

THE STORY COUNTY VETERAN



Story County Commission of Veterans Affairs (SCCVA) – Story County, Iowa

SPRING 2019

Greetings Story County Veterans!



Thank you for your service to our country and welcome to the spring 2019 edition of the Story County Veteran. I'm glad we finally made it out of winter and can get out of the

house to enjoy an Iowa spring. Not sure about you, but I might have worn out my snow shovel this year along with some wear and tear on my snow blower.

Story County Veterans Affairs staff are dedicated to assisting Veterans living in Story County. To better assist you, please call and schedule an appointment at 515-956-2626 or 515-956-2625. We have scheduled appointments in and out of the office every day. Scheduling an appointment will prevent us from missing you or long wait times in our lobby.

I hope you find the information in this newsletter helpful for you and your family!

Hometown Outreach

I have been doing hometown outreach at our city halls in Story County, and at this time I have completed my first tour and have visited with 52 Veterans in their hometown. This program is working great, so I am on tour number two, only this time I will be at city halls all day instead of half days as I did during tour number one. If you have any questions or just want to come in for a visit, watch for me in your hometown.

Locate your DD-214

One of the most common questions I receive every week is how to find a Veteran's DD-214. We were all given a DD-214 when we were discharged from

the service. After reading this, please go find your discharge and have it recorded at the Story County Recorder's office if you haven't done so yet; if it is already recorded, you can go there to get a copy or a certified copy at no charge. The Recorder's office is in Nevada at the Story County Administration Building, and they are open from 8:00 AM-5:00 PM, Monday-Friday.

If your discharge is not recorded with the County and you need help finding it, give our office a call and make an appointment; we have the forms in our office that you will need to fill out to request a copy of your discharge from the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis.

One way to know if your discharge is recorded without asking the office is to ask yourself this question: Do you get \$1,852 tax exemption off your property? If you do, then no worries, your DD-214 is on record and you are receiving the discount. In addition, check to see if you are getting homestead exemption on your property; be advised you only can claim homestead on one property in the United States.

You might be wondering about this tax benefit of \$1,852. It goes back to 1947 when Iowa legislators put this in place as a flat rate. During that time, the average home value in Iowa was \$18,520, so this benefit was 10% of that value. However, this benefit has not changed in 72 years, so we hope there is an increase approved soon by our State Legislators and Governor.

Military Tax Exemption

July 1 of every year is the deadline to make application for military tax exemption on property taxes. If you sold your house and bought a different one, you have to re-file by July 1. We have two Assessor offices in the County, one in Ames and one in Nevada. If you bought in Story County outside of the city limits of Ames, then go to the Story County Administration Building at 900 Sixth Street in Nevada.

Enjoy the newsletter!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brett D. McLain".

Brett D. McLain

Director, Story County Veterans Affairs

A promotional graphic with a red border. At the top and bottom are decorative banners with stars and stripes. The text in the center reads: "Save the date! June 14th Story County Commission of Veterans Affairs Free BBQ! Family Friendly Games and Activities for kids and adults! (More details coming soon! Please check our website at www.storycountyiowa.gov/va)".

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www.storycountyiowa.gov/va)**

Do We Have Any Pearl Harbor Survivors in Iowa?

The Iowa Chapter of the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association was disbanded in 2013 as there were only 3 remaining members, all of whom have since passed away. Iowa does have a Sons & Daughters Chapter of Pearl Harbor Survivors that is under the umbrella of the National Association. According to them, all Iowan Pearl Harbor survivors have passed away.

We do have one Pearl Harbor survivor living in Polk County we are aware of. However, he moved here in the 1990's to be closer to family. He is originally from California.

There may be others like him from other States who have ultimately ended up in Iowa.

If you know of any Pearl Harbor survivors living in Story County or in Iowa, please let me know.

Brett McLain
515.956.2626

STORY COUNTY IS PROUD TO BE A HOME BASE IOWA COMMUNITY!

As part of the Home Base Iowa initiative, Story County has established the Welcome Home to Story County Relocation Assistance Program which allows up to \$2,500 in relocation assistance.

For more information, please contact the County Outreach and Special Projects Manager at 515-382-7247 or via email at lharter@storycountyia.gov.

Youngest Enlisted US Military Service Member

One of our youngest members who served in WWII was 12-year-old Calvin L. Graham, USN.

On 15 August 1942 Calvin was sworn into the Navy. He was 12 years, 4 months, and 12 days old. He was the youngest individual to enlist in the US Military service since the Civil War.

After boot camp, Calvin went to Pearl Harbor where he was assigned to the USS South Dakota. They were soon in the South Pacific. During their first battle, Calvin's gun crew accounted for seven of the 26 enemy aircraft that the ship shot down.

A short time later, in November 1942, during the Battle of Guadalcanal, the South Dakota was hit forty-seven times by enemy fire. One explosion threw Calvin down three decks of stairs. He was seriously wounded by shrapnel that tore through his jaw and mouth. In spite of his injuries, he helped pull fellow sailors from danger. He was awarded the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart, and the Navy Unit Commendation medal.

