



From left to right, Daniel Rioux, State Commander, DAV; Norman Nelson, Past State Commander VFW; Craig Moody; Bill Christofferson; Johnny Janes, Chairman Veterans Advisory Council; Governor Jon Huntsman; Terry Schow, Executive Director, Utah Department of Veteran Affairs; Richard Fisher, past State Commander, American Legion; and Representative Greg Hughes at the Ceremonial Bill Signing.

## Utah Department of Veterans Affairs:

### Opening Ceremony at Governors Mansion

By: Berni Davis, Editor

Salt Lake City, UT: On July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007, the Utah Division of Veterans Affairs officially transitioned to the Utah Department of Veteran Affairs. This transition moved the State Veterans Affairs office out from under the Utah National Guard and into its own Department, and the Executive Director, Terry Schow, is now a member of Governor Huntsman's Cabinet, a position that was confirmed by the State Legislature in June.

On Monday July 2<sup>nd</sup>, the ribbon was cut for the new department, so to say, with a ceremony at the Governor's Mansion. This exclusive ceremony was attended by those very active in the Veterans Community and also those that were

instrumental in the process of becoming a department.

At this ceremony, Governor Huntsman laid out the three main goals he has set for Mr. Schow and the new department: 1, to reach out to the Veterans and ensure that they and their families are aware of state and federal benefits; 2, create and maintain a database of service and benefits available; and 3, educate state officials and Veterans about what Veteran's benefits they are entitled to.

"The services we are obligated to provide will continue," said Governor Huntsman. We are a nation at war and we have a commitment to the men and women in that war to provide  
cont. pg 8

## Salt Lake City Cemetery Project Update

By Tonja Knight, Assistant to the Director

At the beginning of this year, the condition of approximately 1,600 grave makers of Veterans in the Salt Lake Cemetery was brought to the attention of the public. The problem was that no one was sure who was supposed to care for these grave makers, which, after time, began to sink, crack and disappear. This attention produced results.

The project to repair the deteriorating head stones is now well underway and going well. This is because of the generosity of Onyx Construction Co. The efforts of Onyx Construction have made it possible to preserve the memory of Utah's Veterans that have served our country. The project is coming along nicely and completion is predicted for late July. The process to restore the headstones is one of great detail, first a trench is dug along each row of grave markers and filled with gravel, rebar is then installed in the headstones for stabilization. The headstones are then reset and lined up to stand at the same height. Lastly a cement collar is inserted to hold the headstones in place. The stones will then be bleached to improve their appearance.

The Utah Department of Veterans Affairs would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to Onyx Construction and all those who expressed interest in volunteering to help with this project. A rededication ceremony is planned for the graves once construction is complete.



Salt Lake City Cemetery, Veterans gravemakers before construction Prproject.



Log on to our  
Website for updates  
[veterans.utah.gov](http://veterans.utah.gov)

Or Call to Volunteer  
1-800-894-9497

## Upcoming Events

- > **Oct 27<sup>th</sup>:** OIF/OEF Welcome Home Event at the VAMC
- > **Nov 1<sup>st</sup>:** Veterans Entrepreneurial Workshop
- > **Nov 2<sup>nd</sup>:** Homeless Veterans' Stand Down at the George Wahlen VA Medical Center in Salt Lake City 7:30-2:30
- > **Nov 9<sup>th</sup>:** Veterans Benefits and Job Fair at South Town Expo Center 2-8pm.
- > **Nov 11<sup>th</sup>:** Veterans Day

## Thoughts From the Editor

By Berni Davis, Editor

### GI Bill Confusion threatens Reservists and Guardsmembers

The 38 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) is the say all, no questions about it law of the VA. This federal regulation lays out all of the standards and regulations, some times not so clearly, that the VA must follow.

Now, there are multiple types of GI Bill benefits that the 38 cfr covers, I will be discussing just two of these, chapter 1606 and 1607. Ch 1606 is the selected Reserves Montgomery GI Bill whereas ch 1607 or REAP, Reserve Education Assistance Program. The difference between these two programs is based on the service of the Veteran, a Reservists/Guardsmember who has been called to Active Duty, on a Presidential Title 10 call up after 9/11/2001 for at least 90 days is eligible for REAP, which is paid at a higher rate. 1606 is the standard GI Bill for all other Reservists/Guardsmembers and can be \$100-\$300 less per month depending on the length of deployment.

So what's the problem? Well, the confusion comes in when a member separates from service. Eligibility is based on an individual staying within their component, thus, actively drilling and staying in good standing within the unit. Most reservists/Guardsmembers are aware of this, they are told from day one that when they get out of the military they lose the GI Bill, 1606 and 1607 eligibility is based on this. However, recently we have been receiving reports that the VA is still paying the GI Bill to those who have separated.

So why are they paying if the member is not eligible? 38 cfr is very clear on this, the benefit is gone unless discharge is due to service connected disability but if that is the case then why are they paying? Well that question is not so easy to answer, if you call the VA education line (1-888-GIBILL1) you are certain to get a different answer for every person you talk to. The VA needs to figure this out, because the problem is that at any time the VA can decide that they paid when they were not supposed to and then the Veteran has a debt to the VA that they responsible to pay back.

There is no clear solution to this problem, my advice, if you are recently separated, take the money the VA wants to give you but be fully prepared to pay that back at any time. You can always fight it with an appeal but that might not be worth it. However, maybe the VA needs to be overwhelmed with appeals before they fully realize there is a problem and actually take steps to correct it.

## The Veterans Voice

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## VA Will Not Tolerate Improper Medical Care to Veterans:

*The following is a letter sent from the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, James Nicholson, in Washington DC to Governor Huntsman.*

Dear Governor Huntsman:

In the past few weeks, questions have been raised about the ability of the Department of Defense (DOD) and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide the world-class health care our service members and veterans earned through their service and sacrifices. Many of these questions are focused on conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, a DoD facility. Concerns have also been raised about VA's ability to care for our returning Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF) veterans. So, I am writing to let you know what VA did, is doing, and will do in the future to care for these heroes, who share the honored title of "American veteran."

VA provides exceptional health care for veterans at more than 1,400 locations throughout our Nation. This year, we estimate more than 5.8 million patients will be cared for at our 154 hospitals, 135 nursing homes, 45 domiciliaries, and 881 outpatient clinics. Approximately 209,000 of those veterans will have served in Iraq or Afghanistan. The VA health care system is rated by many as the best health care system in the country and a failure to provide our absolute best to even one veteran is inexcusable.

I will not tolerate conditions within the facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs that do not meet our high standards. I directed that all facilities for which I am responsible be inspected by management to assure that they are up to par. Moreover, I directed that VA focus all possible resources on providing priority service to our returning OIF/OEF veterans and streamlining their access to that service.

I am concerned some service members may not have experienced a seamless transition as they move from active military service to care administered by VA. Often that transition takes a severely injured service member from a military treatment facility (MTF) to a VA polytrauma center, which is equipped to deal with the multiple injuries we see in those patients, to include traumatic brain injury (TBI) and amputations. The transition also includes the service member's move from the polytrauma center to his or her home, which may be some distant from our facilities. If even one of these young men or women does not receive needed care, that is one too many, and we will do all within our power to ensure such a situation does not occur.

Toward that end, I would like to tell you about a number of changes I directed to further improve the way VA provides health care to these heroes: We expanded our network of poly trauma centers from the original 4 to 1 in each of our 21 Veterans Integrated Service Networks.

All VA health care professionals are being trained to recognize and care for patients with TBI. We will be screening all patients who served in the combat theater of operations for TBI and post-traumatic-stress disorder (PTSD).

Every VA medical center now has specialty PTSD treatment capability.

## Utah Department of Veterans Affairs Mission Statement

*To honor and recognize the service of Utah Veterans as their advocate relative to Veterans benefits. In that capacity we are the State agency that assists former and present members of the U.S. Armed Forces both active and reserve and their dependents in preparing claims for and securing such compensation, hospitalization, education and vocational training, and other benefits or privileges to which they may be entitled under Federal or State law or regulation by reason of their service in the military.*

We are adding 23 new Vet Centers to our existing 209, each with the professional capacity to intervene on PTSD and other mental health Issues. We will engage a panel of outside clinical experts to review and evaluate our Poly trauma System of Care.

We will establish a VA Advisory Committee on OIF/OEF veterans and their families. Membership will include severely wounded combat veterans who have experienced VA care, family members and caregivers of wounded veterans, and survivors. They are to help us identify where we can, and must, do better.

I have directed that each of our poly trauma patients be provided an advocate who will work with that patient and his or her family to ensure everything possible is done to minimize the strains on the family and to assist them in navigating the VA system of care and benefits. To expedite this, I directed the hiring of 100 additional people, most of whom will be veterans of the Global War on Terror, to be the personal advocates for these severely injured young men and women and their families. These advocates will be available to the veterans and their families around the clock, whether the patients are at poly trauma centers, other VA medical facilities or their homes.

As service members leave active duty, many will receive VA disability compensation for injuries received. Since the onset of combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, VA has expedited the claims of seriously injured OIF/OEF veterans and their families.

