

## Utah Division of Veteran's Affairs Outreach Program

According to the 2000 Census there are 161,000 veterans in the state of Utah. We are still only reaching a handful. We are the State agency that assists former and present members of the U.S. Armed Forces 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.

The Utah Division of Veteran's Affairs Outreach Program provides substantial face to face support to Utah Veterans. Our office has representatives that travel twice a month to Department of Workforce Services (DWS) offices in rural cities and towns. We also brief veterans that are coming off active duty on certain benefits that they may be entitled to. Our mission is to assist veterans and their families with paperwork for VA claims and to answer questions about veterans benefits and to provide an understanding of state and federal benefits available to veterans.

To find out when a Veterans Service Officer will be in your city please call the Utah Division of Veterans' Affairs at (801) 326-2372 or 1-800-894-9497 or visit our website [www.veterans.utah.gov](http://www.veterans.utah.gov). Please spread the word. If you are a veteran or know a veteran our office is here to help.

### Yearly Total 2006:

- Veterans seen: **746**
- New Claims: **260**
- Appeals or Re-Opened Claims: **177**
- Utah Guard and Reserve members briefed for 2006: **3,307**
- Homeless outreach (Veterans seen): **836**
- Dollars Generated (In claims): **\$552,172**

## Upcoming Events

- **Feb 17th, 2007** American Legion Oratorical Contest 1:00pm George Wahlen VAMC.
- **March 10, 2007** American Legion Pageant and Birthday party at Holiday Inn Downtown. Dinner 6:00pm and Pageant at 7:00.
- **May 18th, 2007** Annual Veterans Memorial Golf Tournament at Hubbard golf corces (Hill AFB). Tee off at 8am.
- **May 28th, 2007** Memorial Day Program at the Veterans Memorial Cemetery. The event will begin at 2:00 p.m.
- **May 30-June 2,** DAV State Convention at Crystal Inn in Murray.
- **June 4-9, 2007** Utah Girls' State Forum at Southern Utah University.
- **June 9-11, 2007** VFW State Covention at the Holiday Inn Downtown.
- **June 11-15, 2007** Utah Boys' State Forum at Weber State University.
- **June 22-24, 2007** American Legion State Convention at Landmark Inn, Park City.



*Fred Hamilton (left) assists Frank Black (right) in filing out a housing application at St. Vincent De Paul while on the Homeless Outreach Program. Mr. Black is a Vietnam disabled veteran.*

## Elderly Veterans Target of New Scam

Salt Lake City Utah: There have been recent reports of individuals employed by private companies claiming to help veterans and their dependents apply for VA benefits and charging large fees to do so. These individuals are targeting elderly claimants in Nursing Homes and Assisted living facilities by claiming to be associated with the VA.

The Utah Division of Veteran Affairs has spoken to a few family members of Veterans faced with this very scam. The pattern seems to be that these individuals are approaching the unknowing Nursing Homes and Assisted living Facilities and giving VA benefits briefings to the family members of Veterans in the homes. These individuals are promising benefits and monthly compensation to the Veterans and are offering to assist the family with the VA claims process for a fee of \$800 or more and often claim that they possess special knowledge and can therefore do more for the Veteran than other organizations can.

The problem with this is that these companies are not associated nor certified by the VA to assist Veterans or their family members with filing claims. Therefore, there is no benefit to the Veteran by

going through these people, their claims will not be decided sooner nor will they have a better outcome by paying these individuals whose promises are often empty. The Veteran are paying for a service that they can receive for free by agencies certified by the VA that are trained by the VA and have a deep understanding of the VA claims, rating and appeal process that uncertified organizations do not have.

Currently there are 87 recognized veteran service organizations consisting of 37 national organizations and 50 state and regional departments, the Utah Division of Veteran Affairs is one of these. Other recognized organizations in Utah are the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). For a complete listing of certified organizations go to [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) and click on the organizations link, under Staff Organizations go to General Counsel and from that page there is a link to *Recognized Veterans Service Organizations*.

