

North Central Chapter

A Member Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America

North Central Chapter

209 N. Garfield Ave., Sioux Falls, SD 57104 1-605-336-0494 * 1-800-505-4782

Email: info@ncpva.org Website: www.ncpva.org

National PVA Website: www.pva.org

Volume 350





December 2020/January 2021

Upcoming Events Dec 2020/Jan 2021

Dec 10 . . . Membership Meeting/ TBD

Dec 14... Wreath Laying Ceremony, Flaming Fountain Veterans Memorial, State Capitol, Pierre, 11:00 AM

Dec 19... Wreath Laying Ceremony, Hills of Rest Cemetery Mausoleum, Sioux Falls, 11 AM

Dec 19... SF Veterans Council Meeting, Military Heritage Alliance Building, 7:00 PM

Dec 24-25 . . . Office Closed

Dec 25 . . . Merry Christmas!

Dec 31-Jan 1 . . . Office Closed

Jan 1 . . . Happy New Year!

Jan 14... Membership Meeting, Chapter Office, Noon Luncheon and 1:00 PM Mtg

Jan 18... Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Office Closed

Jan 21 . . . SF Veterans Council Meeting, Military Heritage Alliance Building, 7:00 PM

Because of the coronavirus, many of our events may have been canceled. Please check ahead of time.

Additional Canceled Event

Annual Christmas Luncheon in December

In observance of

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day,

Monday, January 18, 2021

the Chapter Office will be closed.

With Sympathy

It is with great sadness that I inform you that Lisa Cummings' husband, Mike, passed away on Sunday, November 15th.

There will be a private memorial service on Tuesday, November 24th, at the Heritage Funeral Home in Sioux Falls at 2:00 PM. They have respectfully requested that it be limited to family only due to the COVID-19.

Please keep Lisa and her family in your thoughts and prayers during this difficult time.

Terry Paulsen

Government Relations Director



Just a reminder that the Chapter Office will be closed Thursday, November 26th, and Eriday, November 27th

Friday, November 27th, for Thanksgiving.

We wish you and your families

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

Have a Safe and enjoyable Holiday!

SD State Veterans Cemetery Endowment Fund

With the passing of SB 91, the South Dakota Veterans Council has established an Endowment Fund with the South Dakota Community Foundation. This fund will be used for the maintenance and operations of the veterans cemetery.

The South Dakota State Veterans Cemetery will be located at the 1-90/I -229 area in Sioux Falls, SD and will encompass up to 50 acres of land donated by the City of Sioux Falls.

All federally defined veterans, spouses, and dependent children are eligible for burial in the State Veterans Cemetery.

We are proud to be able to give our veterans their final resting place on the eastside and keep them close to their families.

If you would like to contribute to the Endowment Fund, please click on the following link. Our goal is to raise \$3,000,000.00 by 2023.

https://sdcommunityfoundation.org/ for-advisors/existing-funds/southdakota-veterans-cemetery-fund/



From all of us at PVA North Central Chapter, we wish you and your families a joyous holiday season!

Stay Safe!

North Central Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America <u>OFFICERS</u>

President, Casey Davidson Vice President, Vacant Secretary, Greg Brandner Treasurer, Gene Murphy

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Duane Biesboer Charles Doom Rodney Melcher Harlan Schmidt

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Legislation Director: Terry Paulsen/Gene Murphy
Volunteer Coordinator: Charles Doom
VAVS: Lisa Cummings/Sheri Kloes
Membership Officer: Duane Biesboer
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Michael Olson

NATIONAL SERVICE OFFICER

Brad Friez

VA Dakota Regional Office 2501 West 22nd Street, Room 100 Sioux Falls, SD 57105 605-333-6801 800-795-3632

OFFICE STAFF

Lisa Cummings, Executive Director
Terry Paulsen, Government Relations Director
Barbara Priesz, Administrative Assistant

Temporary COVID-19 Office Hours are Monday through Friday, 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Sioux Falls VA Health Care SCI Coordinator

Rachel Gangle, Social Worker

605-336-3230 ext. 7898

Fargo VA Health Care SCI Coordinator

Tracy Lamont, SCI Coordinator

701-239-3765

Black Hills VA Health Care SCI Coordinator

Michelle Hough, SCI Coordinator

605-720-7003

— Attention Members —

If you are receiving your newsletter by mail and would like to receive this via email, please contact me at the Chapter Office (LisaC@ncpva.org/605-336-0494) with your email address. This will help save the Chapter on postage and printing costs.









http://www.facebook.com/ncpva

Disclaimer: The North Central Chapter PVA newsletter is published six times a year. It serves its members and interested parties by informing them about chapter activities, veterans' issues, SCI related matters, advocacy and legislative developments and other relevant issues concerning disabilities and the disabled community. The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the North Central Chapter, its Officers, Board Members or the Editor. Similarly, appearance of advertising herein does not constitute an endorsement of their products or services. The editor has the right to edit all articles.

Membership-Duane Biesboer

The Chapter currently has a total of 179 members and 84 Associate Members.

Regular membership is FREE! If you know of anyone who has a spinal cord injury or disease please have the Veteran contact the Chapter office.

Beginning October 1st, all Associate Members will be invoiced for Annual Dues. Annual dues are \$30 per year and Life Dues are \$200.00.

Thank you to those who have sent in their dues!!

Please notify the Chapter when you have a change of address.

Volunteer Program-Charles Doom

The Chapter had 149 hours for the month of October. Duane Biesboer and Donna Deutsch were October/ November 2020 Volunteers of the Month. Remember to look for your volunteer number in the newsletter and win a \$25 Gift Card! If you see your number, call the Chapter Office!



"Friends Aiming High" by John Green

Framed and Matted - \$275 Print Only - \$75

To order your print, please contact the Chapter Office at (605) 336-0494





Wreath Laying Ceremony Pierre, SD

The 14th Annual Wreath Laying Ceremony will be held <u>Monday</u>, <u>December 14th</u>, <u>11:00 AM</u> at the Flaming Fountain Veterans Memorial at the State Capitol in Pierre.

