

# IOWA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS NEWSLETTER



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## Winter 2015

### “The Best Iowa had to Offer”

On November 15, 2014 the Iowa Aviation Museum in Greenfield, Iowa, held its annual Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony. This year, three Iowa soldiers were recognized – all of whom participated in the Doolittle Tokyo Raiders’ secret mission on April 18, 1942. The participants honored are U.S. Air Force Colonel Charles Ross Greening, U.S. Army Air Forces Corporal Leland D. Faktor, and U.S. Army Air Forces Staff Sergeant William J. Dieter.

“The Doolittle Raid was in retaliation for the devastating Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor just four months earlier. After this and the Bataan Death March, the American people sorely needed a morale boost.

The daring bombing of Tokyo provided that boost. The raid was ordered at the request of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and was led by Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle. Sixteen B-25 “Mitchell” bombers flew off the aircraft carrier USS Hornet to bomb the targets on the Japanese mainland. The secret task force was spotted and the bombers were forced to depart early – knowing they didn’t have fuel to reach safe territory. Iowans Dieter and Faktor were two of the three crew members killed when their bombers crash-landed.” All 80 members of the Doolittle Raiders were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal on May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

The descendants and families of the three honorees were in attendance. Speakers included USAF Major Corey O’Toole, the grandson of Doolittle Raider William Dieter’s cousin; and Jim Bower, son of William Bower (Doolittle Raider Pilot-plane 12).

The evening opened and closed with the color guard presenting the flags. Governor and Lt. Governor



Reynolds were unable to attend the event, but sent a video stating that, “These three American Heroes and Iowans rose to the occasion when their country needed them the most and volunteered for a secret mission offering little chance of survival. They were truly ‘the best Iowa had to offer.’” Branstad also said he could not think of any better place to honor these brave men by forever having their faces and stories adorning on the walls at The Iowa Aviation Hall of Fame.

Robert King, Executive Director of IDVA had the pleasure to represent the Governor and Lt. Gov-

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## “The Best Iowa had to Offer” Con’t.

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ernor at the event and reported that it was a wonderful evening and extremely well attended. Col. King and his wife, Joy had the honor of sitting with Jim Bower, the son of Captain Bill Bower who was the pilot of Doolittle Raider B-25 Number 12.

King made presentations of Iowa banners to the families and concluded the evening with a toast. “This was an evening filled with great honor as we recount the events of 18 April 1942 and tell the stories of these true American heroes,” said Greg Schildberg, Board Member of the Iowa Aviation Museum. “This raid had a significant impact on Iowa lives and Iowa aviation. We are pleased to bring people together in remembrance.”

The Iowa Aviation Museum, located in Greenfield, Iowa, became operational in 1988 by order of proclamation from Governor Branstad. The original mission of the museum was “to preserve, restore, and display antique aircraft of the ‘golden era of aviation’ and related memorabilia for the education and pleasure of the public, and to honor Iowa aviators of the past, present, and future.” Now, the museum is working toward storing and telling the history of Iowa’s rich aviation heritage.

[Source: Iowa Aviation Museum: [www.flyingmuseum.com](http://www.flyingmuseum.com), and Connell Aviation Group: <http://connellaviationgroup.com>.]



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## Iowa Veterans Cemetery

The Iowa Veterans Cemetery reports that through January 15, 2015, there are:  
 Applications on file (still living): 7,328    Interments: 2,296  
 Veterans interred: 1,851    Dependents interred: 445

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Iowa Veterans Cemetery Facts:  
 Caskets: 681    Cremations: 1,550    *In Memory of* markers: 65

**Iowa Veterans Cemetery Con't.**  
Images from Wreaths Across America 2015



Photos by Robert Nandell

**Iowa Veterans Cemetery Con't.**  
Images from Wreaths Across America 2015



Photos by Cemetery Staff

Iowa Veterans Cemetery Con't.



Valerie Funk, from Osceola, Iowa, served 10 years with the National Guard. In 2008, she received a degree in Photography and Graphic Design; in 2010 she began designing quilts.

Valerie has recently donated the quilt she designed (pictured), which was made from pieces of military uniforms – some dating back to World War II. The quilt is now displayed in the front area of the Iowa Veterans Cemetery’s administration building.



