November 4, 2019

VETERANS
MONTHLY INFORMATION PACKAGE

FLAGLER COUNTY

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Feel free to make copies and distribute throughout your organization.
The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today that it has finalized its plan for resolving legacy appeals across the department and expects to complete the remaining legacy appeals by the end of calendar year (CY) 2022. Legacy appeals are claims for which the VA provided notice of decision prior to implementation of the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017 (AMA) and the claimant has not elected to participate in the AMA process.

In response to the growing number of legacy appeals, VA implemented AMA as of Feb. 19, giving Veterans more choice and control over the process of their appeals.

“AMA has been in place for almost a year and we are finally starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel for the resolution of legacy appeals,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “I am proud of the work being done here at VA to make sure those Veterans waiting the longest for a decision get their results.”

This past year, VA decreased the number of pending legacy appeals despite receiving thousands of new appeals. VA is successfully reducing legacy appeals while also working AMA appeals to ensure Veterans receive their decisions in a timely manner.

VA’s three administrations –Veterans Benefits Administration, Veterans Health Administration and National Cemetery Administration – plan to resolve their non-remand legacy appeals by the end of CY 2020. The Board of Veterans’ Appeals will continue to work appeals from the administrations and plans to resolve its legacy appeals inventory by the end of December 2022.

Resolving legacy appeals aligns with VA’s strategic plan to modernize IT systems and processes and supports VA’s mission to provide exceptional customer service to Veterans and their families. Veterans who are waiting for their decisions are encouraged to check the status of their appeal via the appeals status tracker.

For more information about the appeals process, visit VA decision reviews and appeals.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 4, 2019

VA celebrates National Family Caregivers Month

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recognizes National Family Caregivers Month this November honoring the 5.5 million family members, friends and neighbors who care for Veterans suffering from chronic conditions, disabilities, disease or daily difficulties.

This year’s theme, #BeCareCurious, encourages family caregivers across the country to ask questions, explore options and share in the care decisions that affect the health and well-being of their loved ones.

“VA is not only listening to our Veterans, but to the voices of their families, caregivers and survivors,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “We are taking action to address their concerns and needs, as we improve the delivery of care, benefits and services.”

VA leads the country in providing benefits and services to caregivers in support of Veterans. Caregivers play a critical role in the U.S. health care system and enable Veterans to maintain their highest level of independence while remaining in their homes and communities for as long as possible. Recognizing the responsibilities of a caregiver can take a toll on one’s physical, psychological and financial health, VA remains committed to creating awareness and providing resources and information.

For more details on Family Caregivers Month, contact your local VA Caregiver Support Coordinator. Access VA Caregiver Support resources or call the Caregiver Support Line at 855-260-3274 from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

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PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC SERVICE CREDITS VA FOR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE IMPROVEMENTS

The nonprofit, nonpartisan Partnership for Public Service, in collaboration with Accenture Federal Services, this month, released the study Government for the People: Profiles on the Customer Experience—finding that VA’s customer experience improvement efforts are showing positive results, citing reduced wait times for appointments, same-day mental health access at all medical centers, and an improved online experience.

The study also credits improved Veteran trust of the department to recent customer experience programs within the Veterans Health Administration. In September 2019, 88% of Veterans nationwide said they “trust the VA for their health care needs” when responding to an outpatient health care survey, up from 85% two years earlier. The percentage of Veterans who said they trust the VA to fulfill our country’s commitment to Veterans increased to 72% in April 2019, from 59% in July 2016.

“Customer Experience is VA’s first priority,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “When Veterans come to VA, it is not up to them to get us to say yes. It’s up to us to get Veterans to yes. That’s an excellent customer experience, and we are taking bold steps to empower our employees with what they need to provide our Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors a consistent and world-class experience.”

The insights recognize the establishment of the Veterans Experience Office as a catalyst to launch major efforts aimed at improving online and in-person customer experiences. VA is one of two agencies of those reviewed that has a senior executive focused primarily on customer experience. Of the report’s 13 indicators that customer experience is a high priority to an agency, VA completely satisfies 11 and partially satisfies two.

Four of the essential indicators encourage a mature customer feedback program. Since 2016, the Veterans Signals program has received more than 4.1 million Veteran responses and has expanded to 35 surveys in real-time across the department. These surveys also act as a call for help by respondents, to date more than 1350 crisis alerts have been sent to the Veterans Crisis Line or the National Call Center for Homeless within minutes of receipt.

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These Are This Year's Best Jobs for Veterans

Jobs in health care topped the list of the 10 best career employment opportunities for the estimated 250,000 service members who transition out of the military each year, according to a survey released Monday by Navy Federal Credit Union, in partnership with the nonprofit Hire Heroes USA.

In line with numerous studies by the government and other organizations, the Best Careers After Service survey of veterans who were already employed found that many transitioning service members leave their first job within a year. It added that its top 10 list of jobs offered the chance for lasting employment.

