

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS NEWSLETTER



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Spring 2011

Memorial Day 2011

Memorial Day is for remembering military men and women, those brave warriors who have gone on before us, those who are still unaccounted for and those who have given the ultimate sacrifice who will never come home. It is a day to honor those who have given us the gift of freedom.

Since the very early days of the settlement of our nation, American service members have been the defenders of freedom and liberty. Since our humble beginnings, Americans have fought and died on battlefields here and abroad to defend our freedom.

Since the Revolutionary War, millions of men and women have served in America's military; many died in that service. These courageous warriors come from many different backgrounds, but they are bonded by duty, honor, and country.

Our nation is still able to call upon its sons and daughters to go into harm's way to protect us and defend our way of life. These men and women are part of

an unending line of proud citizens who have answered our nation's call to duty. Their families also answer that call.

Enemies change over time, battlefield strategies change, technology and weaponry changes, but one thing that has not changed from the Revolutionary War to Operation New Dawn is the dedication and courage of American military men and women.

As long as we take time to remember and pay tribute to our fallen Americans, their service and sacrifice will not have been in vain. We must remember that freedom is not free.

General Patton prayed, "Let me

not mourn for the men who have died fighting, but rather let me be glad that such heroes have lived." Let us remember those who have paid the price for our freedom and let us thank those who are still serving. They continue the legacy of duty, honor, and country. They continue to provide us the gift of freedom.



Brig. Gen. Derek Hill speaks at the Memorial Day IVC ceremony

—Jodi Tymeson, Executive Director, IDVA

Iowa's Fallen Heroes

These Iowa soldiers were part of the approximately 2,800 members of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division deployed to Afghanistan. They reported to their mobilization station at Camp Shelby, Mississippi in July 2010 for additional training and preparation before departing for the Afghanistan theatre of operations. The unit arrived in Afghanistan in November 2010 where the soldiers provide full-spectrum operations in a combat theater, including lethal and non-lethal capabilities, support to Afghan National Army and Police units, and assistance to humanitarian relief initiatives.



Sgt. Brent Maher, 31, from Honey Creek, Iowa was killed April 11, 2011 by an IED during a mounted patrol in Paktya Province, Afghanistan while serving as a gunner in the "Cougar" Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle. Maher was assigned to the Iowa Army National Guard's Company B, 1st Battalion, 168th Infantry, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division, Shenandoah, Iowa. Two other Iowans were also wounded in the attack: Sgt. 1st Class Nicholas Jedlicka of Council Bluffs and Spc. Dustin Morrison of New Market, Iowa.



Sgt. Brent Maher

Maheer was born December 3, 1979 in Hamburg, Iowa and graduated from Farragut High School in 1998. He also attended Metropolitan Community College in Nebraska. Prior to his mobilization, he was employed by the Woodhouse Auto Family in Omaha, Nebraska.

Maheer was an 11-year military veteran; he enlisted in the U.S. Navy in June 1998, serving until October 2005. He then joined the Iowa National Guard in May 2007 and was assigned to company D, 1st Battalion, 168th Infantry, in Denison. He transferred to Company B in January 2008, where he was assigned as an Infantryman.

He was posthumously promoted to sergeant and will receive the following posthumous awards and decorations: Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart, Good Conduct Medal, North Atlantic Treaty Organization International Security Assistance Force Medal, and the Combat Infantryman Badge.

He is survived by his wife, Brenna Maher; children Kaitelyn Elizabeth, Hannah Rose, and Matthew Douglas; his mother Cheryl Tyner and stepfather Mick Tyner; a brother Greg; and grandparents Roy and Wilma McGraw. He was preceded in death by his father, Matthew Maher.



Spc. Donald Nichols, 21, of Shell Rock, Iowa was killed April 13, 2011 during a mounted patrol in Laghman Province, Afghanistan when the Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected, All-Terrain Vehicle ("MATV") in which he was an occupant was struck by an IED. Also wounded in the attack was Spc. Timothy Gourd, 24, of Prescott, Iowa.



Spc. Donald Nichols

Nichols was born September 3, 1989 in Waterloo, Iowa and graduated from Waverly-Shell Rock High School in 2009. Prior to his mobilization, he worked at the Wal-Mart in Waverly.

Nichols enlisted in the Iowa Army National Guard in March 2008. After graduating from Basic Training and Advanced Individual Training, he was assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 133rd Infantry, as an Infantryman.

He is survived by his mother and father, Jeff and Jeanie Nichols; mother and stepfather Becky and Roger Pooch; his fiancée, Chelsey Bliss, of Waverly; brothers Joe and Nick Nichols and William Catone; stepbrother John Pooch and stepsister Pamela Pooch, and many other aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents.

