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Resources for Warriors,  
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- Facilities, services, and benefits:  
[www.woundedwarriorresourcecenter.com](http://www.woundedwarriorresourcecenter.com)
- Medical and non-medical resources:  
[www.nationalresourcedirectory.org](http://www.nationalresourcedirectory.org)
- Defense Centers of Excellence for PH and TBI:  
[www.dcoe.health.mil](http://www.dcoe.health.mil)
- Service-specific information and resources:  
[www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com)
- After-deployment concerns:  
[www.afterdeployment.org](http://www.afterdeployment.org)
- Armed Forces Foundation:  
[www.armedforcesfoundation.org](http://www.armedforcesfoundation.org)
- Deployment Health Clinical Center: [www.pdhealth.mil](http://www.pdhealth.mil)
- Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1(800)273-TALK (8255)  
<http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov>

# Pottawattamie Commission of Veteran Affairs UPDATES

Fall 2009



## VA Warns Veterans of Telephone Prescription Scam

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is warning Veterans not to give credit card numbers over the phone to callers claiming to update VA prescription information.

"America's Veterans have become targets in an inexcusable scam that dishonors their service and misrepresents the Department built for them," said Dr. Gerald Cross, VA's Under Secretary for Health. "VA simply does not call Veterans and ask them to disclose personal financial information over the phone."

Veteran Service Organizations have brought to VA's attention that callers are misrepresenting the VA to gain personal information over the phone. They say VA recently changed procedures for dispensing prescriptions and ask for the Veteran's credit card number.

"VA has not changed its processes for dispensing prescription medicines," Cross said. "Nor has VA changed its long-standing commitment to protect the personal information of this nation's Veterans."

Veterans with questions about VA services should contact the nearest VA medical center or call, toll-free, 1-877-222-8387.



## VA BURIAL BENEFITS

Information on VA burial benefits can be obtained from national cemetery offices, from the Internet at <http://www.cem.va.gov>, or by calling VA regional offices at 800-827-1000. To make burial arrangements, call 800-535-1117. Veterans with a discharge issued under conditions other than dishonorable, their spouses and eligible dependent children can be buried in a VA national cemetery. Other burial benefits available for all eligible Veterans, regardless of whether they are buried in a national cemetery or a private cemetery, include a burial flag, a Presidential Memorial Certificate and a government headstone or marker. Families of eligible decedents may also order a memorial headstone or marker when remains are not available for interment. The cemetery staffs can assist funeral homes by providing the telephone numbers for the Military Funeral Honors contacts. Military Funeral Honors are organized under the Department of Defense and should be arranged by the funeral director. In the event there is not a funeral director involved in making arrangements refer to the telephone numbers listed below or contact your local American Legion or VFW.

- Army and National Guard - (607) 664-4909
- Navy and Merchant Marine - (860) 694-3475
- Air Force - (716) 236-3182 or (518) 344-2586
- Marine Corps - (516) 228-5666
- Coast Guard - (216) 902-6117

[Source: VA News Release 29 Sep 09 ++]

**CENSUS 2010:** The census is a count of everyone living in the United States every 10 years. It is mandated by the U.S. Constitution and the next one will be in the summer of 2010. Your participation in the census is required by law. The 2010 Census questionnaire will be one of the shortest in history, consisting of 10 questions. It should take less than 10 minutes to complete and federal law protects the personal information you share during the census. Census data are used to distribute Congressional seats to states, to make decisions about what community services to provide, and to distribute \$400 billion in federal funds to local, state and tribal governments each year. With preliminary work starting on the 2010 Census there are some basic cautionary notes for you to be aware of:

- If a U.S. Census worker knocks on your door, they will have a badge, a handheld device, a Census Bureau canvas bag, and a confidentiality notice. Ask to see their identification and their badge before answering their questions. However, you should never invite anyone you don't know into your home.
- Census workers are currently only knocking on doors to verify address information. Do not give your Social Security number, credit card or banking information to anyone, even if they claim they need it for the U.S. Census.
- While the Census Bureau might ask for basic financial information, such as a salary range, the Census Bureau will not ask for Social Security, bank account, or credit card numbers nor will employees solicit donations. Eventually, Census workers may contact you by telephone, mail, or in person at home.
- The Census Bureau will not contact you by email, so be on the lookout for email scams impersonating the Census. Never click on a link or open any attachments in an email that are supposedly from the U.S. Census Bureau.