I have now directed the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) to move the claims of all combat veterans who have served in Iraq or Afghanistan to the head of the line so processing their claims is a top priority. To support expedited processing of all OIF/OEF claims and reduce the claims backlog, I directed VBA to immediately begin an aggressive hiring program to increase our on-board staffing level in the regional offices by over 400 benefits employees between now and the end of June.

I recently announced the "State Benefits Seamless Transition Program," to help severely injured service members receive benefits from their states when they move from military hospitals to VA medical facilities in their communities. This is a collaborative outreach program with states and territories. VA staff located at 10,000 medical facilities will identify injured military members who will be transferred to VA facilities, and will contact state veterans affairs offices on behalf of the veterans. The state offices, in turn, will contact the veterans to inform them about state benefits.

The President announced the creation of a bipartisan Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors to review the care of wounded service men and women from the time they leave the battlefield through their return to civilian life as veterans. The President has also formed an interagency group called the Task Force on Returning Global War on Terror Heroes. He has asked me to chair this task force and we already had two meetings. We are charged to respond to the President in 45 days with a report and recommendations to address the immediate needs of those making the transition from active military to veteran status.

I also want to encourage you to visit our VA facilities in your state. Believe you will be impressed with the commitment of the staff and the high satisfaction level of our veteran patients. If you find problems I hope you will let me know so we can fix them forthrightly. Thank you for your support of America's veterans.

Sincerely yours,  
James R Nicholson

## Veterans Voice ad rates:

Full Page (10x16): \$450.00

1/2 Page (10x8): \$280.00

1/4 Page (5x8): \$160.00

1/8 Page (5x4): \$100.00

1/16 page (4x2.5 or 2x5): \$ 50.00

## Deadline:

The Veterans Voice will be released Mid January, Mid April, Mid July and Mid October. The deadline will be the last day of the month preceding the release date.

## I'M PROUD TO BE AN AMERICAN!

By: Baylee Flynn

*This essay recently won 3rd place in the American Legions National Americanism Essay Contest.*

I'm proud to be an American ... what exactly does that mean? What that means to me is appreciating the liberties that our country has endured for us to live in this amazing country we call the United States of America. It is an honor for me to have a member of my family fighting to defend our rights in Iraq. These exceptional people are the people we should look up to; some people say that rock stars and sports players are their hero's, but in my eyes the soldiers that fight for me to live in the land of the free are my hero's.

When blood is shed for us to live in this country, we should feel extremely privileged to be living where we do and not in some other country where we might have to sell things on the side of the road just to get a scrap of food for the week. Old Glory is the emblem and symbol of this country and when it waves freely to symbolize our

freedom and independence we should hold our heads high and praise God that we live where we do. I believe strongly that our country has fought long and hard for this land and most people take it for granted ... but what if tomorrow you woke up in some foreign country and had nothing to stand for or believe in? I am so very grateful that we live in such a wonderful place that we can go to sleep at night and feel like this is where we belong and this is where we need to be.

My cousin Chance has served in the army for fourteen years now and he is my biggest fan and I am his number one fan. Some people say, "Oh, no big deal that your cousin is in the army." And I say in return, "It is a big deal, it is a HUGE deal to have my very own cousin fighting for you, me, and everyone else to live in America." So you ask me what it means to me to be proud to be an American and I will tell you this I am proud to be an American because I love this country and everything it stands for. And that is why I am proud to be an American.

*On May 5th, 2007, Baylee's cousin, Virgil Chance Martinez, who was fighting in Iraq, was killed by a roadside bomb.*

## Veteran's Memorial Golf Tournament is Very Successful

### 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Veterans Memorial Golf Tournament

By: Tonja Knight, Assistant to the Director

Every year in May the Utah Department of Veterans Affairs hosts the Veterans Memorial Golf Tournament. This year's tournament was held on May 18, 2007 at Hubbard Golf Course on Hill Air Force Base. The tournament was a great success. The weather was beautiful and the air show was awesome. Through donations and sponsors this year's event was able to raise \$8000. Funds from this annual event will be used to help Utah's 160,000 plus Veterans. Sadly some have had circumstances that put them in financial difficulties. Some can't afford the full cost to be in the Veterans Nursing home. Some veterans and their families suffer in the heat of summer without air conditioning or the cold of winter with no heat.

Proceeds from the Veterans Memorial Golf Tournament will also be used to host Veterans programs such as the Homeless Veterans Stand Down held every year in November where homeless veterans are assisted with food, clothing, medical care, eye glasses, counseling, and job search assistance. Other programs that benefit from the proceeds of the tournament include the Veterans Cemetery and the Veterans Upward Bound educational program. We sincerely realize the sacrifices made and that we can never truly repay the debt we owe to the brave men and women who have answered the call of duty. It is because of the generous support of donors, sponsors, volunteers, and business organizations that we are able to provide a small measure of help for Utah's Veterans.

It's not too soon to think ahead for next year's tournament. We are looking forward to an even bigger event next year. Please contact our office if you would like to be a part of next year's golf tournament as a player, sponsor, or volunteer. On behalf of the Director Terry Schow, please accept our heartfelt thanks to all who helped to put this event together and to all who participated.

## Greatness Lies in Service

By Nina Bennett

Service is our ability to selflessly sacrifice for other people, sharing what we have and providing a part of ourselves, without the thought of gain. Our country is only as good as our ability to unify, stand upon our beliefs, and our willingness to give to mankind. Whether or not the threads of the military service run through your family, service-in any form is the foundation on which our society was built and thrives.

Right now, with political firestorms raging about the Iraq war, it is easy to forget that the collected effort of troop deployment is comprised on an individual basis; and whether or not we believe in the war we should support each individual who is, or has been, involved in it.

Let us serve those who have served us, those who sacrifice and suffer in ways we do not know, whose peace comes in the smallest of pieces- ten thousand miles away from their families and their homes. Shake a hand, buy a dinner, spend a moment to pray, volunteer; do what you can for those you can. A good friend of mine, who is a Vietnam Veteran, recently told me that the best thing that can be done for our troops is a moment of genuine recognition and caring. This can be done in so many ways. Below are some websites that offer outstanding opportunities to help:

[www.AnySoldier.com](http://www.AnySoldier.com)  
[www.WoundedWarriorProject.org](http://www.WoundedWarriorProject.org)  
[www.OperationFirstResponse.org](http://www.OperationFirstResponse.org)  
[www.MarineParents.com](http://www.MarineParents.com)

Or, you can contact the Utah Department of Veterans Affairs at [www.veterans.utah.gov](http://www.veterans.utah.gov) for local opportunities

I encourage everyone to seek a way to serve, if only a little. Greatness lies in our ability to give, and service to others ultimately serves ourselves.

Send your thoughts to: Editor, Veterans Voice  
 PO Box 58897, Salt Lake City, UT 84158-0897

## "Be Our Messenger"

By Joe Surace

Volunteers play a crucial role in the care that our veterans receive at the Department of Veterans Affairs Salt Lake City Health Care System. Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) asks everyone to "Be Our Messenger" and let their family, friends and co-workers know that volunteers are a welcome addition to the VAVS family.

The "Be Our Messenger" banners depicted in the photo below may be used for display at various functions and locations such as conventions, group conferences, gatherings, place of work, and businesses willing to support our volunteer program. George E. Wahlen Medal of Honor book markers are available for distribution free of charge when the banners are loaned for display. If you are interested in volunteering for the Department of Veterans Affairs Salt Lake City Health Care System or would like to utilize a banner for display at your function, please feel free to contact Voluntary Service at (801) 584-1241.

Dortha Davenport's recent publication covers the Veterans of Piute County over 140 years from the Black Hawk War (1865) to the recent Afghanistan and Iraqi War. Call (801) 280-8175 to purchase a copy for \$30.00.

*Legacy, History of the National Guard*, by Richard C Roberts is also now available. This publication covers the history of the National Guard with illustrations and is available for purchase at Sam Wellers, 254 S Main, Salt Lake

## Need Prescription Medication?

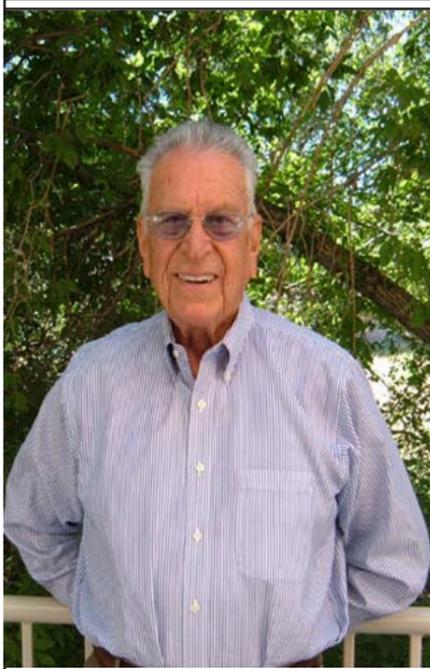
If you do not have or do not have enough prescription coverage, contact the Partnership for Prescription Alliance (PPA) at 1-88-477-2669 or visit [www.pparx.org](http://www.pparx.org) for more information.

The PPA is an organization of drug companies, who have joined together to provide reduced cost, or free medication to those who lack adequate prescription coverage.

You may be able to receive your prescriptions for free.