The individuals charging for this service work for organizations that do not qualify for VA recognition, they therefore structure their business to

receive payment for their services from claimants' private care providers in an attempt to avoid criminal penalties. This explains why they go through the Nursing Homes which typically do not know that these organizations are prohibited by law from preparing claims and charging fees and are also unaware that these services are provided free of charge by the recognized veterans service organizations.

If you or someone you know has been approached by or has paid someone, other than an accredited attorney, to file a claim for VA benefits please contact the VA (1-800-827-100) or this office at 1-800-894-9497 and report these individuals. Also, if someone you know is living in a facilities that has introduced you to these individuals let them know that this activity is not authorized by the VA. Veterans and dependents should never have to pay for assistance in filing claims. Please help us put a stop to this activity.

For more information, to report an incident, or for contact information of certified service organizations call 1-800-894-9497.

**By: Berni Jo Davis**



## The Utah Veterans Voice

550 Foothill Blvd. #202  
Salt Lake City, UT 84113  
(801) 326-2372  
Toll Free 1-800-894-9497  
[www.veterans.utah.gov](http://www.veterans.utah.gov)

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# New Monument Honors Purple Heart Owners

By Frank Maughn

A new series of monuments to Purple Heart awardees will be unveiled during Memorial Day activities at Hill Air Force Base's "Little Chapel" at the Aerospace Museum by Utah's Military Order of the Purple Heart.

Four granite tablets containing the names of over 400 Utah awardees of the Purple Heart Medal will be installed surrounding a large monument already erected between the Aerospace Museum and the WWII-era Chapel across the street.

"We have been assembling the names of Utah recipients of the Purple Heart for over two years", said Frank Maughn, state commander of the Military Order of the Purple Heart. "We now have over 400 names, and have been given four granite tablets on which those names will be engraved. We anticipate having the last three thousand dollars needed to do the engraving and setting those tablets in time to unveil the whole monument Memorial Day 2007".

This is just one of several projects Utah's Purple Heart organization is involved with.

Others include awarding leadership medals to ROTC cadets, locating public sites for Veterans Memorial Forests, and expanding membership opportunities for more owners of the Purple Heart Medal.

The Leadership Medals go to top cadets enrolled in Junior and Senior Reserve Officer Training Corps programs throughout Northern Utah.

The Veterans Memorial Forests project includes reforestation of public parks and spaces with more than 1500 trees that have been grown from seedlings for the past six years, and is a joint project with Utah's Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Purple Heart chapters exist in St George and Ogden, and potential chapters are being explored in the south end of the Salt Lake valley, Utah county, and in the central Utah area from which so many Utah National Guard units were deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Contact officer for each of these projects is Frank Maughn at: [dragoonB26@msn.com](mailto:dragoonB26@msn.com).

## Millions Receive Cost-Of-Living Increases for VA Benefits

*Secretary Nicholson: Increase Protects Purchasing Power*

WASHINGTON – Millions of veterans and eligible family members will see their disability compensation, pension, and survivors' benefits increased as the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides an annual cost-of-living increase for key benefits.

"We want all veterans with disabilities related to the defense of our country to receive the benefits they have earned," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson. "With this increase, we ensure their payments keep pace with the cost of living."

A recent law signed by President Bush provides a 3.3 percent increase in disability compensation and survivors' benefits. Eligible veterans and family members will see this increase starting in their January 2007 checks.

Under the veterans disability compensation program, tax-free payments will generally range from \$115 to \$2,471 per month depending on the degree of disability. Special payments up to \$7,070 per month apply to the most severely injured veterans.

Pension disability benefits will also be increased by the same percentage and effective on the same date. The maximum annual rate for permanently and totally disabled veterans can range from \$10,929 to \$18,234. Payments under this program are based on household income.

This increase also applies to survivors of veterans who died in service or from a service-connected disability. Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) survivors' benefit payments can range from \$1,067 to \$2,443 per month.

Survivors of wartime veterans receiving death pension are also entitled to an increase. The maximum annual payment rate for a surviving spouse can range from \$7,329 to \$11,715. Benefits under this program are intended to bring an eligible spouse's income to a level established by law.

