stacy Dvorak at (612) 202-6119 or ouph@scottcountypf.org.