

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS



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Fall 2010

Another busy year is drawing to an end. At IDVA, we feel we are continuing to move Iowa forward when it comes to providing more and better services to our veterans and their families ...services that help to ensure that veterans are given every opportunity to apply for benefits. We must realize we cannot move forward by looking in the rear view mirror.

On August 31st, the Iowa Veterans Cemetery received a visit from the National Cemetery Administration for our first tri-annual on-site review. IVC had been expecting the visit *next* year - as we had only just completed our second year of operation. Nevertheless, they inspected administration and maintenance facilities for condition and cleanliness; head stones for proper alignment as well as cleanliness; turf, trees, and shrubs for proper grooming - these along with many other items on their checklist. The cemetery is required to follow N.C.A. standards, rules, and regulations – even though we are a state-operated cemetery. The inspector was impressed with our facility and the way it is being maintained.

In September I attended the national training conference for the National Association of State Directors of Veteran Affairs, at which I was elected as Senior Vice-President by my peers. NASDVA is an organization consisting of the top veterans affairs officials in each state and territory. NASDVA provides a medium for the exchange of ideas and information between states...a great learning exchange. The organization also issues group policy statements regarding issues that face veterans nationwide. NASDVA works to ensure uniformity, equality, efficiency, and effectiveness in all services provided to veterans and their families. NASDVA partners with Congress, the Federal Department of Veterans Affairs, national service organizations – working directly, as well, with the National Governors Association – in developing veterans policies.

I continue to work to develop some type of program to help veterans start small businesses - similar to what other states have done. It would be another incentive to encourage more veterans to remain in Iowa or retire from the military and move back to their home state of Iowa.

The Fall School of Instruction was held October 19, 20, and 21 – with very good attendance. We felt the instructors did a great job in providing information necessary to help ensure the county VA directors and administrators are assisting Iowa veterans and their families in the application process for Federal VA benefits.

The Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs has just completed its third year since becoming accredited by the Federal Department of Veteran Affairs. To date, the monetary benefits that veterans and their dependents are receiving from the applications filed in our office amount to \$923,149.00 *monthly*, or \$11,077,788.00 *annually*.

★ Patrick Palmersheim, Executive Director, IDVA



Five more names of Iowans who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in the War on Terrorism have been added to the IVC's Fallen Heroes monument. There are now 78 names etched into the monument...

Upcoming Events

2011 Veterans Day at the Capitol

January is fast approaching, which means that the Iowa Legislature will be convening soon. The 2011 legislative session begins on January 10, 2011.

“Veterans Day at the Capitol” will be held on **January 19, 2011**. All veterans are encouraged to attend. There will not be a registration desk this year – instead an information desk staffed to help identify elected officials and to give information regarding veterans’ priorities for 2011.

Legislative breakfast will be served on the first floor of the Capitol from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. At 10:00 a.m. there will be a veteran’s program; Legislators will be available from 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Veterans are encouraged to seek out their elected officials and meet with them about the 2011 veterans’ agenda.



Veterans Day 2010

There are numerous Veterans Day events being held in central Iowa on November 11th. We hope you'll be able to attend some of the ceremonies (listed below), or any of the other ceremonies being held across Iowa.

November 7, 2010:

3:00 p.m. — Civic Center of Des Moines

“A Star Spangled Salute” — Iowa Military Band concert

November 11, 2010:

8:00 — Iowa Veterans Cemetery — Van Meter

9:00 a.m. — World War I Gold Star Monument (SW of Lutheran Hospital on University Avenue)

10:00 a.m. — Korean & Vietnam Memorials — State Capitol Grounds

10:00 a.m. — Gold Star Military Museum — Camp Dodge

The museum will be open to the public all day. A special concert by 100 children will be held at 10:00 a.m.

11:00 a.m. — Hy-Vee Hall/Wells Fargo Arena — Des Moines

This year Vets Auditorium is in renovation mode, so the annual Veterans Day ceremony will be held at Hy-Vee Hall, meeting rooms 7 and 8.

