

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS NEWSLETTER



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515-242-5331 800-838-4692 <https://va.iowa.gov>

Fall 2011

We recently held ceremonies all across the state on Veterans Day to recognize and say thank you to our veterans. There is a large network of people working together to serve veterans in Iowa. In addition to county, state, and federal offices, many groups helping veterans are private and non-profit organizations doing very good work. Unfortunately, there are some who look to take advantage of our veterans. I want to be sure Iowa veterans know – you do NOT have to pay someone to help file veteran benefit claims (service officers will not charge you), and you should NEVER be told you have to buy a product in order to use one of your veteran benefits.



I want to be sure veterans know...

Service officers will help you file disability compensation or pension claims without charge. If someone is charging you, make sure they explain what service they are providing that cannot be provided by a service officer.

The Iowa Veterans Cemetery is proud to offer you, our veterans, the opportunity to be interred with your fellow veterans and spouses based on your service to our country. We offer free to eligible veterans the interment site, opening and closing of the site, a grave liner (for caskets), military honors, headstone or niche cover and all the engraving. At the present time, there is a \$300 fee for spouse (or eligible dependent child). The spouse (or eligible dependent child) will share the headstone or niche cover as well as the site with the veteran.

Your eligibility to be interred at the Iowa Veterans Cemetery is based on your discharge (DD 214) information (please have our staff determine your eligibility) and NOT where you buy a casket. We are not associated with any casket companies, nor have we asked them to solicit our veterans. We do not involve ourselves in the arrangements you make with the funeral home of your choosing. Whether your decision is casket or interment of cremated remains is a personal choice only the veteran and family can make. This is also true when it comes to your casket or urn.

Please help us spread the word...



Please help us spread the word to veterans and their families. We encourage all veterans to call your local county veterans affairs office, the state office, or any veteran service organization if you have questions about charges for benefit assistance or veteran products.

On behalf of all the staff, thank you veterans for your service, thank you families for supporting your veteran family member, and thank you to all the organizations working to support veterans and their families.

—Jodi Tymeson, Executive Director, IDVA

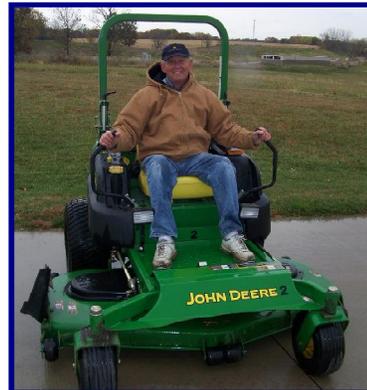
Iowa Veterans Cemetery

News and Updates

Keith Blum, IDVA Cemetery Superintendent reports that it is that time of the year when the cemetery crew is working on spraying, fertilizing, over seeding, trimming bushes, tuning up snow removal equipment, and countless other seasonal duties. As always, the cemetery staff hopes for a mild winter! The summer went well especially with volunteer help from the Knights of Columbus. The cemetery staff also fine-tuned the irrigation system and put down additional sod to help the appearance of some sections that were starting to look a little thin - mostly around headstones.



Jeff Clark, Iowa Veterans Cemetery



Rodger Till, Knights of Columbus

The Iowa Veterans Cemetery reports that through October 19, 2011 there are:
 Applications on file: over 5822 ♦ Veterans interred: 822 ♦ Interments: 982 ♦ *In Memory of Markers:* 28

Iowa Black Knights Dedicate Monument at IVC

The Iowa Black Knights dedicated their monument at the Iowa Veterans Cemetery on October 8, 2011; the following was taken from the dedication speech delivered by Black Night Veteran Leroy Jablonski:

“In December of 1966, the 3rd of the 5th Armored Cavalry arrived on the shores of the Republic of Vietnam and fought gallantly through 1971. During that time-span, the Black Knights fought throughout Vietnam, starting in the Mekong Delta and then in March 1968 moving to the northern most part of Vietnam – Wunder Beach.



During these five years [in Vietnam] the Black Knights received the *Army Presidential Unit Citation*, the *Republic of Vietnam Presidential Unit Citation*, and the

Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with a Palm. Major battles included Bau Bang, Tet Offensive, Hamburger Hill, and the Au Shaw Valley. The unit also endured mortar and rocket attacks, land mines, and firefights throughout this time-frame.



Of the 298 Black Knight’s KIAs, two were from Iowa: Bert Keeler and Lynn Miles.

A total of 20 Iowans served with the Black Knights; 15 were present to participate in the monument dedication. The Iowa Black Knights are the first to have a monument located in a veterans cemetery...there are no other states that have a Black Knight’s monument and the only other Black Knight’s monument is the national monument located at Fort Knox, Kentucky.”

Upcoming Events

AL Post 403 Needs Your Help/Vote in Pepsi's Refresh Challenge

American Legion Post 403 is undertaking a project to benefit all community members and veterans served by their Post and would like the veteran community at large to share in their vision. Their project is a new Post community building and land development to be located just south of the new Iowa Veterans Cemetery near Van Meter. The new center will be used for community events, but would be reserved for veterans' families. "The families could come here and gather together after the committal service and just talk and get together at no cost to them," said Post 403 Commander Marsha Whiteaker. (Read more: <http://www.legionpost403.org/fundraiser.html>)

Why now? The Post gave up its old structure in 2005 because it needed a new roof, modernization to correct summer/winter utility costs, and simply because it was too small to accommodate Post membership expansion from 29 members in 2003 to 90 members in 2010. The opening of the Iowa Veterans Cemetery near Van Meter also increased the inquiries for a community gathering facility after committal services. The Post building and ground designs are working to incorporate various building uses as well as trying to stay "green" to reduce utility costs and the impact on our environment.

Post 403 will need the support of many folks, near and far, to raise approximately \$500,000 to construct a 90' by 110' concept structure. They are in the process of finalizing the plans and hope to break ground next spring as soon as funds are deemed adequate.