Iowa's Fallen Heroes Cont.

Staff Sgt. James Justice, 32, from Grimes, Iowa was killed April 23, 2011 by enemy small arms fire during combat operations in Kapisa Province, Afghanistan. The attack occurred during rescue operations of a U.S. Army OH-58 helicopter crew who were injured when their aircraft made a hard landing in the Alah Say District, Kapisa Province, Afghanistan. Justice and another Iowa soldier, Zachary Durham, 21, of Des Moines, responded to the scene as members of a Quick Reaction Force ("QRF") and came under fire from enemy forces at the crash site. Justice died at the scene.

Justice was born June 30, 1978, in Manning, Iowa and graduated from Irwin-Kirkman-Manilla High School in 1997. Prior to his mobilization, he was employed full-time by the Iowa National Guard at Camp Dodge.

Justice enlisted as an infantryman in Company C, 1st Battalion, 168th Infantry, Iowa Army National Guard in September 1998 at Denison, Iowa. After completing Basic Training and Advanced Individual Training in 1999, he deployed to Operation Desert Spring (Kuwait) in 2001, the Multinational Force Observer peacekeeping mission (Sinai Peninsula, Egypt) in 2003-2004, and Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2005-2006.



Staff Sgt. James Justice

He is survived by his wife, Amanda Jo, and daughter, Caydence Lillian; his mother and father, Lillian and Larry Justice; brother Kenny Justice; sisters Denise Christensen and Christy Lingle, and many nieces, nephews, other family, and friends. He was preceded in death by his paternal and maternal grandparents, and his best buddy - his dog Kado. (Source: Col. Greg Hapgood, Public Affairs Officer, Iowa National Guard)



Staff Sgt. Joseph J. Hamski, 28, from Ottumwa, Iowa was killed May 26, 2011 while serving with the U.S. Air Force. Enemy forces attacked his unit with an improvised explosive device in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan. A second airman, Tech Sgt. Kristoffer Solebee, of Citrus Heights, California, also died in the attack.



Staff Sgt. Joseph Hamski

Hamski graduated from Ottumwa High School in 2001. He attended Iowa State University before joining the U.S. Air Force. He was assigned to the 52nd Civil Engineer Squadron, Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany at the time of his death. He previously served at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida, Cannon Air Force Base in New Mexico, and Kunsan Air Base in South Korea. Hamski worked as an explosives and demolitions engineer and trained others how to detect and deactivate bombs.

He is survived by his wife, Air Force Staff Sgt. Maria Christina Hamski, Spangdahlem, Germany; his mother Mary Ellen Winston; two sisters, Jennifer Hensely and Nicole Friedman and brother, Thomas Hamski.

In Memoriam
Steven E. Layton



March 30, 1952
April 25, 2011

Iowa Veterans Cemetery

News and Updates

Keith Blum, Cemetery Superintendent, reports that the cemetery is ready for summer. The irrigation system is up and running; the trees and grasses are bursting with green. The cemetery staff has put down a lot of sod, and continues to work on the flower beds so they look their best.

Keith also reports that the cemetery has a bad case of dandelions. It turns out that the rain and heat of last year – combined with our moist spring – has resulted in a HUGE crop of dandelions (source: *KCRG-TV News*).

The James Jordan Assembly Knights of Columbus, including Roger Till, Marty Piper, Lavern Heithoff, and Marke Lyle, arrive at the cemetery once a week to help with mowing, watering, and trimming. They

do a great job and are much needed and appreciated! Thank you to all!



Des Moines Boy Scout Troop 22 visits IVC

We are grateful that once again the Van Meter American Legion helped install the cemetery flags on Memorial Day.

New cemetery regulations: During colder weather, artificial flowers will be permitted from October through April.

Memorial Day Flower Policy: Artificial flowers may be placed at the site of the interment one week prior and one week following Memorial Day. IVC staff will remove all artificial flowers on the Monday following Memorial Day. Lastly, miniature

flags may now be placed at the interment site any day of the year.

The Iowa Veterans Cemetery reports that through the end of April there are:
Applications on file: over 5100 ♦ Veterans interred: 692 ♦ Interments: 815 ♦ *In Memory of Markers*: 25

National Veterans Awareness Ride



Motorcyclists participating in the National Veterans Awareness Ride (NVAR) paid a visit to IVC in May. NVAR is a ten-day ride across America from Sacramento, California to Washington, DC. During the ride (and throughout the year), members visit veterans hospitals and homes to spend time with vets and thank them for their service. Riders speak at schools about the pride of patriotism and the importance of veterans in our society, and unfailingly participate in memorial services that honor military personnel who have paid the ultimate price for our freedom.