12:00 p.m. — Fort Des Moines Museum

A ceremony will be held with music by the Hoover High School Band and MSGT Rebecca Starmer; a reception will be held after the concert. Held outside if weather permits; rain location is the Fort Chapel. Free

2:00 p.m. — World War II Memorial - State Capitol Grounds

3:15 p.m. — Iowa State University — Ames

The Gold Star Ceremony will be held on November 11, at 3:15 p.m. in the Great Hall. One World War I name will be added - John Hubert Woodward. The ceremony will also include the stories of honorees whose names are already engraved in Gold Star Hall—one serviceman each from World War II, Korea and Vietnam.

Iowa Veterans Cemetery News

Thank you to the Brown Family



A beautiful, stately iron bench was recently placed at IVC as part of a donation from the Brown family of Boone, Iowa. Philip and Joye Brown's son, Ronald, was interred in the columbarium wall during the first month of the cemetery's operation in July 2008. Now both father and son are interred in the wall. We gratefully thank the Brown family for their very generous past and present donations and support.

Thank you to the Dowling High School Football Team



This hard-working crew (and some hard-working parents) are members of the Dowling High School football team. On October 9th, Matt Malese, a member of the team and also an Eagle Scout, took charge of the IDVA Fall outdoor project, and lead the rest of the players to help the cemetery outdoor staff mulch around most of the cemetery's trees. They went through 5 truckloads of mulch (!).

Thank you to Perry High School

On September 29, 11 students, one principal, and one bus driver from Perry High school, donated and planted 2 trees, plus an additional 3rd tree donated from Hartman's Floral and Greenhouses.

The trees were donated in honor of Perry native Marine Lance Corporal Josh Davis.



Linda Kaufman led the effort to honor Davis.

Davis, just nineteen, died May 7th from a combat-related incident in Helmond, Afghanistan. He graduated early from Perry High School just last year so he could attend Marine boot camp. The Iowa community mourns their small-town hero.

Thank you also to Oliver Patten...who donated a beautiful Red Sunset Maple tree. We appreciate your investment in Iowa's Veterans Cemetery.

IVC Cemetery Update

The cemetery is gearing up for winter: pre drilling holes for cremations, preparing fuel mixture for cold weather, and ensuring snow blowers are in good running condition. Let's hope we won't need those snow blowers this year! The Iowa Veterans Cemetery reports that through the end of October there are:

Applications on file: 4,600
Interments: 669

Dependents interred: 93
In Memory of markers: 23

News Briefs

VA Questions Activities of Businesses Assisting Individuals Filing for Pensions

For quite some time, there have been some businesses working in Iowa (and throughout the Midwest) who are not accredited by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs nor certified by the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs or the Iowa Association of County Commissioners of Veterans Affairs. These businesses and organizations offer to provide assistance in preparing claims for VA pension benefits and even obtaining in-home attendant care at VA expense. They sell annuities or other financial products to veterans for the purpose of qualifying for a pension by reducing a claimant's net worth. **However**, under VA regulations, a claimant cannot transfer assets to qualify for a pension except when the claimant relinquishes all ownership and control of the transferred assets. (See instructions for part IX, *Net Worth*, on VA Form 21-526, *Application for Compensation and/or Pension*.)

VA's enforcement authority over these unscrupulous activities is generally limited to taking action against such organizations and individuals. In fact, the Office of General Counsel (OGC) has reported the activities of such unrecognized businesses to the offices of their respective State Attorney Generals, whose offices review them for unauthorized practice of law, or consumer/senior fraud. One such business was recently ordered to pay \$70,000 in restitution in a proceeding.

If you identify or suspect illegal, unauthorized, unethical, or questionable business activities to secure VA benefits, please email OGC's accreditation mailbox at: gocaccreditationmailbox@va.gov. (The mailbox is monitored daily.) Provide as much information and supporting documentation as possible so that OGC can thoroughly review and properly refer and act on the matter. [NOTE: Many of these unethical businesses have been identified in Iowa - many making presentations in elder-care homes.]