"Be Our Messenger" Banners



Bob Ramos of Riverdale, UT

## Spotlighted Veteran

Bob Ramos is this quarter's Spotlighted Veteran. He is an Air Force Retiree who is a Veteran of both WW II and Korea. He was initially drafted into the Army in 1943 at age 18. After spending some time training he was sent to France and into combat in Germany with the 86<sup>th</sup> Division. After the war in Europe ended, Bob was sent to the Pacific where he was stationed in

the Philippines, after the surrender of Japan, to "mop up the operations". Bob then went on to have career in the Air Force, retired from Hill Air Force Base and has spent the rest of his life fighting for Veterans.

Bob was chosen as our Spotlighted Veteran because of the work that he has done for this office and for Utah's Veterans. Since 1971, Bob has been working with Veterans; initially he was on the Governor's Task Force on Veteran's Employment, and then with the State Department of Veteran Affairs. This work lasted from 1971-1978 as Bob traveling across the Northern part of the state doing outreach with Veterans. He retired from state service in 1987.

Since his retirement Bob spends his time volunteering and golfing. He is a member of the VFW, the American Legion, and American Veterans, among others. He is on

the Wasatch North Veterans Council where he works toward establishing a Veteran's Nursing Home in Ogden.

"As long as I can play golf, I know I can attend meetings and still support Veterans," said Bob of his devotion to the cause. "We hope we can see this thing built before we cash in," he commented of the Nursing Home in Ogden speaking for himself and his good friend and fellow Veteran's advocate, Medal of Honor Recipient George Wahlen.

*If you know someone who provides service to Veterans and the community and you would like to nominate them as our "Spotlighted Veteran" please send a letter describing their service and why they should be chosen to Veterans Voice, Spotlighted Veteran PO Box 58897 Salt Lake City, UT 84158-0897*

### VA Opening 38 New Clinics: World-Class Health Care Brought Closer to More Veterans

From Public Affairs Office, Department of Veterans Affairs

WASHINGTON – To bring the world-class health care of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) closer to where veterans live, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson today announced plans to open 38 new community-based clinics in 22 states.

"VA is committed to providing world-class health care to the men and women who have served this nation," Nicholson said. "These new clinics will bring VA's top-notch care closer to the veterans who have earned it."

With 153 hospitals and about 700 community-based clinics, VA operates the largest integrated health care system in the country. VA's health care budget of more than \$34 billion this year will provide health care to about 5.5 million people during nearly 800,000 hospitalizations and 60 million outpatient visits.

"Community-based medicine is better medicine," said Dr. Michael Kussman, VA's Acting Under Secretary for Health. "It makes preventative care easier for patients, helps doctors have closer relationships with their patients and permits easier follow-ups for people with chronic problems."

The new facilities, called

community-based outpatient clinics, or CBOCs, will become operational by October 2008. Local VA officials will keep communities and their veterans informed of milestones in the creation of the new CBOCs.

Utah is on the list of proposed sites for one new clinic in the western Salt Lake Valley.

### VA Medical Centers Extending Hours: Change Benefits New Combat Veterans, Older Vets

From Public Affairs Office, Department of Veterans Affairs

WASHINGTON — In order to provide more health care for more veterans, especially mental health services, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson has directed the 153 medical centers of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to keep their doors open longer.

"Illness doesn't follow a 9-to-5 schedule," Nicholson said. "I'm directing our medical centers to provide extended hours to ensure we're there for the veterans who have earned our care."

Although the extra hours apply to many hospital-based programs and services,

Nicholson said his latest decision was based upon a desire to ensure VA's more than 9,000 mental health professionals are available when veterans need them.

VA operates the largest integrated health care system in the country and the nation's largest mental health program. About 5.5 million veterans are expected to seek health care from VA's nationwide system this year, accounting for about 800,000 hospitalizations and 60 million outpatient visits.

In recent months, Nicholson has announced a number of initiatives to improve mental health care for returning combat veterans, including the hiring of suicide prevention coordinators for each medical center, 100 new adjustment counselors for VA's 207 Vet Centers, and 100 new medical center employees to serve as advocates for the severely wounded.

VA's mental health experts will gather in Washington in July for a four-day conference reassessing the Department's programs for veterans, especially veterans from the conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan.

## VA VOLUNTEERS TOUCH LIVES

April 19, 2007

SALT LAKE CITY, UT - Volunteers who tirelessly work to improve our community were honored in a recognition of National Volunteer Week. VA Salt Lake City Health Care System (VASLCHCS) hosted a Volunteer Recognition Ceremony on Saturday, April 14 honoring the 480 volunteers serving our nation's veterans.

"Volunteers perform countless acts of service and are one of America's most valuable assets," said Brian Westfield, VASLCHCS acting director. During 2006 VASLCHCS volunteers served more than 98,000 hours of service, provided \$32,500 in monetary donations and \$98,600 in non-monetary donations.

Award highlights of the annual event include Frank DuFresne for his 20,000 hours of volunteer service; Clayton Morgan for his 10,000 hours of volunteer service; Emily Kortkamp for her 8,750 hours of volunteer service; Jack Bills, Dorothy Elggren, and Thelma Moriarty who have a combined total of 164 years and 46,480 hours of volunteer service; George Haultauterly, George Horton, and Douglas Stewart each received the President's 4,000 hour Call to Service Award.

"Volunteers nationwide have continued to reach out to their neighbors both near and far, especially to the veterans who were for and their families. National Volunteer Week is the ideal time to honor volunteers meeting community needs around the country and calling the public's attention to their tremendous contributions," said Westfield.

VASLCHCS treated 39,781 veterans last year, accounting for more than 400,500 outpatient visits and nearly 5,500 hospitalizations.



VA Secretary Jim Nicholson addresses the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs, February 12, 2007.

With Sec. Nicholson, l. to r. are, Rear Adm. LeRoy Collins, Jr., USNR (Ret), Exec. Dir., Fla. Dept. of Veterans Affairs; Patrick Palmersheim, Exec. Dir., Iowa Dept. of Veterans Affairs; John Scocos, Secretary, Wis. Dept. of Veterans Affairs and NASDVA Vice Pres.; Peter Ogden, Dir., Bureau of Maine Veterans Services; Terry Schow, Dir., Utah Div. of Veterans Affairs; Charles Smith, Assy. Sec., N. C. Div. of Veterans Affairs; John M. Garcia, Sec., N. M. Dept. of Veterans Services and NASDVA President; and (partially obstructed) George Basher, Dir., N. Y. State Div. of Veterans Affairs.

## Marine Corps League and Marine Corps League Auxiliary in Utah Hits Another Mile Mark

By Joe Surace

The Marine Corps League Auxiliary has hit another mile marker here in Utah by forming the Cpl. Adams A. Galvez Unit #469 in St. George, Utah. President Dianne Warner-Kearney said that this Unit is the third Marine Corps League Auxiliary Unit in Utah, and because of this will be receiving their Department Charter at the Marine Corps League Auxiliary Convention being held August 5-11, 2007, in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

This year's officers for the Cpl. Adams A. Galvez Unit #469, Marine Corps League Auxiliary are: Unit President Marjorie J. Lisi, Sr. Vice President Claire Mineer, Secretary Treasurer May Maes, and the Judge Advocate Marge Jenkins. Amy Galvez, Salt Lake City is a charter member, along with Tiffany Gardner, Rosalie Mimnaugh, and Judy

Smith. The Unit will be meeting at the BPOE Lodge #1745 monthly with the Utah Dixie Detachment #1270, Marine Corps League, Inc.

Also, the Department of Utah has announced that the City of 81. George has gained another Veterans organization named the Utah Dixie Detachment #1270, Marine Corps League, Inc. It has over 70 members, and Marines are still coming aboard from the outlying areas of St. George.

Bill Toole is the Organizing Officer and said that the Detachment is still growing. This detachment will meet once a month at the Benevolot Order of the Elks Lodge #1743 in St. George. For inquiries you may contact Bill Toole at (435) 652-3998 or e-mail [himatwctoole@sunivertoday.com](mailto:himatwctoole@sunivertoday.com)

This year's officers are: Detachment Commandant Bill Toole,

Jr. Vice Commandant David C. Houston, Jr. Vice Commandant Rick Massey, Judge Advocate Ron Hibble, Adjutant/Paymaster Patrick J. Lisi, Chaplain Rev. Rick F. Nerud Jr., and the Sgt-at-Arms is Larry Mineer.

### Veteran Supporter Honors Veterans with Service

By Berni Davis, Editor

George Thomas, 74, of South Jordan never joined the military, he instead serves his country by honoring those who did join. Since 1945, Thomas has been placing flags on the grave of every Veteran buried in the South Jordan Cemetary every Memorial Day and Veterans Day.

Thomas took over the tradition from him father, a WWI

Legionnaire, who began this work in 1925 until his death in 1955.

Thomas is now ready to pass the regins on, due to ailing health he is no longer able to devote the time and energy necessary for this process. He has enlisted the help of a good friend, Hal Naylor, to continue this.

"Some of those veterans, all they ever get is a flag. Their families are gone. It feels good to give them a flag," said Thomas of his work.

### Small Business

#### Administration offers Loans to Vets

New SBA Loan Program Patriot Express was released on June 13 for Veterans, members of the active duty military who are in the transition program to civilian life, members of the National Guard and Reserves, and the spouses and widows of all of these groups.

