October 7, 2019

VETERANS
MONTHLY INFORMATION PACKAGE

FLAGLER COUNTY

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Feel free to make copies and distribute throughout your organization.
Veterans can now enroll in VA’s Million Veteran Program online

Veterans can now join the Million Veteran Program online (MVP) as part of the U.S Department of Veterans Affairs’ (VA) effort to improve the lives of Veterans through health care research and innovation.

More than 775,000 Veteran partners have already joined MVP, a national, voluntary, research initiative that helps VA study how genes affect the health of Veterans.

“MVP has already resulted in a number of important scientific publications that increase our knowledge of conditions that affect Veterans’ health, and we expect this resource to continue to prove its value over the coming years,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “VA is excited to announce the launch of MVP Online, which will make it even easier for Veterans nationwide to take part in this landmark research effort.”

Veterans currently enrolled in VA care can use their existing VA credentials to securely log in to MVP Online to view their personalized dashboard and learn more about the program. To partner with MVP, Veterans can use the online portal to complete the consent process, allow access to health records (for research purposes only), answer surveys about their health and lifestyle and schedule an MVP visit at a participating VA site to provide a blood sample. VA is currently piloting ways to make the MVP sample collection more convenient for Veterans who do not live near a participating VA site.

MVP helps researchers better understand how genes affect health and illness, which may help prevent illnesses and improve treatments of disease. Research using MVP data is already a part of more than 30 VA projects, including efforts focused on understanding the role of genes in PTSD, diabetes, cancer, heart disease and suicide. Significant research findings have already published in high-impact scientific journals. This research is helping VA to better understand the role genes play in many common illnesses, especially those illnesses common among combat Veterans.

MVP partners include Veterans from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Guam. MVP also has the largest representation of minorities of any genomic cohort in the U.S.

For more information about the Million Veteran Program, visit MVP Online at https://www.mvp.va.gov. For Veterans not enrolled in VA care, the ability to join using MVP Online will be available in the near future. Until then, please call the MVP Info Center at 866-441-6075 to learn more about how to join.

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VA and DOJ Join Forces to Crack Down on Health Care Fraud

3 Oct 2019
Stars and Stripes

The departments of Veterans Affairs and Justice are teaming up to combat healthcare fraud as the VA expands a Medicare-like program that allows veterans to seek care at private facilities in the community at taxpayer expense, officials said.

The VA's Office of Inspector General is joining forces with the Justice Department's criminal division to form an interagency task force that will focus on that program, the government said in a statement Tuesday.

The new partnership "will aggressively target fraud in the VA's expanding health care programs," said Assistant Attorney General Brian A. Benczkowski of the DOJ's criminal division.

Legislation passed last year allows veterans to receive care from approved providers from outside the VA's more than 1,200 medical facilities. As with Medicare, the providers submit claims to the government for payment for their services.
In announcing the task force, the VA IG released a list of more than a dozen cases in which the office partnered with the Justice Department to bring charges or obtain guilty pleas in recent months, including one involving a former chief of pathology for the VA in Arkansas accused of involuntary manslaughter, another in which VA claims processors are accused of collecting overtime pay for hours not worked, and several cases involving fraudulent prescriptions.

Federal investigators from the FBI, IRS, Department of Health and Human Services IG and other agencies are investigating the cases and the DOJ criminal division's fraud section is prosecuting them, the statement said.

"This Task Force sends a clear message to anyone considering committing health care fraud at VA -- we will protect our veterans' health care system at all costs," VA IG Michael J. Missal said in the statement.

Modeled on DOJ's Medicare Fraud Strike Force, the task force will include an attorney from the VA IG's office assigned to the fraud section as a special prosecutor in its health care fraud unit.

A partnership between Justice, the U.S. Attorney's Offices, the FBI and the Department of Health and Human Services IG formed in 2007, the Medicare fraud strike force has charged more than 4,200 defendants with defrauding the Medicare of a total of around $19 billion.

"This is one of those rare opportunities in government where we can be proactive and get ahead of the curve by partnering with the Fraud Section and leveraging its proven strategies for combating fraud," said Missal, the VA IG.
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 1, 2019

VA and health care leaders create a call to action through national suicide prevention task force

Focus is to raise awareness and drive change

The President’s Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End the National Tragedy of Suicide (PREVENTS) task force hosted a health care leadership meeting at the White House to bring together leaders across the health care industry to discuss their role in changing the culture around mental health, substance misuse and addiction.

VA recognizes it must work with communities, faith-based and tribal organizations, private and public partners, as well as state, local, and federal government agencies to achieve this goal.

“Collaboration with major healthcare delivery systems is an integral part of VA’s public health approach to suicide prevention,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “Suicide prevention and alleviating emotional pain and suffering requires an all-hands on deck comprehensive approach. The work of the PREVENTS task force, like this meeting, moves us closer to solving the problems that lead to Veteran suicide.”

