

THE STORY COUNTY VETERAN



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

FALL 2020

Greetings Story County Veterans!

Thank you for your service to our country and welcome to the fall 2020 edition of the Story County Veteran. I hope this newsletter finds you in great health and that you find the information in this newsletter very helpful for you and your family.

I am writing this newsletter in September/October, and with COVID-19 on our minds, our thoughts and prayers go out to the people who have been affected and the doctors and nurses who are on the frontline taking care of us—we salute you!! Be safe and take care of your family.

Please note: 2020 Supermarket of Veterans Benefits is postponed till 2021

This year's Supermarket of Veterans Benefits has been cancelled due to COVID-19. This was not an easy decision for the Story County Veterans Affairs Commission to make with our history of doing this event for the last 20 years. We are hopeful this will all pass by next spring and in our spring newsletter I can let you know about our plans for our 2021 events.

As I write this, I am not sure if our normal Veterans Day programs will continue this year as planned, so please check with your local American Legions about those events. For those of you who would like to join the American Legion, the national American Legion has opened up the eligibility dates to include WWII–present. If you want to become a member, each post in Story County has a membership chair, so just contact that person, or you can call me and I can help with this. This is not to leave out the other Veterans organizations in Story County—Ames has a Veterans of Foreign Wars post, and Story County has a Vietnam Veterans of America Council. If you are interested in becoming a member with either organization, just contact them or our office and we can help.

I have always said it doesn't matter which service organization you choose as long as you choose one or more and be active. All

of our Veterans service organizations are in need of members. I believe you will get a lot out of becoming an active member, attending the meetings, participating in activities, serving on committees, and/or running for an elected office—you can choose what you are interested in doing.

Story County Veterans Affairs Office

I want to make sure you know where Erin and I are located. We are at the Story County Human Services Center at 126 South Kellogg Avenue, Suite 001, in Ames. My phone number is 515-956-2626 and my email is bmclain@storycountyiowa.gov. Erin, County Veteran Service Officer, can be reached by phone at 515-956-2625 and email at erewerts@storycountyiowa.gov.

Currently, the Story County Human Services Center building is locked to the public; however, if we can't help you via phone, emails, or US mail, we can set up an appointment with safety measures in place and meet with you at our office.

We have gift cards for Veterans and surviving spouses who need assistance with food or gas. Please call to speak with Erin or me about these.

Donations for the Iowa Veterans Home

During the month of November, the Story County Treasurer and Veterans Affairs offices will be collecting donations for our Veterans who are residents at the Iowa Veterans Home in Marshalltown. As of this writing we have 18 Veterans from Story County living at the Iowa Veterans Home. Donations will be accepted at the Story County Treasurer's office, located at 900 6th Street in Nevada, or at Story County Veterans Affairs, located at 126 South Kellogg Ave. Suite 001 in Ames.

Due to COVID-19 precautions, please call first before bringing your donations to either office. Call the Treasurer's office at 515-382-7330 or the Veterans Affairs office at 515-956-2626.

You can find the Iowa Veterans Home donation wish list at the link below: <http://www.storycountyiowa.gov/381/Iowa-Veterans-Home>

Update on the Shingrix Shingles Vaccine

If Veterans need to have their second Shingrix shot (shingles vaccine), this can now be scheduled. There are evening and Saturday clinics available. Please contact your Primary Care team by Secure Message or call to schedule, 515-699-5999, Option 2, Option 5.

Enjoy the newsletter!

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

Brett D. McLain, Director
Story County Veterans Affairs

GIRL SCOUT COOKIE DONATION FOR VETERANS



The young lady in the picture is Miya Thompson from Colo, Nevada Girl Scout Troop 30; County Veteran Service Officer Erin Rewerts accepted the donation of cookies which were then given to Veterans in Story County—July 28, 2020

Brushy Creek Area Honor Flight and Story County Freedom Flight Announce 2021 Trips to D.C.

Brushy Creek Area Honor Flight and Story County Freedom Flight announce 2021 one-day trips taking WWII, Korean War, Vietnam War, and Cold War Veterans who served between WWII and Vietnam to our nation’s capital in Washington, D.C. to visit their memorials. If you are interested in going on one of these flights, you will need to make application by December 31, 2020. For an application, please contact Brett at Story County Veterans Affairs at 515-956-2626.

The two flights in 2021 will be **May 8, 2021** and **August 28, 2021**.