To that end, American Legion Post 403 has entered Pepsi's Refresh Challenge (<http://www.refresheverything.com>), and are competing for a community grant of \$50,000. Go to the Pepsi website listed above and register so you can vote once per day! Every vote counts and gets them closer to winning one of Pepsi's grants. Look for their project under "Communities" and then look for: "Help us build it so they can come together to honor their fallen Heroes." For questions, contact the Post Adjutant, Terry Vande Kamp: terrwnd@aol.com.



Upcoming Events

50th Anniversary of the Marine Corps' Operation SHUFLY

The Headquarters Marine Corps, Division of Public Affairs is currently organizing a series of commemorative events in honor of the 50th Anniversary of Operation SHUFLY, the first U.S. Marine Corps engagement in combat operations leading to the Vietnam War. The Division is asking for help in contacting Marines who served in support of Operation SHUFLY in hopes that they can participate in SHUFLY commemorative events next year. If you served in one of the squadrons listed below as part of this Operation, DivPA is interested in speaking with you to discuss your possible participation in a commemorative event in 2012. Interested Marines should contact Jeanette Casselano at 703-614-1034 or by email at jeanette.casselano.ctr@usmc.mil.



USMC Squadron

Time of Rotation

MABS-16, Sub Unit 2	9 Apr 1962 - 30 Nov 1964
HMM-362	9 Apr 1962 - 31 Jul 1962
HMM-163	1 Aug 1962 - 11 Jan 1963
HMM-162	12 Jan 1963 - 6 Jun 1963;
HMM-162	1 July 1963 - 7 Oct 1964
HMM-261	7 Jun 1963 - 30 Sept 1963
HMM-361	1 Oct 1963 - 31 Jan 1964
HMM-364	1 Feb 1964 - 30 Jun 1964
HMM-365	8 Oct 1964 - 30 Nov 1964

U.S. Marine helicopter squadrons began four month rotations through Vietnam as part of Operation SHUFLY on 15 April 1962. Six days later, they performed the first helicopter assault using U.S. Marine helicopters and ARVN troops. After April 1963, as losses began to mount, U.S. Army UH-1 Huey gunships escorted the Marine transports. The enemy again used effective counter landing techniques and in Operation Sure Wind 202 on 27 April 1964, 17 of 21 helicopters were hit and three shot down. Additional history can be found here:

<http://www.mca-marines.org/gazette/operation-shuflly-commemoration>

Spotlight on Local Iowa Hero

7000 Quilts and Still Counting

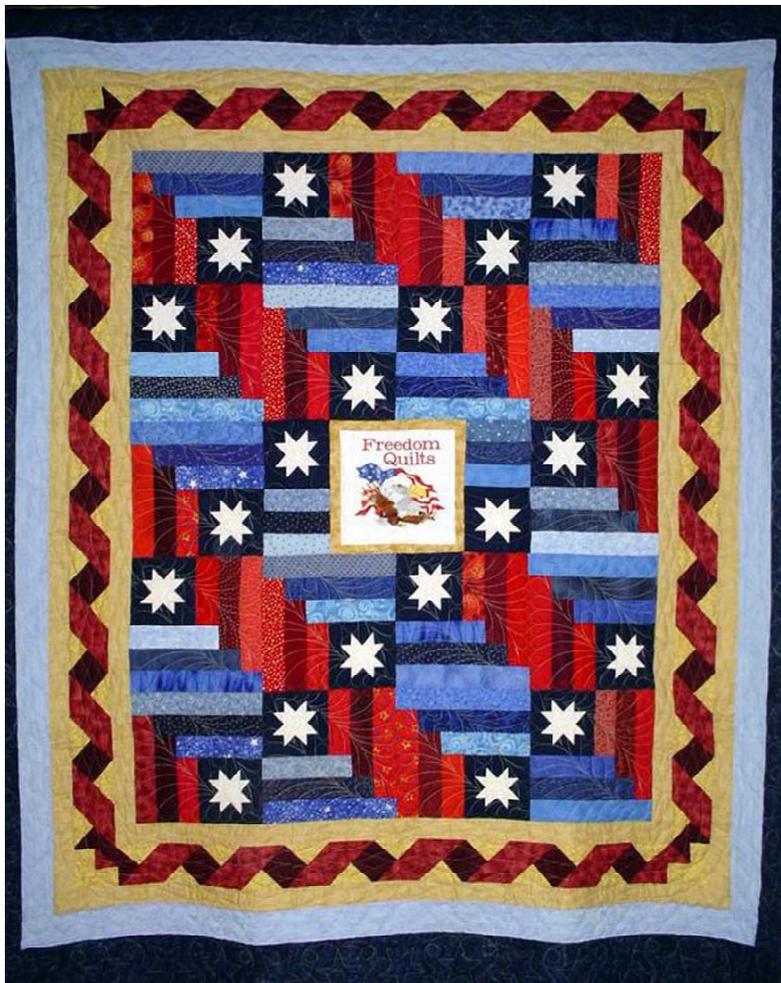
In 2009 Betty Nielsen, resident of Fonda, Iowa, was inducted into the Iowa Volunteer Hall of Fame – the most prestigious state-level honor volunteers can receive. Former Governor Culver stated, “...the people selected are those who have forever changed their community, their state, the nation, or the world through their volunteer service and action.”

Betty Nielsen, Iowa’s “Quilt Lady” IS one of those people...a hero to some. She simply wanted to ease someone’s suffering. After the 9/11 attacks, she answered a call to make and send five quilts to families of victims with ties to Iowa. That five-quilt project, however, turned into one quilt for every family who lost someone on that awful day. She received help, not only from local quilters, but from quilters all over the world – world citizens heart-broken, as we were, from the tragedy.

Betty had 1,544 quilts to deliver on her first visit to New York. It was just the beginning. She returned from her trip and continued to work – sometimes all night long. The quilting project became known as *Freedom Quilts*.

It turns out that one of the original 5 quilts stayed with her, and she used it when she would talk about her project to groups...asking for donations of money or quilt blocks or finished quilts. She named that original quilt “War

Paint,” and it will now hang in the World Trade Tribute Center to honor those lost on 9/11. When the New Freedom tower is completed, the museum will move and the quilt will be hung there.