Harkin Applauds VA Decision to Review Previously Denied Agent Orange Benefits for Vietnam Veterans with "Brown Water" Service

— from: <http://www.iowapolitics.com/index.html?Article=213018>

Senator Tom Harkin applauded the Department of Veterans Affairs for its decision to review the cases of 17,000 "Brown Water" and other Vietnam-era veterans who may have been exposed to Agent Orange. "Brown Water" vets are those who served in the inlets and inland waterways of Vietnam, where the use of Agent Orange was prevalent, while a "Blue Water" classification denotes service outside of affected areas. Senator Harkin, who served in the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam War, is a co-sponsor of S. 1939, the Agent Orange Equity Act, which was designed to address cases of veterans who served in inland waterways and other areas of Vietnam who were denied benefits despite evidence of Agent Orange exposure.

"It is our moral obligation to treat our veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange, which has been linked to so many debilitating diseases," Harkin said. "They served our country and we must honor the sacrifices they made."

With the VA's decision, veterans who served their nation in the inland waterways of Vietnam and at Air Force bases that may have been contaminated by Agent Orange will now receive more standing to claim Agent Orange benefits. Previously, veterans potentially exposed to Agent Orange were denied "Brown Water" classification without obtaining relevant military records, such as deck logs, and were classified as "Blue Water." Conditions linked to Agent Orange exposure include lymphoma, diabetes, heart disease, Parkinson's disease, prostate cancer and respiratory cancers.

News Briefs Con't.

Army Finds Simple Blood Test to Identify Mild Brain Trauma

— from: http://www.usatoday.com/yourlife/health/medical/2010-10-15-1Abra15_ST_N.htm

The Army says it has discovered a simple blood test that can diagnose mild traumatic brain damage or concussion, a hard-to-detect injury that can affect young athletes, infants with “shaken baby syndrome” and combat troops.

“This is huge,” said Gen. Peter Chiarelli, the Army vice chief of staff. Army Col. Dallas Hack, who has oversight of the research, says recent data show the blood test, which looks for unique proteins that spill into the blood stream from damaged brain cells, accurately diagnosing mild traumatic brain injury in 34 patients.

Burial Allowance Update

President Barack Obama has signed HR 3219 (Veterans' Benefit Act of 2010) — which included increases for burial and plot allowance for eligible veterans — from \$300 to \$700 each. The new law takes effect on October 1, 2011.

Living Afghan War Veteran and Iowa Native to Receive Medal of Honor

On September 10, 2010, the White House announced that Staff Sergeant Salvatore Giunta would receive the United States' highest military decoration, the first awarded to a living recipient since the Vietnam War. He will receive the medal from President Barack Obama during a ceremony at the White House on November 16. Giunta will be the fourth recipient from the War in Afghanistan, after Navy Lieutenant Michael P. Murphy, Army Sergeant First Class Jared C. Monti, and Army Staff Sergeant Robert James Miller.

Born in Clinton, Iowa, on January 21, 1985, in a family of Italian descent, Giunta grew up in Cedar Rapids and Hiawatha. His parents, Steven, a medical equipment technician, and Rosemary, a preschool teacher, live in Hiawatha. He has two younger siblings, Mario and Katie. Giunta attended John F. Kennedy High School in Cedar Rapids and enlisted in the Army in November 2003. He married Jennifer Lynn Mueller, a native of Dubuque, in October 2009.

Then Specialist Salvatore A. Giunta distinguished himself by acts of gallantry at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving as a rifle team leader with Company B, 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry Regiment during combat operations against an armed enemy in the Korengal Valley, Afghanistan on October 25, 2007.

Giunta's unwavering courage, in the midst of an ambush in which two American paratroopers gave their lives and several more were wounded, embodies the highest ideals of the Army values. Giunta is currently stationed at Camp Ederle in Vicenza, Italy.



New Medical Forms will Streamline Veterans Claims Process

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has released three new disability benefits questionnaires for physicians of veterans applying for VA disability compensation benefits. This initiative marks the beginning of a major reform of the physicians' guides and automated routines that will streamline the claims process for injured or ill veterans. Visit: <http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel> for more information.

News Briefs Con't.

The Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3)

The Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission has launched their new website. The website www.mic3.net is designed to better inform the public about the Interstate Compact for Educational Opportunities for military children and service the needs of our service men and women. It also provides valuable resources, news, contact information, links, and recent rulings by the commission.