Under each benefit program, additional allowances may be payable for helpless, minor or school age children.

For more information about VA benefits and services, go to VA's website at [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) or call 1-800-827-1000.



Medal of Honor Recipient, George Wahlen (Left) with Governor Jon Huntsman Jr. (center) and First Lady Mary Kaye Huntsman at a Ceremony at the Veterans Memorial Cemetery

# DAV New NSO Supervisor

**By: Dan Rioux DAV NSO**

The Disabled American Veterans service office now has a new Supervisor. His name is Eric McGinnis and he hails from Indianapolis, Indiana where he was the Assistant Supervisor for four years. The National Service Officers are trained to provide veterans with all services needed to complete their claim for the VA. That includes submitting all required paperwork, filing a Notice of Disagreement if you are unhappy with your decision, and arranging and conducting hearings with the Decision Review Officers so that you receive what you are entitled to. Remember this is not charity but benefits that you have earned while serving your country, please be informed and use all of your benefits. Louis Estrada and Dan Rioux are the other National Service Officers that are there to help you with your case. If you need help please contact the Office at (801)326-2375 and speak with one of our secretaries, Jeanette or KariAnn, and they will direct you to the NSO who will handle your case. You can also mail your information to:

**Disabled American Veterans  
Post Office Box 581900  
Salt Lake City, UT 84158-1900**

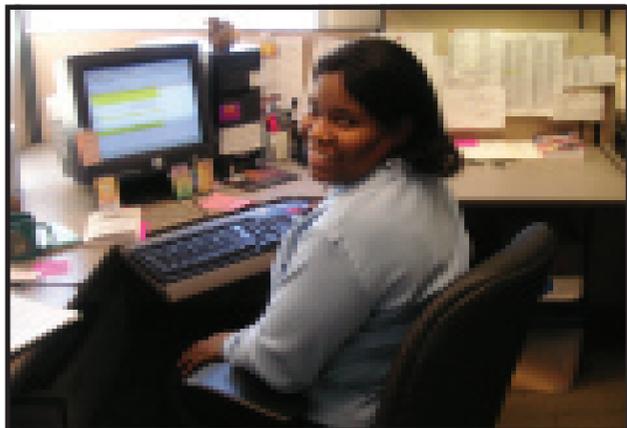
We are located in the VA Regional Office, on the second floor, at 550 Foothill Drive, Salt Lake City, UT.

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## Honorary Veterans BLVD

**By: John Maher DAV Adjutant**

Don Reaveley, a life member of the Disabled American Veterans, was instrumental in the naming of the street between Guardsman Wan and Wakara Way as "Veterans Boulevard". The following veteran's organizations donated funds for the signs: United Veterans Council of Salt Lake City and County, American Legion Post #112, Disabled American Veterans Chapter 6, and Veterans of Foreign Wars post 7442. A special thanks to Pete Martinez and Robert Frank for raising these donated funds and Salt Lake City Councilman Dave L Buhler for his support.



*The Utah Division of Veterans Affairs would like to welcome and introduce its newest staff member, Tonja Knight (above). Tonja joined this office in December 2006 after serving Honorably in the US Army. Tonja is the new Assistant to the Director and looks forward to working with Utah's Veterans.*

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## Vet Center Programs

The goal of the Vet Center program is to provide a broad range of counseling, outreach and referral services to eligible veterans in order to help them make a satisfying readjustment to civilian life. Care includes professional readjustment counseling, outreach, community education, brokering of services with VA and community agencies and a key access link with the US Department of Veterans Affairs. We actively help to identify veteran's needs, provide information and unit debriefings, link with other resources and network with other resources. We provide professional assessments and treatment for various transitional adjustment issues war-time veterans and family may have. We also specialize in Military sexual trauma and bereavement. Services are free of charge. All information is held in the strictest of confidence.