Patriot Express targets those in the military community who want to establish or expand small businesses including: Veterans, service-disabled veterans, active-duty service members eligible for the military's Transition Assistance Program, Reservists and National

Guard members, current spouses of any of the above or the widowed spouse of a service member or veteran who died during service or of a service-connected disability

This program offers higher loan guarantees than SBA Express loans and will be a fast loan processing system, streamlined and centralized which will result in almost immediate SBA response. Interest rates will also be capped at a lower rate than the current SBA Express loans. (The caps will vary depending on the size and maturity of the loan) Contact the SBA for more information.

Join Us at the Veterans Entrepreneurial Workshop on Nov 1st for info on starting your own business.

## Heroes to Hometowns

Heroes to Hometowns is a program that is designed to welcome home Service Members who are severely injured. In creating a positive transition home, Heroes to Hometowns inspires community pride and establishes a support network for Service Members and their families so they can live productive lives.

To be a Hometown for Heroes A community may need to: Organize a welcome home, celebration, help secure temporary and/or permanent housing, assist in adapting a home or vehicle, find jobs and educational opportunities, create a car pool for hospital visits.

A community can help provide child care, financial support, transportation, entertainment options, counseling, spiritual support, and family support.

If your community is interested in being a Hometown for Heroes, contact the Department of Defense at 1-888-774-1361 or go to [www.MilitaryHomefront.dod.mil/troops/injuredsupport](http://www.MilitaryHomefront.dod.mil/troops/injuredsupport)

**Need a Lift?** Is a now available on the web at [www.needalift.org](http://www.needalift.org). This program can help students locate all possible sources of financial aid to help cover the cost of a college education. The American Legion sponsors this program and targets high school students.

### POW Recognition Luncheon

From POW Advisory Committee, Regional Office The Salt Lake City VA POW Advisory Committee sponsored a POW Recognition Luncheon at the Salt Lake City Airport Hilton on April 6, 2007. This annual event recognizes and honors our former POWs living in the area who have served our country so well. Remarks were provided by Brian Westfield, Acting Director of the VA Salt Lake City Health Care System, and Major General Brian Tarbet, The Adjutant General of Utah, who was the featured guest speaker. Presentation of the Colors was provided by the Highland High School AFJRRTOC, with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Jerry Carter, former POW of the Korean

## War Memorial Disappears, without notice, but is Resorted

Roosevlet, UT- In 1948, US HWY 191 was dedicated as a Memorial Blue Star Highway to honor the men and women who served in the military. A large cast aluminum sign was placed just outside the Roosevelt Cemetery to mark this Memorial Highway.

The signed laid dormant, unnoticed by many, even when it disappeared. Initially, the sign was removed when the city was replacing water pipes but it was never restored until Charles Gray, Dan Wheeler and Drew Eschler got involved.

The three men actually never even knew each other. Gray, a veteran and former commander of the VFW, spent man hours and sent many letters to the city to find out what happened to the sign but no one knew.

Wheeler also noticed the sign had disappeared, as he is involved with marking and documenting hidden memorials. He had taken a photograph of the sign in 2003, which helped a Roosevelt City employee, Eschler, locate the sign.

Eschler, who works at the city cemetery began to look around for the sign once he got word that it was missing. He did not even know what it looked like, however, using the photograph he eventually found it in a storage shed.

Now, just lacking a pole, the trio will ensure that the sign is returned to its rightful place, on the HWY to honor those men and women who served.

Conflict and member of the POW Advisory Committee. Also performing at the Luncheon were the Salty Dogs, a local barbershop music group that provided several favorite musical selections, as well as a salute to all the Armed Forces by performing the various service songs. The event was well attended by former POWs and their spouses, as well as by other family members and guests from Utah and Idaho. Also attending were representatives from Hill AFB, members of various local Veterans Service Organizations, as well as state, county, and city agencies, and representatives from Utah's congressional delegations.



Chair Veterans Advisory Council, Johnny Janes, Executive Director, Terry Schow, UTDVA Mike Jensen, VFW, Eric McGinnis, DAV and Lou Estrada, DAV at the Patriot Express Press Announcement



Terry Schow, Ed Bentenson, Richard Fisher, Teresa Curtis and House Speaker Greg Curtis, Norm Nelson and Johnny Janes At the Wreath placing ceremony at the Veterans Memorial Cemetery on Memorial Day, 2007.

## Memorial Day Program Remembers Those Who Are Lost

By Berni Davis, Editor

On Memorial Day, May 28<sup>th</sup>, the approximately 150 seats of the Chapel at the Utah's Veterans Memorial Cemetery were filled as members of the community came together to remember those who have passed on.

The program began with music by the 23<sup>rd</sup> Army National Guard Quintet followed by an

invocation and presentation of colors. House Speaker Greg Curtis and USAF Retiree Ed Betenson were to guest speakers. Speaker Curtis encouraged everyone to teach the younger generations to honor those who have served, to remember those who serve.

SMG Betenson gave a very motivational speech that brought the audience to its feet as he spoke of how Veterans give freedom, not politicians. He also warned that supporting troops and not supporting the war is a false statement that gives support to the enemy. It is important to

## Operation Hero Flight

"Operation Hero Flight" is happy to announce a major contributor has stepped forward to partner with Utah's Department of Veteran Affairs, I Works Inc., and the Hero Flight Committee, to breathe new life into the failed flight that was scheduled 18 May to our Nations Capitol to honor Utah's WWII Veterans.

The Utah Department of Veterans Affairs is supporting the fund raising efforts for this event because there are many WW II Veterans and spouses who were scheduled for this trip. We do intend to get them to DC to see this memorial.

We know that there are many charitable Utahans who did support and would still like to support this effort. They may do so at any Wells Fargo Bank to the account of "Operation Hero Flight" or on our website [www.heroflight.com](http://www.heroflight.com).

support the troops and the war they are fighting.

The event also sparked a sentiment that Memorial Day has become too commercial; individuals are forgetting what is supposed to be remembered, why the holiday exists. It is seen too much as a weekend for camping, an extra day off work and not for what is meant.

The event was concluded with a reading of all the service members from Utah who have been killed in Iraq and Afghanistan and then a tearful wreath laying ceremony.



Flags on Memorial Day at the Veterans Memorial Cemetery

## Korean Ambassador Offers Thanks to Veterans of Korean Conflict

By: Berni Davis, Editor

On March 19<sup>th</sup> of this year the Ambassador from South Korea, Tae Lik Lee, made a trip to Utah and offered, "thanks" to Veterans of the Korean Conflict. At a dinner with approximately a dozen Veterans and their spouses Ambassador Lee sincerely thanked the Veterans for their sacrifice for his country. He also told the Veteran's that although their war is seen as the "Forgotten War" here, the people of South Korea would never forget their service.

Army Veteran Charlie Pharr said of the evening, "If you had to be in a war, the Korean was a good one to be in. The Korean people are so appreciative." John Pavich, a Navy Veteran, commented that it was a very enjoyable evening and it was the first time someone outside of his family had thanked him for his service.

The event, held at the Little America Hotel in downtown Salt Lake, was a very pleasant one that made all of the Veterans feel appreciated and comfortable.

## The Wall That Heals Embarks on 2007 Tour

Washington, D.C.-The Wall That Heals, the half-scale traveling replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial sponsored by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, began its 2007 travel schedule in March, said Memorial Fund Founder and President Jan C. Scroggs. 2007 marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

The Wall That Heals will travel throughout the United States between March and December, visiting areas as diverse as California, Minnesota, Illinois, New York and Georgia. Its first stop of the year will be in Port 81. Joe, Fla., from March 1-4. In all, 23 sites are scheduled on the 2007 tour, but new locations are continually added throughout the year. (For dates and locations in 2007, visit [www.vvmf.org](http://www.vvmf.org). click on "The Wall That Heals,"

then "2007 Tour Schedule.")

In addition to the half-scale replica of The Wall, The Wall That Heals traveling exhibit features a museum and information center. The museum chronicles the Vietnam War era and explores the unique healing power of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. The information center helps visitors learn more about friends and loved ones lost in the war, and volunteers assist them in finding names on The Wall.

Since its dedication in 1996, The Wall That Heals has visited approximately 250 locations throughout the United States, spreading the Memorial's healing legacy to millions. It made its first-ever international journey in 1999 when it went to Ireland to honor the Irish-born casualties of the Vietnam War. It has also traveled to Canada.

Sponsors of The Wall That Heals include Disabled American Veterans Charitable Trust,

FedEx Corporation, Fujitsu Transaction Solutions, Harley-Davidson Foundation and Target Corp.

For more information about The Wall That Heals or the activities planned for The Wall's 25th anniversary, contact the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund at (202) 393-0090, or email [vvmf@vvmf.org](mailto:vvmf@vvmf.org)

**The Vietnam Veterans Moving Memorial Wall will be in Provo at North Park, 500 W 500 N on August 2-6, sponsored by The Provo Vet Center.**

**The Wall that Heals will be in St. George at the Dixie Center December 6-9 sponsored by Vietnam Veterans of America Ch. 961.**



Nationa Association of State Women Veterans Coordinators Officers, l to rPrecilla Wilkewitz, LA; Valerie Conley, OR; Pam Luce, KY; Bertha Hall, TX; Karen Etzler, MO; Linda Waldrop, OK.