Upcoming Events

Dignity Memorial Vietnam Wall

The Dignity Memorial Vietnam Wall, a traveling, three-quarter-scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., will be in West Des Moines, Iowa from September 16-18, 2011 at Resthaven Cemetery. The faux-granite replica stands 240 feet long and eight feet high and is inscribed with the names of more than 58,000 Americans who died or are missing in Vietnam.

Each year, the Dignity Memorial Wall tours the country, making 10-14 weekend stops in communities served by Dignity Memorial providers. Since its inception in 1990, the traveling monument has been displayed in more than 200 cities across the country.

Free and open to the public 24 hours a day, the Dignity Memorial Vietnam Wall is dedicated to Vietnam veter-

ans and honors all service men and women of the U.S. military forces. Dignity Memorial (funeral, cremation, and cemetery providers) created the memorial as a service to those who might never have the opportunity to travel to the nation's capital to experience "The Wall" firsthand.



"The Wall" will leave Prairie Meadows Racetrack and Casino by motorcycle escort on September 14th, 2011 beginning at 12:30 p.m. and arrive at Resthaven Cemetery, 801 19th Street, West Des Moines. (Please RSVP to register as a participant in the motorcycle escort.)

The exhibit is free and open to the public 24-hours a day. A strict non-solicitation policy is enforced at all times. For more information, contact Cheryl TanCreti: 515.223.1230.



Remembering Our Fallen

A display featuring hundreds of photos is about to begin its Iowa tour – honoring members of the military who have died in combat since the 9/11 attacks of 2001. The exhibit called "Remembering Our Fallen" is sponsored by Bellevue University in Omaha.

"The exhibit...was created to honor those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars," Jim Maxwell, spokesperson for the school says, "It's a legacy that these men and women will never be forgotten and their names will be remembered and spoken." The display includes photos of 98 service members from Nebraska and Iowa who have died in the War on Terror in the past decade. Maxwell says the exhibit has been at Bellevue University since late March and it has elicited an emotional response like nothing else they've had on campus. "Some people have

left written notes on the display itself to be given to the families at a later date," he says. "If you view the display yourself, you're used to seeing people in uniform but when you start to see photos of people in their everyday lives, people in roles as fathers, wives and mothers and you see children in the photos, it really hits home."



As of May 1st, the display will start what is hoped to be a national campaign, appearing at

various locations in Nebraska and Iowa through the end of the year. Iowa schedule: June 13-18, Shenandoah Chamber & Industry Association, Shenandoah; June 20-25, Wilson Performing Arts Center, Red Oak; July 22-29, Site TBD, Muscatine; September 6-11, Onawa Public Library, Onawa; September 13-17, Stanton School, Stanton; September 18, Remembrance Run, Sandpiper Rec Area, Saylorville Lake.



Upcoming Events, Cont.



Celebrating Flag Day at the Historical Building

Join the staff at the State Historical Building on July 11th for a day of fun and learning about the American flag, while honoring Iowa's military personnel. Flag Day at the museum will be packed with displays, activities, the Civil War trailer, a book signing, and presentations by Dennis Black, Larry Spencer, former Governor Ray, and many others. It's an event that the entire family will enjoy. **The program is free and open to the public.** The celebration begins at 10:30 a.m. Location: 600 E. Locust, Des Moines, Iowa. (515)281-5111. For a complete schedule, visit their website: http://www.iowahistory.org/about/news/2011/05-18_flag-day.html

10th Annual Vietnam Veterans Recognition Picnic

All Vietnam veterans, families, and guests are invited to the 10th annual **Vietnam Veterans Recognition Picnic** to be held on June 11, 2011 at Swensrud Park in Northwood, Iowa. Serving will begin at 1:00 p.m. with free burgers and brats. Salads, side dishes, and desserts to share are appreciated.

♦For more information, contact Jerry Parmley, Worth County VA director, 641-293-5131.

What Does it Mean to be a Military Veteran in Iowa?

“Being in Iowa” is a series of multi-part reports that goes in-depth to examine what it is like to be a minority in Iowa. The reports look at the issues, history, cultural traditions, challenges, and future of each diverse group of people that are part of Iowa. Reporter Rob Dillard tells the stories by talking with the leaders, having intimate discussions with some members of each group, and taking listeners to the places that exemplify these communities.

Next in the series is “What does it mean to be a military veteran in the state?” The U.S. census estimates the number of veterans in Iowa at more than 245,000. A third of Iowa's veterans are aging baby boomers who served during the Vietnam era. Another 30 percent fought in WWII or Korea. Health care is a major focus for veterans' groups and hospitals.