Currently recognized “wartime” periods: **World War II**

December 7, 1941 – December 31, 1946

Korean War

June 27, 1950 – January 31, 1955

Vietnam War

August 5, 1964 – May 7, 1975

***If you served between World War II and Korean War and/or between Korean War and Vietnam War you should make application. You are eligible to make application if you served one day during the following time frame and have an honorable discharge: December 7, 1941 – May 7, 1975**

Brushy Creek Area Honor Flight and Story County Freedom Flight have flown approximately 2,992 Veterans on 19 flights from approximately 45 counties and 155 communities. There are approximately 400 Veterans on the waiting list.

HONOR FLIGHT ITINERARY

5:00–5:30 a.m.	Arrive at Fort Dodge Regional Airport for processing and boarding
6:20 a.m.	Depart Fort Dodge Regional Airport (hot breakfast served)
9:50 a.m.	Arrive at Dulles Airport, Washington, D.C. (1-hour time zone change)
11:00 a.m.	Board buses and depart to Lincoln, Korean, and Vietnam Monuments
11:45 a.m.	Arrive at Lincoln, Korean, and Vietnam Monuments
1:45 p.m.	Begin loading buses
2:00 p.m.	Depart for tour of Washington, D.C. and eat lunch on motor coach
3:10 p.m.	Arrive at WWII Monument—WWII Veterans picture immediately
4:20 p.m.	Begin loading buses
4:30 p.m.	Depart for Arlington National Cemetery
4:45 p.m.	Arrive at gate of Arlington National Cemetery
5:10 p.m.	Witness lowering of the flag
5:30 p.m.	Observe changing of the guard
6:05 p.m.	Depart for Iwo Jima Monument (light box supper served)
6:20 p.m.	Arrive at Iwo Jima Monument, group picture, and short program
7:10 p.m.	Begin loading buses
7:25 p.m.	Depart for Dulles Airport
8:00 p.m.	Arrive at Dulles Airport and go through security
9:00 p.m.	Depart Dulles to “Home Sweet Home” (snack served)
10:30–10:40 p.m.	Arrive at Fort Dodge Regional Airport (1-hour time zone change)

VA Mileage Reimbursement

Eligible Veterans may be provided mileage reimbursement or, when medically indicated, special mode transport (e.g. wheelchair van, ambulance) when traveling for approved VA medical care.

Mileage reimbursement is 41.5 cents per mile and is subject to a deductible of \$3 for each one-way trip and \$6 for a round trip; with a maximum deductible of \$18 or the amount after six one-way trips (whichever occurs first) per calendar month.

The deductible may be waived when travel is in relation to a VA compensation or pension examination; travel is by special mode; or when the imposition would cause a severe financial hardship.

Eligibility

The following are eligible for VA travel reimbursement:

- Veterans rated 30 percent or more service-connected.
- Veterans traveling for treatment of service-connected conditions.
- Veterans who receive a VA pension.
- Veterans traveling for scheduled compensation or pension examinations.
- Veterans whose income does not exceed the maximum annual VA pension rate.
- Veterans in certain emergency situations.
- A Veteran whose medical condition requires a special mode of transportation and travel is pre-authorized. (Advanced authorization is not required in an emergency and when a delay would be hazardous to life or health.)
- Certain non-Veterans when related to care of a Veteran (caregivers, attendants, and donors).

Beneficiary travel fraud can take money out of the pockets of deserving Veterans. Inappropriate uses of beneficiary travel benefits include: incorrect addresses provided resulting in increased mileage; driving/riding together and making separate claims; and taking no-cost transportation, such as the DAV van, and making claims. Veterans making false statements for beneficiary travel reimbursement may be prosecuted under applicable laws.

Senior Variety Show Donates \$5,000 to Story County Freedom Flight



From left to right: Vicki Stutzman, Senior Variety Show Treasurer; Pat Meek, Senior Variety Show Board President; Brett McLain, Story County VA Director—Sept. 15, 2020

Top 7 Reasons Why VA Denies Claims

#1 VA Denies Because You Lack a Current Disability—Do You Need a Diagnosis?

First and foremost, Veterans must have a current condition in order to establish a service connection. Current means that you are experiencing the symptoms and effects of the condition at this very point in time.

#2 VA Denies Due to No Proof of In-Service Injury, Illness, or Event

Lacking proof of an in-service injury, illness, or event relates to the second element of service connection. VA is looking to see if something happened in service that may have contributed to the onset or aggravation of a current condition.