## National Association of State Women Veterans Coordinators has Annual Convention

By Berni Davis, Editor

Branson, MO- May 2007 marked the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference for NASWVC. These conferences present the opportunity for Women Veterans Coordinators (WVC's) from different State offices and from different VA Regional Offices to come together and learn from each other about ways to have a successful women's veterans program.

Utah's WVC is Veda Jones from Price, she has attended many conferences in the past

and has been instrumental in achieving many benefits for Women in Utah. However, this year Berni Davis from the Utah Department of Veteran Affairs went to Branson for the Conference.

The important things from the Conference that will affect the Women Veterans in this State is that the Utah Department of Veterans Affairs will be hosting a Women Veterans Benefits Bazaar in April 2008. The details are still being set but the idea is to have an environment targeted at women Veterans to inform them of their benefits for their service. Women who have served are Veterans too and it does not take a combat action badge to show service.

## VA Is Nation's Largest Provider of Mental Health Services: Department a World Leader in Outreach, Research

From Public Affairs Office, Department of Veterans Affairs

WASHINGTON — As more newly returned combat veterans turn to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for health care, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson said the Department continues to enhance services that will provide them with world-class care, including mental health care.

“Not all combat injuries are made by bullets and shrapnel,” Nicholson said. “That’s why we have taken — and will continue to take — steps to make certain our veterans receive comprehensive, accessible and compassionate care for their mental health concerns.”

With an annual budget of nearly \$3 billion for mental health services, VA is the country’s largest provider of mental health care. VA employs more than 9,000 frontline mental health professionals — psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers — up more than 15 percent from 2003.

“VA’s mental health programs are evidence-based and tailored to the needs of our patients,” said Dr. Ira Katz, chief of VA’s mental health program. “Maintaining mental health through the challenges of deployment, combat and reentry is a challenge facing many veterans — a challenge that with persistence and

VA’s skillful professional assistance can be overcome.”

Mental health services are provided at each of VA’s 155 medical centers and nearly 900 community-based outpatient clinics. Each medical center has a PTSD Clinical Team or a specialist that focuses on treatment of PTSD.

VA is a world leader in treatment and research concerning PTSD. The Department’s National Center for PTSD is internationally renowned. A key component of VA’s mental health program are the 209 community-based Vet Centers that provide veterans with PTSD counseling and mental health screening, along with help for family members dealing with bereavement and loved ones with PTSD.

At the Vet Centers, VA has hired 100 veterans of the Global War on Terror to provide outreach to other newly returned veterans. An important mission of the outreach effort is maintaining contact with local National Guard and reserve units.

Nicholson also recently announced that VA will open 23 more Vet Centers within the next two years.

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## Did You Know . . .

VA’s Aid and Attendance pension benefit program isn’t Known well enough  
WASHINGTON -. The Department of Veterans Affairs is reaching out to inform wartime veterans and surviving spouses of deceased wartime veterans about an under-used, special monthly pension benefit called Aid and Attendance.

For a wartime veteran or surviving spouse to qualify for this special - monthly pension, the veteran must have served at least 90 days of active military service (if discharged prior to 1980, and two years of active service if discharged after 1980) one day of which was during a period of war, and be discharged under conditions other than dishonorable. VA determines eligibility by adjusting for unreimbursed medical expenses from the veteran’s or surviving spouse’s total household income. If the remaining income amount falls below the annual income threshold for the benefit, VA pays the difference. Aid and Attendance income threshold for a veteran without dependents is now \$18,234 annually. It increases to \$21,615 if a veteran has one dependent, and by \$1,866 for each additional dependent. The threshold for a surviving spouse alone is \$11,715, increases to \$13,976 if there is one dependent child, and by \$1,866 for each additional child.

It is not a new program, but not everyone is aware of a potential eligibility. The Aid and Attendance pension benefit may be available to wartime veterans and surviving spouses who have in-home care or who live in nursing homes or assisted-living facilities. Many elderly veterans and surviving spouses whose incomes are above the legal limit for a VA pension may still be eligible for the special monthly benefit if they have high medical expenses, including nursing home or assisted living expenses, for which they do not receive reimbursement.

To qualify, claimants must be incapable of self-support and in need of regular personal assistance. Basic criteria include the inability to feed oneself, to dress and undress without assistance, or to take care of one’s own bodily needs. People who are bedridden or need help to adjust special prosthetic or orthopedic devices may also be eligible, as well as those who have a physical or mental injury or illness that requires regular assistance to protect them from hazards or dangers in their daily environment. Call 1-800-827-1000 for information or assistance.

Applications may be submitted online at <http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/main.asp> Information is also available on the Internet at [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) or from any local veterans service organization.

## VA Mental Health Experts Convene for Summit Nicholson: 100 New Outreach Workers for Latest Combat Vets

From Public Affairs Office, Department of Veterans Affairs

To ensure returning combat veterans are receiving the latest, world-class mental health care, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is convening a four-day meeting in July of mental health clinicians and researchers from across the country.

“The veterans of the Global War on Terror have earned top-notch health care, and that includes mental health care,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson. “This meeting of our top mental health experts will ensure our mental health programs remain the best in the world.”

Nicholson also announced that VA will hire 100 new employees to provide readjustment counseling at the Department’s 209 community-based Vet Centers.

The expansion is on top of Nicholson’s announcement earlier in the year to hire 100 new medical

center employees to serve as advocates for the severely wounded. VA also recently hired 100 new Vet Center employees, who are combat veterans, to conduct outreach to veterans of the Global War on Terror.

VA operates one of the largest mental health programs in the country, with an annual budget of nearly \$3 billion solely for mental health services. About 1 million of VA’s patients have a mental health diagnosis. The Department employs about 9,000 mental health professionals, which does not include the mental health services provided by primary care physicians and other providers.

The upcoming meeting in the Washington area of mental health professionals will cover a wide range of issues, from integrating mental health services with primary care, to combat trauma, suicide prevention and the special needs of the newest generation of combat veterans.

Mental health services are provided at each of VA’s 153 medical centers and nearly 900 community-based outpatient clinics.

## What Are Your Representatives Doing for You?

From Alyson Heyrend, Communications Director, Rep. Jim Matheson's Office

### Congressman Jim Matheson is Pushing Veteran Issues

Congressman Jim Matheson is reintroducing legislation that would give returning Guard and Reservists Montgomery GI bill benefits to resume their education. Matheson said the bill is a response to concerns from soldiers returning from Iraq who learned that despite their lengthy deployment, they were ineligible for the financial assistance.

"Our military men and women have made tremendous sacrifices during the war against terror. They've earned our gratitude and our support – particularly when they're trying to resume a normal life following deployment. That's what this legislation helps provide," said Matheson.

The Montgomery GI bill is a federal benefit first offered to soldiers returning from World War II that defrays the cost of higher education. Matheson learned from Utah members of Fox Company, 2nd Battalion Marine Corps Reservists that even though they served 24 months on active duty, they were ineligible for the GI benefits. The reason was that while they served the requisite 24 months on active duty—their service wasn't consecutive.

Matheson's bill—the Resuming Education After Defense Service (READS) Act—changes the criteria for GI Bill eligibility to include at least 2 years of cumulative active duty service over a period of five continuous years. He says it applies to Reservists activated between Sept. 11, 2001 and the end of 2008, in order to accommodate those who are serving honorably in Afghanistan and Iraq.

"We continue to rely more and more on the extended service of Reservists. We should keep our promises to them and we should compensate them for that contribution," said Matheson.

### Matheson Aids Small Businesses Run by Reservists, Native Americans

From the Office of Utah Congressman Jim Matheson  
Congressman Jim Matheson added amendments to small business lending legislation Wednesday to help businesses operated by military reservists and Native Americans access loans and technical assistance. Matheson offered two amendments to H.R. 1332 – the Small Business Lending Improvement Act. Both amendments were adopted.

The Small Business Lending Improvement Act is aimed at streamlining and improving the Small Business Administration's 7(a) and 504 loan programs.

Matheson's amendments expand access through the SBA's Community Express Program to members of Indian tribes and military reservists. The Community Express Program is designed to reach out to segments of the small business community that have difficulty getting loans from traditional lenders. His amendments also expand access to the "increased Veterans Participation Program" to military reservists.

"Small business ownership is extremely challenging for these two groups. Providing access to them for small loans and technical expertise could be the critical step in helping them achieve their dream of owning and operating a business," said Matheson. "Since 9-11, many Utahns have put their lives on the line to defend freedom and the American dream. This

### Social Security Funds for Service Members

There are dollars injured service members are not tapping into when they are injured, whether it is combat related or not. An injury while on active duty, including guard and reserve qualifies one for this benefit. Individuals can still receive this disability payment while on active duty/on medical hold. However, there are few Social Security offices in the field that are aware of this benefit. However, the Social Security office presented this at the PEBLO conference in San Antonio on May 7th.

There is an information booklet on Disability Benefits at [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov).

Also, for Traumatic Brain Injury and severe PTSD service members who have challenges with the process there is a link that agencies, professionals or any representative can get on [www.socialsecurity.gov/i3368pro](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/i3368pro) and do the filing with them.

This could greatly help those service members in medical hold or waiting to get into the VA system. Payments do stop if the Service Member returns to work.