As we started researching Best Careers After Service, we discovered that factors like the overall mission of the organization and a support structure for veterans are often just as important as compensation and benefits," said Jaspreet Chawla, vice president of membership with Navy Federal Credit Union.
"With nearly half of U.S. veterans leaving their first civilian job within a year, it's important for transitioning service members to reflect on what motivates them and to know which industries offer opportunities that align with their personal career drivers," Chawla said.

The top 10 career paths identified by the survey include:

1. Health care
2. Government/Public Administration
3. Defense Contracting
4. Information Technology
5. Financial Services
6. Education
7. Law Enforcement
8. Retail
9. Manufacturing
10. Transportation/Warehousing

The Best Careers After Service study was fielded online among 1,001 veterans between Aug. 29 and Sept. 10, 2019. All veterans who participated were employed full-time or part-time, self-employed or working as an independent contractor.

According to the survey, the competitive salaries in health care and the match with military experience put the health care category at the top of the list.

"Two other benefits that stood out were the strong sense of community and teamwork within the health care industry and its opportunities to help people," the survey states.

Among the most popular career paths in health care are hospital operations and logistics, registered nurse, medical research and administration, it adds.

Although ranked No. 7, "law enforcement is one of the industries most suited for, and comparable to, military experience and skills," the survey found. "It's particularly popular among those living in the western U.S. and those who transitioned in 2001 or later."

The most popular career paths in law enforcement identified by the survey include police officer, crime scene Investigator, emergency dispatcher and corrections officer.

-- Richard Sisk can be reached at Richard.Sisk@Military.com.
October 11, 2019

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3. VFW Visits Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors
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5. VA, Partners Offer Flu Shot
6. MIA Update

1. VFW to Host Facebook Live Event Today with VA: Today, VFW National Veterans Service Director Ryan Gallucci will host a Facebook Live event with VA Director of Synchronous Telehealth Dr. Leonie Heyworth and the Executive Director Office of Rural Health Dr. Thomas Klobucar. They will be discussing how technologies improve access to care and will be sharing information about future enhancements of these tools. This Facebook event will give VFW followers an opportunity to have their questions answered regarding care for rural veterans. Visit our Facebook page today at 12 p.m. EDT to join the conversation. If you are unable to watch live today, the event video will be archived.

2. Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2019 Now Law: Last Monday, the president signed the VFW-supported Veterans’ Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2019 into law. The new law provides cost of living increases equal to the same increase granted for Social Security benefits. The increase will be for wartime disability compensation, compensation for dependents, clothing allowance, and dependency and indemnity compensation to surviving spouses and children. These increases will take effect on Dec. 1, 2019. The VFW thanks Representative Elaine Luria (D-Va.) for introducing this legislation, and for her continued efforts to expand benefits for veterans and their families. Learn more.

3. VFW Visits Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors: On Wednesday, VFW Washington Office Executive Director Vincent “B.J.” Lawrence met with Bonnie Carroll, founder and president of Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS). They discussed how VFW and TAPS can work together to support those who have lost a loved one who has served our country. It’s important to note that TAPS supports survivors of all eras and all relationships to the loved one, even if one’s loss was decades ago. One of the VFW’s purposes as defined in our congressional charter is “to perpetuate the memory and history of our dead, and to assist their surviving spouses and orphans” which aligns perfectly with the mission of TAPS. Learn more about TAPS.

4. TRICARE Drug Costs Increasing for 2020: As a result of skyrocketing prescription drug cost in recent years, TRICARE was mandated by Congress as part of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018 to bring their prescription costs compatible with actual
costs of prescription drugs in the civilian medical domain. Starting on Jan. 1, 2020, TRICARE prescription drug costs for beneficiaries are set to rise as much as 42 percent. However, prescriptions filled on base will continue to be free. Copayments for Express Scripts mail-order pharmacy prescriptions will increase for generic drugs, brand name drugs, and non-formulary drugs for a 90-day supply. Cost at retail pharmacies for prescriptions will increase as well for generic drug, brand-name drugs, and non-formulary drugs will for a 30-day supply. Learn more.

5. VA, Partners Offer Flu Shot: Veterans enrolled in VA and in need of a flu shot can receive it for free at their nearest VA health care facility or at their local Walgreens. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, VA, and doctors suggest all individuals get their flu shot during the fall. This is particularly true for individuals over the age of 65, pregnant women, caregivers of infants or family members with health problems, health care employees, and people with heart problems and other chronic illnesses or conditions. Learn more about the flu shot or locate your nearest Walgreens.

6. MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced the identification of four Marines who had been missing and unaccounted-for since World War II. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

-- **Marine Corps Pfc. Louis Wiesehan Jr.** was a member of Company F, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed, including Wiesehan on the second day of battle, Nov. 21, 1943. Interment services are pending. Read about Wiesehan.

-- **Marine Corps Pfc. Robert J. Hatch** was a member of Company D, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed, including Hatch on the third day of battle, Nov. 22, 1943. Interment services are pending. Read about Hatch.

-- **Marine Corps Reserve Pfc. John R. Bayens** was a member of Company B, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed, including Bayens on the third day of battle, Nov. 22, 1943. Interment services are pending. Read about Bayens.