They would like to invite you, your fellow veterans, family and friends to attend.

(Ceremony still scheduled when newsletter went to print. Please check ahead of time.)

Sioux Falls VA Valet Parking

The Sioux Falls VA has decided to solicit a new contract for the continuation of the Valet Parking. This could take up to six months to be awarded.

The PVA has been in contact with the Sioux Falls VA to discuss plans for assisting Veterans into the hospital

Please let Terry know (605-336-0494) of any problems or concerns when visiting the Sioux Falls VA hospital.

Erin Brown named Director of State Veterans Cemetery

Aaron Pollard, Deputy Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, announced on Monday, October 19, that Erin Brown will serve as the director of the new state veterans cemetery in Sioux Falls. Brown will begin her duties November 9.

Once on board, Brown will be responsible for assisting the Department with the completion of the cemetery. From that point forward, she will oversee the day-to-day operations, while ensuring our heroes and their eligible loved ones who will call this sacred ground their forever home, are honored.

"Erin's record of achievements goes all the way back to her time in the military," said Deputy Secretary Pollard. "Her service to this country did not end there. She has worked as a county veterans service officer, an education specialist, claims examiner, state veterans service officer, and a program manager. All of these roles have augmented Erin's expertise on the benefits, programs, and services available to veterans and their families.

U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Filing VA Travel Claims: Questions and Answers

WHAT IS VA TRAVEL CLAIM REIMBURSE-MENT?

VA travel pay reimbursement through the Beneficiary Travel program pays eligible Veterans back for mileage and other travel expenses to and from approved health care appointments.

AM I ELIGIBLE FOR TRAVEL PAY?

VA offers two types of travel pay reimbursement: general health care travel and special mode transportation. As a Veteran, you may be eligible for one or both. A Veteran may be eligible for beneficiary travel services if the following criteria are met:

- have a service-connected (SC) rating of 30 percent or more, or
- are traveling for treatment of a SC condition, or
- receive a VA pension, or your income does not exceed the maximum annual VA pension rate, or
- are traveling for a scheduled compensation or pension, or if not otherwise eligible as noted above, and
- have a vision impairment, spinal cord injury or disorder, or a double or multiple amputation who's travel in connection with care provided through a VA special disabilities rehabilitation program (including programs provided by spinal cord injury centers, blind rehabilitation centers and prosthetics rehabilitation centers) if such care is provided on an in-patient basis or during a period in which you are provided with temporary lodging at a facility of the Department to make such care more accessible.

WHAT'S THE FASTEST WAY TO SUBMIT A NEW CLAIM AND GET FASTER PROCESSING OF A PENDING CLAIM?

For new claims and any pending claims, log in to Beneficiary Travel Self-Service System (BTSSS) and create a profile. An updated profile is required now to file a claim online and to process previously submitted kiosk and hard copy claims. Visit AccessVA and select the Veteran Travel Claim Entry icon to get started. https://access.va.gov.

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HOW DO I SUBMIT A TRAVEL REIMBURSE-MENT CLAIM FOR GENERAL HEALTH CARE TRAVEL USING BTSSS?

VA is phasing in a new web-based portal to submit and process beneficiary travel claims at select locations. The portal, BTSSS, is VA's preferred method to accept travel reimbursement claims. Once implemented, claims submitted using the kiosks will be phased out. However, hard-copy submissions will still be available. Check with your Beneficiary Travel Office to find out when the BTSSS is available at your facility. To submit a claim, visit https://access.va.gov, select the Veteran Travel Claim Entry icon, and logon using a DS Log on Level 2 account. Log in to BTSSS and create your profile today to allow faster processing of any pending claims.

WHAT IS A DS LOG ON LEVEL 2 ACCOUNT?

A DS Logon is an ID issued by Department of Defense (DoD) that allows Veterans and caregivers to access many VA and DoD sites with one user username and password. A DS Log on Level 2 account is required to file a travel claim using BTSSS.

WHY SHOULD I USE BTSSS?

BTSSS automates the claims process to ensure timely processing and payment of travel reimbursement claims. With BTSSS, turnaround time to evaluate and settle a claim is generally less than 5 days. BTSSS allows Veterans and caregivers to submit claims 24/7, 365 days a year from a computer or mobile device. It also allows users to electronically track the status of a claim request.

CAN I GET HELP TO FILE MY FIRST CLAIM?

There are several sources of help to file a claim. Eligible Veterans and caregivers may get help from a travel clerk at the Sioux Falls VA Health Care System at 605-373-4196, refer to the BTSSS user's guide at https://www.va.gov/health-care/get-reimbursed-for-travel-pay, or contact the Beneficiary Travel Help Desk at 1-855-574-7292.

<u>NOTE</u>: Aaron Cork recently left the Sioux Falls VA and while that position is being filled, Amanda Rubin is the acting Privacy/FOIA Officer and Kathleen Metzger is the acting Records Manager.

Veterans, Gold Star families get free entrance to National Parks, Refuges, Other Public Lands

Veterans and Gold Star Families will be granted free access to national parks, wildlife refuges and other Federal lands managed by the Department of the Interior starting on Veterans Day this year and every day onward.

"With the utmost respect and gratitude, we are granting Veterans and Gold Star Families free access to the iconic and treasured lands they fought to protect starting this Veterans Day and every single day thereafter," said Secretary of the Interior David L. Bernhardt.

Entrance fees for the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and standard amenity recreation fees for the Bureau of Land Management and the Bureau of Reclamation sites will be waived for Veterans and Gold Star Families. They will have free access to approximately 2,000 public locations spread out across more than 400 million acres of public lands, which host activities to fit any lifestyle, from serene to high octane, including hiking, fishing, paddling, biking, hunting, stargazing and climbing.