VA and the White House Domestic Policy Council established the PREVENTS task force in June via Executive Order signed by President Trump in March. The interagency task force is charged with implementing a roadmap for Veteran suicide prevention at the national and community levels by March 2020.

Veterans who are in crisis or having thoughts of suicide, and those who know a Veteran in crisis, can call the Veterans Crisis Line for confidential support available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, text to 838255 or chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat.

Reporters covering this issue can download VA’s Safe Messaging Best Practices fact sheet or visit www.ReportingOnSuicide.org for important guidance on how to communicate about suicide.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 30, 2019

VA improves information sharing with community care providers

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will implement new procedures by January 2020, for sharing medical information for Veterans accessing health care in the community.

The department is changing its procedures for electronic health information sharing in accordance with Section 132 of the VA Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks Act of 2018 (MISSION Act).

“The MISSION Act gives Veterans greater access to care, whether at VA facilities or in the community,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “We are providing seamless access to care, improving efficiency and helping to ensure Veterans get the care they need, where and when they need it.”

The change moves VA from an ‘opt-in’ to an ‘opt-out’ model of electronic health information sharing. Veterans will no longer be required to provide signed, written authorization for VA to release electronic health information to community providers for the purposes of receiving medical treatment.

VA shares health information with community providers using a secure and safe electronic system called the Veterans Health Information Exchange. This electronic exchange of information improves patient safety — particularly during emergency situations — and allows for improved care coordination for Veterans receiving care in the community.

Veterans who do not want their health information shared electronically can opt out by submitting VA Form 10-10164 (opt out of sharing) to the Release of Information Office at the nearest VA medical center now or at any time going forward. Veterans who previously opted out on VA Form 10-0484 prior to Sept. 30, do not need to submit new forms. However, Veterans who restricted what information VA shared by submitting VA Form 10-0525 (restriction request) will need to opt out entirely by submitting Form 10-10164.

VA is committed to protecting Veteran privacy. Only community health care providers and organizations that have partnership agreements with VA and are part of VA’s approved, trusted network may receive VA health information.

For information about VA’s health information exchange visit www.va.gov/vler.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 25, 2019

VA strengthens Caregiver Support Program and expands timeline of the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers

WASHINGTON – Today the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced actions to strengthen the Caregiver Support Program and establish a timeline for expanding the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) in accordance with section 161 of the VA MISSION Act of 2018 (MISSION Act).

Under the MISSION Act, VA will expand the PCAFC to eligible Veterans from all eras using a phased approach. Currently, the program is only available to eligible Veterans seriously injured in the line of duty on or after September 11, 2001. Prior to expanding, VA must upgrade its information technology (IT) system and implement other improvements to strengthen the program.

“Caregivers play a critical role in the health and well-being of some of our most vulnerable Veterans,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “Under the MISSION Act, we are strengthening and expanding our program to positively impact the lives of Veterans and deliver the best customer experience to them and their caregivers.”

In December 2018, VA suspended certain discharges from the program due to ongoing concerns about inconsistent application of eligibility requirements at VA medical centers. Since then, VA has held listening sessions with caregivers and other stakeholders, developed or amended 14 standard operating procedures to clarify program requirements for VA staff, increased oversight in each Veterans Integrated Service Network, provided training and education to staff and caregivers and is boosting operational capacity with the hiring of more than 680 staff.

To modernize its caregiver IT system, VA is adopting a three-phased approach and will deploy a new system based on a commercial off the shelf product called Caregiver Record Management Application (CARMA) beginning in October 2019. VA will deploy phase two in January 2020 to centralize and automate stipend payment calculations and expects to deploy phase three in the summer of 2020, which will enable caregivers to apply for benefits online. VA will then perform testing and verify that the system has full functionality before expanding the program as required under the MISSION Act.

The expansion will occur in two phases, beginning in the summer of 2020 or once the Secretary has certified that the new IT system is fully implemented. In the first phase, PCAFC will be expanded to eligible Veterans who incurred or aggravated a serious injury in the line of duty on or before May 7, 1975. The final phase of the expansion will begin two years later. It will expand PCAFC to eligible Veterans who incurred or aggravated a serious injury in the line of duty after May 7, 1975 through September 10, 2001.

Additionally, VA has gathered input and is developing regulatory changes to streamline the program and provide more clarity for Veterans and their family caregivers. VA will publish a proposed rule for public comment prior to issuing final regulations.