The Iowa Veterans Cemetery staff held a “Thank You” luncheon for the Knights of Columbus – in recognition of their volunteer service that they provide to the Cemetery.

Four parishes are represented which include: St. Francis of Assisi, West Des Moines, IA; St. John and Paul, Altoona, IA; Christ the King, Des Moines, IA; and Sacred Heart, West Des Moines, IA.

These groups provided the Iowa Veterans Cemetery with mowing and grounds-keeping by volunteering a total of 327 days – 2, 247.50 hours of work – from 2012 through 2014. Thank you for all you do!



Mr. Larry Via, National Commander, AMVETS, and Mr. Don Shellenberger, State Commander, AMVETS, with King during visit to the Iowa Veterans Cemetery on Saturday, 17 January.



Perry VFW Post 2060 and Perry American Legion Post 85 joined forces to purchase and donate the new large flag pictured here. Left to right: Mahlon Conaway, Dick Shoesmith, and Keith Blum, IVH Superintendent.

## County News

### from Dallas County

Ed Vos, County VA Director in Dallas County, reports that the 2014 Dallas County Veterans Fair was once again a great success this year. On November 1, 2014, over five hundred people attended the fair at the Veterans Reception Center in Van Meter, IA. Attendees received valuable information and assistance in connecting to their veterans benefits and resources. Ed completed approximately 300 drivers license forms.



### from Story County

Story County residents raised and collected monetary donations and items that are needed at the Iowa Veterans Home during the month of November 2014. This is done each and every November for the Iowa Veterans Home. On December 5, 2014, Brett McLain, Director of Story County Veterans Affairs delivered all of the items that were collected.



*Some of the staff at the Story County Treasure's Office*




*L.to R. Brett McLain & Michael Hines of IVH*

### from Johnson County

Gary Boseneiler from Johnson County has done a fantastic job of capturing the essence of the old horse cavalry army in Iowa City that until only recently housed the Iowa City Army Guard units.

You can view three videos; one of the demolition of the Armory, one of the Memorial being built, and one of the dedication ceremony here: [http://www.johnson-county.com/dept\\_vets\\_memorial.aspx?id=15852](http://www.johnson-county.com/dept_vets_memorial.aspx?id=15852).



State of Iowa  
Executive Department

IN THE NAME AND BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE STATE OF IOWA

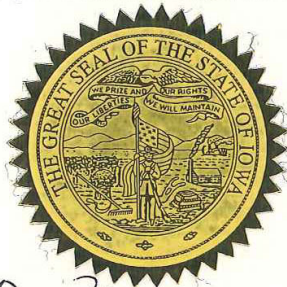
**PROCLAMATION**

- WHEREAS,** since the Revolutionary War, the men and women of our military along with volunteer militiamen have played an integral role in defending our country; and
- WHEREAS,** these men and women have given selflessly of themselves and served with dignity and determination to fight for and maintain our freedoms and way of life for future generations, and we are constantly humbled by their strength and courage; and
- WHEREAS,** the year of 2015 marks historic anniversaries of the end of three major wars in our nation's history: the Civil War - 150 years ago; World War II - 70 years ago; and the Vietnam War - 40 years ago; and
- WHEREAS,** men and women of the state of Iowa have served and fought along their active duty brothers and sisters and have been the bearers of a proud military tradition that is entrenched into our state's history of military service; and
- WHEREAS,** in times of war and peace alike, our veterans have served with courage and distinction in the face of tremendous adversity demonstrating an unfaltering commitment to America and our state and our people; many have made the ultimate sacrifice; and
- WHEREAS,** we pay tribute to our veterans, to our fallen, and to their families; to honor their contributions to our nation, let us strive with renewed determination to keep the promises we have made to all who have answered our country's call; as we fulfill our obligations to them, we keep faith with the patriots who have risked their lives to preserve our Union:

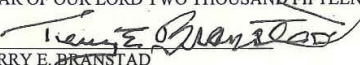
**NOW, THEREFORE, I,** Terry E. Branstad, Governor of the State of Iowa, do hereby proclaim the year of 2015 as


**THE YEAR OF THE VETERAN**

and ask all Iowans to remember our servicemen and women and our veterans and honor their service and sacrifices in their quest to maintain the rights and freedoms of our people and the ideals of our nation.



IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I HAVE HEREUNTO SUBSCRIBED MY NAME AND CAUSED THE GREAT SEAL OF THE STATE OF IOWA TO BE AFFIXED. DONE AT DES MOINES THIS 15th DAY OF JANUARY IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD TWO THOUSAND FIFTEEN

  
TERRY E. BRANSTAD  
GOVERNOR OF IOWA

ATTEST:  
  
PAUL D. PATE  
SECRETARY OF STATE

## Local News and Updates

### “Their Last Full Measure”

Submitted by: 1/Lt. David M. Lamb,  
Inf., Commanding, Company “A”, 49<sup>th</sup> Iowa V.V.I/SVR,  
“The Governor’s Own”

When our sixteenth President, Abraham Lincoln, spoke those immortal words on the afternoon of November 19<sup>th</sup>, 1863, on that wind-swept hillside in the battle-scarred village of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, he thought his speech had not been well received. It certainly paled in comparison to the bombastic oration of over two hours in length that the crowd had already endured from the fiery Edward Everett. A speaker considered by most of his own time to be this nation’s greatest living orator. Lincoln’s very invitation to come and speak seemed almost an afterthought. No one, including Lincoln, could have predicted that what they were about to hear from the President would go down in history as arguably the greatest public address of all time.

At slightly less than two minutes in length, and a mere 272 words long, Lincoln could not have imagined the depth of emotion that every syllable of that masterpiece of English prose would still have the power to evoke in us over fifteen decades since they were spoken.

Nearly overwhelmed by the enormity of the aftermath of death and destruction wrought of those most tragic days of fighting the previous July, Lincoln’s words on that November afternoon perfectly melded the consciousness of our nation when he described the horrible carnage that we had brought upon ourselves. Carnage that was all too real, and too near at hand as the bodies of some of the dead were yet to be removed from the battlefield where they had fallen by the day of the dedication of the Soldier’s Cemetery that both he and Everett had come to take part in on that November day.

He could not know that the terrible war would grind on for nearly another two years and result in the loss of over seven-hundred-thousand men and deplete the nation’s national treasury by more monies than had been minted since the founding of the republic eighty-seven years earlier. But what he did know was that he needed to both honor the sacrifices of the multitudes of men in uniform who were struggling by force of arms to restore the nation and end the terrible institution of human slavery; and at the same time offer hope to a war weary nation that these sacrifices would not be in vain and that there would, indeed, come a day in which this nation would realize that “new birth of freedom”.

For one Iowa family, far removed from that Pennsylvania hillside that day, no words would ever serve to ease the terrible pain of their loss; nor begin to describe the sacrifice that it would endure as every living male member of the family would lose his life in the service of his nation. In fact, by the time that President Lincoln gave his immortal “Gettysburg Address”, five of the six brothers of the Littleton family of tiny Toolesboro (Louisa County) Iowa, were already dead.

This is their story.

It is believed that James Littleton and Martha Lewis were natives of Maryland. At least that is where they wed sometime around 1826. Between 1828 and 1836 they would have three sons (George H., John W., and Thomas S.) before removing their family to Ohio.

Once settled into their new surroundings, another son (William M.) would be born in 1837; and their first daughter (Mary) would follow in 1839. Soon thereafter they would once again be on the move westward to the newly open Iowa Territory.

The Littleton’s would settle in the heavily wooded bluffs above the confluence of the Iowa and Mississippi Rivers

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## Local News and Updates Con't.

### “Their Last Full Measure”

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in what would one day become Louisa County when Iowa entered the federal union as the 29<sup>th</sup> state in 1846. They must have decided that this was to be their ultimate “home” as they purchased 200 acres of land and began to clear the timber to establish their family farmstead.

Five more children would be born to the Littleton's with the addition of Rebecca (1841), twins Permilla and Kendall (1843) Noah (1845) and Sarah (whose year of birth is not known).

Martha Littleton died in 1853, when the youngest of her children could not have been more than five or six years of age. James would follow in 1860, just months before the first shots were fired by cadets of the Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina at the brick fortress in Charleston Harbor known as Fort Sumter.