Many Department managed lands have direct connections to the American military, such as frontier forts, Cold War sites, battlefields, national cemeteries, and memorials. These special places pay tribute to our veterans and serve as reminders of their courage and sacrifice throughout the history of our nation, from Minuteman National Historic Park where colonists stood in defense of their rights, to Yellowstone National Park, which was protected from vandalism and poaching by the 1st U.S. Cavalry before the National Park Service was established, to Mount Rushmore where modern warriors attend reenlistment ceremonies.

Details on Program

For purposes of this program, a Veteran is identified as an individual who has served in the United States Armed Forces, including the National Guard and Reserves, and is able to present one of the following forms of identification:

- Department of Defense Identification Card
- Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC)
- Veteran ID Card
- Veterans designation on a state-issued U.S. driver's license or identification card

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Gold Star Families are next of kin of a member of the United States Armed Forces who lost his or her life in a "qualifying situation," such as a war, an international terrorist attack, or a military operation outside of the United States while serving with the United States Armed Forces.

The Interagency America the Beautiful National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass Program already includes a free annual pass for active duty members of the U.S. Military and their dependents. Other free or discounted passes are available for persons with permanent disabilities, fourth grade students, volunteers, and senior citizens age 62 years or older.

The Department also offers free entrance days for everyone throughout the year to mark days of celebration and commemoration including the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr., National Public Lands Day, Veterans Day, and the signing of the Great American Outdoors Act. 14582

Update from Dakotas Regional Office Director

Good Afternoon Fellow Veteran Advocates!

I was hopeful the Regional Office would be able to open to the public earlier this month of October and was recently hopeful November 2nd would be our date for seeing our veterans in person again. Unfortunately, this Pandemic is not cooperating with those hopes. Due to the recent uptick in cases and positivity rate, almost 1,000 additional cases today (Oct. 28) and a positivity rate of almost 42% today (Oct. 28) in Minnehaha county, I regret to let you know we are going to have to postpone seeing the public.

Again, I thank you for your flexibility and patience while we keep our veteran and employee health interests a top priority.

I will, of course, keep each of you posted as we, hopefully, progress to a healthier situation in our community.

Thanks again for all you do for our veterans and their families and let me know if there is anything that VBA can do to make this unusual situation better for our veterans and their families.

Shawn Bohn

Dakotas Regional Office Director (605) 333-6839

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER, SPORTS & REC

Because of the COVID-19, many of our events that would normally be listed on this Sports & Rec page have been canceled. Always check ahead of time if you have questions.

USD dedicates Patriots Plaza

Veterans, elected officials, community leaders, and staff and students from the University of South Dakota gathered Wednesday to dedicate USD's Patriots Plaza.

The plaza features a large, horseshoe-shaped walkway circling its concrete center. Flagpoles display the American, South Dakota, POW/MIA, and the USD flags.

The Patriots Plaza features busts of three USD alumni who are Congressional Medal of Honor recipients: Capt. Joe Foss (Class of 1939), Capt. Arlo L. Olson (1940) and Col. George "Bud" Day (1949). The project features a separate inset display for each of the three honorees. The symbols of each military branch are displayed and a marker indicating 100 years of Army ROTC at USD.

"It was truly an honor to attend this dedication," said SDDVA Secretary Greg Whitlock. "My accolades to all that contributed to this great plaza that showcases some of South Dakota's great heroes."

Veteran's Transportation

Did you know that River Cities Public Transit, based out of Pierre, accepts Medicaid payment!

What that means is, if you're a veteran on Medicaid, you can now get curb to curb transportation at **NO COST**, even if you live in a non-highly rural county.

This applies for all Medicaid authorized medical appointments anywhere in South Dakota!

What does River Cities Public Transit offer?

- A clean, modern fleet of vehicles for ambulatory and non-ambulatory transit.
- Vehicles are sanitized on a daily basis.
- Professionally trained drivers who are all P.A.S.S. certified by the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA).
- Fulltime Safety Officer on staff.
- Member Dakota Transit Association (DTA).
- Member Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA).

This allows veterans who do not live in counties considered highly rural, but are on Medicaid, to utilize the transit's free transportation services. For more information on this transportation issue and any questions you might have about the services provided by River Cities Transit, please call Jess Marlow at 605-945-2360.

NVWG 2021 App Information

The app for the 2021 National Veterans Wheelchair Games is currently available for download on your Android or iOS device. Download the app or log in online to access information about the Games, locations, notifications and more! You can search the app store for *Paralyzed Veterans of America*. Use the link below to access the web version of the app or download the app to your mobile device.

Web Version: https://crowd.cc/40-nvwg
App Version: https://crowd.cc/s/3FcqE

If you have any questions, please contact Jennifer Massey at jenniferm@pva.org or 202.416.7639.

Cares Act Housing Assistance

Governor Kristi Noem announced that \$10 million in Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF) have been awarded to the South Dakota Housing Development Authority (SDHDA) to assist South Dakotans who have been financially impacted by COVID-19 and need help paying their housing expenses.

"South Dakota is in a good spot as we bounce back from COVID-19, but there is still work to be done," said Governor Noem. "If folks need a lifeline right now, this program can help be that bridge."

The assistance, funded by the State of South Dakota from the Federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, can provide South Dakotans with up to \$1500 a month. Eligible applicants can earn up to 115 percent AMI but must have a demonstrated financial need and be at risk of losing their housing. Assistance can be provided for past due rent, mortgage and/or utilities and may be used for future housing payments, for the time period of March 1 through Dec. 30, 2020.

Assistance provided is not a loan and does not have to be paid back. Payment is made directly to the landlord, mortgage servicer or utility provider on the applicant's behalf. Households who may have current protections in place such as an eviction moratorium, should inquire about this financial assistance. For more information and to apply, visit <u>sdcareshousingassistance.com</u>. See more information on Page 12.