The ship's captain received a letter, from the Navy Department, stating that his mother said he was only 12 years old. Calvin asked the captain to let him stay in the Navy but the captain said "that he did not want a 12-year-old on his ship." He was later thrown into the brig and stripped of his medals. On 1 April 1943, he was kicked out of the navy without an Honorable

Discharge and without Veterans benefits. He did not receive any discharge papers at the time.

He wrote to congressmen and presidents and finally, in 1978, the Navy reinstated all of his medals with the exception of the Purple Heart. He was awarded \$337 in back pay but was denied health benefits except for disability status for one lost tooth. Calvin maintained that it wasn't the money but his pride and self-respect that he wanted restored.

In 1988, President Reagan signed legislation that granted Calvin full disability benefits, increased his back pay to \$4,917, and allowed \$18,000 for past medical bills, contingent on receipts for the medical services. By this time, some of the doctors who treated him had died and many medical bills were lost. Calvin received only \$2,100 of the possible \$18,000.

The money for the rights to his story for the movie, "Too Young The Hero", amounted to \$50,000, but 50% went to two agents, and 20% went to a writer of an unpublished book about Calvin. Calvin and his wife received \$15,000 before taxes. Calvin Graham died at his home in Fort Worth, Texas on 6 June 1992 at the age of 62.

Eighteen months later, on 21 June 1994, his Purple Heart was presented to his widow Mary by the Secretary of the Navy, John Dalton, at a ceremony in Arlington, Texas.

Agent Orange Exposure in Vietnam Waters (Blue Navy Veterans)

If you served on a Blue Water Navy ship on the inland waterways of Vietnam between January 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975, or you ever came ashore in Vietnam, you likely had contact with Agent Orange. The U.S. military used this toxic chemical to clear trees and plants during the war. Find out if you can get disability compensation or benefits for illnesses believed to be caused by contact with Agent Orange.

We'll need additional information from you to determine if you may be able to get disability benefits.

If you believe you may have eligibility for this, we will need documentation of your disability that is linked to Agent Orange. Call 515-699-5999 and ask for an Agent Orange screening test; get a copy of that test and then call Story County VA for an appointment.

Veterans' Recruitment Appointment (VRA)

Veterans' Recruitment Appointment (VRA) is an accepted authority that allows agencies to appoint eligible Veterans without competition.

If you:

- are in receipt of a campaign badge for service during a war or in a campaign or expedition; OR
- are a disabled veteran, OR
- are in receipt of an Armed forces Service Medal for participation in a military operation, OR
- are a recently separated Veteran (within the last 3 years), AND separated under honorable conditions (this means an honorable or general discharge), you are VRA eligible.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.usajobs.gov/Help/working-in-government/unique-hiring-paths/veterans/vra/>

The USDA National Centers for Animal Health facility in Ames, Iowa may have positions available that may be a good fit for certain Veterans. They do have the ability to hire eligible Veterans without competition directly through the Veterans Recruitment authority.

VA Van to Des Moines VA Medical Center

This service is available to Veterans who are at least 30% service-connected and have mobility issues. The van will pick you up and transport you to the Des Moines VA Medical Center for appointments.

Call 515-699-5999 to schedule a ride.



Suicide Prevention

Sometimes, life's challenges can feel overwhelming, like there's no way things can get better. When things feel unbearable, or if you're having thoughts of ending your life, support is available. VA offers a number of programs and resources for Veterans and their loved ones, friends, and health care providers.

If you are a Veteran in crisis — or you're concerned about one — free, confidential support is available 24/7. Call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, or send a text message to 838255.

Suicide Is Preventable

Suicide is a national health concern that affects all Americans, whether or not they have served in the military. VA believes that everyone has a role to play in preventing suicide. That's why we are working with community partners across the country — including faith communities, employers, schools, and health care organizations — to prevent suicide among all Veterans, including those who may never come to VA for care.

Sometimes, a crisis may involve thoughts of suicide. Learn to recognize these warning signs:

- Hopelessness; feeling like there's no way out
- Anxiety, agitation, sleeplessness, or mood swings
- Feeling like there is no reason to live
- Rage or anger
- Engaging in risky activities without thinking
- Increasing alcohol or drug misuse
- Withdrawing from family and friends

The presence of the following signs requires immediate attention:

- Thinking about hurting or killing yourself
- Looking for ways to kill yourself
- Talking about death, dying, or suicide
- Self-destructive behavior such as drug misuse, carelessly handling weapons, etc.

Suicide is Everyone's Business. #BeThere

VETERAN SUICIDE DATA

Iowa, Midwestern Region, and National Veteran Suicide Deaths by Age Group, 2016

Age Group	Iowa Veteran Suicides	Midwestern Region Veteran Suicides	National Veteran Suicides	Iowa Veteran Suicide Rate	Midwestern Region Veteran Suicide Rate	National Veteran Suicide Rate
Total	64	1,202	6,079	30.2	28.0	30.1
18-34	10-20	179	893	-	45.2	45.0
35-54	22	333	1,648	47.8	33.4	33.1
55-74	22	448	2,259	24.7	23.6	25.9
75+	<10	242	1,274	-	24.2	28.3

Iowa Veteran Suicide Deaths, 2016

Sex	Veteran Suicides
Total	64
Male	60-70
Female	<10



Burn Pits Accountability Act

On January 17, 2019, Representative Tulsi Gabbard (HI) introduced H.R. 663, the Burn Pits Accountability Act, in the House, and Senator Amy Klobuchar (MN) introduced a companion bill, S. 191, in the Senate.