-- **Marine Corps Reserve 1st Lt. Justin G. Mills** was a member of Company C, 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed, including Mills on the first day of battle, Nov. 20, 1943. Read about Mills.
To sign up new veterans’ advocates, visit: [http://capwiz.com/vfw/mlm/signup.htm](http://capwiz.com/vfw/mlm/signup.htm).

As always, we want to hear your advocacy stories. To share your stories or photos with us, simply email them directly to [vfwac@vfw.org](mailto:vfwac@vfw.org).

To view this week’s and previous editions, visit: [http://www.vfw.org/actioncorpsweekly](http://www.vfw.org/actioncorpsweekly).
In This Issue:
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4. VA Observes Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October
5. Defense Health Agency Realignment of TRICARE
6. TRICARE Open Season (Update)
7. Holiday Overseas Mail Deadlines Approaching
8. MIA Update

1. House Passes Legislation to Expand the Veterans Legacy Program: On Wednesday, the House passed VFW-supported H.R. 2385, which would permit VA to establish a grant program to conduct cemetery research and produce educational materials for the Veterans Legacy Program (VLP). Under the current program, the VLP awards contracts to universities, colleges, and institutions to develop educational programs to teach students and others about the veterans interred in the National Veterans Cemeteries in their communities. Transitioning to a grant-based program would broaden the reach of the VLP beyond large universities to smaller groups that wish to engage with VA in memorializing veterans. The VFW applauds all the members of the House who showed their support for this important program that promotes civic engagement and fosters respect for service and sacrifice. Now it is time for the Senate to do the same and send it to the president’s desk. Learn more about the Veterans Legacy Program.

2. Veteran Bills Advanced for House Vote: This week, the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs advanced six bipartisan pieces of legislation to the full House for a vote. The six bills covered a wide range of veteran benefits and protections to include improvements for homeless veterans, student veterans, veteran-owned small businesses, and improved reporting transparency within VA. These six bills are just some of the important work the Veterans’ Affairs Committee has worked on this session, and they have shown a commitment to work for veterans in a bipartisan manner. Now, the bills will be up for a vote by the full House of Representatives in the coming weeks. Read the bills.

3. VFW Visits Defense Health Agency: On Wednesday, VFW Washington Office Executive Director B.J. Lawrence and VFW Director, National Security and Foreign Affairs, Robert Jackson met with Lt. General Ronald J. Place, Director, Defense Health Agency. They discussed electronic health record modernization and interoperability and TRICARE. Modernizing the Military Health System electronic health record and establishing seamless medical data sharing between the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the private sector will improve care and treatment for our military service members and veterans.
4. **VA Observes Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October**: October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The VFW and VA encourage women veterans to take advantage of the valuable resources for breast cancer education and early detection. VA has adopted the American Cancer Society’s [breast cancer screening guidelines](https://www.cancer.org/cancer/breast-cancer/causes-prevention/screening/breast-cancer-screening-guidelines.html), which suggests women get yearly mammograms as early as age 40. Veteran patients can sign into [My HealtheVet](https://www.myhealth.va.gov) and send a secure message to your health care team. [Learn more](#).

5. **Defense Health Agency Realignment of TRICARE**: Since October 2018, The Defense Health Agency (DHA) has been undergoing a realignment of the TRICARE system and new medical retirement changes. DHA began integrating all military treatment facilities (MTFs) under their command. This integration will also combine TRICARE and Operational Medicine into one single medical command called the Military Healthcare System (MHS). By October 2021, DHA will have direct authority over all MTFs and will give local medical leaders the authority to effectively move funds and people in order to responsibly coordinate patient-centered care. [Learn more](#).

6. **TRICARE Open Season (Update)**: TRICARE Open Season will run from Nov. 11 to Dec. 9. It is important to note that new retirees have only one year to enroll for TRICARE Prime. If they forget to enroll in TRICARE Prime, individuals are no longer going to be automatically enrolled into TRICARE Select and will have to wait for the next Open Season enrollment period. If an individual is already enrolled they can change their TRICARE coverage, if eligible. If you want to stay in your current TRICARE plan, you do not need to do anything. [Learn more](#).

7. **Holiday Overseas Mail Deadlines Approaching**: Military and U.S. Postal Service officials have issued suggested mailing deadlines for holiday packages and letters to military locations overseas in time for Christmas. To get them there in time for Hanukkah, which starts on Dec. 22 this year, subtract 3 days from the deadlines. According to Military Times, the deadlines for various methods of shipping are the same for most APO/FPO/DPO (diplomatic post office) zip codes, with the exception of some mail going to APO/FPO/DPO Zip Code 093, which covers overseas contingency areas. The Postal Service has also created a “military care kit,” which consists of the items most often requested by military families and it is free. [Learn more](#) about mailing deadlines.