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER, FUNDRAISING



We're proud to be a Thrivent Choice®-enrolled organization. Through the Thrivent programs, we are eligible to receive grant dollars, fee-free donations, and support from Thrivent Action Team service projects.

To learn more about Thrivent's membership benefits and generosity programs visit thrivent.com/generosity



Support Paralyzed Veterans of America North Central Chapter by shopping at AmazonSmile.com Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to North Central Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans Of America Inc whenever you shop on AmazonSmile.

htps://smile.amazon.com/ch/46-03030359947e.

Newsletter Booster Program Thank you for your support!

Ronald and Darla Shelburg Alan & Kathryn Gobczynski Paul Hanson Dennis Hahnemann

Please support your local Chapter!

Newsletter Booster Program

The North Central Chapter PVA publishes the newsletter 6 times per year. We would like to invite our PVA members, Associate Members, and business associates to help support the Newsletter Booster Program. Your name will be published in each newsletter (unless otherwise specified) for only \$10.00. Please help defray the cost of publishing by supporting **YOUR** Chapter. Thank you!

	Name		
Newsletter	Address		
Booster	City	State	Zip
Program	Amount of donation \$		

Send all remittance payable to:

PVA North Central Chapter, 209 N. Garfield Ave., Sioux Falls, SD 57104

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER, ADVOCACY/LEGISLATION-TERRY PAULSEN

Key Changes to the Caregiver Expansion Program

The major changes under the caregiver expansion program are:

- A veteran will need assistance with at least one of the Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) every time they do that activity; and
- A veteran must have at least a 70 percent disability rating from the VA (this eliminates the previous serious injury requirement and now includes a serious illness).

New Eligibility Rules

The veteran must have a serious injury or illness, which is defined as a single or combined service-connected disability rating of 70 percent or more, and meet the following eligibility requirements to participate in the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers:

- The individual is either a veteran or a member of the Armed Forces undergoing a medical discharge from the Armed Forces.
- The individual has a serious injury (including serious illness) incurred or aggravated in the line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service on or after September 11, 2001; on or before May 7, 1975; or beginning October 1, 2022, between May 8, 1975, and September 10, 2001.
- The individual needs in-person personal care services for a minimum of six continuous months based on any one of the following: An inability to perform an ADL; or A need for supervision, protection, or instruction.
- It is in the best interest of the individual to participate in the program.
- Personal care services that would be provided by the Family Caregiver will not be simultaneously and regularly provided by or through another individual or entity.
- The individual receives care at home or will do so if VA designates a Family Caregiver.
- The individual receives ongoing care from a Primary Care Team or will do so if VA designates a Family Caregiver.

Note: A "need for supervision, protection, or instruction" means the veteran or service member has a functional impairment that directly impacts his or her ability to maintain his or her personal safety on a daily basis.

Tier Changes

Under the previous regulations, VA established three tiers for determining stipend payments. VA determined that utilization of a three-tier system resulted in inconsistent assignment of amount and degree of personal care services provided. VA determined that was thus necessary to base stipend payments on only two levels of need that establish a clear delineation between the amount and degree of personal care services provided to the eligible veteran. Therefore, VA has moved from a three-tier system to a two-tier system.

Reassessment Process for Veterans Enrolled Prior to October 1, 2020

Veterans enrolled in the Caregiver program prior to October 1, 2020, will be reassessed based on the new eligibility criteria. The reassessment period begins on October 1, 2020, and ends September 30, 2021. During the 12-month transitional period, no veteran and caregiver will be discharge from the caregiver program before the 12-month transitional period.

At the end of the 12-month transitional period, any veteran VA determines is no longer eligible to participate in the program, will be provided a 60-day advance notice, and will continue to receive benefits for an additional 90 days. At the end of the 60-day advance notice and 90-day period, the veteran and his or her caregiver will no longer be eligible to participate in the program. At the end of the 12-month transitional

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PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER, ADVOCACY/LEGISLATION-TERRY PAULSEN

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period, if VA determines the veteran is eligible to remain in the program, the caregiver stipend payment will be based on the new benefit levels. However, if the veteran moves during the grandfathered period, they will be reassessed under the new eligibility criteria, and if they remain in the program, the Caregiver stipend payment will be based on the new benefit levels.

The reassessment period began on October 1, 2020, and will run through September 30, 2021. No matter when the reassessment occurs within that year, veterans will maintain their eligibility through September 30, 2021.

New Stipend Rate

VA has replaced the Bureau of Labor of Statistics (BLS) hourly wage rate for home health aides with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) General Schedule (GS) Annual Rate for Grade 4, Step 1, based on the locality pay area in which the eligible veteran resides, divided by 12.

For an eligible veteran who does not meet the requirement to be "unable to self-sustain in the community," the Primary Family Caregiver's stipend amount will be 62.5 percent of the monthly stipend rate. For an eligible veteran who is determined to be unable to self-sustain in the community, the Primary Family Caregiver's stipend amount will be 100 percent of the monthly stipend rate.

<u>Note</u>: "Unable to self-sustain in the community" means that an eligible veteran either requires personal care services each time he or she completes three or more of the seven ADLs listed in the definition of an inability to perform an ADL in this section, and is fully dependent on a caregiver to complete such ADLs or: has a need for supervision, protection, or instruction on a continuous basis.

VA Outlines Steps to Resolve Community Care Billing Issues

VA has announced steps that veterans should take if they are billed for VA authorized community care appointments.

First, the veteran should gather any letters, notices, or information regarding debt collection or adverse credit reports related to authorized use of community care.

Then, the veteran should call the toll-free number at 877-881-7618 (option 1), Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., ET.

VA staff will collect the veteran's information, investigate the issue, and then follow up with details of the final resolution and answer questions.

VA Automobile Allowance and Adaptive Equipmet

Do you have a disability related to your military service that prevents you from driving? If you do, you may be able to get disability compensation or benefits.