VA is also working across the department to ensure caregivers have a positive experience through program improvements and initiatives to include:

- Providing home and community-based care alternatives through the Choose Home Initiative at 21 VA medical centers.
- Establishing the Center for Excellence for Veteran and Caregiver Research named after Senator Elizabeth Dole.
- Expanding telehealth services to enable Veterans and their caregivers to get care in the comfort of their homes.
- Delivering valuable programs for caregivers such as peer support mentoring, a Caregiver Support Line, self-care courses and educational programs to help caregivers succeed.

Caregivers play a critical role in enabling Veterans to maintain their highest level of independence and remain in their homes and communities for as long as possible. VA leads the nation in providing unprecedented benefits and services to caregivers. The MISSION Act strengthens VA’s ability to serve as a trusted partner in the care of our nation’s most vulnerable Veterans.

To learn more about the many support services available for caregivers of Veterans, visit www.caregiver.va.gov or call the Caregiver Support Line at 1-855-260-3274.

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The Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs are gearing up for what will be the largest expansion of patrons to the military commissary system and exchanges in 65 years, making sure that shoppers will be able to get on base and find the shelves fully stocked.

Starting Jan. 1, Purple Heart recipients, former prisoners of war and all service-connected disabled veterans, regardless of rating, as well as caregivers enrolled in the VA's Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers program, will be able to shop at Defense Commissary Agency stores and military exchanges.
They also will have access to revenue-generating Morale, Recreation and Welfare amenities, such as golf courses, recreation areas, theaters, bowling alleys, campgrounds and lodging facilities that are operated by MWR.

Facilities such as fitness centers that receive funding from the Defense Department budget are not included.

At commissaries, however, there will be an added cost for new patrons who use a credit or debit card to pay for their groceries, in addition to the 5% surcharge commissary patrons already pay.

DoD officials told Military.com on Wednesday that an estimated 3.5 million new patrons will be eligible to shop. However, after analyzing store locations and their proximity to where veterans live, they expect that slightly more than a quarter of those patrons, or 800,000 people, will take advantage of the benefit.

According to Barry Patrick, associate director of MWR and Resale Policy in the Office of the Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness, the DoD expects veterans in high-cost areas like Guam, Alaska, Hawaii and parts of California to take advantage of the benefit. Stores in states or cities with large populations of service-connected disabled veterans, including Florida, California, parts of Texas and Washington, D.C., may also see an increase in customers.

"Through this data analytics tool that we've developed, we've been able to provide the services and the resale organizations information ... to ensure that [they] can adjust," Patrick said. "We are working with distributors to ensure that the supply chain is adjusted accordingly, based on high-impact projections, and that the supply chain is also prepared for rapid, agile reaction to any unexpected situation."

In addition to ironing out the supply chain concerns, Pentagon officials also have been working to guarantee that the new patrons can get to the stores, which often are located on secure military installations, and will be able to make purchases.

The details have required a joint effort for much of the past year between the DoD and the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Homeland Security and Treasury. Homeland Security is involved because Coast Guard Exchanges are part of the deal, and Treasury plays a role, because it is responsible for ensuring that new patrons pay a fee for credit and debit card purchases at the commissaries.
Since most new patrons lack the credentials needed to get on military bases, installations will accept the Veteran Health Identification card, or VHID, from disabled and other eligible veterans. For caregivers, the VA plans to issue a memo to eligible shoppers in the coming months, which will be used in conjunction with any picture identification that meets REAL ID Act security requirements, such as a compliant state driver's license or passport.

Justin Hall, director of the MWR and Resale Policy in the Office of the Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness, said that, after Jan. 1, newly eligible patrons should go to the visitors' center at the base where they plan to do most of their shopping to register their credentials. Thereafter, they will be able to access the base in the same way as CAC and DoD ID card patrons.

According to Hall and Patrick, store computers and registers are being tweaked to scan VHID cards, and employees are being trained on identifying the new patrons.

The most significant difference mandated in the law that created the benefit, the fiscal 2019 National Defense Authorization Act, is that the new customers must pay a fee if they use a credit or debit card at the commissaries. By law, the stores, which receive funding from the Defense Department budget, are not allowed to cover the extra cost of the new users' card convenience fees.

The initial fee for commercial credit cards will be 1.9%; for debit cards, it will be 0.5%. Patrons can avoid the card fees by paying by cash or check, or by using the Military Star card, a credit card offered by the military resale system, which they will be eligible to apply for beginning Jan. 1.

The card fees will apply only to the new patrons.

The Defense Department is preparing a fact sheet that will contain information on how veterans can get a VHID card if they don't already have one and how caregivers can obtain the memo they need to access the benefit.

MWR and Resale Policy officials said they also will launch an information campaign to alert service-connected disabled veterans of this new benefit.

"Everybody I've talked to is excited," Hall said. "We're really hoping to get the word out so veterans will learn about the opportunities."