8. **MIA Update**: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced two new identifications, and six burial updates for service members who have been missing and unaccounted-for from WWII and the Korean War. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

   -- **Marine Corps Pfc. Quentin W. McCall**, 22, of Union Church, Miss., was a member of Company I, 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force. McCall landed on the island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed, including McCall on the fourth day of the battle, Nov. 23, 1943. Interment services are pending. [Read about McCall](#).

   -- **Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Earl F. Ferguson**, 26, of Minneapolis, Minn., was a pilot assigned to the 329th Bombardment Squadron, 93rd Bombardment Group (Heavy), 8th Air Force.
Ferguson was the co-pilot of a B-24 aircraft on Aug. 1, 1943, when it crashed as a result of enemy anti-aircraft fire during Operation Tidal Wave, the largest bombing mission against the oil fields and refineries at Ploiesti, north of Bucharest, Romania. His remains were not identified following the war. Interment services are pending. Read about Ferguson.

-- **Navy Seaman 2nd Class Hubert P. Hall**, 20, of Floyd County, Ky., whose identification was initially announced in August, will be buried in the spring of 2020 at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, in Honolulu. Hall was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma was hit multiple times which caused it to capsize quickly and caused the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Hall. Read about Hall.

-- **Army Sgt. Billy J. Maxwell**, 19, of Hogansville, Ga., whose identification was initially announced in August, will be buried Nov. 9, in his hometown. Maxwell was a member of Heavy Mortar Company, 3rd Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Nov. 30, 1950, when his unit engaged against enemy forces near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. His remains could not be recovered following the battle. Read about Maxwell.

-- **Army Pfc. Donald E. Mangan**, 26, of Elkton, S.D., whose identification was initially announced in August, will be buried Oct. 22 in Gig Harbor, Wash. Mangan was a member of Company C, 1st Battalion, 112th Infantry Regiment, 28th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Sept. 17, 1944, after his unit was attacked by enemy forces near Wettlinglen, Germany. His remains could not be recovered after the attack. Read about Mangan.

-- **Army Cpl. Robert L. Bray**, 18, of Chillicothe, Ohio, whose identification was initially announced in June, will be buried Nov. 6 in Bainbridge, Ohio. Bray was a member of Company C, 1st Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Regiment. He was reported missing in action on July 20, 1950, when he could not be accounted for following his unit fighting in a defensive action against enemy forces near Taejon, South Korea. The Army declared him deceased on Dec. 31, 1953. Read about Bray.

-- **Army Cpl. Ysabel A. Ortiz**, 19, of El Monte, Calif., whose identification was initially announced in August, will be buried Oct. 28 in Riverside, Calif. Ortiz was a member of Battery D, 15th Anti-aircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 2, 1950, when enemy forces attacked his unit near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. His remains could not be recovered following the attack. Read about Ortiz.

-- **Army Sgt. David A. Feriend**, 23, of Fife Lake, Mich., whose identification was initially announced in August, was buried Oct. 13 in Kingsley, Mich. Feriend was a member of Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 6, 1950, in the vicinity of the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Read about Feriend.

To sign up new veterans’ advocates, visit: [http://capwiz.com/vfw/mlm/signup.htm](http://capwiz.com/vfw/mlm/signup.htm).

As always, we want to hear your advocacy stories. To share your stories or photos with us, simply email them directly to vfwac@vfw.org.
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1. VFW Testifies at Blue Water Navy Oversight Hearing: On Wednesday, VFW National Veterans Service Director Ryan Gallucci testified before the House Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs regarding VA’s preparation to process Blue Water Navy Agent Orange claims starting on Jan. 1, 2020. Subcommittee members discussed the importance of providing timely benefits to Blue Water Navy veterans and reducing the complexity of the disability claims process. At the hearing, Ryan Gallucci stated, “Secretary Wilkie must lift the stay immediately. Waiting until January not only harms veterans but creates an unnecessary backlog for VA at a time we can ill afford it.” Read the VFW’s Testimony. Watch the hearing.

2. VFW Attends Meeting with Secretary of Defense: On Wednesday, VFW Washington Office Executive Director B.J. Lawrence attended a meeting with Secretary of Defense Dr. Mark T. Esper and other veteran community stakeholders. Their discussion touched on key issues facing the military community such as suicide, toxic exposure, military housing, and other quality of life issues. “The VFW thanks the Secretary for his commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of our service members and their families,” said Executive Director B.J. Lawrence.

3. House Markup Hearing Ends Abruptly: This week, the House Committee on Veterans Affairs held a hearing to mark up and amend certain veteran bills that essentially ended after a dispute over procedures. House Republicans and Democrats on the committee disagreed over the addition of amendments to a significant women veterans piece of legislation. “It was disappointing to see what happened during today’s hearing,” said VFW Deputy Director, National Legislative Service Pat Murray. “We hope all members of the committee can put today’s hearing in the past and get back to being one of the more productive and bipartisan committees in all of Congress.” While the hearing this week did not end as planned, the VFW is
confident the House committee will continue to move essential legislation just as they have historically done before. Watch the hearing.