### **SALT LAKE CITY VET CENTER**

1354 East 3300 South, Salt Lake City, Utah 84106  
(801)584-1294; (800)613-4012, Ext. 1294; Fax: (801) 487-6243

### **PROVO VET CENTER**

1807 North 1120 West, Provo, Utah 84601  
(801)377-1117 - Toll Free: (800)246-1197 - Fax: (801) 377-0227

### **POCATELLO VET CENTER**

1800 Garrett Way, Pocatello, Idaho. 83201  
(208)232-0316 - Fax: (208)232-6258

## 2007 VAN SCHEDULE

**FOR:**

**LOGAN, VERNAL AND  
ST GEORGE, UT,  
ELY, NV AND  
ROCK SPRINGS, WY**

**CALL:**

**1(800) 613-4012 EXT. 2003**

FOR APPOINTMENTS

## UTAH VETERANS VOICE NEWSPAPER AD RATES

The Veterans Voice is circulated to Utah's Veterans. 10,000 hard copies of the paper are made and the paper is also available online at [www.ut.ngb.army.mil/veterans](http://www.ut.ngb.army.mil/veterans).

**Ad rates are:**

**Full Page: \$400.00**

**1/2 Page: \$275.00**

**1/4 Page: \$150.00**

**1/8 Page: \$90.00**

To place an ad contact either Berni Davis or Terry Schow at (801) 326-2372, toll-free 1-800-894-9497, fax (801) 326-2369 or email [berni.davis@va.gov](mailto:berni.davis@va.gov).

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## Use Your Voice

**A note from the Editor**

**Berni Jo Davis**

It recently occurred to me, as I was making the final preparations for this issue of the *Veterans Voice* that the title of this publication might be somewhat faulty. Perhaps it is the connotations that the word "voice" carries, is it just a medium to carry thoughts or a way of expression opinions? Either way, is the paper a voice of or for Veterans, or both? In the past it seems to be a voice for Veterans, bringing information to those across the state who have served their country, or just those who support those who did serve.

This is the first issue of the *Voice* that I have really been apart of one, the first of many, I hope, and one thing that I would really like to see become of this modest publication is that it become a voice not just for the Veteran, but *of* the veteran. With this, I highly encourage you to send me your thoughts, your concerns, your opinions, your letters and *your voice*.

Through your letters to the editor I hope to place your voice in the pages of the *Veterans Voice* and to truly make this *your* paper.

Letters to the Editor, or other events in your communities that you feel should be shared with the Veterans and Veterans supports community can be emailed to [berni.davis@va.gov](mailto:berni.davis@va.gov) or sent to:

*Veterans Voice*

Utah Division of Veterans Affairs  
550 Foothill BLVD, Suite 202  
Salt Lake City, UT 84113

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## Utah Division of Veterans Affairs Seeks

The Utah Division of Veterans Affairs is seeking volunteers to assist with various Veteran related projects. Individuals are needed to provide assistance with Military Funeral Honors for Veterans who have passed away, the Veterans Nursing Home, Veterans Cemetery, annual Veterans Golf Tournament fundraiser, Veterans Outreach, interviews for the Veterans History Project, Homeless Veterans Stand Down and Veterans Information and Benefit Fairs.

If you want to volunteer or if you have any questions about volunteering please call Berni Jo Davis at either (801) 326-2372 or 1-800-894-9497. You may also email him at [berni.davis@va.gov](mailto:berni.davis@va.gov). Any assistance you can provide is greatly appreciated.

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## Homeless Veterans Outreach Program

By Berni Jo Davis

Every November the Veterans organizations in the Salt Lake area team together to host the Homeless Veterans Stand Down. This annual event is designed to assist Utah's homeless Veterans in obtaining clothing, shelter, VA benefits, food and jobs. Although \$20,000 worth donations to 220 Homeless Veterans for the Stand Down did make a difference in their lives, many of the services provided, unfortunately, end up becoming only temporary solutions. To provide year round assistance and more permanent help to this demographic, a Homeless Veterans Outreach program was created. This program has been running steadily since July 2005 and is funded through the Utah Department of Workforce Services.

Permanent Outreach Programs are setup at the Road Home and St. Vincent DePaul homeless shelters in the Salt Lake City area. The purpose of this program is to inform these veterans of resources that are available to them from the Utah Department of Workforce Services, the Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office, the Utah Division of Veteran Affairs and the VA Medical Center and to assist them in finding housing and employment and other general services.