Thomas Littleton would be the first to enlist in the volunteer forces that were rallying to President Lincoln's call when he joined Company “C” of the 5<sup>th</sup> Iowa Infantry. He would die a prisoner of war at Andersonville in 1864. His final post is in the National Cemetery there.

William Merrill Littleton followed Thomas in September, 1861, when he joined the 8<sup>th</sup> Iowa Infantry. He survived the carnage of the fabled “Hornet's Nest” at Shiloh the following April. The 8<sup>th</sup> Iowa though badly mauled in the fighting at Shiloh, would none the less be sent on to the Siege of Corinth, Mississippi, where William was again thrust into the thick of the fighting. Marked as a leader of men by his officers, William was promoted to Corporal in March of 1863, but by mid-October he was so ill from chronic diarrhea (called “the soldier's disease”) that he was sent to the hospital at Jefferson Barracks near St. Louis. He died there in December and is at rest in the National Cemetery.

George Handy Littleton (the first born of the sons) was living and working in New Boston, Illinois by the time the war broke out. He enlisted in the 65<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry in March of 1862. His unit saw limited action before he was captured at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, during one of the several times that pivotal supply, ordnance, and material depot would change hands during the war. So ill was George that his Confederate captors “paroled” him to Camp Sherman in Chicago, Illinois, in the fall of 1862. He died there of disease in December. His final resting place is not known.

Kendall Littleton was but nineteen when he enlisted in the 19<sup>th</sup> Iowa Infantry on July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1862. He died instantly on the field of battle at Prairie Grove, Arkansas on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1862. His brothers John Shelby Littleton, and Noah, had both enlisted in the same company of the 19<sup>th</sup> and would have been there on the field when Kendall died. John was also severely wounded at Prairie Grove and died of his wounds at a field hospital in Fayette, Arkansas, eleven days later on December 18<sup>th</sup>. He was buried in an unmarked, mass grave near the site of the field hospital.

Noah Littleton survived the fighting at Prairie Grove and moved on with his unit to other engagements during the fall and winter of 1862-63. He would drown when the small ferry boat that his forage train was using to cross the swollen White River near Forsythe, Missouri, broke free of its guy ropes and pitched six soldiers and several mules into the frigid waters. His body was recovered and interred at the National Cemetery at Springfield, Missouri.

You see, another aspect of this story that is so utterly remarkable is the fact that all six of these young men were of “mixed race”. Their father, James Littleton was half African-American; their mother Caucasian. (Some family oral tradition claims that James was, indeed, half Native-American instead of African-American). Though black soldiers had fought with distinction in both the American Revolution and the War of 1812, a federal law of 1792

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## Local News and Updates Con't.

### “Their Last Full Measure”

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had barred them from service in the Army until mid-1862.

The story of this remarkable family and their monumental sacrifice had gone more or less unknown until local historians Tom Woodruff and Ed Baines of the Louisa County Historical Society happened to come across an obscure newspaper clipping from 1907. That set them upon a path of discovery to learn all that they could about this family and the terrible offering that was laid upon the altar of freedom by these six young men who truly gave, “their last full measure of devotion.”

Plans are underway to build a memorial in Louisa County, near where the Littleton family farm once stood that will honor these six men whose tragic deaths represent the greatest known loss of life endured by a single family in the history of all of this nation's conflicts.

Persons interested in donating to the estimated \$250,000.00 projected costs of the monument should send their donations to the Louisa County Historical Society at: LCHS-Littleton Account/P.O. Box 302/609 Highway 61/Wapello, Iowa 52653

Further information on these brothers and the project can be found in the outstanding article by historian John Busbee in the September/October issue of *Iowa History Journal*, on sale now at newsstands or, by visiting the website of “The Governor's Own” 49<sup>th</sup> Iowa Veteran Volunteer Infantry/SVR at [www.iowavalor.com](http://www.iowavalor.com).

## Creative Writing for Veterans: UI Arts Share submitted by Paul Maisano

University of Iowa Arts Share continues the long tradition of sharing arts resources at The University of Iowa with the greater Iowa community. Through outreach efforts in collaboration with the Division of Performing Arts (Music, Dance, Theatre Arts), the School of Art and Art History, and The Iowa Writers' Workshop, it is the goal of Arts Share to strengthen the arts, providing access to life-enriching arts experiences throughout Iowa.