-- Patricia Kime can be reached at Patricia.Kime@Military.com. Follow her on Twitter at @patriciakime.
Medal of Honor Museum to be located in Texas

By: Military Times staff

The National Medal of Honor Museum will be built in Arlington, Texas, the museum’s foundation announced Tuesday.

With nearly 70 recipients hailing from the region and nearly 1.8 million veterans and active-duty military residing in Texas, Joe Daniels, president and CEO of the National Medal of Honor Museum Foundation said in the announcement that Arlington was the optimal location to build the museum showcasing the nation’s highest medal for valor.

More than 3,500 military service members have received the nation’s highest military honor since the first medal was presented in 1863. The National Medal of Honor Museum will offer an experience that draws personal and emotional connections to Medal of Honor recipients and their inspiring stories, according to the foundation’s press release.
The foundation is also working with the Texas’ congressional delegation to create a monument in the nation’s capital for Medal of Honor recipients, the announcement states.

The museum was supposed to be built in its current location in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, aboard the USS Yorktown, but Arlington officials made a final pitch to incorporate the museum in the city’s growing entertainment district, according to the Charleston Post and Courier.

The design for the museum in South Carolina started over last year after the foundation spent $3.5 million preparing the initial concept of a pentagon-shaped building. According to the Post and Courier, the foundation started a national search for alternative locations last year, citing difficulties with Mount Pleasant officials. Denver was also in the running for the museum’s relocation, according to the Colorado Sun.

The museum is expected to open in 2024.
Memo outlining supposed changes to VA caregiver program creates confusion, anxiety among veterans

By: Leo Shane III and Patricia Kime

Veterans Affairs officials are distancing themselves from a memo circulating among veterans groups this week outlining drastic changes to eligibility for department’s caregivers program, calling it a mistake and demanding staffers immediately stop sharing it.

The document, which was distributed to veterans families in at least four states, has raised concerns about more upheaval with the program, which has been the subject of intense scrutiny in the past two years for inequitable acceptance into and dismissals from it.
The memo appeared to be an update of a screening tool used by VA officials to help decide who can participate in the caregiver program, designed to help ease financial and logistical stress on individuals providing full-time care for injured veteran.

Nearly 19,300 veterans are currently enrolled in the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers, which provides several thousands of dollars a month to family members caring for injured veterans to make up for their lost wages. It is not known how many of those families would have been effected if the new memo’s rules were to go into effect.

Along with basic program rules about needing full-time home care and not receiving other substitute care, the new screening tool included other disqualifying criteria such as having a part-time job, attending college classes, the ability to “safely be home alone” for any period, and the determination by VA doctors that “you caregiver is doing things ... you could or should be doing for yourself.”

Several families of injured veterans received the new memo in program information packets in recent weeks, and leadership at veterans advocacy groups have been peppering VA officials with questions over its origin and intent.

In a statement this week, VA press secretary Christina Mandreucci said the memo is an outdated and inaccurate document which does not reflect any current changes to the program.

“This looks like a mistake, a really horrible mistake,” he said. “VA needs to take responsibility for this, and I think they are.”

VA officials did not say where the document originated. Schwab said part of the confusion stems from how the caregiver program is currently administered. While the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers does have a national office, most eligibility and operations decisions come from local officials.
In this case, a local decision to create a new screening tool for potential caregivers could have spread among several sites as new national rules, even though no such decisions had been made.

But Lauren Price, founder of Veterans Warriors — an advocacy group that focuses on VA accountability — said her organization still hasn’t received adequate answers on where the memo came from.

“This memo was circulated in four separate [VA regions] -- Arizona, Mississippi, Pennsylvania and Florida. This clearly points to an origin at the VA Central Office,” Price said. “But they won’t give us any answers.”

“VA doesn’t have the legal authority to change eligibility for the program.”

Mandreucci said the department is considering eligibility changes in the future “to improve the current program” but will do so through the federal rulemaking process, which provides months of public comment time before any new rules are finalized.

Schwab said VA officials have repeatedly promised in recent days that veterans’ employment will not be used as disqualifying criteria for the caregivers program.

The memo is the latest measure of frustration for veterans monitoring the caregiver program, which was expected to undergo a major expansion this fall.

VA officials announced last month that because of problems with the department’s technology infrastructure, caregivers of veterans injured before 2001 will have to wait at least nine more months before they can enroll in the program.

Last year, VA Secretary Robert Wilkie ordered a moratorium on removing individuals from the caregiver program after numerous families complained they were being forced out by doctors despite little or no improvement in their veterans’ medical situation.

That order remains in effect, although the number of caregivers participating in the program is still down significantly over the last two years.
Trisha Essary was one of those dropped from the stipend and still frustrated over how the program has been run.