For instance, you were injured in a training accident, exposed to loud noises, or witnessed a traumatic event. Any of these incidents may lead to a subsequent disability and thereby qualify as an in-service event.

#3 VA Denies Due to Lack of a Medical Nexus Connecting Your Disability to Your Military Service

After the first two elements of service connection are met, you will likely need to provide a nexus opinion. A nexus opinion establishes a link between your current disability and your in-service incident. **This opinion can come from a private physician or the C&P (compensation or pension) examination.**

If the examiner gives a negative nexus opinion, meaning they find that it is “less likely than not” that your condition is due to service, VA will likely deny your claim for service connection. **A positive nexus opinion will find that it is “at least as likely as not” that the condition is due to service.**

#4 VA Denies VA Disability Benefits Due to Lack of Evidence

VA often denies claims for disability benefits because there is not enough evidence in the Veteran’s file to issue a favorable decision. Generally, VA has a duty to assist, meaning VA is required to gather information that may help support the Veteran’s claim **but ultimately it is the responsibility of the Veteran to provide them with the needed evidence.** (e.g., service personnel records, service medical records, VA medical records).

#5 Veteran Missed Their C&P Exam Appointment

It is extremely important that Veterans attend their C&P exams, because if you do not attend the exam, VA can deny your claim. If you have a good reason for not being able to attend, you must inform VA right away and seek to reschedule.

#6 VA Denies Because the Veteran Used the Wrong VA Form

VA denies claims if Veterans submit the wrong forms associated with their claims. There is a specific VA form for most everything within the claims and appeals processes. As such, it can be very overwhelming for Veterans and hard to keep track of. **Therefore, when you are working with your County VSO to file your claim, it is very important that you share your entire claims history.**

#7 VA Denies Due to Missed VA Disability Form Deadlines

There are many deadlines that Veterans must be aware of when filing claims and appeals. Under AMA, **after receiving an unfavorable decision**, Veterans have one year to choose in which appeal lane they would like to file their appeal: supplemental

claim; higher-level review; or Notice of Disagreement (appeal to the Board of Veterans’ Appeals).

Was Your VA Disability Claim Denied?
Contact Story County Veterans Affairs,
515-956-2626 or 515-956-2625

All claims we assist with have a representative appointed at no cost to the Veteran/surviving spouse. VA Form 21-22 is used to **appoint your representative.** Below are the service organizations located at the Federal Building in Des Moines who can represent you; it is not required that you hold membership to use these organizations. They are there to represent you on your claim **for free.**

American Legion 515-323-7532

Disabled American Veterans..... 515-323-7539

Paralyzed Veterans of America 515-323-7544

Veterans of Foreign Wars 515-323-7545

Vietnam Veterans of America 515-323-7548

If VA has denied your disability compensation claim or granted you a lower rating than your medical conditions warrant, do not give up the fight. We may be able to help answer your questions and/or help you appeal this decision. Contact our office today for a free consultation.

Headstone or Grave Marker

Our office has had several calls about eligibility for a headstone or grave marker; below is the condensed version on eligibility.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) furnishes upon request, at no charge to the applicant, a Government headstone or marker for the unmarked grave of any deceased eligible Veteran in any cemetery around the world, regardless of their date of death. VA may also furnish a headstone or marker for graves marked with a private headstone or marker for Veterans who died on or after Nov. 1, 1990.

Any deceased Veteran discharged under conditions other than dishonorable and any member of the Armed Forces of the United States who dies on active duty may be eligible. Service after Sep. 7, 1980, as an enlisted person, and service after Oct. 16, 1981, as an officer, must be for a minimum of 24 months continuous active duty or be completed under special circumstances (e.g., death on active duty). Persons who have only limited active duty service for training while in the National Guard or Reserves are not eligible unless there are special circumstances (e.g., death while on active

duty or as a result of training). Reservists and National Guard members who, at the time of death, were entitled to retired pay, or would have been entitled but for being under the age of 60, are eligible. Reservists called to active duty other than training and National Guard members who Federalized and who serve for the period called are eligible.

For more information, please visit: www.va.gov

Mental Health for Veterans

Nearly 1 in 4 active duty members showed signs of a mental health condition, according to a 2014 study in *JAMA Psychiatry*. This article will focus on questions that military personnel often ask concerning treatment resources, disclosure, and staying healthy during the transition to civilian life. If you are having thoughts of suicide, the Veterans Crisis Line is available 24/7 by dialing 1-800-273-8255 and pressing 1.