4. Hackers Target Job-Hunting Service Members and Veterans: Service members and veterans seeking employment need to be aware of a scam circulating the web. The website, “Hire Military Heroes,” prompts users to download an app that contains malicious malware that allows hackers to access a significant amount of personal information, according to cybersecurity researchers at Cisco Talos. The phony site shared a similar URL to the site “Hiring Our Heroes,” an employment site the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation launched. It is unknown at this time who may be the culprit behind the cyberattack. Learn more.

5. American Troops Continue to Be Identified: It was reported this week that at least 41 American troops have been identified among the remains returned from North Korea last year, according to officials at the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), paving the way for them to be returned to their families nearly seven decades after the Korean War. North Korea turned over 55 cases of bones and artifacts to the United States in July 2018, weeks after its leader, Kim Jong Un, agreed to do so as a goodwill gesture during his first nuclear summit with President Donald Trump. In advance of the June 12, 2018, Singapore Summit, then-VFW Commander-in-Chief B.J. Lawrence sent a letter to President Trump to urge him to include the return of American remains as a discussion point with Kim Jong Un. Read more.

6. Gold Star Family Members Now Have Opportunity to be a Congressional Fellow: This week, House Resolution 107 – SFC Sean Cooley and SPC Christopher Horton Congressional Gold Star Family Fellowship Program Act was agreed to in the House. This resolution establishes the Congressional Gold Star Fellowship in which an eligible individual may serve a 12-month fellowship in the office of a member of the House. An eligible individual is defined as the child, spouse, or sibling of a person who dies while serving as a member of the Armed Forces, to include National Guard & Reserve, that has been ruled “in the line of duty” and a veteran who dies from a service-connected disability, per VA, within four years of their discharge from the Armed Forces.

7. Veterans Day Discounts and Freebies: As a display of gratitude and appreciation, community partners around the nation have joined together on Veterans Day to honor servicemen and women, veterans, and their families for their sacrifice and dedication to this nation. Take advantage of the numerous discounts and freebies, ranging from discounted and free meals to discounts at local retail stores, in your area on Veterans Day. Learn more.

8. VFW Attends Reveal of WWP Annual Warrior Survey: On Tuesday, VFW Washington Office Executive Director B.J. Lawrence attended the reveal of the 2019 Wounded Warrior Project Annual Warrior Survey. Surveys of this kind are important to understand where veterans are with regards to their mental and/or physical health, and their economic opportunities. Read the Executive Summary.

9. MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced four new identifications, and three burial updates for service members who have been missing and
unaccounted-for from WWII and the Korean War. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

-- **Marine Corps Pfc. Robert J. Hatch**, 21, of Woods Cross, Utah, was a member of Company D, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed, including Hatch on the third day of battle, Nov. 22, 1943. Hatch will be buried Dec. 14, 2019, in Bountiful, Utah. [Read about Hatch.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. Jasper V. Marquez**, 21, of Santa Fe, New Mexico, was a member of Company L, 3rd Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Nov. 28, 1950, when enemy forces attacked his unit near the Kunu-ri, North Korea. Repatriated American prisoners of war reported that Marquez had died at Hofong Camp while a prisoner of war, in January 1951. Marquez will be buried in his hometown. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about Marquez.](#)

-- **Army Sgt. William C. Holmes**, 21, of Smyth County, Virginia, was killed during the Korean War. Holmes was a member of Heavy Tank Company, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. On Sept. 21, 1951, his unit participated in a patrol located near the Iron Triangle, North Korea. After a prolonged firefight, Holmes was killed in action. Following the battle, his remains were not initially recovered. Holmes will be buried Nov. 23, 2019, in Middleway, West Virginia. [Read about Holmes.](#)

-- **Navy Seaman 2nd Class Everett G. Windle**, 20, of Kansas City, Missouri, was killed during World War II. On Dec. 7, 1941, Windle was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Windle. Interment services are pending. [Read about Windle.](#)

-- **Navy Coxswain Layton T. Banks**, 20, of Dallas, Texas, was killed during World War II. On Dec. 7, 1941, Banks was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Banks. Interment services are pending. [Read about Banks.](#)

-- **Navy Fireman First Class Bethel E. Walters**, 25, of Dallas, Texas, was killed during World War II. On Dec. 7, 1941, Banks was assigned to the battleship USS West Virginia, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft. The USS West Virginia sustained multiple torpedo hits, but timely counter-flooding measures taken by the crew prevented it from capsizing, and it came to rest on the shallow harbor floor. The attack resulted in the deaths of 106 crewmen, including Walters. Interment services are pending. [Read about Walters.](#)

-- **Marine Corps Sgt. Jerome B. Morris**, 22, of Paragould, Arkansas, was a member of Company B, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands in an attempt to secure the island. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded, while the Japanese were virtually annihilated. Morris was killed on the third day of the battle, Nov. 22, 1943. Interment services are pending. [Read about Morris.](#)
To sign up new veterans’ advocates, visit: http://capwiz.com/vfw/mlm/signup.htm.

As always, we want to hear your advocacy stories. To share your stories or photos with us, simply email them directly to vfwac@vfw.org.