Her husband, Bill, is a former Army sergeant who was medically retired 13 years ago after a truck accident left him with a head injury and an amputated leg. She served as his full-time caregiver for five years before the caregiver program was launched in 2011, and another six years after they began receiving the stipend.

But even though Bill still had problems accomplishing basic tasks like feeding and dressing himself, VA officials dropped him from the caregiver program completely last year, after he got a job as a heavy equipment operator. The couple said they were never told that could disqualify them from the program.

“We would tell (caregiver staff) where he was not functioning. Then when we read (the staff’s) report, it said ‘he can do this on his own,’” Trisha said. “It frustrated us to no end.”

Last year, while Trisha was at work, Bill made a mistake putting on his prosthetic leg and fell, shattering his collarbone. She believes that wouldn’t have happened if they were allowed to stay on the caregiver program.

“He’s 100 percent disabled and there are a lot of issues that are getting worse,” she said. “But basically, the only way he’s going to qualify again for the program is if he requires [a nursing home level of care].”

Schwab said he understands the frustration within the community over the program, and is working with families to separate facts from rumors about the eligibility rules.

Meanwhile, he is also asking VA to find ways to better coordinate operations of the caregiver program, both with outside groups and within the department itself.

“We need to prevent renegade decisions and incidents, and right now the structure of the program allows that,” he said.
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6. MIA Update

1. September is Suicide Prevention Month: #BeThere is the VA campaign to prevent suicide. VA is encouraging everyone to help prevent suicide by showing compassion and a willingness to find a solution when the veteran may be unable to find the solution on their own. The VFW and Give An Hour will be doing just that on Sept. 14, 2019, by holding the fourth annual A Day to Change Direction, a national day of service and action to change the dialogue on mental health for veterans and their communities. Learn more about the #BeThere campaign. Pledge to participate in A Day to Change Direction.

2. VFW Supports Relief Efforts for Hurricane Dorian: The VFW is accepting donations to help veterans, service members, and military families impacted by Hurricane Dorian. From hurricanes to raging wildfires, each year natural disasters leave many in desperate need of assistance. The VFW’s Disaster Relief Fund provides our organization the opportunity to react quickly with immediate relief to those in the affected areas. You can donate to the VFW Disaster Relief Fund. Learn more about the hurricane’s impact on your respective VA facility.

3. 2020 VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship Application is Open: The 2020 VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship is now accepting applications! The program, which is in its sixth year, is for VFW members who attend an accredited institute of higher learning. Ten student veterans will be selected for the semester-long program that focuses on real policy issues faced by veterans, service members, and their families. The highlight of the program is participation in the VFW Legislative Conference, which in the past has included meetings at the White House and with senior officials from the Department of Veterans Affairs and Congress. Those selected also spend time with their VFW Department members on Capitol Hill pushing the VFW’s legislative priorities. Alumni of the program have become more active in all levels of the VFW and have changed laws to improve care and benefits for veterans. Learn more and apply for the fellowship.

4. On-Base Shopping Eligibility Expands Jan. 1: Beginning in the new year more than 3 million service-connected disabled veterans with VA ratings from zero to 90 percent will be authorized on-base exchange and commissary shopping privileges, as well as access to certain MWR facilities, but you must have a VA-issued Veteran Health Identification Card, or VHIC, to gain access. The VHIC is issued only to veterans who are enrolled in the VA health care system.
You can apply online, or in person at your local VA medical facility. Family members of the newly eligible veterans will not be authorized to shop, but will be permitted on-base as guests of the VHIC-carrying veteran. Veterans who do not reside near a military installation can still shop online at the four military exchanges. Search for stores at ShopMyExchange, Marine Corps Exchange, Navy Exchange, and Coast Guard Exchange. Caregivers will be processed differently, initially, since they have no military or VA affiliation. The VA will post a memo to VA.gov for caregivers to be used for access at the front gate, along with a driver’s license. This process is expected to transition to a caregiver-type ID card, which will have scanning swipe capability. One hundred percent disabled veterans, their spouses, and eligible dependents already have access because they are issued military identification cards.

5. DOD to Divert $3.6 Billion to Fund Barrier Projects: On Wednesday, DOD announced that $3.6 billion will be diverted from 125 military construction projects in both the U.S. and overseas to fund 11 fencing and barrier projects along the southern U.S. border. In total, this reprogramming will suspend programs in 23 states, three U.S. territories, and 19 nations. These projects include schools, dining and maintenance facilities, upgrades to flight line infrastructure, and upgrades to ballistic missile defense infrastructure. See the full list of projects slated for deferment. Read the official DOD press release.

6. MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency has announced the identifications of four American servicemen who had been missing and unaccounted for from the Korean War. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

-- Army Cpl. Gerald N. Wilson Company F, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division. He was last seen July 25, 1950, while participating in the defense of Yongdong, South Korea. His remains could not be recovered. Interment services are pending. Read about Wilson.