Nielsen said quilts have been sent to those who have asked – every person in every family who lost someone in the terrorist attacks in New York City and the Pentagon. The project would be over, except in 2003, the mother of a soldier lost at war asked if she could get a quilt. And, as before, Nielsen wouldn’t say no. “With each quilt we make, a hero is honored and remembered. Each stitch carries with it our respect, our love, and our deepest honor for those who have made the ultimate sacrifice.” Thus, the project has now expanded as a mission of comforting families of fallen soldiers.

On September 11, 2011, Representative Steve King presented Betty Nielsen with the high honor of a congressional medal for her tireless volunteer work over the last decade.

Nearly 7,000 families have received her love and Betty is still going. Learn more about the project at the Freedom Quilt website: <http://freedomquilts.net>. Take some time and visit Fons and Porter’s “Love of Quilts” blog <http://www.fonsandporter.com/blogs/?p=758>. (You might want to have a handkerchief handy, as well.)

News Briefs

Thank You for Helping Iowa's Veterans!

Iowa State University invited the Iowa Lottery to present a ceremonial check to the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund before the Texas–Iowa State game on Saturday, October 1, 2011.

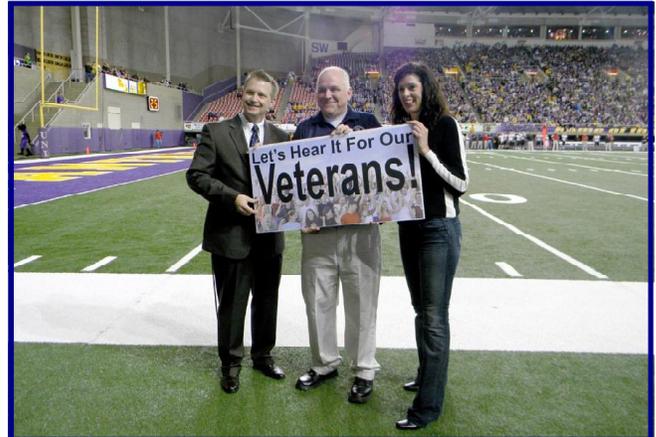
Mary Neubauer, vice president of external relations at the Iowa Lottery, presented the check to Kate Myers (member of the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs) for nearly \$9 million dollars! The check represents the total amount that has been raised since 2008 for veterans' causes from the sale of select lottery games dedicated to the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund.

Mary reports that all the fans gave them a huge, warm welcome Saturday night in Ames! In addition to the usual check presentation, the lottery decided to liven things up this year by having a double-sided check. The other side had a message asking the crowd at Jack Trice Stadium to stand up and show their appreciation for veterans. The crowd responded in turn and expressed their roaring support.



Kate Myers, Iowa Commission of Veteran Affairs and Mary Neubauer, Iowa Lottery, at Jack Trice Stadium, Iowa State University, Ames

The University of Northern Iowa also invited the Iowa Lottery to present a ceremonial check to the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund on Saturday, November 5, 2011 at the University's UNI-Dome. The photos below were taken during the on-field presentation at UNI on Saturday night. The Iowa Legislature's intent is to build the principal of the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund up to \$50,000,000; figures were at \$14,635,618 at the end of October 2011.



From left: Mary Neubauer, David Worley, Commandant IVH, and Chris Andrews, General Manager of Panther Sports Properties.

News Briefs Cont.

2011 Iowa Remembrance Run – Honoring our Fallen



The 2nd annual Iowa Remembrance Run had 536 registered participants! The men's winner was Andrew Minear of Bondurant, Iowa, and the women's winner was Torey Lasater of Conrad, Iowa.

The *Remembrance Run* honors and remembers fallen service members with ties to Iowa that have died in Iraq, Afghanistan, or elsewhere from combat, illness, or accident since the Iraq War began in March 2003. In addition, there are those service members whose names have been submitted for remembrance by friends or families that did not die while serving overseas or on active duty. A flag is displayed for each of our Iowa fallen service members that are remembered during the run. This year 88 service members were honored.

The 2012 run will be held on Sunday, September 30 at Raccoon River Park in West Des Moines. Contact is Heather Johnson: 515-473-0282. Visit their website for the event: www.iowaremembrancerun.com.



AIB Receives Award for Service to Veterans

The AIB College of Business recently received a special award for “Outstanding and Dedicated Service to America’s Veterans” from the American Legion Department of Iowa. AIB was named to *G.I. Jobs* magazine’s 2012 list of “military-friendly schools.” John Derner, American Legion Department Adjutant, presented the award to AIB Board of Trustees President Jane Weingart at the history project event on 11-11-11.

For the past 3 years, AIB has conducted a **Veterans History Project** every November 11th. AIB volunteers have documented more than 80 veterans’ stories that will be archived at the Iowa Gold Star Museum at Camp Dodge and in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

In 2000, The United States Congress created the Veterans History Project (VHP) as a part of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. The mission of the VHP is to collect, preserve, and make accessible the personal accounts of American wartime veterans so that future generations may hear directly from veterans and better understand the realities of war. Visit www.veteranshistoryproject.org to see how you can become involved.



News Briefs Cont.

Over \$2.2 Billion in Retroactive Agent Orange Benefits Paid

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced in August 2011 that more than \$2.2 billion in retroactive benefits have already been paid to approximately 89,000 Vietnam veterans and their survivors who filed claims related to one of three new Agent Orange presumptive conditions.

On August 31, 2010, the Department of Veterans Affairs amended its regulations to add ischemic heart disease, hairy cell leukemia and other chronic B-cell leukemias, and Parkinson's disease to the list of diseases presumed to be related to exposure to Agent Orange.

Secretary Shinseki stated, "I encourage all potentially eligible Veterans to apply as soon as possible to preserve the most favorable effective date for payments." The VA also encourages, "survivors of Veterans whose death may be due to one of the three diseases to file a claim for dependency and indemnity compensation."

Secretary Shinseki's decision to add these conditions to the list of Agent Orange presumptive conditions was based on a study by the *Institute of Medicine*, which indicated a positive association between exposure to certain herbicides and the subsequent development of one or more of the three conditions.