Mental Health Concerns

There are three primary mental health concerns that you may encounter serving in the military.

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Traumatic events, such as military combat, assault, disasters, or sexual assault can have long-lasting negative effects such as trouble sleeping, anger, nightmares, being jumpy, and alcohol and drug abuse. When these troubles don't go away, it could be PTSD. The 2014 *JAMA Psychiatry* study found the rate of PTSD to be 15 times higher than civilians.

Depression.

More than just experiencing sadness, depression doesn't mean you are weak, nor

is it something that you can simply "just get over." Depression interferes with daily life and normal functioning and may require treatment. The 2014 *JAMA Psychiatry* study found the rate of depression to be five times higher than civilians.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

A traumatic brain injury is usually the result of significant blow to the head or body. Symptoms can include headaches, fatigue or drowsiness, memory problems, and mood changes and mood swings.

Service men and women owe it to their fellow service members to stay in good mental as well as physical health. If you're concerned about a possible mental health condition—or if you enter the armed forces with a past or present mental health condition—know that the armed forces do not require service members to disclose mental health problems to their chain of command. The responsibility for deciding whether to disclose your condition does fall on the medical officers and care providers you consult. They receive training on military policies concerning the confidentiality of protected health information (PHI). Here are some people to consider speaking with.

Confidential counselors are available for service members and their families through Military One Source at 1-800-342-9647. If you're unsure whether to seek treatment or if someone you know might need treatment, they are an excellent first stop for information and advice. Primary care providers can be helpful for discussing concerns and treatment options. Behavioral health care providers working at primary care clinics are available on many military bases so you can seek a specialist's advice without leaving base. And at some bases, you can find convenient Embedded Behavioral Health teams—clinics separate from traditional medical facilities.

If you, a colleague, or a family member are experiencing an immediate crisis—particularly if it's a life-threatening mental health crisis—you should proceed immediately to a military or civilian emergency room for acute care or call 911.

Find more information at:

<https://www.nami.org/Find-Support/Veterans-and-Active-Duty>

MENTAL HEALTH FACTS

Who can be affected by a mental illness?

A mental health condition isn't the result of one event. Research suggests multiple interlinking causes. Genetics, environment, and lifestyle combine to influence whether someone develops a mental health condition. A stressful job or home life makes some people more susceptible, as do traumatic life events like being the victim of a crime. Biochemical processes and circuits as well as basic brain structure may play a role, too. In addition to the person directly affected by a mental illness, family, friends, and communities are also affected.

20%

Of adults experience a mental health condition every year

50%

Of mental health conditions begin by age 14

5%

Live with a serious mental illness such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder

75%

Of mental health conditions develop by age 24

VA to award more than \$400 million in grants to end Veteran homelessness

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced on August 7, 2020 that it will begin awarding more than \$400 million in grants under the Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program (SSVF) to 266 non-profit organizations in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands on Oct. 1 of this year.

SSVF funding provides thousands of low-income Veteran families around the nation with access to case management and other assistance to rapidly re-house Veterans who become homeless or prevent Veterans from becoming homeless. "Helping Veterans exit homelessness and remain in stable housing is more important now than ever," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "The Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program remains a vital resource to ensure that every Veteran has a safe and stable place to call home, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic." In fiscal year (FY) 2019, SSVF

served 105,156 individuals, including 70,524 Veterans and 20,608 children.

As a result of these and other efforts, Veteran homelessness has been cut in half since 2010's launch of the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness.

Since then, VA's homelessness programs and targeted housing vouchers provided by the Department of Housing and Urban Development have placed hundreds of thousands of Veterans and their family members into permanent housing or helped to prevent them from being homeless.

This year's grant recipients competed for funding under a Notice of Fund Availability published Dec. 5, 2019. The funding will support SSVF services in fiscal year 2021 which begins Oct. 1 and ends Sept. 30, 2021. Visit [VA homeless SSVF](#) to view the list of 2020 grantees and to learn more about the program.



Attention Veterans:

Do you need
winter weatherization
for your home?