[Source: NAUS Weekly Update 25 Sep 09 ++]

**GI BILL Update:** VA has announced the Montgomery GI Bill payment rates for the 2009-2010 academic year. On 1 OCT the rates for a full time student will be increased to \$1,368 per month from \$1,321 a month. VA has also updated the Tuition and Fee rates for Students attending school in Massachusetts. They will now get up to \$330 per credit hour, which is an increase from \$71. [Source: NAUS Weekly Update 18 Sep 09 ++]

**COLA 2010 Update:** Inflation rose 0.3% in August, but remains 2% down for the first 11 months of FY2009. Since August is the mid-point of the annual July-September COLA calculation period, that 2% should be about where the index for FY2009 ends up. That confirms no COLA for 2010, and that the 2011 COLA countdown will start about 2% in the hole. [Source: MOAA Leg Up 18 Sep 09 ++]

**VIETNAM MEMORIAL WALL Update:** Established in 1979, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) is dedicated to preserving the legacy of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., promoting healing and educating about the impact of the Vietnam War. Authorized by Congress, its most recent initiative is building The Education Center at The Wall, an underground facility near the Memorial that is designed to help visitors discover the stories of those named on The Wall and celebrate the values embodied by all service members who served in all of America's wars. The VVMF is seeking photographs of the more than 58,000 fallen service members whose names are inscribed on its black granite wall.

The organization plans to incorporate the pictures in the memorial's planned underground Education Center. Persons with photos they wish to share can contact any FedEx Office store. FedEx Office will provide scanning services in its over 1,600 FedEx Office Print and Ship Centers. The images will be scanned and eventually displayed in The Education Center at The Wall. The Education Center is an underground facility that will be built near the Vietnam Veterans and Lincoln Memorials. The pictures being collected will form its centerpiece: a larger-than-life wall of photos that will showcase pictures of those we lost during the Vietnam War on their birthdays. When having a photo scanned at a FedEx Office location, contributors will be asked to fill out a form on which they will identify the person whose photo they are providing and share a remembrance of that person. The form and photo will then be scanned and uploaded to a special site where all of the photos will be housed. For more information on the project refer to the fund's Web site at <http://www.vvmf.org/>. [Source: VVMF Press Release 17 Sep 09 ++]



**Military Appreciation Monday  
Free "Thank You" Dinner  
Monday, Nov. 16, 2009,  
5 p.m. to 9 p.m.**

Golden Corral's 9<sup>th</sup> annual Military Appreciation Monday dinner will be held on Monday, November 16, 2009, from 5 to 9 pm in all Golden Corral restaurants nationwide.

The free dinner meal is a special "thank you tribute" to any person who has ever served in the United States Military. If you are a veteran, retired, currently serving, in the National Guard or Reserves, you are invited to join us for Golden Corral's Military Appreciation Monday dinner.

To date, Golden Corral restaurants have provided over 2.2 million free meals and contributed over \$3.3 million to the Disabled American Veterans organization.

In cooperation with the Service Organizations at the Des Moines Regional Office the Pottawattamie County Veteran Affairs will be hosting the DAV Mobile Service Office Van on November 19, 2009 from 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. at the Veteran Affairs office located Courthouse Annex 223 South Sixth Street, Council Bluffs call to schedule an appointment 712-328-5797



The work of NSOs extends well beyond their offices and extends deep within the veterans' community.

Part of their outreach activities involves DAV's Mobile Service Office (MSO) Program. This program is designed to educate disabled veterans and their families on specific veterans' benefits and services.

This outreach program generates considerable claims work on behalf of veterans and their families. NSOs, often aided by Department and Chapter Service Officers, travel to communities across the country to counsel and assist veterans with development of evidence, completion of required applications and prosecution of claims for veterans benefits administered under federal, state and local laws.