And our project: Veterans' Voices Project (VVP) is a creative writing outreach program connecting graduate students from the Iowa Writers' Workshop with veterans on campus and throughout Iowa in order to help them share their stories. VVP emphasizes personal narratives, explores the varied and diverse experiences of veterans, and is individually tailored. Writers and veterans meet one hour per week for six weeks, one-on-one or in small groups (participants outside Iowa City will meet in person for first and final sessions and via Skype and/or email in between). This project is funded through the University of Iowa Office of Outreach and Engagement and is free to all participants.

The therapeutic value of writing is well-documented. VVP is a branch of The Patient Voice Project, which collaborates with healthcare professionals to improve knowledge and understanding of therapeutic writing. Expected benefits for participants in VVP include improved health, well-being, and resiliency; meanwhile veterans returning to college receive valuable preparation for that transition.

Participants can opt to have their writing anthologized in future issues, which are published and distributed in an effort to raise awareness and stimulate new and deeper understanding of the unique and important experiences of veterans in the community. For more information or to sign up, email [artshare@uiowa.edu](mailto:artshare@uiowa.edu).

## Local News and Updates Con't.

### Airmen Missing from WWII Found

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office announced on October 10, 2014 that U.S. servicemen, missing from World War II, have been accounted for and their remains are being returned to their families for burial with full military honors. Army Air Forces 1st Lt. William P. Cook, 27, of Alameda, Calif., Staff Sgt. Maurice J. Fevold, 21, of Chicago, and Sgt. Eric M. Honeyman, 21, of Alameda, Calif., have been accounted for and will be buried with full military honors.

Gov. Terry Branstad ordered flags to be flown at half-staff in Iowa from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Monday, October 20, 2014, in honor of Staff Sgt. Maurice L. Fevold, formerly of Badger/Eagle Grove, Iowa. Funeral services with full military honors were held October 20, 2014.

Maurice J. Fevold was born February 21, 1923 east of Badger, Iowa to John and Carrie (Thorson) Fevold. He grew up in the Badger/Eagle Grove, Iowa area and was a 1941 graduate of Eagle Grove High School. After school he moved to Chicago, Illinois where he lived a short time before enlisting in the United States Army Air Corps on April 12, 1943. Fevold enlisted in the U.S. Army on April 12, 1943, and transferred into the U.S. Army Air Corps in June 1943. Fevold attended armament training at Lowry Field, Colo., aerial training at Ft. Myers, Fla., and then B-26 flight training at Barksdale Field, La. He left the U.S. for duty in the European theater in April 1944 and was assigned to the 599<sup>th</sup> Bomber Squadron, 397<sup>th</sup> Bomber Group, Medium, U.S. Army Air Corps.

On Dec. 23, 1944, the first day of aviation operations for the Battle of the Bulge, Fevold, along with five other crew members, took off from Saint Quentin, France on board a B-26G Marauder bomber aircraft "Hunconciuous" to attack an enemy-held railroad bridge in Eller, Germany. Their aircraft was shot down by enemy anti-aircraft fire near Seffern, Germany, which borders Belgium. A total of 10 U.S. aircraft were recorded as lost in the vicinity of Seffern during this specific mission.

Fevold, the aircraft's armorer-gunner, and the entire crew were officially declared deceased on Dec. 23, 1944, but their remains were never recovered. In November 2006, the Joint Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Accounting Command - Central Identification Laboratory (JPAC) received information of a possible aircraft crash site near Allmuthen, Belgium. In March 2007, a JPAC Investigation Team surveyed the purported crash site, where human remains and physical evidence were recovered in 2012 by JPAC personnel.

Following World War II, the Army Graves Registration Command (AGRC) conducted extensive field investigations and was unable to locate the aircraft and the crew. In May 1949, AGRC concluded the crew members were unrecoverable.

In 2006, a group of aviation researchers located the wreckage of a B-26G near Allmuthen, Belgium and notified the U.S. Army Mortuary Affairs Activity - Europe. In 2007, a Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) team investigated the site and recommended it for excavation. In 2012 and 2013, JPAC teams excavated the crash site and recovered human remains and non-biological material evidence.