2020 Warm Hearts Warm Homes Winter Weatherization for Veterans

- Weatherization materials provided **free of charge**
- Available to Veterans in Story County
- Reduces heating costs, makes home more comfortable throughout the winter
- A program of **Central Iowa RSVP**

Weatherization materials include:

- Plastic window kits for sealing windows
- Weather stripping for exterior doors
- Door sweeps/draft dodgers
- Gaskets for outlet plates and switch plates
- Furnace filter replacement



For more information contact:

Central Iowa RSVP

Jessica Bullock, Volunteer Coordinator

515-292-8890 rsvp53@cirsvp.org

Story County Veterans Flu Clinic

- Thursday November 19th 9:00 am – 2:00 pm
Nevada American Legion
1331 6th Street, Nevada Iowa
- No appointment needed- just walk on in!!
- Please wear a mask while getting your flu shot



Choose **VA**



Suicide Prevention

We all can take action to help prevent suicide, but many people do not know what they can do to support a Veteran during a time of crisis.

A simple act of kindness can help someone feel less alone. Suicide prevention can start with one simple act of support; just be there for them and listen.

Veterans and/or their loved ones can call **1-800-273-8255** and **Press 1**, or send a text message to **838255**, or chat online to receive free, confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, even if they are not registered with VA or enrolled in VA health care.

The responders at the Veterans Crisis Line are specially trained and experienced in helping Veterans of all ages and circumstances—from those coping with mental health issues, to recent Veterans dealing with relationships or the transition back to civilian life.

Since 2007, the Veterans Crisis Line has answered nearly 2.8 million calls and initiated the dispatch of emergency services to callers in crisis nearly 74,000 times. The Veterans Crisis Line anonymous online chat service, added in 2009, has engaged in more than 332,000 chats. In November 2011, the Veterans Crisis Line introduced a text-messaging

service to provide another way for Veterans to connect with confidential, round-the-clock support, and since then has responded to more than 67,000 texts.

VA is working to make sure that all Veterans and their loved ones are aware of the Veterans Crisis Line. To reach as many Veterans as possible, VA is coordinating with communities and partner groups nationwide—including community-based organizations, Veterans Service Organizations, and local health care providers—to let Veterans and their loved ones know that support is available whenever, if ever, they need it.

Act Now

- Dial **1-800-273-8255** and **Press 1** to talk to someone
- Start a confidential online chat session at www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/chat
- Send a text message to **838255** to connect to a VA responder
- Take a self-check quiz at <https://www.vetselfcheck.org/welcome.cfm>
- If you or a Veteran you know is in crisis, find a facility near you
- Visit www.MilitaryCrisisLine.net if you are Active Duty, Reserve, or Guard
- Connect through chat, text, or TTY if you are deaf or hard of hearing

VA to award more than 425 grants, \$279 million to help prevent and end Veteran homelessness

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced on August 19, 2020 that it will award more than 425 grants to community organizations totaling approximately \$279 million under the [Grant Per Diem \(GPD\) program](#).

The GPD program provides funding to community organizations that provide transitional housing and supportive services for homeless Veterans, with the goal of helping homeless Veterans achieve residential stability, increase their skill levels and income, and obtain greater self-determination.

The award period begins Oct. 1 to support three different types of grants to address the unique needs of Veterans who are homeless. The GPD program has provided Veterans who are homeless with community-based transitional housing and supportive services since 1994. The number of Veterans experiencing homelessness in the U.S. has declined by 50% since 2010—resulting from the GPD program and other VA efforts.

Visit the [GPD program](#) and [list of grantees](#) for more information.

NAMI Homefront

NAMI Homefront is a free, 6-session educational program for families, caregivers, and friends of military service members and Veterans with mental health conditions.

Based on the nationally recognized NAMI Family-to-Family program, NAMI Homefront is designed to address the unique needs of family, caregivers, and friends of those who have served or are currently serving our country. The program is taught by trained family members of service members/Veterans living with mental health conditions.

What You'll Gain

Recovery is a journey, and there is hope

for all people affected by mental illness. This in-person group experience provides the opportunity for mutual support and shared positive impact. You will experience compassion and reinforcement from people who relate to your experiences. Through your participation, you have the opportunity to help others grow.

NAMI Homefront teaches you how to:

- Manage crises, solve problems, and communicate effectively
- Learn to care for yourself, including managing your stress
- Develop the confidence and stamina to support your family member with compassion

- Identify and access federal, state, and local services
- Stay informed on the latest research and information on mental health, including posttraumatic stress disorder and substance abuse
- Understand current treatments, including evidence-based therapies, medications, and side effects
- Navigate the challenges and impact of mental health conditions on the entire family

Find more information at:

<https://www.nami.org/Find-Support/NAMI-Programs/NAMI-Homefront>

Veterans Memorial, Nelson Park, Slater, Iowa



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