To view this week’s and previous editions, visit: http://www.vfw.org/actioncorpsweekly.
As boneyards go, this place is pretty lively. Before many Tucsonans have even started their morning commute, a pair of aircraft mechanics are already crouched over the open cockpit of an F/A-18 Hornet fighter jet, disarming the ejector seat and removing the explosives.

Nearby, a towing crew pulls a Navy P-3 Orion anti-submarine aircraft over to the "flush farm" to be drained of its fuel. Then, they hook up to a different F-18 and haul it to the "wash rack" for perhaps the last thorough cleaning it will ever get.

Meanwhile, about a mile away, a small army of specialty painters fans out across a dirt lot to spray protective coating on row after row of mothballed C-130 Hercules transport planes.

Welcome to a typical Thursday morning at the 309th Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group, Tucson's most famous four-square-mile parking lot with roughly $34 billion worth of military might.
The people who work here generally refer to the place by its acronym, or "A-marg" as they call it. Most everyone else -- here and around the globe -- knows it as the airplane graveyard, or simply the boneyard.

But that nickname only tells part of the story.

Though the boneyard is the final destination for most of the warplanes that end up there, some do return to the sky.

In May, AMARG restored a B-52 Stratofortress bomber to active duty after more than a decade in storage. Now, workers at the facility are preparing dozens of retired F-16 Fighting Falcon fighter jets to fly again, this time as full-sized, "drone" aerial targets piloted by remote control.

They also help get surplus military machines ready for delivery to U.S. allies, like the six helicopters that were sent to Greece earlier this year and the five more that will soon be sold to Israel.

"Any day that you come here, there's a really wide variety of things we could be working on," says Air Force Col. Jennifer Barnard, now in her third year as group commander. "When somebody says, 'Oh, is this happening at A-marg?' Yeah, probably."

The Sum of its Parts

Arguably the boneyard's most important mission is to serve as a giant, open-air parts warehouse for the U.S. military and others.

During the past fiscal year alone, AMARG "reclaimed" 5,744 different parts from the aircraft in its collection, saving taxpayers an estimated $405.9 million in replacement costs.

And as the only facility of its kind in the nation, the boneyard is often the only place left to find the parts needed for certain types of older aircraft.

Barnard says simple, high-priority orders can be filled the same day, but larger, hard-to-reach parts can take weeks or months to harvest and deliver.

"We've done special cuts on aircraft, where we'll cut a piece of an airplane and send it to somebody who needs it," she says.

One of the C-130s that services the science stations in Antarctica sports a tail section that once soaked up the sun in Tucson.

"That's kind of why we get looked at as an air power reservoir," Barnard says. "Our guys take a lot of pride in preserving these aircraft and taking really good care of them. They know they might be needed again, whether it's a whole airplane or just its parts."

A Visit to the 'Flush Farm'
Roughly 95% of aircraft arrive at the boneyard under their own power. They land at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base and taxi through a gate at the southeastern end of the runway to be prepped for slumber.

Their first stop is the "flush farm," where defueling supervisor Dale Pace and his crew can service up to six aircraft a day, depending on the type.

Pace says the task takes longer for large airplanes with multiple engines like the massive C-5 Galaxy transport. "That takes us forever and a day to defuel," the former Air Force mechanic says.

It works a little like a blood transfusion. All of the aviation fuel is pumped out and replaced with a special oil, similar to the stuff used in sewing machines, that coats the tanks and fuel systems to protect them from corrosion. The only way to do that is by firing up the engines.

On this recent Thursday, the crew is working on the Navy P-3, which arrived at AMARG the week before and was towed to the flush farm earlier in the morning.

Two members of Pace's team climb behind the controls of the retro-looking airplane and spin up all four props to burn off the last of the jet fuel and draw the oil into all the places that need protecting.

Pace stands outside the aircraft, watching the engines for the telltale sign that the exchange is complete. As soon as he sees puffs of white smoke, like at the Vatican, he motions to the men in the cockpit to cut the power.

To coat all the necessary engine parts in an F-15 Eagle or an F-18, the fighter jets have to be lashed to the ground and run with their afterburners on, creating a rumbling sound that echoes across Tucson.

"And if you do it in the winter, you get a nice long flame" from the exhaust ports, says storage induction supervisor Herman Castillo.

Any airplanes that are expected to fly again one day must be brought out of storage once every four years to be refueled and fired back up to make sure their engines and other systems are still in working order.

Then they are flushed again, sealed back up and returned to the boneyard, Castillo says.

The Dirty Job of Getting Clean

The next stop is the wash rack, where men in protective rain gear give a Coast Guard C-130 transport plane a nose-to-tail scrubbing before it flies off to be outfitted to fight wildfires. The aircraft has already been painted with the U.S. Forest Service name and logo.

Nearby, other members of the six-man crew use high-pressure sprayers and industrial degreaser to clean A-10 Thunderbolt wings and landing gear pods recently "brought in from the desert."
The parts will be refurbished in a shop at AMARG and used to extend the life of the Air Force's fleet of ground-attack jets, a mainstay at Davis-Monthan and in the skies above Tucson.