-- Army 1st Lt. Robert C. Styslinger Battery B, 57th Field Artillery Battalion, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported to have been killed in action Nov. 29, 1950, while fighting enemy forces near Hagaru-ri, Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. His remains could not be recovered. Interment services are pending. Read about Styslinger.

-- Army Pfc. Harold K. Knight was a member of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 31st Infantry Regiment, 31st Regimental Combat Team. His unit was engaged in intense fighting with the Chinese People's Volunteer Forces, near the Chosin Reservoir in North Korea, from Nov. 27 - Dec. 1, 1950. Witness accounts noted that Knight was killed in action Nov. 25, 1950. His remains could not be recovered. Interment services are pending. Read about Knight.

-- Army Sgt. Donald L. Murphy was a member of Company A, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division, 31st Regimental Combat Team. The 31st RCT was east of the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea, enduring repeated attacks from the Chinese People's Volunteer Forces, before withdrawing from their positions on Dec. 1, 1950. Murphy could not be accounted for by his unit, and he was subsequently declared missing in action as of Dec. 2, 1950. Interment services are pending. Read about Murphy.

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.
By ILEANA NAJARRO | Tampa Bay Times | Published: October 3, 2019

TAMPA, Fla. (Tribune News Service) — Many were infants on Oct. 7, 2001, the day the United States unleashed Operation Enduring Freedom and began the Afghanistan War. Some had yet to be born.

So as the 18th anniversary of America’s longest war approaches, it’s not surprising that the newest military recruits have no emotional connection to the events of September 11.

“It doesn’t feel as serious as it must have been to the older generations,” says Isabelle Acevedo, an 18-year-old Air Force ROTC cadet at the University of South Florida. Acevedo is one of a number of local teens who told the Tampa Bay Times they intend to join the military, but aren’t sure why U.S. troops are still in Afghanistan or what prompted the war that has lasted their entire lifetime.

Experts say September 11 means different things to the two generations that came of age in its shadow.
Millennials, born before 1996, have personal memories of the attacks and their immediate aftermath, said Jason Dorsey, president of the Center for Generational Kinetics in Austin, Tex. He said it later prompted many to enlist.

Members of Gen Z, born after 1996, rely on an interpretation of the attacks and their meaning. They’ve grown up desensitized to global terrorism. Their lives were much more affected by mass shootings across the country, especially in schools.

This generational divide has forced recruiters and ROTC leaders to change approaches when discussing deployments and modern-day military service.

Recruitment has always been hard, with each generation providing unique challenges, said Beth Asch, a senior economist at the California-based Rand Corporation. During the Cold War, few felt the need to enlist during what was generally a time of peace. Public support for the military faltered in the aftermath of the Vietnam War.

After 9/11, interest in military service spiked, driven by a sense of patriotism.

That interest has slowed over the last few years, said Capt. Nicholas Pine of the U.S. Army Tampa Recruiting Battalion.

Recruits today ask more about educational benefits and job opportunities than older millennials. They want to know more about daily military life and turn to social media for answers.

Trevor Yarborough, 17, a senior in the Navy Junior ROTC program at Robinson High School, said he regularly sees ads showing military drills on YouTube and follows recruiters on Instagram.

“I see all the time the stuff they do,” he said.

Yet with almost infinite access to information online, recruits who grew up in a digital world can still struggle to discern fact from fiction.

Dispelling online rumors is one of the biggest new challenges recruiters face, Pine said. For instance, there’s a misconception that all those who enlist will only go to war and not work engineering jobs or other non-combat tasks.

Recruiting strategies aren’t all that’s changed.

New technologies such as drones are reducing manpower needs while cyber attacks have redefined warfare. The various branches are working more closely together. Multiple combat tours are the new normal.

“It’s a different war now,” said Elliott Berman, a Navy veteran and commander of Robinson High School’s ROTC program.
Increasingly, it’s being fought by a different soldier. The removal of barriers for women is a significant factor in their representing 18 percent of enlistments in the Army this year, according to local recruiters.

The changes inspire 17-year-old Kadie Weston, also in Robinson High School’s ROTC program.

“Women want to serve as much as men,” she said. “I know the saying that it’s a man’s world but I feel that soon it’s going to be a woman’s world.”

These new recruits will likely face new challenges once they become veterans.

People who served after the September 11 attacks were twice as likely to face combat compared to previous veterans so they are more likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder than earlier generations, a new Pew Research Center study found.

The Department of Veterans Affairs is working to improve medical services for the growing number of female veterans who will require specialized treatments as they age.

But for everything that’s changed in the world since 2001, the core reasons driving people toward military service remain the same.