In 2014, JPAC's Research and Analysis Group concluded a historical association existed between the artifacts and human remains recovered at the Belgium excavation site and Missing Air Crew Report #11985 from World War II. Mitochondrial DNA testing positively identified the remains as belonging to Fevold and other crew members from the missing aircraft.

Fevold's military awards and honors include the Purple Heart (posthumous), Air Medal (11 awards), Army Good Conduct Medal (posthumous), European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal (with one silver service star), World War II Victory Medal, Presidential Unit Citation, and Enlisted Aircrew Member Wings.

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## Local News and Updates Con't.

### Airmen Missing from WWII Found Con't.

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He was preceded in death by his parents and sister, Jeanette Prime. He is survived by great nephews and great nieces: William Bushman of Missouri; Robert Sweeney of Hawaii; Michael Sweeney of Washington; Vicki Riley of Iowa; and Shelly Everheart. *[Photo of Staff Sgt. Fevold not available.]*

## State Program Helps Military Service Members and Veterans Make Iowa their Forever Home

### *Military Homeownership Assistance Program Offers \$5,000 Down Payment Grants to Service Members*

The State of Iowa recognizes and thanks all military servicemembers and veterans for their service to the State of Iowa and our country. Their hard work, leadership and patriotism should be honored. The State of Iowa assists Iowa servicemembers and veterans in creating their permanent home in Iowa through the Military Homeownership Assistance program. The program is jointly administered by the Iowa Finance Authority and the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs and funding is appropriated by the Iowa Legislature.

The Military Homeownership Assistance Program provides eligible servicemembers with a \$5,000 grant that may be used towards down payment and closing costs to purchase a home located in Iowa. When combined with the Iowa Finance Authority's other down payment assistance programs, military members could receive a total of up to \$7,500 in grant funds toward the purchase of a home. In fiscal year 2014, the program assisted 423 military servicemembers and their families to fulfill their dream of homeownership.

"The Military Homeownership Assistance Program was created by the Iowa Legislature in an effort to foster affordable homeownership opportunities for servicemembers like Justin," said Iowa Finance Authority Executive Director Dave Jamison. "Down payment assistance will often make the difference in getting a desired home or not. For servicemembers and veterans it helps smooth the transition to civilian life and put down roots in Iowa."

"The Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs' mission is to assist veterans with obtaining services and benefits that they are entitled to. We are also concerned about the successful reintegration of veterans into civilian life and the community," said Colonel Robert King, Executive Director, Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs. "The Military Homeownership Assistance Program is an excellent program that directly impacts qualified veterans' ability to purchase a home. We are extremely pleased with the response of veterans requesting this program."

"The State of Iowa is committed to helping veterans find jobs, explore career paths, and make a smooth transition to civilian life in Iowa through the Home Base Iowa initiative, and this all starts with stable housing," said Iowa Economic Development Authority Director Debi Durham. "We want veterans to know that Iowa offers them not only job opportunities but can also assist them in purchasing a home and planting roots in a caring, welcoming community."

The Military Homeownership Assistance Program has provided more than \$15.4 million in funding to support 3,244 military servicemembers and their families since the program's inception in 2005. Availability of funding for this program is subject to annual state appropriation and funds are made available on a first-come, first-served basis. More information about the program and application information is available at [IowaFinanceAuthority.gov](http://IowaFinanceAuthority.gov).

The Iowa Legislature created the Iowa Finance Authority in 1975 to undertake programs to assist in the attainment of housing for low-and moderate-income Iowans.

## IDVA News

### IDVA Executive Director Receives Award

At the end of each year, the 49<sup>th</sup> Iowa VVI presents awards to individuals and groups whom they feel have made significant contributions to the preservation of Iowa's historic military heritage and the sacrifices made by generations of Iowa veterans.

This year, Col. Robert King, IDVA Executive Director, was chosen by unanimous vote of the Honor Guard as a recipient of one of these awards. A book and certificate on behalf of the 49<sup>th</sup> Iowa VVI/SVR was presented on Wednesday, December 31, 2015 by David M. Lamb, DC Department of Iowa Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War Commanding Officer, Co. "A", 49<sup>th</sup> Iowa VVI/SVR.

The 49<sup>th</sup> Iowa VVI is the Honor Guard for the Department of Iowa, sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, and also serve as the Tomb Guard for President Lincoln's tomb in Springfield, Illinois.