Wash rack supervisor Mike Sherry says that, on average, his crew cleans about four airplanes and 50 refurbished parts each week.

The men bake all summer in their rubber suits, then spend the cold winter outside soaking wet.

"It's miserable work," Sherry says. "It's one of the hardest jobs at AMARG."

It's also an important one. Cleaning the aircraft and their components makes them more resistant to decay, Sherry says.

"I'm kind of a jerk. I'll go behind my guys with a white glove," he says with a grin. "These aircraft need to survive out in the desert for a long time."

Serving the Armed Services Since 1946

The boneyard was established in 1946 to store World War II bombers and transports.

Tucson was chosen for its dry desert air -- perfect for preventing corrosion -- and hard caliche soil capable of supporting heavy airplanes without the need for thousands of acres of concrete.

It became the nation's primary storage center for military aircraft in 1964, when about a thousand Navy planes were transferred to the site from a depot near Phoenix.

The facility's inventory hit an all-time high of 6,080 aircraft in 1973, as the Vietnam War was winding down.

Today, AMARG is home to about 3,280 aircraft of 80 different varieties, from small helicopters to some of the world's largest military cargo planes.

As Pace, the flush farm supervisor, puts it, "Everything for everyone ends up out here."

Each branch of the military is represented, as are the Coast Guard, Border Patrol, FBI, Forest Service, NASA, the National Science Foundation and several allied governments.

Barnard considers all those agencies and armed forces her customers. They have the final say over how their airplanes are stored and used.

"We don't own anything here," the commander explains. "We're like giant property managers. We take care of these things, but we don't own any of it."

Lots of Veterans, Not Much Saluting

The atmosphere at AMARG is businesslike but decidedly unstarched. Roughly 700 people work at the boneyard, and almost none of them are required to salute anybody.
Barnard is one of only three active-duty Air Force personnel assigned to the operation. The rest are civilian Defense Department employees and government contractors.

Barnard is still the boss, but she has to work a little harder at it.

"I actually have a personal philosophy that, if you lead civilians, if they choose to follow you, you're that much more effective of a leader. Because they have a choice, right?" she says with a smile.

A lot of the employees have military backgrounds, and many of them served as aircraft mechanics.

Before he ended up as AMARG's wash rack supervisor, Sherry used to maintain fighter jets at Luke Air Force Base in Phoenix, among other places. He says a few of the F-16s he worked on when he was in the Air Force have since shown up at the boneyard, including one or two problem birds he wasn't too happy to see again.

Some aircraft show up with personal notes written on them by the last people to fly them.

Sherry points to the F-18 that was just brought to his crew for a wash. There on the nose cone, a pilot with the call sign "Dude Bro" has left his goodbye in black Sharpie: "Thank you for your service ol' girl."

Sherry says AMARG occasionally invites pilots out to watch when one of their old airplanes is ready to be retired for good, once all the usable parts have been harvested and the thing is about to be cut up and crushed into little pieces.

"We try to find the pilots who had the last flight on them. To watch them get choked up, it's heart-wrenching," he said.

Disarmed for the Trip to the 'Desert'

Dean Clark and Gary Chartier play a crucial role at the boneyard. They're the ones who make sure no one gets blown up or launched into the sky while working on one of the mothballed warplanes.

On this day, they are disarming the ejection system on an F-18. Standing at the top of some rolling metal stairs, Clark reads the steps off a checklist as Chartier leans down into the cockpit to disconnect and remove the explosive charges.

Clark says the process usually takes three to four hours, depending on the age of the aircraft.

Older F-18s are the worst, he says. "There's a bunch of springs and wires. It's annoying."

This is the last step in the "induction" process before an airplane gets towed out to what boneyard workers call "the desert," though it isn't a desert at all.
The storage area actually sits on roughly 2,600 acres of hard-packed dirt dotted with weeds, crabgrass and anthills. There, the airplanes are parked in neat rows and loosely grouped based on their status, which can range from ready to fly to soon to be scrapped.

Generally speaking, "anything that's east of Kolb (Road), it will never fly again," says Leo Bernier, a storage services work leader.

A Boneyard with Creature Comforts

The far east end of the property is also where AMARG stores about 280,000 pieces of aircraft production tooling, just in case a defense contractor wants to fire up its factory again and start churning out new airplanes or parts.

For now, the stacks of tools and rows of wooden crates mostly provide shelter for pack rats, rattlesnakes and the occasional swarm of bees.

AMARG spokeswoman Terry Pittman says occasional wildlife encounters are just part of the job.

Javelina regularly find their way onto the installation, including one that stole a boot that belonged to a member of the wash crew.

Not long ago, a mule deer got into the boneyard and lived there for about a month before state game wardens were called in to tranquilize the animal and move it off the base.

"Just last week, we found a ringtail [cat] inside a soda machine," Pittman says. "I don't know if it was trying to get warm or cold."

A baby ringtail rescued from a mothballed bomber back in the 1950s went on to be one of the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum's earliest animal ambassadors.