The DAV's Mobile Service Office (MSO) program was revitalized in March 2001 and is the most extensive outreach effort in the history of our organization. Thanks to the generosity of a \$1 million pledge from the Harley-Davidson Foundation in 2007, the DAV expanded the sites visited by the MSO to include Harley-Davidson dealerships, where benefits assistance is offered to veterans of all generations in communities where they live.

These distinctive- looking and well equipped "offices on wheels" eliminate long trips some veterans in smaller towns and rural communities must take to visit our National Service Offices. The MSO program enhances DAV service to more veterans and their families.



**VISN 23**  
**Flu Information and Education**  
**Toll Free Number**  
**1-888-686-0479**  
**24 hours/day**  
**7 days/week**



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Monthly Service Organization Meetings:

1st Tuesday – CB Disabled American Veterans Chapter No. 5  
7:30 p.m.  
- Avoca American Legion

1st Wednesday -Hancock American Legion and Auxiliary

1st Thursday – CB AMVETS Post

2nd Tuesday –Treynor American Legion  
AMVETS – Walnut

2nd Wednesday - CB AL Auxiliary

2nd Thursday – Carter Lake VFW Auxiliary

3rd Monday – CB VFW

3rd Wednesday – CB VVA Post 798

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#### LOCAL PHONE NUMBERS

**Omaha VAH** – 346-8800

**DAV VAH Transportation-**  
402-449-0659

**West Central Community Action** - 322-5966

**Workforce Development Center** – 242-2136

**Department of Human Services** – 328-5661

**Vet Center** – 402-346-6735

**Department of Veteran Affairs**  
1-800-827-1000

**Legal Aid** – 328-3982

**Family Housing Advisory Service** – 322-4436

**Red Cross** – 322-4017

**Salvation Army** – 328-2088

#### WHY VETERANS REUNITE

*"I now know why men who have been to war yearn to reunite. Not to tell stories or look at old pictures. Not to laugh or weep. Comrades gather because they long to be with the men who once acted at their best; men who suffered and sacrificed, who were stripped of their humanity. I did not pick these men. They were delivered by fate and the military. But I know them in a way I know no other men. I have never given anyone such trust. They were willing to guard something more precious than my life. They would have carried my reputation, the memory of me. It was part of the bargain we all made, the reason we were so willing to die for one another. As long as I have memory, I will think of them all, every day. I am sure when I leave this world, my last thought will be of my family and my comrades....such good men."*  
*Author unknown*

### VA Hosts 'Stand Down' to Give Homeless Veterans Rest, Rehabilitation

**OMAHA, Neb.** — Homeless veterans can come in from the cold to get assistance and a hot meal at a "Stand Down" at the Omaha Civic Center, Mancuso Hall, Nov. 14 from 9 a.m. to noon.

The Department of Veterans Affairs Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System (NWIHCS) will provide free services for homeless veterans including health screening, eye exams, drug and alcohol counseling, mental health services and foot care. In addition, the veterans can also receive limited free clothing and a hot meal.

Veterans must be eligible for VA health care to participate in the Stand Down. Homeless veterans who are not currently enrolled, but who are otherwise eligible for VA health care benefits can register and will receive information about the services available to them through the VA NWIHCS.

In addition to the VA, representatives from the following community agencies will be present to assist homeless veterans: county veteran service offices, the Omaha Vet Center, Nebraska Workforce Development, the Salvation Army, Nebraska Department of Veterans Affairs, Lions Club, and the Omaha G.I. Forum. Veterans can also meet with representatives from the VA to discuss disability benefits that may be available to them.

Stand Down is a military term that means service members are removed from the combat field to receive rest and rehabilitation. It is one of many opportunities for the VA to reach out and connect with homeless veterans to provide them much-needed rest and rehabilitation.

"Our veterans honorably served America. This is our opportunity to serve them," said Linda Twomey, VA NWIHCS Grant and Per Diem coordinator. "The Stand Down is one of the VA's many programs to reach out and serve homeless veterans in our communities."