If you missed the series on radio (640 AM and 90.1 FM), you can listen to the broadcast on IPR's website: www.iowapublicradio.org.

“All the Way Home” - Tri-State Veterans Conference

The 3rd “All The Way Home Conference/Standdown” in Dubuque is scheduled for Saturday, September 24, 2011, at the Five Flags Center, 405 Main Street, Dubuque, IA 562001.

The conference will emphasize:

- ♦ Providing a forum for veterans and their families to access services available in Dubuque and the surrounding areas.
- ♦ Making these services available in one place and thus the conference will empower veterans to seek and receive services intended for them and their families.
- ♦ Providing an appropriate forum for the Dubuque community to thank veterans for their service.
- ♦ To coincide with the return of our National Guard Troops.

For additional information, visit: <http://allthewayhomeconference.com>, or contact Glen Gassman, Iowa Workforce Development, 563-589-7840, glen.gassman@iwd.iowa.gov.

News Briefs

House Resolution 39

On April 18, 2011 the Iowa House of Representatives passed House Resolution 39 to honor Iowa's World War II veterans. The Resolution commemorated the 70th anniversary of the beginning of World War II. House Resolution 39 reads:

A Resolution commemorating the seventieth anniversary of the beginning of World War II and honoring all World War II veterans.

WHEREAS, nearly 70 years ago, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt announced to Americans that December 7, 1941, was "a date which will live in infamy"; and

WHEREAS, on that morning, America was maliciously attacked without warning and without provocation and more than 2,400 Americans died and 1,100 were wounded; and

WHEREAS, the attack on Pearl Harbor changed America forever, thrusting the United States into the Second World War with Japan, Italy, and Germany; and

WHEREAS, following the attack, Iowans answered the call of service and joined the armed forces in defense of freedom, with 262,638 Iowans serving valiantly during World War II, with 8,398 laying down their lives, and 10 being awarded the Medal of Honor; and

WHEREAS, during World War II, in some of the darkest days of the twentieth century, Iowans proudly served the United States, which stood with more than 40 allied nations to fight and defeat the enemies of freedom across both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans; and

WHEREAS, more than 16 million Americans served in the military during World War II and more than 400,000 Americans made the ultimate sacrifice by giving their lives in the service of their country and their fellow Americans and in the name of freedom everywhere; and

WHEREAS, all Americans sacrificed on the home front by giving up their loved ones and working for the war effort, offering valuable support to family members, neighbors, and unknown fellow Americans; and

WHEREAS, we honor the lives lost in the attack on Pearl Harbor and salute the veterans of World War II by remembering their sacrifices, also paying tribute to those now serving America to advance freedom around the world; NOW THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, That the House of Representatives recognizes December 7, 2011, as Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day and commemorates the seventieth anniversary of the United States of America entering into World War II; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That all World War II survivors be accorded special thanks and recognition for their actions in their fight against Nazism, fascism, and totalitarianism; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That those killed during the war be memorialized so the memories of them do not fade; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That all state agencies, interested organizations, groups, and individuals be encouraged to observe this solemn occasion with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

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After the Resolution passed, the House of Representatives offered their thanks to the many veterans present by hosting a ceremony in the capitol. Speakers included: Representative Royd Chambers, Senator Daryl Beall, IDVA Director Jodi Tymeson, Brigadier General Derek Hill, and Representative Jerry Kearns.



*Jodi Tymeson, Daryl Beall,
WWII vet Bill McLaughlin, Royd Chambers*



*WWII vets Paul Satterthwaite, Dick Salemink, Robert Lowe,
Richard Stammer, Johnny Beason, Jim Campbell, John Phillips*

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) App Helps Thousands

The PTSD Coach smartphone application (app), launched in April by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense, has already helped more than 5,000 users connect with important mental health information and resources.

Since its launch, the PTSD Coach app has been downloaded by thousands of individuals. While 96 percent of the users so far are located in the United States, it has also been downloaded in 25 other countries. The application allows users to track their PTSD symptoms, link them with public and personalized sources of support, provide accurate information about PTSD, and teach helpful strategies for managing PTSD symptoms on the go.

The app has also already proven to be a useful tool for the staff at the Veterans Crisis Line. Within the first two hours of the app's official launch, the Crisis Line staff were contacted by a distressed veteran who reported being instructed by the app to call the crisis line and was subsequently given an appointment at the local VA Medical Center. Crisis Line staff have begun to regularly recommend this resource to callers.