Potentially eligible veterans include those who were exposed based on duty or visitation in Vietnam or on its inland waterways between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975; exposed along the demilitarized zone in Korea between April 1, 1968, and August 31, 1971; or exposed due to herbicide tests and storage at military bases within and outside of the United States.

The Agent Orange Claims Processing System website located at <https://www.fasttrack.va.gov/AOFastTrack> may be used to submit claims related to the three new presumptive conditions. For other questions about Agent Orange, veterans may call the VA's Special Issues Helpline at 1-800-749-8387 and press 3. For more information about Agent Orange presumptives and disability compensation, go to: <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange>.



List of Ships Associated with Presumptive Agent Orange Exposure

Veterans who served aboard U.S. Navy and Coast Guard ships operating on the waters of Vietnam between January 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975 may be eligible to receive VA disability compensation for 14 medical conditions associated with presumptive exposure to Agent Orange.

An updated list of U.S. Navy and Coast Guard ships confirmed to have operated on Vietnam's inland waterways, docked on shore, or had crew members sent ashore, has been posted at <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/> to assist Vietnam veterans in determining potential eligibility for compensation benefits.

The VA presumes herbicide exposure for any veteran with duty or visitation within the country of Vietnam or on its inland waterways during the Vietnam era. Comprehensive information about the 14 recognized illnesses under VA's "presumption" rule for Agent Orange is also located on the webpage.

In practical terms, veterans with qualifying Vietnam service who develop a disease associated with Agent Orange exposure need not prove a medical link between their illnesses and their military service. This presumption simplifies and speeds up the application process for benefits.

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Agent Orange Exposure continued from Page 8

When a claim is filed by a veteran, surviving spouse, or child, the VA will determine whether the veteran qualifies for the presumption of exposure based on official records of the ship's operations. Ships will be regularly added to the list based on information confirmed in these official records.

Even if a veteran is not filing a claim, a veteran may conduct his or her own research and submit scanned documentary evidence such as deck logs, ship histories, and cruise book entries via email to 211_AOSHIPS.VBACO@va.gov.

Service on board ships anchored in an open water harbor, such as Da Nang Harbor, or on ships on other open waters around Vietnam during the war, is not considered sufficient for the presumption of Agent Orange exposure. For veterans interested in obtaining deck logs, contact the National Archives at College Park, Md., at <http://www.archives.gov/dc-metro/college-park/researcher-info.html>.

The Agent Orange Claims Processing System website located at <https://www.fasttrack.va.gov/AOFastTrack> may be used to submit claims related to the three conditions added to the list of Agent Orange presumptives last year (Parkinson's disease, hairy cell and other chronic B-cell leukemias, and ischemic heart disease). This website makes it easy to electronically file a claim and allows veterans and their physicians to upload evidence supporting the claim. It also permits online viewing of claim status.

[Source: Department of Veterans Affairs: <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange>]

HCI Care Services

HCI Care Services (formerly known as Hospice of Central Iowa) is a not-for-profit, independent healthcare organization that brings comfort and supportive care to individuals and their families. They have been available to families since 1978, and offer compassionate comfort care to those with chronic or serious illnesses.



WE HONOR VETERANS

Volunteers are vital to HCI and play an important role enhancing quality of life for patients and their families. There are four times as many volunteers as HCI employees. Each patient and family member receives care from a team of staff and volunteers who provide medical care, pain management, emotional support, and spiritual guidance.

Veteran-to-Veteran Volunteer Program is a special HCI service, pairing veterans who are volunteers with patients who have served our county. Veteran Partners provide companionship while talking, reading, and sitting with patients. The veteran volunteers have a unique perspective that can help veteran patients come to terms with past events.

Call (800) 806-9934 to learn more. Also visit their website: <http://www.hospiceofcentraliowa.org>.

War and Sacrifice in the Post-9/11 Era

A recent study entitled "War and Sacrifice in the Post-9/11 Era" has focused on the attitudes of veterans and the general public toward military service. The study found that about 84 percent of post-9/11 veterans feel the public does not understand problems faced by service members and their families; 71 percent of the public agrees. The report is based on two surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center.

The summary of key findings of the study are available at: <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/10/05/war-and-sacrifice-in-the-post-911-era>. [Forwarded by John Mikelson, Veterans Center Coordinator, University of Iowa]

News Briefs Cont.

Iowa Veteran Wins First Place at 2011 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival

Lana Gillaspie, a Navy combat veteran of Vietnam and resident of Knoxville, Iowa, was one of more than 3,000 veterans who entered the “National Veterans Creative Arts Festival” competition. Lana won **five** medals in two divisions: a gold medal in the dance division in the special recognition category; three gold medals in the drama division/group religious prose, group poetry, and special recognition categories; and a silver medal in the group patriotic prose category. Her award in the drama division was entitled “Listen Up” – a positive and humorous take on her struggles dealing with Multiple Sclerosis, diagnosed in 1999.

The special recognition category is a prestigious honor because the winners are chosen for their creative pieces that they developed despite their physical or psychological limitations.

Lana received her awards last month in Fayetteville, Arkansas at the 2011 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, presented each year by the Department of Veterans Affairs, Help Hospitalized Veterans, and the American Legion Auxiliary. The Festival is the celebration and grand finale stage and art show, which is the culmination of talent competitions in art, music, dance, drama, and creative writing for veterans treated in the VA’s national health care system.

In addition to her creative art endeavors, Gillaspie also helps out at the VA Medical Center in Des Moines, sharing her story with other veterans through her writing and public speaking. For more on Lana’s talents, visit: <http://abilitymagazine.com/Creative-Arts-vets.html>.

[Source: <http://www1.va.gov/opa/speceven/caf/2011/newsrelease.asp?no=22>]



Lana Gillaspie reads from her award-winning drama, “Listen Up”

News Briefs Cont.

Aircrew Missing in Action from WWII Identified Sioux City Native Buried in Arlington National Cemetery

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced that the remains of 10 servicemen, missing in action from World War II, have been identified and are being returned to their families for burial with full military honors.