## **VA Extends “Agent Orange” Benefits to More Veterans *Parkinson’s disease, Two Other Illnesses Recognized***

WASHINGTON –Relying on an independent study by the Institute of Medicine (IOM), Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki decided to establish a service-connection for Vietnam Veterans with three specific illnesses based on the latest evidence of an association with the herbicides referred to Agent Orange.

The illnesses affected by the recent decision are B cell leukemia’s, such as hairy cell leukemia; Parkinson’s disease; and ischemic heart disease.

Used in Vietnam to defoliate trees and remove concealment for the enemy, Agent Orange left a legacy of suffering and disability that continues to the present. Between January 1965 and April 1970, an estimated 2.6 million military personnel who served in Vietnam were potentially exposed to sprayed Agent Orange.

In practical terms, Veterans who served in Vietnam during the war and who have a “presumed” illness don’t have to prove an association between their illnesses and their military service. This “presumption” simplifies and speeds up the application process for benefits.

The Secretary’s decision brings to 15 the number of presumed illnesses recognized by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

“We must do better reviews of illnesses that may be connected to service, and we will,” Shinseki added. “Veterans who endure health problems deserve timely decisions based on solid evidence.”

Other illnesses previously recognized under VA’s “presumption” rule as being caused by exposure to herbicides during the Vietnam War are:

Acute and Subacute Transient Peripheral Neuropathy

AL Amyloidosis

Chloracne

Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia

Diabetes Mellitus (Type 2)

Hodgkin’s Disease

Multiple Myeloma

Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma

Porphyria Cutanea Tarda

Prostate Cancer

Respiratory Cancers, and

Soft Tissue Sarcoma (other than Osteosarcoma, Chondrosarcoma, Kaposi’s sarcoma, or Mesothelioma)

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Filing for VA benefits is a “FREE” benefit to the veteran and his or her dependents. If you are paying for these services; STOP!
- Do you require quality nursing home assistance? Are you an Honorable Discharge Veteran or the widow of an honorably discharged veteran? You may meet the requirements to stay at the Iowa Veteran Home.
- A 0% Service-Connected hearing disability can entitle the veteran to hearing aids through the VA Medical Center.
- A 10% Service-Connected rating can entitle the veteran to hearing aids and or eye glasses through the VA Medical Center.
- Purple Heart Recipients are automatically qualified for medical care Priority Group 3.
- A service-connected disability can be increased when the disability worsens and medical documentation is available as proof.
- Pharmacy co-pays through the VA are \$8.00 per 30 day supply, and are refillable by phone.
- VA Pension is designed to assist veterans with non-service-connected disabilities who meet a minimal income threshold  
When you apply for a rating increase three things could possibly happen to your rating:
  1. Rating is Increased
  2. Rating is Decreased
  3. Rating remains unchanged

# Office Locations And Hours

**Pottawattamie County Commission of Veterans Affairs**  
223 South 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Court House Annex, Suite 6  
Council Bluffs, Iowa 51501  
712-328-5797 FAX 712-328-5726

e-mail: [veterans@pottcounty.com](mailto:veterans@pottcounty.com)  
Commission meeting 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the month, 2 p.m.-4 p.m., subject to change

Monday –Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 pm closed 12:00-1:00 p.m.  
Assistance can be provided by appointment during nontraditional hours

Darlene at Avoca Court House Tuesdays 8:00 am – 4:30pm  
712-328-5821

**Commissioners:**  
Phil Jacobs, Chairman  
Phil Killion, Secretary  
Robert Jorgensen, Member

**Staff:**  
Darlene McMartin, B. S.W., Administrator  
Peggy Becker, Case Worker III  
Lori Swisher, Case Worker II  
Michael Grap, Case Worker II  
Pamela Wilke, Receptionist

The staff of the Veterans Service Office can assist you with the following subjects:

- Compensation or Pension
- Disability Retirement
- Death Indemnity Compensation
- Appeal to Board of Veterans Appeal
- Hospital and Outpatient Benefits
- State of Iowa Benefits
- Educational Benefits
- Vocational Benefits
- Debt Waivers
- Obtaining Lost Military Records
- Review of Military Discharge
- Claims for Insurance Payments
- Burial Allowance
- SBP/ChampVA
- Emergency Assistance