Am I eligible for disability benefits from VA?

You may be eligible for disability benefits if you have a disability that's related to your service (called a service-connected disability) and that includes at least one of the conditions listed below.

At least one of these must be true for you. You have:

Loss, or permanent loss of use, of 1 or both feet, or Loss, or permanent loss of use, of 1 or both hands, or

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From the Office of Brad Friez National Service Officer

We are still not sure of when the VA Regional Office in Sioux Falls will be open to the general public. For several weeks we thought that the VA would open up but with the upswing in positive cases of the COVID 19 virus that just has now happened. Construction continues on and it appears is just about completed. When the building does open up to the public there will be screening done for all Veterans much like the VA staff and others such as our office are going through each work day. Eventually, the public will be allowed in the building from 8 am to 1:30 pm. Everyone will need to wear a mask and we want Veterans to set up an appointment so we can regulate the numbers of Veterans entering into our office. Normally only the Veteran will be allowed into the office unless that Veteran needs a caregiver. Additionally, we ask all individuals to social distance from our staff and other visitors.

The Veteran organizations and congressional representatives continue to meet via phone calls with local VA leadership and one of the most important topics that we have discussed is the discontinuance of the Sioux Falls VA's valet parking on September 29. Because of our collective concerns VA has decided to give the valet parking another go. But they are just now beginning the contract process and it could take up to six months to get this back in place which would be around May of 2021. In the interim the VA will begin a shuttle service beginning November 16 with two golf carts and various numbered parking places for Veterans who need assistance with getting into the VA Hospital building. There will be signage on those spots. Once a Veteran pulls into those spots there will be a phone number they dial to request that assistance. For those who pull into the VA parking lot and need assistance but do not have a phone with them the VA is working on a solution for those situations. They might be encouraged to stop at another location in the parking lot and then VA staff would attempt to stop by their location and offer assistance in getting inside the hospital.

The annual tax abatement letters that the VA sends out each October have generated some calls. On page two of that letter the VA has a list of (potential) benefits. Some Veterans believe that they are entitled to all of those benefits which may or may not be the case. Check with your representative if you do indeed have questions on your various VA benefits.

13588

VA reaches Milestone, completing nearly half of Blue Water Navy Disability Claims received since beginning of year

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it has decided more than 34,000 Blue Water Navy disability claims under the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019, effective Jan. 1, — which extends the presumption of exposure to herbicides such as Agent Orange to veterans who served in the offshore waters of the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam War.

As of Sept. 30, the VA has processed 34,415 (48%) of 69,570 claims received, of which 24,328 (71%) have been granted — awarding more than \$664 million in retroactive benefits to eligible veterans and families.

"It's important we ensure Blue Water Navy Veterans and their families receive the benefits they've earned," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "As a result, the VA will continue to get the word out via our social media channels, PSAs and VSOs — to ensure every veteran who is eligible applies as soon as possible."

The VA also collaborated with the <u>National Archives and Records Administration</u> to digitize all Navy and Coast Guard deck logs for ships with known Vietnam service. Digitization of the Navy deck logs was completed in December 2019 and Coast Guard deck logs were completed in September. As part of the agreement, the VA provided digital images of the deck logs to NARA to make digitally available in the <u>National Archives Catalog</u>. Veterans may contact inquire@nara.gov if the deck log they are seeking is not available in the National Archives Catalog.

If your claim was denied, click here on how to appeal a VA claim decision. For assistance in filling a claim, Veterans may contact approved Veterans Service Organizations. Learn more about Agent Orange exposure and VA disability compensation or call 800-827-1000 for more information.

For Sale

1985 John Deere Lawn Tractor for sale. 38 inch cut, Hydro stat, 18.5 horse engine, brand new blade and drive belts, well maintained. Price is \$400 or negotiable. Call Darrell at 906-2210 if interested.

(continued from Page 9) Terry Paulsen

Permanent decreased vision in both eyes: 20/200 vision or less in your better eye with glasses, or greater than 20/200 vision but with a visual field defect that has reduced your peripheral vision to 20 degrees or less in your better eye, or

A severe burn injury, or

Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), or

Ankylosis in 1 or both knees or hips (Note: This qualifies you for an adaptive-equipment grant only)

Who's covered?

- Veterans
- Service members

What kind of disability benefits can I get?

- A one-time payment of not more than \$21,488.29 to help you buy a specially equipped vehicle
- In some situations, one or more adaptive equipment grants to change a vehicle so it has features like power steering, brakes, seats, windows, or lift equipment to help you get into and out of the vehicle. View current rates for special allowances

How do I get these benefits?

You'll need to file a claim for disability compensation and get our approval **before** buying a vehicle or adaptive equipment. You can apply for—and use—either grant before or after military discharge.

Find out how to file a claim for disability compensation

When you file, you'll need to show that your disability is service connected or treated as if service connected under 38 U.S.C. 1151.

View the current payment rates

For the one-time payment to help you buy a specially equipped vehicle

- You'll need to fill out an Application for Automobile or Other Conveyance and Adaptive Equipment (VA Form 21-4502). <u>Download VA Form 21-4502 (PDF)</u>
- We'll pay the vehicle's seller directly.

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VA launches New Electronic Health Record System in Pacific Northwest

The U. S. Dept of Veterans Affairs (VA) began using its new electronic health record system Oct 24 at select VA facilities in the Pacific Northwest and Las Vegas, marking the beginning of a transformation in how VA delivers care to veterans.

More than 24,000 veterans receiving primary care at the Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center (VAMC) in Spokane, Washington, will benefit from the VA's first full implementation of the new software, which provides VA health care staff with a modern EHR that is interoperable with the Department of Defense (DOD), U.S. Coast Guard and community care partners.