Since the Persian Gulf War, a common waste disposal practice at military sites outside the United States was the use of burn pits. Smoke from these pits contained toxic substances that may have short- and long-term health effects, especially for those who were exposed for longer periods.

Many service members reported acute symptoms of respiratory or eye irritation, gastrointestinal distress, or rashes during or shortly after exposure, but the research thus far has been inconclusive about whether there are longer lasting consequences to these exposures as there are many Veterans who are still struggling with health conditions that arose during or after military service.

HELP US HELP YOU!

To better assist
you, please call the
Story County VA
office to schedule
an appointment.

515-956-2626
515-956-2625

Types of Veteran ID Cards

There are several types of identification cards you can use to show you're a Veteran. You only need to have one of them for this purpose. Learn about the different types of ID cards you can get.

Department of Defense Identification Card

A Department of Defense (DoD) Identification Card is used to show your military status and to get access to services at military bases. You may also use this card to get discounts offered to Veterans at many stores, businesses, and restaurants.

If you have a DoD Identification Card, you don't need to request another type of photo ID card to prove you're a Veteran or to get retail or business discounts.

You may be eligible if one of the descriptions below is true for you:

- Retired from the military, or
- On active duty, or
- In the National Guard, the Reserves, the Selected Reserves, or Inactive Ready Reserve

Veteran Health Identification Card

When you're enrolled in VA health care, you get a Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC) that you use to check in to your appointments at VA medical centers. You may also use this card to get discounts offered to Veterans at many stores, businesses, and restaurants. If you have a VHIC, you don't need to request another type of photo ID card to prove you're a Veteran or to get retail or business discounts.

Veteran ID Card

A Veteran ID Card (VIC) is a form of photo ID you can use to get discounts offered to Veterans at many stores, businesses, and restaurants. When you have this card, you won't need to carry around your military discharge papers or share sensitive personal information to receive discounts. If you have a VIC, you don't need to request another type of photo ID card to prove you're a Veteran or to get retail or business discounts.

You can apply for a VIC online at: <https://www.va.gov/records/get-veteran-id-cards/vic/>



Do Not Let Identity Thieves Steal Your Tax Refund

Since 2000, tax-related identity theft has grown significantly. The IRS, the Iowa Department of Revenue, state and federal consumer protection agencies, and taxpayers have all fought back. But tax-related identity theft remains a threat.

Identity thieves may try to steal an income tax refund by using the taxpayer's Social Security number to file a tax return. Similarly, they may use a victim's SSN

to earn wages that are reported to the IRS as the victim's income, thereby avoiding paying taxes themselves on the earnings.

Identity thieves get a hold of Social Security numbers through various means. They make telemarketing calls to trick victims by saying they are with the IRS or some other agency and want to confirm the number. They buy Social Security numbers obtained through data breaches. They also trick victims through scam e-mails.

You may find out you've been a victim of income tax identity theft when you receive a letter from the IRS or the Iowa Department of Revenue saying more than one return was filed in your name or that you earned income you didn't report.

For more information about all forms of identity theft, go to the website: IowaIdTheft.org.

Be Aware of Pension Poachers!

Be cautious if someone offers to move your assets around for you to qualify for VA pension. This type of scam is often directed toward Veterans and family members who do not actually qualify for VA pension. You could be required to repay these benefits to the government. Examples of possible pension poaching scams:

- Organizations that cold call Veterans, charge money for assisting with a VA pension claim, and take credit card information from Veterans over the telephone
- People who charge as much as \$6,000 upfront to represent claimants before VA, with a percentage of any

eventual back payment from VA as a portion of the ultimate fee

If you need any assistance with filing a claim with the VA, or have any questions regarding VA benefits and services, please call the Story County VA office and schedule an appointment to meet with Brett or Erin...for free!

DON'T BE A VICTIM: BE AWARE OF PENSION POACHING SCAMS

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) pension exists to help financially disadvantaged wartime Veterans and their survivors.

Individuals and organizations are available to help you file a VA pension claim **free of charge**. A searchable list of VA-accredited representatives including Veterans Service Organizations, agents, and attorneys is available at the VA Office of General Counsel website: www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation/index.asp.



To get more information about VA pension, visit www.benefits.va.gov/pension or call 1-800-827-1000.





FLAG POLE DEDICATION

The flag pole located at Dakin's Lake in Zeoring was dedicated on May 25, 2018.

Sponsored by Vietnam Veterans of America, Story County Chapter 1102

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126 South Kellogg Avenue, Suite 001
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