Thus far, the program has been successful in taking dozens of Veterans off of the streets and placing them into permanent housing, assisting them in obtaining employment, enrolling for care in the VA Medical System and filing applications for service connected disabilities and VA pensions.

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## Utah Division of Veterans Affairs New Website

The Utah Division of Veterans' Affairs has a new upgraded website. The new website address is: [www.veterans.utah.gov](http://www.veterans.utah.gov). This new website is easier to navigate and more informative than ever including links to VA benefits contact information, outreach schedules, Upcoming events and the State Benefits Fact Sheet. The *Veterans Voice* will also be Available online.

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## Bugles Across America



By: Kim Sorensen,  
State Director, Bugles Across, Utah

Bugles Across America was created in 2000 to provide live buglers for the funerals of our brave men and women that gave so much to our country—our veterans. A retired Marine, by the name of Tom Day, discovered that Congress was passing legislation that read “when a family requested a military funeral for their veteran they would be supplied with at least two members of the Honor Guard, presentation of the flag and the playing of Taps by a bugler or if one was not available a recording of Taps”. We at Bugles Across America believe, as Tom does, that a recording does not provide the honor and respect that our veterans deserve. Recordings are a poor substitute at best and a disaster at it's worst. With scratched CDs, dead batteries, or an embarrassing blast of rock music from a “boom box” during a time of immense grief for a family—this is why we are here. Many cemeteries and mortuaries have purchased a digital machine. When placed in the bell of a horn it allows a person to stand, holding the horn, and “play” Taps. I believe it's like lying to the family. This machine can not give the emotion and feeling a live bugler can provide. The problem is that there are only about 500 military buglers available. There is a great need for more buglers to accommodate the number of veteran funerals that are down every day as the brave soldiers of WWII are nearing the end of their years. A call was put out across the US requesting anyone that is able to pick up a horn and fill the void. Tom created a website ([BuglesAcrossAmerica.org](http://BuglesAcrossAmerica.org)) for people to join. A family member looking for a bugler can log on to the site and place a request. This request is sent out to all the buglers in the state in which the funeral will be preformed. We also provide Taps for police officers and firefighter as well participating in any event honor our military and veterans.

The Utah State Chapter has only a small handful of active buglers. We are welcoming anyone who can sound Taps in a respectful manner. Any brass instrument can be used—not just trumpets or bugles. We have many bagpipe members as well. Even if someone is not able to play an instrument they are encourage to join—we'll find them a way to help too. We are looking for donations of trumpets or bugles, flags and flagpoles, office supplies, and new or gentle used military style uniforms like those marching bands wear. Monetary donations are always appreciated. More than anything—we need more buglers! I'm particularly interested in recruiting from our scout groups and young man and women in jr. high and high schools.

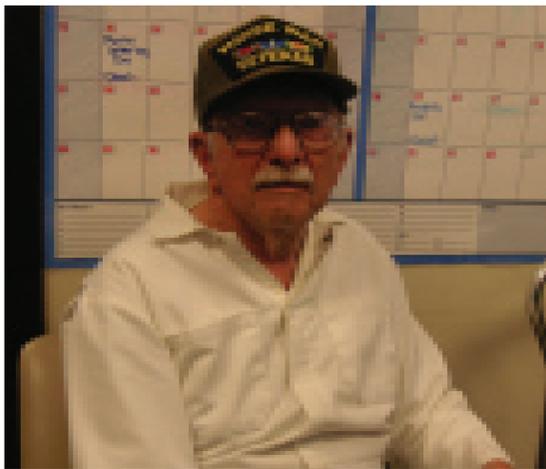
Our organization participated in the VA's celebration on Veterans' Day on November 11<sup>th</sup> at the State Veterans' Cemetery in Bluffdale. This also served as a dry run for an event our national organization will be putting on for Armed Forces Day in May of 2007. Our chapter will be performing again at the State Veterans' Cemetery. Many of the other states will also be performing in national and state veterans cemeteries as well as other military points of importance. The concept of the event is to recruit as many brass players as possible and to play Taps one after another. This is to show honor to our military, past and present. This will also be an opportunity for everyone to become aware of the services BAA provides—free of charge. It is not necessary for someone to be a member in order to perform with us. There are opportunities for non-musicians to help out here as well. For more information on this event the official website is [EchoTaps.org](http://EchoTaps.org). Just sign up and I'll keep you up dated. I can be contacted by email at [kimsorensen7@yahoo.com](mailto:kimsorensen7@yahoo.com) or at 801-856-6282.