"This milestone is the result of 27 months of planning, collaboration and steadfast work by our Electronic Health Record Modernization (EHRM) team, the Cerner team, leaders, and staff across the VA and our partners within DOD," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "This is an historic step toward creating a seamless health care experience for veterans, from the time they enter the military through their care at the VA."

The new system puts VA and DOD on a single electronic health record, which improves veterans' health care experiences by eliminating their need to keep or carry paper records detailing care received from either department. Care providers from both departments will be able to view, update and securely exchange patient data in the new system, which also enables increased information sharing with providers in the communities where veterans live and receive care.

In addition to the launch at the Mann-Grandstaff VAMC and its four community-based outpatient clinics located in Wenatchee, Washington; Libby, Montana; Coeur d'Alene, Idaho; and Sandpoint, Idaho. VA also began using the new system at the West Consolidated Patient Account Center, the VA business operations facility in Las Vegas that supports billing for the Pacific Northwest.

The new EHR system complements VA's longstanding health record system, Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture, also known as VistA, and Computerized Patient Record System at these sites. The EHRM program will continue rolling out the new software until it is in place nationwide at all VA facilities by 2028.

Learn more about VA's EHRM program.

South Dakota Cares Housing Assistance Program

Temporary Rental, Mortgage or Utility Assistance

WHAT IS THE SD CARES HOUSING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM?

The SD Cares Housing Assistance Program provides funds to assist South Dakota residents with housing expenses. If you have been financially impacted due to COVID-19, the SD CARES Housing Assistance Program (SDCHAP) may provide temporary rental, mortgage, or utility assistance.

Assistance provided is not a loan and does not have to be paid back. Payment is made directly to the landlord, mortgage servicer or utility provider on the applicant's behalf. Funding amount is based on need with a maximum of \$1,500 per month.

Eligible applicants can earn up to 115 percent of the area median income (AM) and funds can be used to cover arrears back to March 1st and current housing expenses that a household is unable to pay. Assistance can only be provided through December 30, 2020.

Program Information

Allocation Amount

\$10,000,000

Recipients

South Dakotans who have lost income due to COVID-19 and owe past due rent, mortgage or utilities.

Maximum Grant

\$1,500 per month

Application Deadline

December 18, 2020 or sooner if funding is expended.

How to Apply

Potential applicants can visit <u>sdcareshousingassistance.com</u> to verify eligibility requirements and to begin the application process. Online applications are mobile friendly and will be processed by partnering agencies throughout the state. Should applicants not have internet access, partnering agencies listed below are available to help households complete an application.

Do I Qualify?

- Owe past due rent, mortgage or utilities or unable to pay current housing expenses due to being financially impacted by COVID-19:
- Have incomes at or below 115% of AMI;

1 person - \$62,675

2 person - \$71,530

3 person - \$80,500

4 person - \$89,470

5 person - \$96,600

6 person - \$103,730

7 person - \$110,975

8 person - \$118,105

- Be a South Dakota resident:
- Meet all program criteria; and
- Ensure a complete application

<u>Partners</u>: Helpline Center, Codington County Welfare, Four Bands Community Fund, Inc., Grow South Dakota, Inter-Lakes Community Action

Partnership, Lakota Funds, Mazaska Owecaso Otipi Financial, NeighborWorks Dakota Home Resources, Pennington County Health & Human Services, Rural Office of Community Services, Inc. and Western SD Community Action.

Tricare Open Enrollment

Check your mailbox or your inbox. If you received a letter similar to the one on this page, you should act on it now.

For more information, we encourage you to visit the three links below.

Dear Tricare Select Beneficiary:

As required by law, TRICARE is introducing enrollment fees for Group A retired beneficiaries enrolled in TRICARE Select coverage. You are currently enrolled in TRICARE Select. You are also a Group A retired beneficiary. Being in Group A means you or your sponsor enlisted or were commissioned before January 1, 2018.

You and your family members now must pay a TRICARE Select monthly enrollment fee. Your monthly enrollment for payment will start on January 1, 2021.

- For an individual plan, you will pay \$12.50 per month.
- For a family plan, you will pay \$25.00 per month.

If you want to keep your TRICARE Select coverage, you must act. You must set up a monthly enrollment fee payment. You must do this during TRICARE Open Season. TRICARE Open Season starts on November 9, 2020. And it ends on December 14, 2020. Once you set up your monthly enrollment fee payment, your TRICARE Select coverage will continue in 2021, as long as you remain eligible.

To set up your monthly enrollment fee payment, call Health Net Federal Services, LLC, at 844-866-WEST (9378).

If you do not set up your monthly enrollment for payment by December 14, 2020; then:

- Your last day of TRICARE Select coverage will be December 31, 2020.
- You will only be able to get care at a military hospital or clinic if space is available. This will start on January 1, 2021. You will still be able to use the military pharmacy. Visit www.tricare.mil/mtf.

If you get your retirement or other pay from a military pay center, then you will pay your TRICARE Select fees via a monthly allotment, where feasible. If you don't get your retired pay through a military pay center or if your retired pay does not cover the monthly enrollment fee, then you will pay your fees by a recurring credit or debit card transaction. You can also pay your monthly fees through electronic funds transfer (EFT). Your EFT must be from a U. S. bank.. (continued in next column)

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Dental and Vision plans may be available through the Federal Employee Dental and Vision Insurance Program This is offered by the U. S. Office of Personnel Management. Learn more at www.benefeds.com.

Your Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) record has your family status, service status, and other information. You must keep your DEERS record up to date. If you don't keep your DEERS record up to date, then you will miss key information and enrollment deadlines. Visit www.tricare.mill/deers.

Sincerely,

Enrollment Dept, Health Net Federal Services, LLC

https://tricare.mil/Plans/Enroll/Select/SelectFeesFAOs

https://www/tricare-west.com/content/hnfs/home/tw/bene/enroll/allotment.html

https://tricare.mil/SelectEnrollmentFees

(continued from Page 11) Terry Paulsen

For the adaptive-equipment grant

- If you qualify for adaptive equipment only, you'll need to fill out an Application for Adaptive Equipment—Motor Vehicle (VA Form 10-1394). Download VA Form 10-1394 (PDF)
- We may pay you, or we may pay the equipment seller directly.