The app is one of the first in a series of jointly-designed resources by the VA National Center for PTSD and DoD's National Center for Telehealth and Technology to help service members and veterans manage their readjustment challenges and receive anonymous assistance. Given the popularity of mobile devices, VA and DoD hope to reach tens of thousands of veterans, service members, and their family members with the new suite of apps. (*Sources below*)

More apps from DoD's National Center can be found at: <http://www.t2health.org/apps>.
Information on the PTSD Coach app is on the VA's National Center for PTSD Website:
<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/pages/PTSDCoach.asp>.

News Briefs Cont.

Family Caregivers of Wounded Warriors

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Easter Seals formally announced a partnership to provide comprehensive caregiver training to family caregivers of eligible post-9/11 veterans as authorized by the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010.

Beginning May 9, 2011 family caregivers and veterans could apply for services authorized under a VA interim final rule that was published on May 5.

Eligible family caregivers of eligible post-9/11 veterans will receive comprehensive training developed by Easter Seals in collaboration with VA clinical experts. It is part of a package of new services that also include a monthly stipend, mental health services, and access to medical care under the *Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs* (CHAMPVA), if the primary family caregiver is not entitled to care or services under a health plan contract.

Family caregivers of eligible post-9/11 veterans will have a choice of how to receive their training. Options will include traditional classroom training, online learning, or a correspondence course. The first training courses are expected to start in June, and monthly stipends, which are backdated to the day applications are formally submitted, could begin as early as July.

Veterans may download a copy of the Family Caregiver program application at www.caregiver.va.gov. The application enables the veteran to designate a primary family caregiver and secondary family caregivers. Caregiver support coordinators are available by phone at 1-877-222 VETS (8387) to assist veterans and family caregivers with the application process. Caregivers of veterans from all eras are also encouraged to use the website and support line to explore more than two dozen other services VA provides caregivers.

(Source: <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel>)

VA Video News

VA News is a video program designed to provide timely news and information about the Department of Veterans Affairs. The weekly 15-minute newscast is co-produced by the VA Learning University and the Office of Public Affairs in partnership with the Employee Education System and other headquarters and field offices and produced by the Office of Public Affairs and the Veterans Health Administration's Employee Education System.

The hosts for this show are Laura Landacre, with the VA-DoD Collaboration Service, and Thomas Middleton, with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.



You can view VA News on demand. On the VA Home page at www.va.gov, click on "Media Room," then on "videos."

Vehicle Registration Penalties Waived

400.44(6) Waiver of penalties for military members. Registration penalties shall be waived as provided in Iowa Code section 321.134, subsection 5, if the owner provides a copy of an official government document verifying that the applicant is in the military service of the United States and has been relocated as a result of being placed on active duty on or after September 11, 2001.

This Administrative Rule refers to a waiver of registration fee penalties that have accrued on a vehicle that has not been renewed in time. If a military person is suddenly deployed, they may not have time to put their vehicle into storage (remove the plates and inform their county treasurer). If this should happen, the vehicle registration could go delinquent in the owner's absence. The waiver permitted by 321.134(5) and the above Rule "forgives" any accrued registration penalties if the owner can provide "an official government document" verifying that the applicant was deployed for active military service.

For more information, contact Andrew Lewis, Office of Vehicle Services, DOT: Andrew.Lewis@dot.iowa.gov

News Briefs Cont.

Reaching Out to Rural Veterans

Nearly 40 percent of enrolled veterans in the VA health system live in rural areas of our country. Like other individuals living in rural areas, veterans have difficulty in obtaining access to quality health care; the reasons mainly stem from the need to travel long distances to health care facilities, lack of health insurance, and lack of specialty care providers working in rural areas. As a result, *rural populations tend to be in poorer health*; in fact, a study by the Office of Health and Human Services estimates that half of the adults living in rural areas suffer from a chronic health condition. With regard to rural veterans, there are the unique health complications associated with combat exposure such as PTSD, depression, and traumatic brain injury.

Over the past decades, VA has transformed itself from an in-patient primary care system to an out-patient health care system with an emphasis on prevention and patient-centered care using the electronic health record and patient aligned care teams. The Office of Rural Health (ORH) was created in March 2007 to bring this model of care to veterans in rural and highly rural areas.

ORH has established six strategic goals and associated initiatives to accomplish their mission of increasing access to quality health care for veterans living in rural areas. These initiatives are vital to Iowa veterans living in rural areas. For more information, visit: <http://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/?p=21019> (Source)



Blue Star Mothers

On Saturday, March 5th, the Gold Star Museum unveiled their new **Medal of Honor** display. Among the many dignitaries on hand were the Blue Star Mothers of Iowa, who were honored to have Rose Giunta, mother of Sal Giunta – Iowa's medal of honor recipient – speak to their group. Julie Greer, president of BSMA IA #1 reports that Iowa has two Blue Star Mothers chapters – Chapter 1 that encompasses most of central Iowa, and Chapter 2 from western Iowa. She joined the group because she needed support when her son was deployed in 2009.

The Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc. is a non-partisan, non-political organization. They do not support any political candidate, nor endorse any religious organization. The military represents all aspects of America as does their organization, providing support for active duty service personnel, promoting patriotism, assisting veterans' organizations, and always ready to help in homeland volunteer efforts. Perhaps most importantly,

the Blue Star Moms support *other* moms of military soldiers. They are mothers who now have, or have had children serving in the military.



Governor Branstad joins the Blue Star Mothers at the Gold Star Museum

The Blue Star Mothers were nearly 30,000 strong during World War II. Mothers volunteered throughout the tough times of the war; they worked in hospitals, train stations, packed care packages for soldiers, and were a working part of homeland security during times of war. The organization has waned in size over the years but has held together by mothers showing pride in both their children and country. In recent times they have begun to grow in strength. Many of us old enough to remember, recall the blue star banners hang-

ing in neighborhood windows – indicating a member of the household was serving in the military. A gold star meant the family had lost a family member in the service. Our gratitude to Blue Star Mothers past and present is immeasurable. Visit: www.bluestarmothers.org

News Briefs Cont.

Department of Veterans Affairs - Office of Survivors Assistance *Helping Our Survivors through their Time of Transition*

The Office of Survivor Assistance (OSA) was established in October 2008 by Public Law 110-389, Title II, Section 222, and is the primary advisor to Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki, on all matters related to policies, programs, legislative issues, and other initiatives affecting veterans' survivors and dependents of survivors.

OSA monitors VA's delivery of benefits to survivors, makes appropriate referrals to VA offices for survivors seeking benefits, and explores innovative ways of reaching survivors who are not receiving VA benefits for which they are entitled to receive. Some of these benefits include, but are not limited to, education assistance, home loan guaranties, health care insurance, and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC). To fulfill its mission, the Office of Survivors Assistance has been working closely with senior VA leadership to provide up-to-date information on the issues faced by the survivor community.

OSA has also established multiple partnerships with the Department of Defense agencies, veterans service organizations and other non-government organizations to explore ways to ease the transition of survivors into the VA system, and to make a difference in survivors' lives.

More information can be received by calling 202-461-1077, by visiting their Web site at www.va.gov/survivors, or contacting them at officeofsurvivors@va.gov.



VJO - Veterans Justice Outreach Program

A new VA initiative, the Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) Program, is now in place at the VA Central Iowa Health Care System in Des Moines. VJO is an outreach program designed to collaborate with local justice system partners to identify veterans who enter the criminal justice system and are in need of treatment services rather than incarceration.

The VJO Specialist will:

- ◆ Provide direct outreach, assessment, and case management for justice-involved veterans in local courts and jails;
- ◆ Assist with eligibility determination, enrollment, and referral to both VA and non-VA services upon release;
- ◆ Provide training to local law enforcement on veterans' issues and offer strategies to help work with veterans;
- ◆ Provide information and education to courts and attorneys about veterans' issues and services available;
- ◆ Collaborate with judges and specialty courts to connect veterans to VA treatment services and homeless programs; and
- ◆ Develop and implement separate Veteran Treatment Courts if need is determined.

For more information, contact the IDVA office for a brochure, or contact the VJO specialists listed below:

Jennifer Miner
Central Iowa VA Medical Center
Office: (515)699-5999 x4875

Sherri Koob
Iowa City VA Health Care System
Office: (309) 786-1614

For a copy of "Guidebook for Incarcerated Veterans" visit: http://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/docs/Reentry/09_ia.pdf

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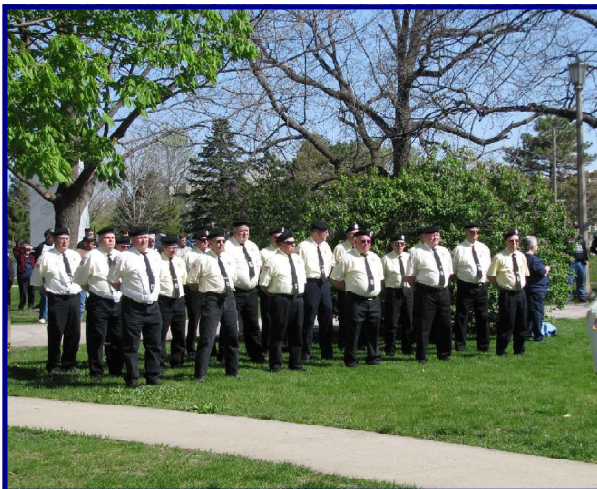
Vietnam Veterans Recognition Day 2011

Iowa honored their Vietnam veterans at a remembrance ceremony on Saturday, May 7th, 2011 at the Vietnam Memorial in Des Moines.