Bugles Across America is a very special organization that I am proud to be part of. As someone with no military background of my own I see this as my opportunity to serve my country - if only in a small way. My grandfather was a WWII vet and I had an uncle who was in Vietnam. I currently have a cousin and sister-in-law serving in the Army. As Utah's State Director of Bugles Across America I will continue to strive to ensure that every one of our veterans receives the honor and respect they deserve through the sounding of Taps by a live bugler.

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**Were you hurt or injured as a result of your military service? Are you or your spouse in need of counseling as a result of your service in Iraq or Afghanistan?**

**If so contact  
1-800-894-9497  
for assistance.**



*Joseph J. Kelley Jr (above) is a veteran of three wars/conflicts. He served in the US Army Air Corps in WWII in the Pacific Theater, where he was injured and awarded the Purple Heart. He then transferred into the Air Force upon its inception and continued to serve nearly 30 years when he retired but not before going to both Korea and Vietnam for combat service. He currently lives in West Valley, UT with his wife of 60 years, Janette whom he has four children, 7 grand children and 8 great grand children with.*

## **VFW Post Recognizes WWII Vets**

In 2004, the government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands acknowledged the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Saipan by commissioning a medallion for veterans who fought in the Pacific theater. This battle was over a very strategic Island in the Pacific and was instrumental in the outcome of the war. Fought in June of 1944, this anniversary has come and gone, however, VFW Post 3457 in Saipan continues to distribute these medals.

More than two dozen veterans in Box Elder County were eligible to receive the recognition. The Veterans of Foreign War Post 1695 received the medallions from Saipan, and presented them at a dinner in April 2006 to: Robert B. Balmer, Robert Beadles, A. C. Christensen, Alvern W. Davis, Charles Goodliffe, Norris Goold, Clifford Green Sr., Ridd L. Grover, LeRoy Holmgren, Willie Hunsaker, Everend L. Jacobson, Darrell Loveland, Chase Nielson, Blaine F. Olsen, Richard Partridge, Ellis Richman, Marcelo Singh, Gene Tabor, Clifford Woodland, Zeke Worthington and Lowell Nelson, who has since passed away. In the months since then, Post Commander Lonny Cutler has continued to obtain medals on behalf of local veterans.

It is important to note that all veterans who served in the Pacific during World War II are eligible to receive this medallion. The medals are being distributed through the VFW, so commanders throughout the country can obtain the medals for their post by submitting the name, address, rank at the time of the battle, unit and branch of service to VFW Post 3457, PMB 529, PPP Box 10000, Saipan, MP 96950. For more information e-mail [prior.service@saipan.com](mailto:prior.service@saipan.com).

## **RETIRED AND ANNUITANT PAY: COMBAT-RELATED SPECIAL COMPENSATION (CRSC)**

Combat Related Special Monthly Compensation is a system that enables retirees to receive full military retirement pay and VA compensation for service-connected disabilities that are "combat related". The Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) have finalized the plans to provide eligible retirees with the additional money. Potential retroactive pay is due for more than 100,000 retiree accounts.

In the past, Veterans receiving service connected disability compensation and military retirement pay could only draw the maximum amount of pay from one source. For example, if disability compensation was \$115 per month, and retirement pay is \$1600 month, the veteran would receive the tax free \$115 from the VA but would then only get \$1,485, before taxes, from retirement because they can not get more than \$1600 total. CRSC allows the retiree to draw the full amount of both types of payment.