Military families move between postings on a regular basis, which can be difficult for the children of military families. The average military student faces transition challenges more than twice during high school, and most military children will attend six to nine different school systems. The Compact seeks to make transition easier for the children of military families so that they are afforded the same opportunities for educational success as other children, and are not penalized or delayed in achieving their educational goals.

The Compact provides for the uniform treatment of military children transferring between school districts and states. Thirty-five states have adopted the compact – including Iowa.

For more comprehensive information, please visit their website: www.mic3.net.



Wreaths Across America™

from – <http://www.wreathscrossamerica.org>

Wreaths Across America™ was formed as an extension of the Arlington Wreath Project. The Arlington Wreath program was started by Morrill Worcester ([Worcester Wreath](#)) in 1992 with the donation and laying of 5000 Christmas wreaths to Arlington National Cemetery. This became an annual journey for Mr. Worcester.

In 2005, a photo of the stones adorned with wreaths and covered in snow circulated around the internet. The project received national attention. Thousands of requests poured in from all over the country from people wanting to emulate the Arlington project at their National and State cemeteries. Unable to donate thousands of wreaths to each state, Mr. Worcester conceived the idea of sending 7 wreaths (one for each branch of the military as well as POW/MIA). In 2006, with the help of the Civil Air Patrol and other civic organizations, over 150 locations held wreath laying ceremonies simultaneously. The Patriot Guard Riders volunteered as escort for the wreaths going to Arlington. This began the annual "Veterans Honor Parade" that travels the east coast in early December.

By 2007 the requests for more wreaths grew. The Worcester family established the nonprofit group *Wreaths Across America*™ to further promote Veterans remembrance. The mission **Remember, Honor, and Teach** characterized the projects goals perfectly. By 2008 over 300 locations held wreath laying ceremonies in every state, Puerto Rico and 24 overseas cemeteries. Over 100,000 wreaths were placed on veterans graves. Over 60,000 volunteers participated.

The wreath laying is now held annually on the second Saturday of December - a date unanimously voted by the US Congress as "Wreaths Across America™ Day".

*The Wreaths Across American ceremony will be held at
the Iowa Veterans Cemetery on December 11th, 2010, at 11:00 a.m.*

Bushy Creek Area Honor Flights

The Brushy Creek Area Honor Flight had three flights this past summer and early Fall: May 1, June 12, and September 25. At least one more flight is planned for May 2011.

The flights departed from Fort Dodge and served all of the adjacent counties (plus other counties) in the area. All three flights accommodated 100+ veterans and approximately 60 guardians to Washington D.C. Flights were funded by donations, fund raisers, canisters, etc. It took over \$90,000 to fund each flight. Funds are still being raised for next year's flight. Among the dignitaries and supporters who were on hand to welcome the veterans, Iowa's Congressman Latham was one of those who met the 9-25-10 flight.

As representatives of the Iowa community in D.C., the *Capital Area Iowa Club* has enthusiastically supported every effort to honor Iowa's Greatest Generation. They have sent representatives from their club to greet and extend thanks for each of the Honor Flights of WWII veterans from Iowa at the World War II Memorial. Some have served as official points of contact; others coordinated with the Honor Flights directly; and still others organized local D.C. volunteers to meet, greet, and assist the Iowa World War II veterans.

Another Honor Flight is scheduled for Saturday, November 6, 2010 – departing from the Quad Cities.

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... from one of the family members that flew on the June 12th flight:

"Thank you for hosting the June 12th Honor Flight. My grandfather... was able to go and I, as his guardian. By being a guardian, I was witness to a time machine of sorts. When the flight took off from Fort Dodge, it was [a plane] full of the elderly. When it returned, there was an energy I can only describe as *electric*. They came alive again and were young – maybe for the last time in their lives. I don't think medicine could ever explain what happened on the flight..."



The Washington D.C. Capital Area Iowa Club and Iowa Honor Flight veterans

Korean War 60th Reunion Event

Story submitted by Linda Salz

The Korean War has come to be known as the *Forgotten War*. ...At 4.00 a.m. on June 25, 1950, the calm was shattered by the thunder of artillery shells (initiated by the North Koreans) exploding around Kaesong, the ancient capitol of Korea.