### House Veterans' Affairs Committee Passes Six Bills

Washington, D.C. -Chairman Bob Filner announced that the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs passed six bills. The bills would expand veterans' health care and benefits. H.R. 67 - to improve the outreach activities of the Department of Veterans Affairs. H.R. 1660 - to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a national cemetery for veterans in the southern Colorado region. H.R. 612 - to extend the period of eligibility for health care for combat service in the Persian Gulf or future hostilities from two years to five years after discharge or release. H.R. 1470 - to require the provision of chiropractic care and services to veterans at all Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers. H.R. 2199 - to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide certain improvements in the treatment

is one way of acknowledging their sacrifice and repaying—in part—the debt that we owe."

Matheson noted that of U.S. non-farm businesses, less than one percent are owned by American Indians. While 14 percent of American small businesses are owned by veterans, Matheson said the men and women who serve in the Reserves should not be left out.

### Matheson to VA: No Bonuses While Disabled Vets Go Without

By Alyson Heyrend, Communications Director, Rep. Jim Matheson's Office

Salt Lake City, UT-Congressman Jim Matheson today expressed outrage that senior Veterans Affairs officials would receive performance bonuses despite a backlog of more than 400,000 disabled veterans' claims.

Matheson said he'd support legislation to place a hold on this year's bonuses to VA managers until the backlog of disability claims has been reduced.

"It's unconscionable that the financially-strapped VA would pay bonuses to senior career officials while the community they serve-disabled veterans-wait for months for help," said Matheson. "Something is badly out of whack."

Matheson was reacting to a news account of a list of 2006 bonuses to senior Veterans Administration officials, totaling more than \$3.8 million. Among those reportedly receiving a bonus of \$33,000 was the deputy undersecretary for benefits, who helps manage a disability claims system with a backlog of between 400,000 and 600,000 claims.



From l to r Former House Speaker Craig Moody, Rep Curtis Oda, Rep Brad Dee, Rep Greg Hughes and Bill Christofferson

### Department of Vetran Affairs

Cont from page 1.

certain services for them when they return home. This Department is an important step in providing those services, which include benefits counseling, advocacy and assistance in understanding and using existing state and federal benefits.

This transition is a positive move for Utah's Veterans as it now allows control of budget, budget decisions and programs to be made by the Department and allows the National Guard

of individuals with traumatic brain injuries. H.R. 2239 - to expand eligibility for vocational rehabilitation benefits administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

"We call our veterans 'heroes' for a reason," stated Chairman Filner (D-CA). "Our nation is united in saying that every person that comes back from this war deserves all the love and care and dignity that this nation can bestow. We will work boldly and tirelessly to meet the needs of our veterans and their families. Caring for veterans is an ongoing cost of war and the measures passed today will have an impact on our veterans and their dependents."

### Matheson Supports Enhanced Treatment for Vets with Brain Trauma

By Alyson Heyrend, Communications Director

Washington, D.C.-Congressman Jim Matheson said legislation that passed the House this week will provide better treatment for soldiers and veterans who have suffered traumatic brain injuries. Matheson was a cosponsor of HR 2199-The Traumatic Brain Injury Health Enhancement and Long-Term Support Act of 2007.

The bill directs the Veterans Affairs Secretary to establish programs to screen and treat veterans for the injury as well as to set up a site to coordinate providing health care and services to the patients.

"Survivors trying to recover from serious brain injuries struggle against a host of difficulties, including a long, complicated rehabilitation," said Matheson. "The patients need a comprehensive support and treatment network. This legislation begins the job of establishing that network."

Matheson said the bill also has a provision for establishing two mobile vet centers in Veteran's Integrated Service Network 19, which includes the state of Utah. He said these mobile centers allow rural veterans closer access to services they would normally have to travel long distances to reach.

"Mobile vet centers offer vital services to soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, particularly counseling and benefits claim processing help. We need to do whatever it takes to assist our military men and women in their effort to return to their normal routine," said Matheson.

Matheson said in Washington and Iron Counties alone there are roughly 10,000 veterans who could benefit from a mobile vet center in that part of the state.

## VA Prosecutes Defrauders of Veterans, Nicholson: "Full Force of Law" to Protect Earned Benefits

From Office of Public Relations,  
Department of Veterans Affairs

June 12, 2007 WASHINGTON – Continuing a long-standing campaign to identify and prosecute those who defraud veterans of their rightful benefits, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently highlighted several successes by its Inspector General in investigating people who mishandle the finances of veterans and family members unable to manage their own affairs.

"VA is committed to protecting our veterans, especially our most vulnerable veterans. We will investigate and help bring charges against anyone suspected of defrauding veterans of the disability compensation or any other assistance they have earned,"

said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson. "Fiduciary fraud is a heinous crime. We will bring the full force of law against offenders."

Among recent cases successfully prosecuted as a result of investigations by VA's Office of the Inspector General:

Los Angeles resident Anne Chavis pleaded guilty to perjury and forgery in embezzling \$1 million from veterans who were too disabled to handle their own financial matters. She is awaiting sentencing.

The daughter and son-in-law of an elderly Alaskan veteran with Alzheimer's disease diverted about \$500,000 from the veteran to make personal purchases while failing to pay the veteran's bills. Phyllis Talas was sentenced to 60 months' probation, and Frank Talas to six months' incarceration and 36 months' probation.

A Washington state woman overseeing her niece's VA benefits

pleaded guilty to misappropriating funds and was sentenced to 36 months of probation. Christina May diverted to her personal use funds from VA's Dependency and Indemnity Compensation awarded to her under-age niece.

From January 2005 through April 5 this year, VA's Office of Inspector General investigated 61 cases of alleged fiduciary fraud. Twenty-seven people were indicted on related charges, of whom 19 have been convicted so far. Resulting penalties have included \$1.9 million in court-ordered restitution for veterans or their estates, 191 months' imprisonment and 838 months of probation.

To report suspected fraud involving veterans benefits, other crimes, fraud, waste or mismanagement in the VA, please contact the Office of Inspector General Hotline at 1-800-488-8244 or email at [vaoig.hotline@forum.va.gov](mailto:vaoig.hotline@forum.va.gov).

## New Annual Electronic Filing Requirement for Small Tax-Exempt Organizations

Beginning in 2008, small tax exempt organizations that previously were not required to file returns may be required to file an annual electronic notice, Form 990-N, Electronic Notice (e-Postcard) for Tax-Exempt Organizations not Required to File Form 990 or 990-EZ. This filing requirement applies to tax periods beginning after December 31, 2006. Organizations that do not file the notice will lose their tax-exempt status.

This could affect Veterans Organizations such as the VFW and American Legion Posts.

## Veterans Wheelchair Games Test Athleticism and Courage VA and PVA to Present the Largest Annual Sports Event of its Kind

June 6, WASHINGTON – More than 500 American veteran heroes with physical disabilities will converge on Milwaukee June 19 – 23 to test their agility, athleticism and strength of spirit at the 27<sup>th</sup> National Veterans Wheelchair Games, the largest annual wheelchair sports event in the world. More than 20 veterans injured in current conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq will join veterans from the Gulf War, Vietnam and other conflicts in 17 competitive events.

"The National Veterans Wheelchair Games are a chance for disabled veterans, who receive the benefits of VA's world-class health care, to share in the camaraderie of friendly competition," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson. "The determination, stamina and competitive spirit on display at the Games are an inspiration."

The Wheelchair Games, presented each year by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), are open to all U.S. military veterans who use wheelchairs for sports competition due to spinal cord injuries, certain neurological conditions, amputations or other mobility impairments. For the first time at the Games, a demonstration track and field clinic will be held for athletes who are able to stand using prosthetic devices.

"Our association with the National Veterans Wheelchair Games helps fulfill our promise of improving the quality of life for veterans with disabilities," said Randy L. Pleva, Sr., PVA national president. "When the wheelchair athletes assemble in Milwaukee, the intensity of competition will be exceeded only by the fellowship of veterans united together."

The Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center in Milwaukee and the Wisconsin chapter of PVA are hosting the 2007 Games. Veterans competing in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games come from nearly all 50 states, plus the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Great Britain.

At the Games, veterans will compete in track and field, swimming, basketball, weightlifting, softball, air guns, quad rugby, 9-ball, bowling, table tennis, archery, handcycling, a motorized rally, wheelchair slalom, a power wheelchair relay and power soccer. Trapshooting and wheelchair curling are exhibition events this year. Events are being held at the Midwest Airlines Center, Veterans Park, Schroeder YMCA Aquatic Center, Bowlero Lanes, and other venues in and around Milwaukee.

The 27<sup>th</sup> National Veterans Wheelchair Games kick off June 19 with a wheelchair basketball demonstration at Red Arrow Park, as well as the 2007 Disabled Sports, Recreation and Fitness Expo. Kids Day at the Games takes place on June 22 at the Milwaukee County Zoo, where local children with disabilities will meet the

Do You know what benefits you've earned??  
Call 1-800-894-9497 to find out if there are programs for you!

athletes and learn more about wheelchair sports.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs and PVA's national president will greet the athletes at the Opening Ceremonies on June 19. VA's Deputy Secretary and PVA's national executive director will attend the Closing Ceremonies on June 22. Both events will be held at the Midwest Airlines Center. Admission to all Games activities is free, and the public is encouraged to attend.