Retirees entitled to additional money from the DFAS will receive notification by mail of money due and a schedule of payment. Surviving spouses or deceased retirees' estates may also receive compensation.

DFAS began initial payments in September 2006 and the DVA plans to begin payments in October 2006. The basic criteria for a retroactive payment is for an individual currently in receipt of either CRSC or Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay (CRDP) who received an increase in DVA compensation since June 2003 for CSRC or January 2004 for CRDP which was not offset from the retired pay entitlement on a current basis.

Another new program that allows retirees to get full Retirement pay and Disability compensation is the Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay (CRDP). This recently passed law also phases out the VA disability offset. To qualify, military retirees must have 20 or more years of serve and a 50% (or higher) VA rated disability. This program is run by the Department of Defense. It is not a VA program. Those who qualify for concurrent receipt, should have automatically received an increase in military retirement starting in January 2004. To qualify for concurrent receipt you must: Be a military retiree with 20 or more years of service. This includes Chapter 61 Medical Retirees with 20 years or more, or National Guard and Reserve with 20 or more good years, and have a service related VA disability of 50% or higher.

DFAS has established a toll free line that is operational from 8:00 to 4:30 (Eastern). Monday through Friday to address questions from CRSC and CRDP recipients who believe they might qualify. The toll free number is 1-877-327-4457.

### **QUICK FACTS**

#### **To be eligible, you must:**

- \* Be a military retiree (Army, Navy, Air Force or Marine Corps).
- \* Meet all the requirements for either CRSC or CRDP eligibility
- \* Have received payment(s) of either CRSC on or after June 1, 2003; and/or CRDP on or after January 1, 2004.
- \* Awarded one or more increase in your percentage of disability by the VA on or after June 1, 2003.

#### **What will happen?**

- \* Retirees need take no action to claim any funds.
- \* DFAS and DVA will use existing records to identify recipients.
- \* Recipients will be notified by letter of additional funds due.
- \* Retirees may be eligible for payment from DFAS as a restoration of retired pay or from DVA as a part of disability compensation.
- \* In cases where retirees are due money from DFAS and DVA, DFAS will provide information to DVA as needed. Retirees need take no action.

#### **When things will happen:**

- \* The first DFAS retroactive payments were made in September 2006.
- \* Due to the large number of cases, the payment process could take up to a year.
- \* Once all eligible retirees have been identified, DFAS will publish a general schedule on this Web site.
- \* All retirees who may be eligible for additional money are expected to be identified.

## **VA Benefits for Surviving Spouses**

<http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/dependents/Spouse.htm>

## POW/MIA Recognition Day Ceremony

The Salt Lake City VA POW Advisory Committee, University of Utah AFROTC Arnold Air Society, and the Air Force Association jointly hosted a POW/MIA Recognition Day Ceremony on the University of Utah campus on September 17 and 18, 2006. A Candlelight Vigil was held on Sunday, September 17 at President's Circle, where thousands of candles were illuminated to represent those missing in action. Service members from the Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marines all were present to hear the names read of the missing in action.

An Open House for former POWs was held on Monday, September 18 at the Olpin University Student Union Ballroom. Former POWs in attendance included Richard Burt, Gale Patterson, and Wallace Butterfield from World War II, Jerry Carter from the Korean Conflict, and Jay Hess from Vietnam. All of these former POWs displayed their memorabilia and awards. Captain Gale Patterson, veteran of World War II and POW in Germany during the final seven months of the war, was the keynote speaker. He related several poignant personal stories of his captivity and life as a POW in Germany. He recalled his capture and standing alone near a village near Zagreb, Yugoslavia, handcuffed and remembering what had brought him to this point. Only a few minutes earlier, he had been a pilot of a B-17 with nine other crewmembers. All had been forced to bail out of the crippled B-17, which crashed shortly after they bailed out.

It was their 16<sup>th</sup> mission—the target was an oil refinery North of Vienna, Austria. The date, Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> of October, 1944, would be a day Capt Patterson would never forget. Prior to take-off, the Squadron Commander directed Patterson and another aircraft commander, Kirby, to switch sides in the formation—Patterson was now to fly off the lead on the left wing, versus his normal right wing. There didn't seem to be any particular reason for the last minute change in the formation, and it seemed unimportant at the time.