Army Air Force 2nd Lt. Robert R. Bishop of Joliet, Ill.; 2nd Lt. Thomas Digman, Jr. of Pittsburgh; 2nd Lt. **Donald W. Hess of Sioux City, Iowa**; 2nd Lt. Arthur W. Luce, of Fort Bragg, CA.; Staff Sgt. Joseph J. Karaso, of Philadelphia; Staff Sgt. Ralph L. McDonald of East Point, GA.; Sgt. John P. Bonnassiolle of Oakland, CA.; Sgt. James T. Blong of Port Washington, WI.; Sgt. Michael A. Chiodo

of Cleveland, OH; and Sgt. John J. Harringer, Jr. of South Bend, IN., were buried as a group, in a single casket representing the entire crew, with full military honors, on Oct. 26, in Arlington National Cemetery. **Hess** and Karaso were interred individually in Arlington National Cemetery.

On April 29, 1944, the 10 airmen were ordered to carry out a bombing mission over Berlin, Germany, in their B-24J Liberator aircraft, piloted by Bishop and Luce. German documents captured after the war noted that the aircraft crashed near the town of East Meitze, Germany, and there were no survivors. German forces buried the remains of Digman, Blong, and one unknown airman in a cemetery near Hannover, Germany, around the time of the crash. In 1946, the Army Graves Registration Service exhumed the remains of the three individuals for

identification and reburied them in a U.S. Military Cemetery in Condroz, Belgium.



A caisson carries the remains of 10 Army airman who died during World War II when their B-24J Liberator crashed near the town of East Meitze, Germany, on April 29, 1944. Photo by Kevin Wolf/AP

In 2003, a German national located the site of the crash and recovered human remains – which were turned over to U.S. officials. In 2005, a Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) team excavated the crash site and gathered additional human remains, military equipment, and metal identification tags for Bishop, Blong, Bonnassiolle, and Harringer. The team also recovered a class ring with the initials AWL – presumably belonging to Luce. In 2007, a JPAC

team completed the site excavation and found additional evidence that helped to confirm the identity of the crew.

Among other forensic identification tools and circumstantial evidence, scientists from JPAC and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory used dental analysis and mitochondrial DNA – which matched that of some of the crew members' families – in the identification of their remains.

At the end of the war, the U.S. government was unable to recover and identify approximately 79,000 Americans. Today, more than 73,000 remain unaccounted-for from the conflict.

[Source: DOD – <http://www.defense.gov/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=14875>]

News Briefs Cont.

2011 Hiring Our Heroes Job Fair

The 2011 **Hiring our Heroes Job Fair** was held Tuesday, November 8, 2011 at Hy-Vee Hall. The fair's focus was a state-wide job fair specifically geared for veterans and



*Governor Branstad addresses the participants of the 2011 Hiring our Heroes Fair
[Photo courtesy of Rich Heki, Principal Financial]*



military spouses and an integral part of the VA's "Aggressive agenda focusing on one measure of success – jobs for the one million unemployed veterans in America."

Over 174 exhibitors participated, including both businesses and service organizations. The IDVA booth experienced a steady flow of veterans from opening until closing of the fair. Iowa Workforce estimated that over 1500 people attended and approximately 477 of those were veterans.

Make the Connection!

"On our Nation's Veterans Day...I'm excited to announce that MakeTheConnection.net will go-live on November 14. ...Make the Connection is a public awareness campaign by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) that provides personal testimonials and resources to help veterans discover a variety of ways to improve their lives.

We sincerely hope that MakeTheConnection.net will help veterans recognize that they are not alone – there are people out there like them who are going through similar experiences, overcoming challenges, reaching positive outcomes for treatment and recovery, and finding paths to fulfilling lives. We could not have launched this campaign without your support, and we appreciate your boldness to publicly share your experiences and help raise awareness of the range of services available for Veterans.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is deeply honored by your participation and humbled by your commitment to helping your fellow veterans, and I was personally moved as I watched the video of each of your stories. Again, we cannot thank you enough for the time you have contributed for helping ensure this campaign is successful. Your willingness and courage to share your stories is yet another example of the strength and selflessness of our Nation's Veterans and their families."

With gratitude and deepest respect,

Sonja V. Batten, Ph.D.
Department of Veterans Affairs
<http://maketheconnection.net>

View information and real stories relevant to who you are and your experiences, and easily find resources for support:

Veterans

National Guard
& Reserve

Partners

Friends
& Family

Active Duty

Clinicians

News Briefs Cont.

Iowa Supports U.S. EPA Initiative to Hire Water and Wastewater Operators

Tom Beasley, Iowa Department of Education, Veteran and Military Education

The US Environmental Protection Agency has recognized that veterans represent a major recruiting opportunity for water and wastewater utilities. Many veterans possess technical skills and training directly transferable to careers in the water sector. Recognizing this, the EPA, along with the American Water Works Association, the Water Environment Federation, the US Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Labor (VETS) has asked Iowa to lead this initiative to recruit and train veterans for careers in water and wastewater occupations.

Iowa is characterized as a “heavy Guard and Reserve” state meaning most of its military population is assigned to units in the Iowa National Guard or Reserves. Both the National Guard and the Reserves provide combat formations and related combat support units to the nation's combat strength. Iowa has Guard strength of 9,400 soldiers and Airmen. Reserve Forces stationed in Iowa, including Marine Corps Reserve, Army Reserve, and Navy Reserve add another 9,000.

The US Department of Veterans Affairs, the US Department of Labor, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, the Iowa Department of Education, and Propositions (Professional Career Transition Experts), have joined together to help Iowa water and wastewater utilities recruit and hire Iowa veterans and military. Iowa is the first state in the nation to implement the US EPA initiative to attract and hire veterans to careers in water and wastewater occupations.

Together with the Environmental Protection Agency, American Water Works Association, and Water Environment Federation (WEF), Iowa is working to promote water sector careers across Iowa. The most effective promotion takes place at the local level in the interaction between the utilities and local government program staff. With this in mind, EPA, AWWA, WEF, Iowa DE, Iowa DNR, and Propositions developed this summary to help utilities understand the benefits of these programs and how to work with them to recruit and train veterans for water sector careers.