Anything in the boneyard that still has wings -- unless it's an actual quail or owl -- quickly gets lashed down with cables.

"Airplanes by nature like to fly, so when the wind blows, you want them to stay on the ground," Barnard says. "We have a securing plan for every aircraft that describes how many of those tie-downs it needs. The most extensive one is the C-5, which has 72 tie-downs."

Saving Taxpayers' Dollars

The final step in the storage process belongs to what everyone still calls the "Spraylat crew," even though the boneyard doesn't use that particular brand of spray-on latex coating anymore.

Using a "sealing diagram" supplied by the owner of the aircraft, the painting crew will cover every window, access panel, seam and opening with easy-to-peel paint and a reflective thermal coating to help keep the inside of the aircraft cool while protecting the machine from the elements.
The workers start the way any house painter might -- by marking off parts of the aircraft with a special type of painter's tape that pulls off easily without damaging the vehicle's finish or leaving behind any sticky residue. Then they spray on two to three coats of black latex paint, followed by two coats of white vinyl similar to the flexible coating found on the flat roofs of many Tucson homes.

It's "not really rocket science," but it is exacting, says Bernier, who leads one of the painting crews. Each coat is measured down to the millimeter to make sure it is thick enough to do the job but can easily be peeled off later if necessary.

They usually work in pairs, but some "big birds" require a four-man team.

Coating a C-130 requires roughly 3,000 square feet of sealant, which can take five to six days to apply. Your standard fighter jet usually takes four to five days. Certain helicopters have to be completely cocooned, which can eat up a full week.

The largest aircraft in the boneyard, the giant C-5, also requires seven days of taping and spraying, but it used to be a whole lot worse.

Bernier says the original sealing diagram for the massive transport required protective coating along the leading edge of every wing, including the one atop the tail, more than six stories above the ground. He says his crew would be lucky to finish a job like that in under two weeks.

The coating is designed to last five years, so Bernier and company have to reapply it to some of the aircraft that are stored for longer than that.

This is the most visible part of the operation, the part of AMARG the general public probably recognizes from looking at aerial photos or driving past the base.

To some people, all those idle but expensive airplanes represents an enormous waste -- acres upon acres of needless military expenditures collecting dust in the desert sun.

But Bernier sees the boneyard like a bank account.

Every part of every aircraft they can save and pull back out later is one less part that needs to be bought or built somewhere else.

"We're saving billions of taxpayers’ dollars," Bernier says as he stands in the shadow of a C-130 in the middle of its paint job. "That's what it comes down to."

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In Front of the Government Services Building
1769 E. Moody Blvd, Bunnell, Florida

Special Guest Speaker:
Brigadier General, US Army (Ret)
Ernest C. Audino,
District 6 Director for
Congressman Michael Waltz

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Veterans Day Celebration
In Honor of Your Service

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Central Park in Town Center
11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

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10:00 AM - 11:00 AM EST

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The Mission: To make sure we ask each and every veteran resident at ELB VA Veterans Nursing home what they want for Christmas.

Put on your Team RWB Shirt if you have one and join Team RWB Daytona for this annual event to make the Veteran residence of Emory L Bennett VA Veterans Nursing home's Christmas a very merry one.

30 Volunteers are needed. Meet Vince Faulkner in front of the nursing home. Volunteers will be given names and room numbers of veterans to talk to and find out what they want. It will warm
Eagle Leader Contact

Vince Faulkner, vince.faulkner@teamrwb.org

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11/23/2019 10:00 AM
11/23/2019 11:00 AM

GET DIRECTIONS
CHRISTMAS WISH

LIST FOR VETERANS

THE MISSION: TO MAKE SURE WE ASK EACH AND EVERY VETERAN RESIDENT AT ELB VA VETERANS NURSING HOME WHAT THEY WANT FOR CHRISTMAS.

PUT ON YOUR TEAM RWB SHIRT IF YOU HAVE ONE AND JOIN TEAM RWB DAYTONA FOR THIS ANNUAL EVENT TO MAKE THE VETERAN RESIDENCE OF E...
Volunteers are needed. Meet Vince Faulkner in front of the nursing home. Volunteers will be given names and room numbers of veterans to talk to and find out what they want. It will warm your heart and the veterans'.

Join the whole event. The time makes them! Spending hearts, teams, and the veterans. Very merry one.
PLEASE INVITE YOUR VETERAN BUDDIES, FAMILY AND FRIENDS. IT'S ONE OF THE FAVORITE VETERANS OUTREACH OF THE YEAR!

VISIT EVENT PAGE

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11.14.2019

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12PM - 2PM  OPEN TO ALL
Orange City Career Center
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- County of Volusia HR Department
- Deland Police Department
- Express Employment Professionals
- Florida Healthcare Plans, Inc.
- Florida United Methodist Children's Home
- Halifax Health
- Hilton Hotels & Resorts
- Louis Berger Services, Inc.
- Manpower
- On Time Prime (an Amazon Service Delivery Partner)
- Orange City Police Department
- Performance Designs
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