Sports are important in the therapy used to treat many disabilities. VA is a recognized leader in rehabilitation, with therapy programs available at VA health care facilities across the nation. For many injured veterans, the Wheelchair Games provide their first exposure to wheelchair athletics.

To obtain more information about the competitive events, visit the Games Web site at [www.wheelchairgames.va.gov](http://www.wheelchairgames.va.gov).

Want to Help Your Fellow Veterans? Never served in the military but still want to do your part?

Call 1-800-894-9497 for information on volunteering. We need people to help with:

Funeral Honor Guards  
Veterans Golf Tournament  
Home Less Veterans Stand Down  
Outreach

There are many more opportunities!

## VA Hosts Welcome Home at Its Washington Medical Center

From Office of Public Relations,  
Department of Veterans Affairs

WASHINGTON -- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will host an all-day "Welcome Home" event for recently returned veterans of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) and active duty service members preparing to separate from the military. The comprehensive outreach effort will take place Saturday, June 2, at the Washington DC VA Medical Center (VAMC) from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

"This is a wonderful opportunity to thank these brave men and women for their service, as well as to provide information about the many services and benefits they have earned," said VA Secretary Jim Nicholson. "Many of these services are aimed at helping them and their families with readjustment and transition back to civilian life."

VA will offer a variety of screenings and counseling in the following areas: readjustment, employment, education, home loans, life insurance, transition and health care.

A unique feature of the event is the inclusion of a Marine Corps "Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) Muster" conducted by the Marine Corps Mobilization Command (MOBCOM). MOBCOM conducts these events monthly at sites across the U.S.

"Like an information fair, the musters are designed to assist each Marine as they transition from active military to civilian life and to remind them of their remaining statutory service obligations," said Brigadier General Darrell L. Moore, Commanding General, MOBCOM.

## Veterans Serving Veterans

By Jeff Hanson, State Officer Utah Veterans Nursing Home

Veteran service organizations are having a positive impact on the quality of life of the Veterans at the Utah State Veterans' Nursing Home by generously donating time and money to a variety of activities and projects. The nursing home Veterans are very grateful for the energy that is put into each activity and project and would like to thank all who contribute.

This spring, as part of a courtyard improvement project, the Ladies Auxiliary VFW Post 4918 made a large monetary contribution towards 8 raised garden beds. Today, the residents are growing a beautiful vegetable garden. This group also purchases a Christmas gift for each resident each year.

Last year the DAV, James R Thomas, Jr., Chapter 6 funded a very large bird aviary for the Day Room. Each day, residents enjoy watching a variety of birds interact, nest, lay eggs and hatch young in the indoor habitat. This group also invites residents to a monthly bar-b-q and donates a gift to each resident at Christmas time.

The Marine Corp League and its Ladies Auxiliary come in on a monthly basis and spend valuable time with the veterans in the Alzheimer unit. Each member meets this challenge with a smile and makes a wonderful contribution to those veterans who suffer from dementia.

The VFW, Ben Russo, Post 3586, have funded and coordinated a professional entertainment group to come in and perform annually during the Christmas holiday. This event is looked forward to each year.

The National Veterans Awareness Riders visit our facility each year as they make their way across the country to Washington. They are a great group of people that interact with the residents well.

UMVAC organization made a nice contribution of a large outdoor fountain that the residents enjoy in the courtyard. The VFW Post 1481 from Ogden recently collected nice blankets, books and audio books and donated the useful items to the nursing home.

The Department of Utah Ladies Auxiliary of the Veterans of Foreign Wars made a large monetary donation toward a big screen TV in the Alzheimer unit.

The veteran service organizations are awesome. Thank you for your patriotism. Thank you for helping make the Utah State Veterans' Nursing Home a very special place. For more information on the home and possible service opportunities call Jeff Hanson at (801) 584-1014.

### Bart O. Davis Utah Transition Assistance Advisor

BART O. DAVIS, after a 35-year military career holding ranks from E1 to E7 and O1 to O6 retired from the Utah National Guard in November 2000. He managed his own business, B&K Solutions, LLC, a professional conflict-resolution organization from 1998 to 2006, when he accepted the position as Utah Transition Assistance Advisor.

Bart's position as Utah Transition Assistance Advisor is a result of a partnership between the National Guard Bureau and Veterans Administration. He educates and assists National Guard and Reserve Service members regarding their



## Utah's Veterans Nursing Home



Top left, Veteran residents at the Utah State Veterans Nursing Home plant vegetables in their new raised garden spaces. From L to R – Delbert Boyington, Recreational Specialist Cheryl Haws, James Johnston, John Hebert. Above Resident Bill Schneider catches a fish at Vivian Park, Provo Canyon; left, Resident Jay Welch checks out a unique bike participating in the National Veterans Awareness Ride. Below, A National Veteran Awareness Rider checks out a WWII scare on resident John Stireman's leg.

## Program Helps Families of Deployed Service Members

Havoline with Deposit Shield motor oil brand is partnering with Operation Homefront to launch a national program called Operation Havoline Star, which will provide 1,000 free conventional oil changes, including lube and filter, at participating Texaco Xpress Lube locations.

Eligible military families can receive one gift certificate for a free oil change redeemable at participating Texaco Xpress Lube locations across the country through Dec. 31, 2007. Military dependants with an active-duty service member currently deployed overseas are eligible for the program and can apply through one of Operation Homefront's 31 local chapters or on the Operation Homefront website., [www.operationhomefront.net](http://www.operationhomefront.net).



**A Representative from the Utah Department of Veteran Affairs will be in your area. Contact your local**

**Department of Workforce Service Office for details or [veterans.utah.gov/outreach/index.html](http://veterans.utah.gov/outreach/index.html) for the schedule**

earned benefits and informs them how to obtain available services for themselves and their families.

Bart has spent most of his adult life in and around the military and Veterans organizations and has firsthand experience in mobilizations, combat operations, post-mobilizations and the challenges of rebuilding relationships after long periods of separation from family and friends in high-stress environments.

In 1968-69 he served in Vietnam as a member of the Idaho National Guard leaving a two-year old daughter and a young wife who was expecting their son (now an Apache pilot with the Utah National Guard). His experience as a Soldier, husband and

father gives him a unique ability to understand and assist Service members cope with the challenges of their chosen profession.

The following professional and personal goals as the Utah Transition Assistance Advisor hang above Bart's desk: *Ensure ALL deployed Veterans and their families have the knowledge and ability to access the benefits and services they have earned. Establish a uniform process to educate, assist all Service members and families in obtaining services, and provide on going readjustment support.* Bart can be reached at [Bart.o.davis@us.army.mil](mailto:Bart.o.davis@us.army.mil) or 801-523-4937, see [www.utvethelp.com](http://www.utvethelp.com) for more information.

## DAV NIGHT AT THE BALLPARK

The Utah DAV is holding a picnic and night at the ballpark at Franklin Covey Park, 77 West 1300 South, Salt Lake City, Utah, Tuesday July 31, 2007.

A picnic will be held in the left field pavilion starting at 5 PM, with the first pitch of the baseball game between the Iowa Cubs and the Salt Lake Bees scheduled for 7:05 PM. Department Commander Dan Rioux will have the honor of throwing out the first pitch

The Fastball Picnic will include jumbo Hot Dogs, baked beans, potato chips, watermelon and soda.

The cost is \$16.25 per person, including game ticket. Call the DAV Department HQ for tickets and information, at (801) 359-8169 or the transportation coordinator at the VA at 582-1565 ext 2003, or the service officers at 326-2375.

## VA MEDICAL CENTER RECOMMENDED SITE FOR FISHER HOUSE

From Public Affairs Office, George E. Wahlen Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center

SALT LAKE CITY, UT – Safe, comfortable and affordable housing for families of veterans being treated by the Department of Veterans Affairs Salt Lake City Health Care System (VASLCHCS) may soon become a reality. The medical center's Salt Lake City campus was one of ten recommended sites for construction of a VA Fisher House, providing home-away-from-home accommodations.

Many of our returning service members need intensive physical and occupational rehabilitation, said Brian Westfield, VASLCHCS acting director. "Locating a Fisher House on our medical center campus will enable our patients to focus on their treatment and permit them to receive the full benefit of our extensive world-class care."

The VA Fisher House will be a 21-guest suite, 16,000 square foot, two-story home, located on the southwestern portion of the medical center campus. The facility will include common kitchen, laundry facilities, spacious dining room, living room with library, and toys for children.

Fisher Houses are built through public donations and contributions from the Fisher House Foundation. "If the community demonstrates strong support for a Fisher House by raising at least \$500,000 in matching construction funds, the Fisher House Foundation will prepare a proposal

## AWARDS REPLACEMENT

Veterans who have lost medals or decorations, or never received ones they earned, may request them at any time. The government will generally replace lost or destroyed decorations for service or valor at no cost. There may be a charge for campaign ribbons and badges.

Former service members and the survivors of deceased veterans can obtain replacement medals or make appeals by writing to their respective service below. For Air Force (including Army Air Corps) and Army personnel, the National Personnel Records Center will verify the awards to which a veteran is entitled and forward the request with the verification to the appropriate service department for issuance of the medals. The Standard Form (SF 180), Request Pertaining to Military Records is recommended for requesting medals and awards. This form can be downloaded in PDF format at <http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/standard-form-180.html>.