## Federal News and Updates

### Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014

A Message from the Secretary (November 5, 2014)



#### An Open Letter to America's Veterans

At the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), we have one of the most noble and inspiring missions in Government. I accepted this job and joined this mission to better serve you—our Veterans—and improve the delivery of the care and benefits you have earned. It is our privilege to serve you, and I have made clear that as we move forward as a Department, we will judge the success of all our efforts against a single metric—the outcomes we provide for Veterans.

The Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (VACAA), enacted less than 3-months ago, goes a long way toward enabling VA to meet the demand for Veterans health care in the short-term. VA has put considerable focus and attention on ensuring the law is implemented seamlessly, without confusion, and without creating hardships for Veterans. This legislation provides authorities, funding, and other tools to better serve Veterans in the short-term. We are appreciative of this temporary measure to improve access while we build capacity within the VA system to better serve those who rely on us for health care.

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## Federal News and Updates Con't.

### Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014

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From June 1 to September 30, 2014, VA completed more than 19 million Veteran appointments in our facilities and made nearly 1.1 million authorizations for Veterans to receive care in the private sector and other non-VA health facilities—a 46.6-percent increase over the same period in 2013. This was all done under existing programs prior to the passage of VACAA, and sets the stage for strengthening existing partnerships between VA and the private sector. We have much we can share with one another to the benefit of Veterans.

VA has signed contracts with two private health care companies to help VA administer the Veterans Choice Program (Choice Program) under VACAA. The Choice Program is a new, temporary benefit allowing some Veterans to receive health care in their communities rather than waiting for a VA appointment or traveling to a VA facility. It does not impact your existing VA health care or any other VA benefit you may be receiving. We will begin implementing this benefit on November 5, as required by law. A call center is now operational to answer your questions and verify your eligibility for this program.

As part of this new program, we are issuing a Veterans Choice Card to every Veteran who is potentially eligible for the new, temporary health benefit. The Choice Card allows Veterans to elect to receive care outside of VA when they qualify for the new program based on the distance of their residence from a VA care facility, or when wait times for VA health care exceed the standards established in law. The Choice Card does not replace the identification card you already use to access other VA benefits; please do not throw away that identification card.

The Choice Card will be issued in three phases. The first group of Choice Cards along with a letter explaining eligibility for this program is currently being sent to Veterans who may live more than 40 miles from a VA facility. The next group of Choice Cards and letters will be sent shortly thereafter to those Veterans who are currently waiting for an appointment longer than 30-days from their preferred date or the date determined to be medically necessary by their physician.

The final group of Choice Cards and letters will be sent between December 2014 and January 2015 to the remainder of all Veterans enrolled for VA health care who may be eligible for the Choice Program in the future.

We are continuing to work with our partners—Congress, Veterans Service Organizations, and others—to get the information about this health program out to Veterans in as many ways as possible. Please visit our Web site at [www.va.gov/opa/choiceact](http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact) where we have provided helpful information on Choice Program eligibility. We will work with our partners to keep you informed as we improve our delivery of high-quality, timely care. Thank you for your service and sacrifice.

Sincerely,  
Robert A. McDonald  
U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs

#### ...a note from IDVA Executive Director Robert King:

If you are a veteran attempting to set up care or to check for eligibility, I would direct you to (866)606-8198 in order to determine if you are eligible for the program. The determination that the veteran is eligible for the program is a very important Step 1. The VA Choice Program website is an excellent tool and is the best source for up-to-date information about the VA Choice Program. The website continues to update the longer version fact sheets and summaries and is updated as changes or new information is ready for distribution ([www.va.gov/opa/choiceact](http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact)).

## Federal News and Updates Con't.

### Veterans Employment Center for Job Seekers

The Veterans Employment Center (VEC) is the federal government's single online tool for connecting transitioning Service members, Veterans and their families to meaningful career opportunities in the public and private sectors. The VEC is a government-wide product that brings together a reputable cadre of employers with real job opportunities, and provides transitioning Service members, Reserve Component Service members, Veterans and their families with the tools to translate military skills into plain language and build a profile that can be shared - in real time - with employers who have made a public commitment to hire Veterans. The VEC was created in collaboration with the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Labor, Defense and Education, the Small Business Administration, and the Office of Personnel Management.