Annual Legislative Reception



The South Dakota Veterans Council will be hosting its Annual Legislative Reception on the 13th of January 2021. The event will be held in the Highland/Hills Ballroom at the RedRossa Italian

Grille from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. in Pierre, SD.

This event affords the Council to brief Legislators on the numerous programs and projects that the council is working on to enhance the lives of South Dakota's veterans and their families.

Delays in Obtaining Military Documents for Eligibility Determinations

As you may be aware, the government's primary repository for military personnel records, the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC), has been closed to the public since March due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to numerous COVID-19 exposures occurring with increasing frequency, the NPRC has informed us they have shut down most of their remaining operations indefinitely. This decision negatively impacts our ability to obtain documents to determine eligibility for interment in national cemeteries.

We will continue to make every attempt to assist Veterans and their families, but if a service member's records cannot be obtained through any source other than NPRC, we may not be able to make a timely eligibility determination.

We ask you to inform family members of this issue and ask them to search for any additional military documents which may be in their possession. Documents kept by the Veteran may be the only documents available at this time to verify his or her eligibility for burial.

We also encourage you to ask family members to check the following:

- Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) or the American Legion. These organizations may have discharge documents on file for members.
- Any orders the service member may have received or any documents showing a military service number would be helpful.
- County clerk of the county where the service member would have returned from service. The service member may have filed their documents with the county upon discharge from military service.
- If the service member has a set of dog tags, please send a clear photograph of them to our agency.

Any additional information provided may improve our ability to locate records. You may send any additional information or documents by fax at 1-866-900-6417 or by email at NCA.Scheduling@va.gov. Please follow up on the fax or email with a phone call to 1-800-535-1117, Option 1, to alert us to this additional information. (continued in next column)

(continued from first column)

We apologize for the delay and thank you for your assistance in this emergency.

Jay Dalrymple, Director
Natl Cemetery Scheduling Office, St. Louis, MO

VA, American Kidney Fund Join Efforts to Help Veterans

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it is partnering with the nonprofit <u>The American Kidney Fund</u> (AKF) to help veterans diagnosed with kidney disease live healthier lives.

The VA-AKF collaboration augments existing VA programs and services that support veterans through early identification of kidney disease and referral for appropriate treatment.

"Our goal is to ensure our veterans are aware of the resources needed to understand, manage, and help treat kidney disease," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "This alliance improves veterans' access to kidney disease resources, programs, and support, and provides information on VA benefits to those diagnosed with or who are at risk for developing the disease."

Additionally, veterans will have access to webinars, awareness campaigns and events to increase their consciousness of risk factors, causes, complications, and treatments of kidney disease and associated conditions.

The prevalence of chronic kidney disease in the veteran population is higher than in the general population. Kidney disease affects about one in six veterans, including more than 40,000 VA-enrolled veterans who are diagnosed with kidney failure, known as end stage renal disease, who rely on dialysis or a kidney transplant to survive.

The VA employs more than 200 nephrologists who specialize in the care of patients with kidney disease and has a comprehensive research portfolio aimed at preventing and improving the treatment of chronic kidney disease. Through the partnership with AKF, the VA will also share publicly available data with AKF for clinical research.

"By working together, AKF and VA will leverage each other's strengths to address the unique challenges

(continued on Page 16)

Leland Olson

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

Dec 01



PVA North Central Chapter

Birthday Roster - Dec 2020/Jan 2021

Zuma o ison	200 01
Stephen Vogt	Dec 03
David Byrd	Dec 06
Tony Hylland	Dec 06
Alan Gobczynsk	Dec 07
Willard Black	Dec 08
James Huckabay	Dec 08
Timothy Doyle	Dec 09
John Pike	Dec 10
Jonathan Olson	Dec 11
Dennis Theel	Dec 11
Lyle Monsees	Dec 14
Frank Hood	Dec 17
Charles Madche	Dec 17
Michael Ollerich	Dec 21
John Trautman	Dec 26
Jeanne Saunders	Dec 27
Darryl Schock	Dec 29
Gary Sletto	Dec 29
Randy Brown	Jan 01
Mitchell Kostek	Jan 03
Steve Thompson	Jan 03
Eric Kritzmire	Jan 07
Gary Kipena	Jan 08
Lawrence Hogan	Jan 09
Bob Sanchez	Jan 10
Lary Marthaller	Jan 11
(continued in next column)	

(continued from first column)	
David Morgan	Jan 15
Thomas Holtey	Jan 16
Samuel Terry	Jan 16
Lloyd Gill	Jan 22
Thomas Dietz	Jan 26
Kenneth Bassett	Jan 27
Bob Schutte	Jan 28
Ross Beranek	Jan 29
Timothy Thompson	Jan 30
Stephen Larson	Jan 31

Wills for Heroes

Wills for Heroes is a free monthly legal clinic for veterans and their spouses to receive simple wills and powers of attorney. This clinic is for incomequalifying individuals and by APPOINTMENT ONLY.

You must call and schedule an appointment to meet with an attorney on the day of the clinic. Call East River Legal Services (605-336-9230) for the next scheduled time.

Vet Centers Up Date

During this pandemic, please remember the Sioux Falls and Rapid City Vet Centers are remaining open and continue to provide the following services:

Individual Counseling (face-to-face, telehealth and phone visits)

Group Counseling (telehealth)

Marital and Family Counseling

Military Sexual Trauma

Please give them a call to schedule an appointment!