Dalton Hongell, 18, is a member of USF’s Air Force ROTC program. He was an infant lying on his mother’s bed on a military base when the first plane struck one of the World Trade Center towers in New York. His aunt had to take care of him after his mother deployed.

Though the attacks directly affected his early upbringing, what drives him is a commitment to his mother’s legacy and a sense of pride. Hongell plans to join the Air Force.

“It’s a duty that needs to be done,” he said.

Today, roughly half of enlistments are continuing a family legacy, Army recruiters say.

The Tampa Bay area, home to MacDill Air Force Base and the largest retired veteran population in Florida, has supplied new recruits across multiple wars.

The youngest ones may not fully grasp how the September 11 attacks changed the world, but they still respect it as a key moment in history, said Maggie Liott, 18, an Air Force ROTC cadet.

They say they wish there was greater public discussion about the Afghanistan War and what military service means in 2019.

Connor Gadson-Yarbrough, 18, who plans to join the Navy, said that for some, what matters is the chance to serve their country.

“Somebody has to do it,” Gadson-Yarbrough said.
I have a sort of love hate relationship with these posts, and they come along fairly often. I love the fact that the veterans community and so many others come to pay their respects, even to folks they don't know. But it's just sad knowing someone passed away without actual family there.

From Army Times:

Most of the 2,000-plus people who gathered in the Florida heat Tuesday didn’t know Edward Pearson. They knew little, if anything, about the life of the 80-year-old Army veteran.

But they knew of his death, and that was reason enough to attend his funeral. They came on rumbling Harley Davidsons and in sleek Mercedes. They walked into the service with the aid of canes and service dogs. Women clasped bouquets of white flowers. Men gripped American flags large and small.

Pearson, a resident of Naples, Florida, died Aug. 31. His obituary went viral when the funeral director included this sentence in the service announcement: This veteran has no immediate family and all are welcome to attend.

News of the ceremony at an open-air pavilion area at the Sarasota National Cemetery spread fast and wide in veterans’ forums and on social media networks. CNN host Jake Tapper and U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio tweeted the information.

I know that our Twitter and Facebook pages were pushing the info out, and I saw people commenting on it, so proud we could help out a little.
Some folks are saying that the veterans community should have been there before he passed. Well, before you go there, make sure you read the whole article:

*With Thrasher’s help, the community came together to secure a title for the home, fix the roof and pay a past electric bill. Pearson told Thrasher that he didn’t want to “be on the news” for his plight and was hesitant to ask for help at all. He was preparing to move into a new place when he died.*

Anyway, here’s a local news report on the funeral:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=11&v=ktUboKA4eJw
In This Issue:
1. TRICARE Open Season Coming Soon
2. VA, Partners Offer Flu Shot
3. DOD Annual Suicide Report
4. Legislation Introduced for Rural Veterans Transportation Grants
5. MIA Update

1. TRICARE Open Season Coming Soon: TRICARE Open Season is the period every year when you can enroll or change your health plan if you are eligible for TRICARE coverage. If you want to stay in your current TRICARE plan, you do not need to do anything. However, if you are eligible, you can switch between the Prime or Select option or switch between individual and family plans. Learn more.

2. 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.

3. DOD Annual Suicide Report: On Monday, the Department of Defense (DOD) released its first-ever Annual Suicide Report. The report provides data on service members and their families, provides an overview of the department’s suicide prevention strategy and governance, and describes current and future initiatives underway to combat suicide. The military is showing similar trends to the suicide rates in civilian populations, which have increased over time. In calendar year 2018, there were 541 service members across the military’s active and reserve components who died by suicide – 325 active duty, 81 reservists, and 135 National Guardsmen. The most common factors that are linked to suicides in the military are relationship and/or financial stressors, and administrative or legal difficulties. View full report.

4. Legislation Introduced for Rural Veterans Transportation Grants: This week Representative T.J. Cox (D-Calif.) introduced VFW-supported H.R. 4589. Rep. Cox introduced this bipartisan bill with Representatives Amua Amata (R-American Samoa), Susie Lee (D-Nev.), and Greg Steube (R-Fla.). This important legislation would indefinitely extend the VA grant program to organizations that assist veterans in rural areas travel to and from VA medical facilities, instead of having to be renewed every two years. The VFW thanks all original cosponsors for their efforts to improve access to medical treatment for rural veterans. Learn more.
5. **MIA Update**: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced six new identifications, and five 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. Ray P. Fairchild** was a member of Company D, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division. He was killed in action on Nov. 27, 1950, near the town of Yudam-ni, west of the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. His remains could not be recovered. Interment services are pending. [Read about Fairchild](#).

--- **Marine Corps Pfc. Jack B. Van Zandt** was a member of Company A, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force. Van Zandt 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 Van Zandt on the third day of the battle, Nov. 22, 1943. Interment services are pending. [Read about Van Zandt](#).