The VEC can be found at [www.ebenefits.va.gov/jobs](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov/jobs). For a tutorial video on how to use the VEC, please visit [www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWfhl-eSoWk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWfhl-eSoWk).

*As a job seeker, you have access to the following resources:*

- **Skills Translator:** Translate your military occupational codes into civilian skill equivalents for a powerful public profile and résumé; and learn about related civilian career paths.
- **Profile & Résumé Builder:** Seamlessly import results from the skills translator into an online profile that you can save for future use, publish for employers to search, or download to help you develop a résumé in any format. Publishing your profile on the VEC instantly connects you to thousands of employers looking to hire Veterans, transitioning Service members, Reserve Component Service members and family members.
- **Veterans Job Bank (VJB):** The VJB allows you to search over 1.5 million jobs—including federal, state, local government and private sector jobs. In fact, some employers are specifically recruiting transitioning Service members, Reserve Component Service members and veterans through the VJB.
- **Employer Commitments:** View a list of hundreds of employers and organizations that have made a commitment to hire or train individuals like you, and then link directly to their site to get more information, start the conversation and apply for jobs.
- **Other Resources:** The VEC contains or links to a broad set of other informational resources designed to help you find meaningful career opportunities and take advantage of special government and partner programs, such as the new Department of Defense SkillBridge pilot program to promote civilian job training for transitioning Service members.

If you have any questions or need technical assistance with the site, please contact the Department of Veterans Affairs VEC support team at: [oeoecsupport.vbavaco@va.gov](mailto:oeoecsupport.vbavaco@va.gov).

### VA Expands Fry Scholarship

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it will begin accepting applications by mail on Monday, November 3, 2014, for the Fry Scholarship under newly expanded eligibility criteria to include surviving spouses. The expanded criteria for the Fry Scholarship is the latest in a series of VA actions to implement provisions of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 ("Choice Act").

Specifically, Section 701 of the Choice Act expands the Fry Scholarship to include the surviving spouses of Servicemembers who died in the line of duty after September 10, 2001. Prior to this expansion, only children of those who died in the line of duty were eligible for this benefit.

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### VA Expands Fry Scholarship Con't.

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The Fry Scholarship was created to honor Sergeant John David Fry, 28, of Lorena, Texas. Sergeant Fry had one week left in his tour in Iraq in 2006, when he volunteered to continue working for seven more hours disarming explosive devices, despite having already sustained an injury to his hand. He made the ultimate sacrifice on March 8, 2006, in Anbar Province, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device detonated. He left behind a widow and three young children.

The Fry Scholarship will entitle eligible spouses to up to 36 months of the full, 100-percent level of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, which includes a tuition-and-fee payment, a monthly housing allowance and stipend for books and supplies. Some spouses currently eligible for or already receiving benefits under the Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance (DEA) program may now be eligible for the Fry Scholarship. All surviving spouses eligible for DEA and the Fry Scholarship must make an irrevocable election for terms beginning on or after January 1, 2015.

VA will identify surviving spouses eligible for both programs and send them a letter with comparative information on the benefits available and instructions on how to make an election. Information about these two programs is available on VA's website and the GI Bill website ([www.benefits.va.gov/gibill](http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill)). The VA call center (888-GIBILL-1) also will be able to help individuals understand the differences between the two programs. [Source: <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2647>]



## Other News

### Tuskegee Airmen Die on Same Day

Two members of the Tuskegee Airmen – the famed all-black squadron that flew in World War II – died on the same day. The men, lifelong friends who enlisted together, were 91.

Clarence E. Huntley Jr. and Joseph Shambrey died on January 5, 2015 in their Los Angeles homes, relatives said Sunday.

Huntley and Shambrey enlisted in 1942. They were shipped overseas to Italy in 1944 with the 100<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron of the Army Air Force's 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group. As mechanics, they kept the combat planes flying.

Huntley serviced P-39, P-47 and P-51 aircraft, and as crew chief, was responsible for the plane of the squadron commander, Capt. Andrew D. Turner, said Huntley's nephew, Craig Huntly of Inglewood.

Read more here: <http://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/article6061182.html#storylink=cpy>. [Source: Associated Press]





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