★ **GI Bill Education and Training Benefits**

The GI Bill provides a variety of financial education and training benefits that can be advantageous to both the veteran and the hiring utility. The amount of Department of Veterans Affairs education benefits payable to a veteran is determined by eligibility under VA laws and the type of program that the veteran enrolls in to pursue his/her objective. The wide applicability of the GI Bill makes it easy for veterans to re-train for positions in utilities.

★ **How can my utility help veterans receive on-the-job training benefits?**

Many veterans are unaware that the Department of Veterans Affairs may pay monthly financial education benefits to a veteran while he/she is taking part in an approved entry-level on-the-job training (on-the-job training lasting up to 24 months) or taking part in an apprenticeship (may be longer than 24 months). During the training period, the utility pays an apprenticeship or internship wage while the veteran receives an additional financial benefit through VA. Helping veterans to receive this benefit can help utilities recruit and retain veteran employees. Please note that apprenticeship or internship wages must be applied consistently. A utility may not pay lower apprenticeship or internship wages for veteran trainees that are doing the same type of work as non-veteran trainees. A utility must provide training that is supervised and organized in order to qualify for approval for veterans training benefits. The training may include a veteran trainee acquiring necessary job skills by shadowing a senior utility employee through daily routines. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources and the Iowa Department of Education have developed a training outline an Iowa utility could use that would allow a veteran to receive GI Bill benefits.

★ **Propositions, Inc...the experts in professional career transitions...has volunteered to help promote job vacancies to Iowa's veteran and military population**

Propositions is dedicated to helping veterans and qualified military personnel find new jobs or careers. To achieve this they are sponsoring an innovative program called ProVeteran. The objective of this initiative is to provide career

EPA Initiative continued from page 13

transition tools and services to any veterans at no cost. Propositions, Inc. provides a unique and advanced way by combining the power of high tech with high touch and experienced career professionals.

★ **What is the ProVeteran Career Program?**

The goal of this initiative is to provide effective career transition tools and services at no cost to the US veteran. To achieve this, an innovative program called the ProVeteran Career Program was created. The funding for this initiative is being provided by Propositions and other sponsoring companies and organizations that want to help these veterans.

★ **How is this career program different?**

Unlike some programs that only offer a one-time seminar or website resource, Propositions works with veterans as they progress through the entire career and job search campaign. Whether it takes weeks or months, tools and services are provided to support the veteran during their transition to a new job or career. Propositions also tailors the experience based on the needs of the individual, providing a customized experience and allowing each veteran to progress at their own pace. Finally, a proven step-by-step methodology is used that helps to reduce the overall time to re-employment.

★ **A dedicated team of career experts is provided**

In addition, Propositions provides a dedicated team of career coaches, strategists and resume writers who are certified and experienced in helping veterans find jobs. A team approach is used to give the veteran the best combination of talent and skills. Their background and interests are matched with a pool of career professionals to give them a personal and tailored experience. This combination of high technology with high touch provides unparalleled support for returning veterans and their families.

★ **Who qualifies?**

US Military: Active, Retired, and Reserves
All Veterans
Spouses/Partners of Veterans

This program is also designed to complement existing veteran assistance programs, so one can pick and choose the resources and help they need – when they need it. Please contact Julie Premo [jpremo@propositions.com]

★ **As part of this effort, a new informational brochure has been posted on the Work for Water website:** <http://www.workforwater.org/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=2147483686>.

For additional information, contact

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News Briefs Briefly

Retroactive Traumatic Injury Benefits, No Matter Where You Were Injured

The VA has approved retroactive traumatic injury benefits to Service members who suffered qualifying injuries during the period Oct. 7, 2001 to Nov. 30, 2005, regardless of the geographic location where the injuries occurred. Learn more: <http://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/4854/retroactive-traumatic-injury-benefits-no-matter-where-you-were-injured/>

Veterans Benefits by State

Ever wonder how Iowa's veteran benefits stack up against other states? Veterans benefits by state can be found here: <http://www.military.com/benefits/content/veteran-state-benefits/state-veterans-benefits-directory.html>.

You may also want to read about the *National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs* (NASDVA) – a national organization whose members are “deeply committed to care for our nation’s 23 million veterans.” Find their website here: <http://www.nasdva.net>

National Resource Directory

The National Resource Directory provides online support and access to over 10,000 services and resources. Visit: www.NationalResourceDirectory.gov and be sure to check Iowa for any additional benefits that may be offered. Iowa's veteran benefit information can be found here: <https://va.iowa.gov>.

VetSuccess

The VA's **VetSuccess** website offers services by providing access to a job board of more than 8 million job openings, as well as tools for veterans to build or upload resumes and for employers to search for veterans who match their recruiting needs. For more information go to <http://www.vetsuccess.gov>.

County News Briefs

Worth County

Members of VVA 790 from Lake Mills, Iowa, posted the POW/MIA Flag on Friday, September 16th during the Dig-



nity Wall Memorial Event. Leader and County VA Director, Jerry Parmley, Worth County, was unable to attend, and his attendance was deeply missed.

Mills County

The Mills County Museum in Glenwood, Iowa, was proud to be included as one of the cities on tour for the *Remember Our Fallen* photo display August 25 thru September 1. The exhibit was seen by over 325 people at the Glenwood Lake Park Museum.

Promoter Don Williams remarked that “*Remembering Our Fallen*” was created to honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Its legacy will be that these men and women will never be forgotten and that their names will be forever remembered and spoken.

Next stop on the tour, December 6 – 13, 2011, is the Veterans Memorial Building - Harlan, Iowa.

County News Briefs Cont.

Greene County

submitted by Tracie Perez, Director, Greene County VA

What was once an empty lot filled with weeds and the foundation of a house long gone, has now become a memorial to the men and women who died in service during two world wars, *and* a memorial that honors those who have since — and are presently — serving their county. The **Edward English Post 198** of Churdan, Iowa, initiated the project, and the community in turn quickly helped to make it happen. The Churdan town council agreed to help as well; and the Greene County supervisors awarded monies from the L. Dryfus fund that allowed the purchase of three life-sized cement statues. The statues consist of two men — one representing the army, the other the navy, and the third statue — a woman — representing nurses.