In the Spring of 1951, a group of young men from the Midwest were inducted into the U.S. Army and took basic training at Fort Riley, Kansas. They formed Co. M 85th Infantry of the 10th Infantry Division. When inducted, the Army promised these men they would be in Korea in 5 months.

For most, the Army kept their promise, and even flew them from Japan to Korea so they would be there as scheduled. Most were then assigned to either the 27th or 35th Regiments of the 25th Division. They spent time on the front lines as well as other

assigned duties throughout Korea. Some never returned.

In July of 1967, a group of these veterans gathered for a reunion in Fort Dodge, Iowa. Additional reunions were held in locations around Iowa, Minnesota, and Missouri. They have had 24 reunions to date. For the last 10 years, the veterans have enjoyed getting together in Des Moines.

For the 60th anniversary, there will be a reunion held at the Comfort Suites at Living History Farms on August 27 - 28, 2011. The group that gathered this year are pictured below. New members are welcomed to join the group next year. For more information, contact either:

Bob Fraune - Waterloo, IA. (319) 234-2330 or
Francis Erpelding - Burt, IA. (515) 924-3289.



*Pictured back row left to right: Ralph Van Wyk, Bob Fraune, Tom Forbes, Delmar Sickelka, Russell Timmerman, Francis Wenthold, Gordon Jackson, Marvin Gaul and Bob Fogler
Pictured front row left to right: Thomas Harris, Richard Morris, Donovan Studer, Milton Heiser, Marvin Elgin, Keith Mithelman and Francis Erpelding
Unable to attend this year: Chuck Stodola and Wendell Troxel*

National Guard Retiree Day

National Guard's annual Retiree Day was held this year on October 16, 2010. Over 621 retirees attended. Once again IDVA participated with a booth that provided information on state veteran's benefits, services, updated photographs and pamphlets for the Iowa Veterans Cemetery.

Other booths represented medical care, Social Security, issuing ID cards, and many others that all spoke to the National Guard Retiree. Additionally there were seminars and presentations; IDVA's Patrick Palmersheim (photo at right), presented during the seminar setting.



Resiliency Rocks!

On September 30, some of the IDVA staff and Iowa Veterans Commission of Veterans Affairs members attended an presentation at Camp Dodge's Freedom Center. Maine Army National Guard Colonel Jack Mosher serves as the Chief of Operations for the Maine National Guard, stationed at Camp Keyes, Augusta, Maine. He spoke about *resiliency*, and how "resiliency can be greatly enhanced through the mindful development of mental and physical toughness by making healthy choices, encouraging others, and learning from our life experiences."



From left, Army Col. Jack Mosher and Maj. Jay Brock, Maine National Guard, Jill Sheppard, former Miss Utah, & Army Sgt. Maj. Victor Angry, National Guard Bureau. They ended the 21-day journey here in a final marathon-length course leading into Arlington National Cemetery.

Mosher didn't feel resilient when he returned from deployment to Afghanistan in 2004. "I didn't have a very happy homecoming," he said. "I couldn't figure out why I was so angry...I felt I had more peace when I was in Afghanistan."

Mosher recognized he was in poor physical condition. Then a friend reached out to him. He advised Mosher to concentrate on his health first. Mosher knew that surviving post-deployment, financial hardships, divorce, a demanding new job, and attending the War College — meant *getting in shape*.

Ultimately, Army Col. Jack Mosher and his friend Maj. Jay Brock decided to run a marathon a day—a total of 550 miles — for soldiers' lives. They called it the "One Life Resiliency Run," and began on May 8 from Kittery, Maine, and finished at Arlington National Cemetery on May 28. "We are not just run-

ning to prevent suicide," he said. "We are talking about soldiers who engage in many kinds of high-risk behavior after they return home."

"Focusing on health and building my own resiliency allowed me to be successful," he said. "Running brought us out into the light — made us strong again. We just wanted to share that with others." He added that "it doesn't have to be running; it could be fly fishing or whatever you're passionate about."

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