- Sioux Falls Vet Center (605) 330-4552
- Rapid City Vet Center (605) 348-0077

STAY SAFE

(continued from Page 14)

veterans face in managing their kidney health," said LaVarne Burton, AKF president and CEO. "Through providing educational materials and programs from prevention through transplant, we aim to improve the quality of life for the thousands of veterans at risk for or living with kidney disease."

AKF, founded in 1971, works on behalf of the 37 million Americans living with kidney disease, and the millions more at risk, to provide programs that address early detection, disease management, financial assistance, clinical research, innovation, and advocacy.

For more information on this or other partnerships, contact <u>VA's Office of Community En-</u> gagement



MAY THE BEAUTY OF CHRISTMAS FILL YOUR HEARTS WITH PEACE, LOVE AND HAPPINESS!

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Join the CFC community to help those in need. As a federal employee, you can give to the charities you care about through payroll deduction, sign up to volunteer, and *Be the Face of Change*.



SUPPORT THE PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER! CODE #54682 If you are a federal government employee or your employer offers a charitable giving campaign through United Way, you can help us to continue our programs and services we offer to our members, veterans and other individuals with disabilities.

CONTRIBUTION CODE: 54682





With Sympathy

This is to inform you that long time Associate Member David Paintner of Avon was involved in a car accident and passed away in November. Please keep David and his family in your thoughts and prayers.

Scooter Lift

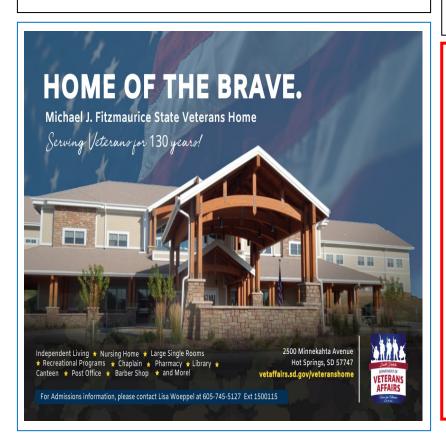
If anyone is interested in a scooter lift which attaches to the hitch on the back of a vehicle, we have two available.

Contact the Chapter Office (605-336-0494) for further information.



Car Sunshades for Sale - \$10.00

Proceeds will benefit the Chapter's programs and services! Contact the Chapter office (605-336-0494) for further information.



<u>SUPPORT PVA</u> NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

Paralyzed Veterans of America North Central Chapter relies solely on private donations and receives NO government funding! Your contribution is 100% tax deductible, as we are a 501(c) (3) corporation. Support by individual donors and businesses enable us to make our services FREE to members.

Please support our mission through a direct donation to:

PVA North Central Chapter
209 North Garfield Avenue,
Sioux Falls, SD 57104

QUESTION:

HAVE YOU CONSIDERED INCLUDING PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER IN YOUR WILL OR TRUST?

This type of donation will serve as an investment in our organization that will reap our members benefits for many years to come.



How to Donate Property

Please donate that Auto, Boat, Yacht, Truck or RV that's no longer needed to NCPVA! Receive the maximum legal tax deductions and possibly a partial cash payment.

For more information about car, boat, RV and other property donations or to receive a "no obligation" evaluation of your potential vehicle or other property donation, please call toll free: (866) 2-GIVING or (866) 244-8464.

We pick up anywhere in the U.S.A.



ATTENTION VOLUNTEERS

BE SURE TO LOOK FOR YOUR VOLUNTEER NUMBER OR VAVS VOLUNTEER NAME SOMEWHERE IN THIS NEWSLETTER AND CONTACT THE CHAPTER OFFICE IF YOUR NAME OR NUMBER IS LISTED.

CHUCK DOOM
VOLUNTEER PROGRAM
COORDINATOR

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

1519 W. 51st Street, Sioux Falls, SD 57105 (605) 332-6866 / Fax: (605) 338-5489

National Service Office: (605) 333-6896 NSO Email: www.dav.vbasux@va.gov

www.davsd.org www.dav.org

"DISABLED VETERANS HELPING DISABLED VETERANS"





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"Our government and our people have no greater obligation than to assure that those who have served their country and the cause of freedom will never be forgotten or neglected"

—President Lyndon B. Johnson







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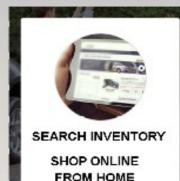
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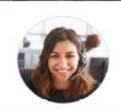
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Paralyzed Veterans of America North Central Chapter 209 N. Garfield Ave Sioux Falls, SD 57104

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

VA Health Care Systems Contact Information

Sioux Falls VA Health Care System

2501 West 22nd Street Sioux Falls, SD 57105

Phone: (605) 336-3230 or (800) 316-8387

Fax: (605) 333-6878

VA Black Hills Health Care System - Fort Meade Campus

113 Comanche Road Fort Meade, SD 57741

Phone: (605) 347-2511 or (800) 743-1070

Fax: (605) 720-7171

VA Black Hills Health Care System

500 North 5th Street Hot Springs, SD 57747 Phone: 605-745-2000 Fax: 605-745-2091

Minneapolis VA Health Care System

One Veterans Drive Minneapolis, MN 55417

Phone: (612) 725-2000 or 866-414-5058

Fax: (612) 725-2049

Fargo VA Health Care System

2101 Elm Street Fargo, ND 58102 Phone: (701)232-3241 Fax: (701)239-3705

VA Montana Health Care System

1892 Williams Street Fort Harrison, MT 59636 Phone: (406) 442-6410 Fax: (406) 447-7916

Cheyenne VA Health Care System

2360 E. Pershing Blvd. Cheyenne, WY 82001 Phone: (307)778-7550 Fax: (307) 778-7336

Sheridan VA Health Care System

1898 Fort Road Sheridan, WY 82801

Phone: (307) 672-3473 or (866) 822-6714

Fax: (307) 672-1900

The PVA North Central Chapter proudly serves the states of North Dakota, Southwest Minnesota, and portions of Montana and Wyoming.