Four black marble benches were purchased and engraved. Maps of Korea, Vietnam, and the Middle East were etched on individual benches. A black marble obelisk stands in the center of the memorial and contains the names of the 11 local men who died in action during WWI and WWII.

The county road crew spent a day bringing in dirt and positioning it as a resting place for the memorial. Businesses from the town of Churdan and the surrounding communities began donating money when the word had spread. Individuals sent in cash gifts and donated their time and labor. A local welding company and area farmers brought in machinery to set the statues.

A Greene county foundation grant was applied for and received, covering the cost of landscaping. Three trees were donated in honor of a father and husband who had been Sergeant-of-Arms at the *Edward English Post* for many years. The county conservation officer brought in the proper equipment and planted the trees and additional shrubbery. Paton/Churdan students were dismissed from school on three occasions to help lay the matting and move 28 tons of river rock. Women of the community have planted flowers and keep the area weed-free during the summer.

And finally, within one year, a beautiful area aptly named “Freedom Park” was in place. This memorial was built to honor all the men and women who were willing to sacrifice time and life to maintain our freedoms, and to honor the parents and spouses who sent them off, worried, and prayed until they were safely back home. In addition, the project became an opportunity for the youth of the county to become part of the effort and to recognize the sacrifices of the past and realize the freedoms they enjoy in the present are theirs to maintain — during both peace and war.

Situated on busy Highway 4 along the eastern edge of Churdan, Iowa, “Freedom Park” is noticed by many travelers every day – some of whom have stopped to take a picture or take note of the engraved names. It is hoped that with the continued care by the community and the recognition by those who pass by, that “Freedom Park’s” purpose has been realized: to honor those who have kept freedom the foundation of our county.

“Freedom Park” was dedicated on Sunday, October 16th, 2011. Our very own Tracie Perez sang *Danny Boy* at the dedication. Veterans from the 1940s through 2011 attended and were honored.



Freedom Park, Churdan, Iowa

County News Briefs Cont.

Linn County

submitted by Don Tyne, Director, Linn County VA

Linn County Veterans Affairs and the Community Circle of Care held their 6th annual *Sleep Out for the Homeless* on Saturday, November 12, 2011, in Greene Square Park, Cedar Rapids as part of National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week (November 13-19).

The public was invited to participate in the *Sleep Out* by collecting pledges and sleeping outside in cardboard boxes to raise awareness of homelessness in Linn County and to raise money for area shelters. The Community Circle of Care also kicked off its annual blanket drive. "Our goal is to raise awareness of the problem of homelessness in Linn County and to raise money for the shelters that serve those in need," said Don Tyne, Director of Linn County Veterans Affairs and Co-Chair of the *Sleep Out*.

Of the 5,520 persons served by local homeless assistance programs in FY10, over half (51%) were children. The average age of a homeless person in Linn County is nine years old.



The *Sleep Out* committee set a goal of raising \$50,000 for this year's event. Money raised will be distributed to the following Linn County homeless assistance programs:

- ★ Catherine McAuley Center Transitional Housing Program
- ★ Catholic Worker House
- ★ Cedar House Shelter
- ★ Foundation 2 Youth Shelter
- ★ HACAP Transitional Housing
- ★ Mission of Hope
- ★ Salvation Army Emergency Lodging Program
- ★ Waypoint Domestic Violence Program / Madge Phillips Center
- ★ Willis Dady Emergency Shelter

Donations will still be accepted and can be paid online at www.sleepoutforhomeless.org or mailed with checks made payable to: Community Circle of Care, Inc./ATTN: *Sleep Out for the Homeless*/P.O. Box 1305/Cedar Rapids, IA 52406



Clarke County

from "Voice & Commentary" in the *Des Moines Register*

Dr. Bill Schaefer, a retired Grand View University professor of photography, was recently featured in the November 2, 2011, "Voice & Commentary" section of the *Des Moines Register*. He has recently completed a moving project documenting by word and photographs the faces and memories of the last WWII veterans in Clarke County Iowa.

With the assistance of Fern Underwood - a local county historian, and the Osceola American Legion Post, he located nearly all of the living WWII veterans in the county. In 2011 he photographed 38 veterans ranging in age from 84 to 100. Each photograph portrays the face of a veteran holding an old photo taken in uniform more than 60 years ago. He remarked that "When one veteran passed away soon after I photographed him, I became keenly aware that of the 2 million WWII veterans still alive, 300,000 will die this year."

The photographs are remarkable. The "Faces of WWII - Veterans of Clarke County, Iowa" is now on display until December 31 at Terrible's Casino in Osceola. The *Register* is also requesting stories of Iowa's living WWII veterans. You may tell them about yourself or your relative in an email or a letter: revans@dmreg.com or Randy Evans, PO Box 957, Des Moines, IA 50306. [Source: <http://www.desmoinesregister.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2011311020042>]

County News Briefs Cont.

Jasper County

Freedom Flight

Jasper County veterans headed to Washington, D.C. on October 25, 2011, with a send-off ceremony on Sunday, October 23rd – including a motorcycle escort for the buses carrying the veterans and their spouses – to Newton High School where an hour-long ceremony was held. The plane carried 7 World War II veterans, 77 Korean veterans, and 74 Vietnam veterans.

Jasper County Treasurer and Jasper County Freedom Flight committee chair, Doug Bishop, has already been involved in five such flights involving central Iowans. Last year Jasper County did its own Honor Flight for World War II veterans. Jasper County residents donated nearly \$90,000 over the past five months to make this happen!

The generosity of a Newton woman in memory of her husband and her brothers, all veterans of World War II, helped ensure that organizers of the Jasper County Freedom Flight had the funds necessary to pay tribute to the approximately 150 local veterans with a day-long trip to Washington, D.C. to view the memorials erected in their honor. Maxine Swanger, in memory of her husband, Sterling Swanger and her brothers, Jack Hindman, Jerry Hindman, and Clair Hindman, donated \$20,000 to the Jasper County Freedom Flight fund.

Doug Bishop, stated: “The Jasper County Freedom Flight Committee would like to thank Bret Doerring for arranging the meeting and a very special thank you to Maxine Swanger for the very generous donation in memory of her loved ones.”