--- **Marine Corps Reserve Pfc. Norman A. Buan** was a member of Company C, 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force. Buan 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 Buan on the first day of the battle, Nov. 20, 1943. Interment services are pending. [Read about Buan](#).

--- **Marine Corps Pfc. Marley Arthurholtz** 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. On Dec. 7, 1941, Arthurholtz died in the attack along with 429 of his shipmates. Interment services are pending. [Read about Arthurholtz](#).

--- **Army Sgt. 1st Class Riley Burchfield** was a member of Company D, 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division. Burchfield was captured by enemy forces near Kunu-ri, North Korea. He reportedly died while in custody of the Chinese People’s Volunteer Forces, at Prisoner of War Camp 5, in February 1951. Interment services are pending. [Read about Burchfield](#).

--- **Army Pfc. John A. Shelemba** was a member of Company L, 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. Shelemba was reported missing in action while defending Taejon, South Korea on July 20, 1950. Interment services are pending. [Read about Shelemba](#).

--- **Marine Corps Reserve Pfc. John T. Burke**, 18, of Newton, N.C., whose identification was initially announced in May, will be buried on Oct. 26 in Hickory, N.C. Burke was a member of Company B, 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division. In November 1943, his unit 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. Burke died on Nov. 20, 1943. [Read about Burke](#).

--- **Army Cpl. Jerry M. Garrison**, 21, of Lamar, Ark., whose identification was initially announced in August, will be buried on Oct. 22 in his hometown. Garrison was a member of Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 2, 1950, when enemy forces attacked his unit near Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. [Read about Garrison](#).
-- Army Sgt. Gerald B. Raeymacker, 21, of Dunkirk, N.Y., whose identification was initially announced in August, will be buried on Oct. 19 in his hometown. Raeymacker was a member of Battery B, 57th Field Artillery Battalion, 7th Infantry Division, 31st Regimental Combat Team. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 6, 1950, in the vicinity of the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea, when his unit was attacked by enemy forces. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Read about Raeymacker.

-- Army Pfc. David C. Wilkes, 20, of Saline, Mo., whose identification was initially announced in July, will be buried Oct. 19 in Lakewood, Wash. Wilkes was a member of Company D, 1st Battalion 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. Approximately 2,500 U.S. and 700 South Korean soldiers assembled into the 31st Regimental Combat Team, which was deployed east of the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea, when it was attacked by overwhelming numbers of Chinese forces. Wilkes was initially reported missing in action on Dec. 2, 1950, when he could not be accounted for after the withdrawal, but his status was later amended to killed in action. Read about Wilkes.

-- Coast Guard Lt. Thomas J.E. Crotty, 30, from Buffalo, N.Y., whose identification was initially announced in September, will be buried Nov. 3 in his hometown. Crotty served aboard the USS Quail in the Philippines as part of the 16th Naval District-in-Shore Patrol Headquarters, during the onset of World War II. Crotty was among those reported captured after the surrender of Corregidor and held at the Cabanatuan POW camp, where he died on July 19, 1942. Read about Crotty.

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.
Monday, November 11, 2019 at 10:00 AM
In Front of the Government Services Building
1769 E. Moody Blvd, Bunnell, Florida

Special Guest Speaker:
Brigadier General Ernest C. Audino,
District 6 Director for
Congressman Michael Waltz

The 2019 Flagler County
Veteran of the Year
Will Be Announced

Appearance by Flagler
Palm Coast H.S.
Formality Singers

We salute you!
VETERANS
HONOR

VETERANS DAY
NOVEMBER 11TH

Veterans Day Celebration
In Honor of Your Service

Free BBQ Lunch & Live Music
Central Park in Town Center
11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Sign up through your veteran group today!
7TH ANNUAL PAYCHECKS FOR PATRIOTS
STATEWIDE HIRING FAIR

11.14.2019 (THURS.)

10AM - 2PM VETERANS & ELIGIBLE SPOUSES
12PM - 2PM OPEN TO ALL

Orange City Career Center
CareerSource Flagler Volusia
846 Saxon Blvd., Orange City, FL 32763

PRE-REGISTER
Email us:
vetservices@careersourcefv.com
All participants are encouraged to pre-register

Florida Paychecks for Patriots is a special hiring fair dedicated to local veterans. It is a statewide initiative that matches veterans with businesses who value the knowledge, skills and attributes attained during military service.

LIVE WORKSHOP
“How to Market Yourself at a Job Fair” workshop is offered at 9am on the day of the hiring fair. Reserve your seat by emailing us at vetservices@careersourcefv.com.

Need resume assistance? Schedule an appointment by emailing: donnarunge@careersourcefv.com no later than Oct. 31, 2019.

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