The ceremony included posting of colors by the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 790, remembrance prayers led by Chaplain Daniel McClure, COL (Ret), Megan Hartwig singing the National Anthem, welcome from Steve Mulcahy, the laying of the ceremonial wreath by members of Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 490, music by the MacKenzie Highlanders Pipes & Drums, special guest speaker, Vietnam Veteran nurse Mary Ellen White, and taps beautifully played by Donald Samuelson, 1SG (Ret).



Mary Ellen White



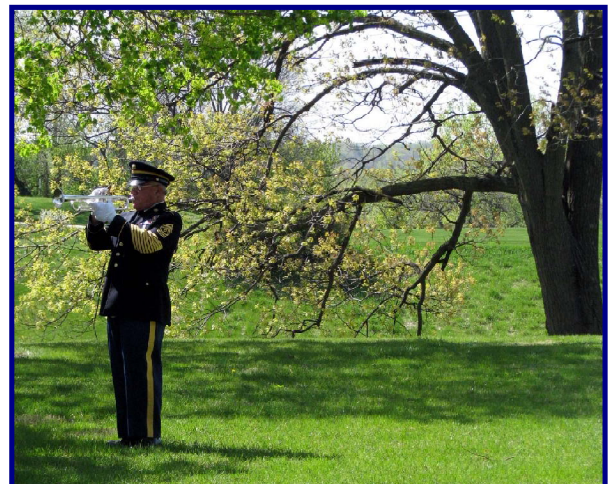
Members of VVA Chapter 790



MacKenzie Highlanders



Roger Elliott & Dan Gannon, VVA Chapter 490



Donald Samuelson

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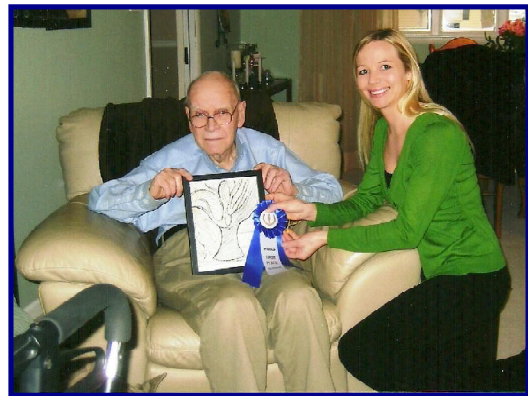
Looking from the Inside Out

(Story by Scott Olson)

Story County - Cambridge, IA March 14, 2011 - Harold, a disabled WWII veteran, participated in the *Veterans Creative Arts Competition* in February 2011. This winter he drew a number of trees by looking out the picture window of his Medical Foster Home as a recreational activity. His monochrome drawing went all the way to the national competition to win a blue ribbon (1st place). He lives at *Home Sweet Home*, a Story County Medical Foster Home.

Medical Foster Homes are sponsored and supported by the VA Central Iowa Healthcare System and provide an alternative to nursing home placement for our veterans who need the care of another but don't have family able to provide care. The veterans are matched with caregivers in our communities who open their homes to one or two veterans in need of a family. Medical Foster Home Caregivers provide a loving home atmosphere, meals, personal care and supervision.

Any veterans interested in this assisted living alternative to nursing home placement can contact Scott Olson at scotto0125@gmail.com or call (515) 220-4010.



Harold displays his award-winning art

August 7th – Iowa's Purple Heart Day



August 7 will now officially be known as "Purple Heart Day" here in Iowa. Under House File 474, unanimously approved by the Legislature and signed by the Governor, state and local governments—and ALL Iowans—are encouraged to observe Purple Heart Day in a way that honors the sacrifice of our military men and women killed or wounded in enemy action, or who suffered maltreatment as prisoners of war.

August 7 was selected because on that day in 1782, General George Washington created the "Badge for Military Merit," a purple, heart-shaped piece of silk edged with silver binding. The badge was presented to soldiers for "any singularly meritorious action."

ESGR Names Volunteer of the Year

John Mikelson of Columbus Junction, and a volunteer with the Iowa Committee of Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), was recently named *Volunteer of the Year* in recognition of his work on behalf of ESGR.

A veterans advisor employed by University of Iowa Veterans, John also serves as a military outreach volunteer. Rob Kelly, vice-chair of Iowa ESGR, reports that, "John can speak first-hand about military service, and his sincerity and honesty only enhance his vast knowledge when speaking to civilians and service members." We thank John for all of his work on behalf of veterans.