“God bless Jasper County. Who would have ever believed that we could have raised \$80,000 in four months...We are calling it Freedom Flight because we are not affiliated with the national Honor Flight,” Bishop said.

On the Washington, D.C. end, the Iowa veterans were greeted by members of the Iowa Alumni group, *Capital Area Iowa Club*. As they have done with hundreds of other veterans that have come before, they helped the veterans maneuver around the capitol grounds and answered any questions they had. The club (members are Capital Area University of Iowa alums) has a page that contains information about their involvement as well as other photographs from other flights: <http://www.iowalum.com/dciowa/honorflight.htm>.



Photo courtesy of Kevin Meredith - Capital Area Iowa Club

County News Briefs Cont.

Louisa and Muscatine Counties

submitted by Andrew Beaver, Director, Louisa County

There is a new ride available for local veterans from Louisa and Muscatine Counties to get to the VAHCS in Iowa City, and the vehicle will be hard to miss on the local roadways. Starting in September, a new DAV (Disabled American Veterans) van began daily trips to the VA Medical Center in Iowa City and the VA Outpatient Clinic in Coralville. The patriotic painted 2011 Ford Flex can hold up to six veterans plus the driver.

The availability of the van came from an effort by the Louisa and Muscatine County Veterans Commissions and Veterans Service Officers (Sara Creamer and Andy Beaver) to secure transportation for local veterans without having to depend on other surrounding counties. Prior to delivery of the new vehicle, local veterans had to arrange a ride on either the Mercer County, IL or the Des Moines County, IA vans, both of which were only an option if there was space available. With more and more veterans enrolling in the VA Health Care System and the additional surge of returning soldiers, the two counties decided that there was a need for their own transportation option.



Photo by Andrew Beaver

Johnson County

Last year on Veterans Day, the city of Solon, Iowa, (Johnson County) honored their veterans by opening a new memorial park. This year on 11-11-11, the city once again honored their veterans by unveiling new monuments containing the names of Solon residents who gave their lives to the military, and new pavers with names of Solon residents who served in the military.

The Solon Veterans Memorial is a 10,000 pound granite arch designed and constructed by *Memorials by Michel*. Four walls bear the names and rank of 295 Solon-area veterans on black granite slabs. Names date back to the Civil War. The arch itself bears the emblems for each branch of the United States military. The memorial has room for approximately 1,000 names.

The Solon American Legion Auxiliary approached the Solon Legion with the idea of a veterans memorial for the community. Ultimately, it became a \$140,000 undertaking. Within a four-year period of time, the community hosted events to raise money for the monument - from silent auctions, garage sales, breakfasts, and funds from donations - as little as 50 cents to as much as several thousand dollars. None of the monies raised came from government funds. The projected timeline for construction of the memorial was five years; it was completed 18 months early!



Photo by Benjamin Roberts/Iowa City Press Citizen

Mayor Susan Drucker and Jack Tesmer, commander of Solon's VFW Post 1863, wrote a letter inviting residents to the ceremony on 11-11-11: "It is an opportunity for us, as a community, to show how much we appreciate our veterans for their dedication to our country and the honor they have brought to our nation." The Legion will host a dedication for the memorial in Spring 2012.

County News Briefs Cont.

Marshall County

On September 17, 2011, Master Sgt. Todd Eipperle returned to his hometown of Marshalltown and received a hero's welcome including a parade, award ceremony, and a proclamation declaring it "Master Sgt. Todd Eipperle Day." The ceremony was attended by hundreds of friends and neighbors, and by a huge crowd of Boy Scouts... In his civilian career, Todd is District Director for the Boy Scouts of America's Mid-Iowa Council.

Eipperle was wounded during a July 2011 attack in Afghanistan by a rogue Afghan security officer that killed fellow Iowa Army Na-



Eipperle is welcomed home

tional Guard soldier Sgt. 1st Class Teryl Pasker and Connecticut State Trooper Paul Protzenko. Eipperle shot and killed the shooter and suffered gunshot injuries as well. Eipperle was part of the 2,800 member Iowa Guard brigade that returned from Afghanistan in July 2011.

Before the hugely supportive Marshalltown crowd, Todd was presented a Bronze Star Medal for meritorious service during his tour in Afghanistan. The Bronze Star recognizes heroism in combat. He had also been presented the Purple Heart for his wounds during his earlier hospital stay in Germany.

IDVA Office - Camp Dodge

Tall Corn Contest

Once again, IDVA's Bob Steben's yearly "field of dreams" quest did not materialize this season.

Each year the 50,000 subscribers to *Our Iowa* magazine are sent very special packets of tall-growing Brazilian and Mexican corn kernels to plant, pollinate, pamper, and prod into (hopefully) becoming the year's tallest ear of corn!

The winner receives \$500 worth of corn-related goods: \$200 of pork, \$200 of beef, and \$100 of ethanol gasoline. Maybe next year!!



Pumpkin Fun



October 31, 2011, welcomed the first IDVA office pumpkin-decorating contest. Bi-partisan judging was deftly handled by COL Ken Andresen. Congratulations to Director Jodi Tymeson who was awarded a first place trophy and certificate for her win!





Photo Memories from the Dignity Memorial Wall Event



Photographs by Tom Doherty



Patriot Guard gathers to escort the Wall from Prairie Meadows to Resthaven



Resthaven Cemetery awaits the arrival of the Wall and motorcycle escorts



Iowa Highway Patrol & Polk County Sheriff members led the escort to the cemetery



Volunteers pose in front of the Dignity Van as they prepare to erect the wall



Before...



During...



Nearly finished...



Boy Scouts assist attendees



Closeup of wall



Mementos left in memory of loved ones



The Wall



Iowa Honor Guard presents flag



Bagpiper Ron Best "clears the wall"

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

58,212 killed
153,452 wounded
1,711 missing

★ ★ ★ ★ ★



The Wall – Open 24/7



COL Robert King introduces General Orr



Flyover



Reading the names of 58,212 killed



Boy Scouts were a constant presence



5-Star Freedom Rider Ceremonial Team



Rain failed to diminish attendance

Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs

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