## Veterans Registered to Use My HealtheVet Will Have More Features Added to Their Personal Health Records In 2007

From Office of Public Affairs, Department of Veteran Affairs

My HealtheVet, VA's Web-based portal that allows Veterans to register and record personal health information and combine it with parts of their electronic health records, will add new features throughout 2007 that will enable veterans to improve management of their health care.

The portal recently was named a "Top 5" Excellence.Gov program winner for 2007 by the Industry Advisory Council for its innovative use of technology to achieve strategic goals and objectives. Veterans who register on the web site can record personal health information and combine it with parts of their VA electronic health records.

Once registered, veterans can record and store health information and measurements such as blood pressure readings, cholesterol counts, temperatures, and health histories, refill their VA prescriptions, and access medical information from reliable health libraries.

for the approval by the Fisher House Foundation Board of Trustees. The proposal will include developing an architectural plan for the proposed Fisher House," said Don Willis, Community Fund Raising Committee Champion.

The Fisher House Foundation will review the ten newly recommended locations to determine sites for Fisher House construction in 2008 and 2009.

Send written or typed request letters and a copy of DD 214 or discharge papers with the following information to the appropriate service branch, addresses listed below, with the following information: full name, Social Security Number and Former Service Numbers if any, date and place of birth, dates of service, complete mailing address and telephone and fax number plus Email address.

Air Force: National Personnel Records Center, Air Force Reference Branch NRPMF, 9700 Page Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63132-5100. For appeals or problems write to Headquarters Air Force Personnel Ctr, AFPC/DPPPR, 550 C Street West, Suite 12, Randolph AFB, TX 78150-4714.

Army: National Personnel Records Center, Medals Section (NRPMA-M), 9700 Page Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63132-5100. Send appeals to: Commander PERSCOM, Attn: TAPC-PDO-PA, 200 Stovall Street, Alexandria, VA 22332-0471

Aiden Barr, Acting Program Manager for My HealtheVet said new features to be introduced in 2007 will enable veterans who have registered on the web site to add electronic copies of portions of their VA medical records to their personal health records.

"My HealtheVet will provide exciting new features that registered veterans can add to their personal health records throughout the year," said Aiden Barr. "These upgrades will allow veterans, their families and clinicians to partner in improving management of their health care."

Among the newest My HealtheVet features are screening tools for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression and alcohol use. The "Healthy Living Centers" provide medical information and tips on healthy eating, physical activity, and smoking and tobacco use cessation. The "Condition Centers" offer information on medical conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, hypertension and stroke, plus tips on managing those conditions. Information on support groups is also available on the site.

To ensure the security and privacy of their personal health record, veterans must register on the My HealtheVet web portal and complete an "In Person Authentication," (IPA) at their medical

VASLCHCS treated 39,781 veterans last year, accounting for more than 400,500 outpatient visits and nearly 5,500 hospitalizations.

For more information on the Fisher House Foundation visit [www.fisherhouse.org](http://www.fisherhouse.org). Don Willis, Community Fund Raising Committee Champion can be reached by calling (801) 209-5765.

Call 1-800-613-4012 to volunteer at the VA Medical Center

Navy: Bureau of Naval Personnel, Liaison Office Room 5409, 9700 Page Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63132-5100. For appeals or problems write to Chief of Naval Operations, (OPNAV 09B33), Awards & Special Projects, Washington, DC 20350-2000.

Marine Corps: Bureau of Naval Personnel, Liaison Office Room 5409, 9700 Page Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63132-5100. For appeals or problems write to Commandant of the Marine Corps, Military Awards Branch (MMMA), 3280 Russell Road, Quantico VA 22134-5100.

Coast Guard: Bureau of Naval Personnel, Liaison Office Room 5409, 9700 Page Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63132-5100. For appeals or problems write to Commandant U.S. Coast Guard, Medals and Awards Branch (PMP-4), Washington, DC 20593-0001

**Lost copies of DD 214's can also be requested by logging on to [vetrecs.archives.gov](http://vetrecs.archives.gov)**

facility. Once a VA patient has registered on the portal and completed the authentication, Barr said they will see their prescription drug name, in addition to the prescription number. Future additions will enable these same veterans to see their VA appointments, co-pay balances, and copies of chemistry and hematology lab reports.

In February 2007, My HealtheVet was named a "Top 5" Excellence.Gov program winner, a prestigious award given annually by the Industry Advisory Council (IAC) to federal, state or local government agencies in recognition of their innovative use of technology to help achieve strategic goals and objectives.

Since VHA introduced My HealtheVet in 2003, registrations have rapidly increased, reaching nearly 375,000 in March 2007. Following the release of online prescription refill in August 2005, veterans have electronically submitted nearly 2.4 million refill requests.

## Past VFW State Commander Offers Thanks

By Norm Nelson

From the desk of Veterans of Foreign Wars I would like to thank all of the veterans who have allowed me the chance to be of service this past year and help in a small way to make your road a little easier. As you try to get help with your vet's issues the road is full of paper trails that seem to never want or find an end. Thanks to the service officers and all there hard work this year. It has been a fulfillment in all I wanted to do for the Veterans of this great state and all who supported the team of VFW Families. Norman I. Nelson Commander 2006, 2007

Vern Wade has taken over a state commander for the VFW for 2008.

**The Disable American Veterans Sponsors a Van that runs throughout the region transporting Veterans to their appointments at the George Wahlen VA Medical Center and then back home. To schedule an appointment with Van call the following numbers:**

SLC: (208) 221-0362 (MONDAY-FRIDAY 08:00 TO 17:00)

1-800-613-4012 EXT: 2003

**VAN TIMES AND LOCATIONS**

**NORTHERN ROUTE**

02:15 AM—**SAGE JUNCTION** (EXIT 33 OFF FREEWAY 1-15)

02:45 AM—**ASHTON** (DAVE'S JUBILEE GROCERY STORE)

03:15 AM—**ST. ANTHONY** (MAVERICK STATION) (S. BRIDGE ST. AND 3<sup>RD</sup> S.)

03:45 AM—**REXBURG** (MAVERICK STATION) (MAIN ST. AND SECOND WEST)

04:15 AM—**RIGBY** (MAVERICK STATION MAIN AND CLARK ST.)

04:45 AM—**IDAHO FALLS** (CHEVRON and McDONALDS) (BROADWAY AND SATURN)

05:15 AM—**BLACKFOOT** (FLYING J) (228 PARKWAY DR)

05:30 AM—**FORT HALL** (GAS STATION BY CASINO)

**SOUTHERN ROUTE**

05:45 AM—**POCATELLO** (VET CENTER 1800 GARRET WAY) (WESTWOOD VILLAGE MALL)

06:15 AM—**McCAMMON** (FLYINGJ) (BY FREEWAY 1-15)

06:30 AM—**DOWNEY** (FLAGS WEST TRUCK STOP) (OFF FREEWAY 1-15)

06:45 AM—**MALAD** (CHEVRON STATION) (EXIT 13 OFF FREEWAY 1-15)

07:15 AM—**TREMONTON** (SINCLAIR STATION) (EXIT 40 OFF HIGHWAY 84)

07:35 AM—**BRIGHAM CITY** (FLYING J EXIT 362 OFF 1-15)

*ARRIVAL AT VA HOSPITAL IS BETWEEN 08:30 TO 09:00 APPOINTMENTS MUST BE BETWEEN 09:00 TO 14:00*

*THE VAN DEPARTS HOSPITAL WHEN THE LAST VETERAN IS DONE*

**2007 VAN SCHEDULE FOR  
IDAHO, PRICE and ST.  
GEORGE**

FOR APPOINTMENTS CALL:

IDAHO: (208) 221-0362

PRICE, ST. GEORGE: 1-800-613-4012 x.  
2003

JULY 3, 5,9, 11, 13, 17,  
19,23,25,27,31 HOLIDAY ON 4  
AUGUST 2,6,8, 10, 14,  
16,20,22,24,28,30  
SEPTEMBER 5,7,11,13,17,19,21,  
25,27 HOLIDAY ON 3  
OCTOBER 1,3,5,9, 11, 15, 17, 19,  
23,25,29,31 HOLIDAY ON 8  
NOVEMBER 2, 6, 8, 14, 16,20, 26,  
28,30 HOLIDAY 12, 22

**2007 VAN SCHEDULE FOR  
LOGAN, VERNAL, ELKO, ELY,  
AFTON, ROCK SPRINGS**

FOR APPOINTMENTS CALL:

WY AND NV: (307) 886-5293

LOGAN AND VERNAL: 1-800-613-4012  
x2003

JULY 2,6,10,12,16,18,20,24,26,30  
HOLIDAY ON 4  
AUGUST 1,3, 7, 9, 13, 15,  
17,21,23,27,29, 31  
SEPTEMBER 4,6,10,12, 14, 18,20,  
24,26, 28 HOLIDAY ON 3  
OCTOBER 2,4, 10, 12, 16, 18, 22,  
24, 26, 30 HOLIDAY ON 8  
NOVEMBER 1,5,7,9,13,15,19,21,  
23,27, 29 HOLIDAY 12,22