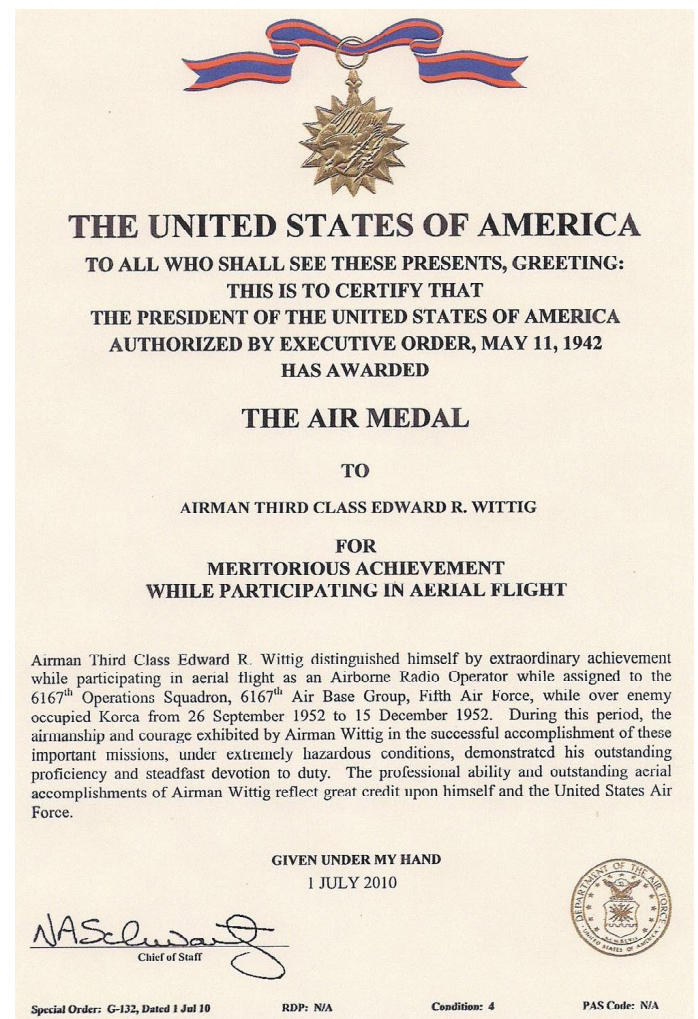
News Briefs Cont.

Medal Awarded 59 Years Later...

On April 16, 2011 at the Korean War veterans meeting in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, the Air Medal was presented by the University of Iowa ROTC to Airman Third Class Edward R. Wittig. The Air Medal presentation was over 59 years in the works! A3C Wittig served in Korea from 1951-1955 as an airborne radio operator. Now retired, he lives in Cedar Rapids.

The Air Medal is a military decoration of the United States. The award was created in 1942, and is awarded for meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight. Awards may be made to recognize single acts of merit or heroism, or for meritorious service.

We thank Airman Third Class Edward Wittig for his extraordinary achievement while assigned to the 6167th Operations Squadron, 6167th Air Base Group, Fifth Air Force over enemy-occupied Korea.





**Do you have questions about
applying for veterans benefits?**

Go no further!

**The Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs
or your County Veterans Affairs Office
will assist you for FREE!**

If you need help or have questions about accessing your veterans benefits, the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA) and your County Veterans Affairs office has trained and accredited people who are ready to assist you. We are dedicated to serving those who served!



Iowa has 99 county veterans affairs offices, 2 IDVA offices, and partnerships with Iowa Veteran Organization Service Officers, the VA Benefits Administration, the Veteran Healthcare Administration, regional Vet Centers (counseling), and 14 Community-Based Outpatient Clinics.



IDVA or your county office have the most up-to-date information available about applying for veterans benefits, including current requirements, changes, and additions to veterans benefits.



YOU DO NOT HAVE TO PAY ANYONE to apply for your VA benefits. These are benefits you have earned.



FREE local resources for ALL VA benefit applications & information:

**Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs ★ 515.242.5331 ★ 800.838.4692 ★ 515.362.7350
7105 NW 70th Avenue ★ Camp Dodge H Bldg 3663 ★ Johnston, IA 50131 ★ <https://va.iowa.gov>**

These organizations also have service officers:

American Legion:	800.944.2039	Paralyzed Veterans of America:	888.909.4782
Disabled American Veterans:	515.323.7539	Veterans of Foreign Wars:	515.255.2139
Military Order of the Purple Heart:	515.362.7355	Vietnam Veterans of America:	515.323.7549

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