As the formation reached 29,000 feet, the bombing run began. This was a path of about five minutes to line up the target and drop their bombs. This is also when the enemy flak was the most intense and accurate. Throughout the formation, B-17s were receiving heavy damage from the flak, with gasoline tanks being ruptured and then the gas flowing from the ruptured tanks into the open bomb-bay doors, basically creating flying bombs if a spark accidentally ignited the gasoline. Patterson's plane had now lost two engines, with a third on half power—it was clear they would have to bail out of the crippled aircraft soon. About this time, he looked across the lead plane to see Kirby's left wing burst into a ball of fire—four crewmembers quickly jumped out the rear hatch. The B-17 went into a spin, then exploded into hundreds of pieces. He knew six men had just been killed and with his heart in his throat, he realized that would have been his fate and his crew's fate had he been flying in his usual position in the formation, and the squadron commander not changed his position. Patterson believes it was divine intervention that saved his life that day, along with his fellow crewmembers.

After seven months in three different POW Camps in Germany, with never enough food, bone chilling cold, and two forced marches, he was freed by General Patton's 14<sup>th</sup> Armored Division on April 29, 1945. He was flown to Le Havre, France, where he boarded a troop ship on May 8, VE Day, arriving back in the United States in the Boston Harbor on May 23, 1945. All ten crewmembers aboard his B-17 arrived home by June 1, 1945, with no serious injuries.

To conclude the two day event, a formal Military Retreat was held at the University's President's Circle. Participating organizations in the retreat were the University of Utah Air Force ROTC, a combined University of Utah Navy/Marine Corps ROTC detachment, and a Junior ROTC detachment from East High School (Army) in Salt Lake City. A VFW Honor Guard played taps and fired a 21-gun salute to conclude the ceremony.

**DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS,  
DEPARTMENT OF UTAH  
HAS A WEB PAGE  
located at: [www.utdav.org](http://www.utdav.org)**

## VA Urged Veterans to Wear Medals on Veterans Day



WASHINGTON – The Honorable R. James Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and leaders of major veterans organizations called on America's veterans to help kindle a new spark of patriotism on Veterans Day by wearing the medals they earned during military service.

“We are announcing a *Veterans Pride Initiative* to remind Americans of the pride and honor in the hearts of those who have served,” Nicholson said. “We expect Americans will see our decorated heroes unite in spirit at ceremonies, in parades and elsewhere as a compelling symbol of courage and sacrifice on Veterans Day, the day we set aside to thank those who served and safeguarded our national security.”

The campaign is modeled after a tradition in Australia and New Zealand, countries who honor the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) on April 25. ANZAC Day sees veterans wearing their military decorations whatever they are doing on that day. Nicholson said he hopes a U. S. tradition will ensue to emulate this pride in being a veteran and in honoring our veterans.

VA is offering information about the campaign on its Web page, <http://www.va.gov/veteranspride/>, where veterans also can obtain information about how to replace mislaid medals and learn how to confirm the decorations to which they are entitled.

**George E. Wahlen  
VA Medical Center  
Salt Lake City, Utah**

**“Be Our Messenger and  
If someone you know,  
is interested in  
volunteering please  
have them call.....**

**(801) 584-1241**



# Focus on the Female Veteran

## Highlights from the Women's Veterans Conference in Reno

By Delilah Washburn

TVC Veterans Counselor and Women Veterans Program Manager  
President, National Association of State Women Veterans Coordinators

The seventh annual conference of the National Association of State Women Veterans Coordinators (NASWVC) was held May 30 – June 3, 2006 in Reno. Last year's conference was held in Corpus Christi, Texas, and 18 states were represented. This year, Pam Luce from Kentucky called the roll and 32 states were represented. It is obvious that NASWVC is a growing organization.

Several distinguished guests participated in this year's conference. The Honorable William F. Tuerk, Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, Department of Veterans Affairs, brought greetings and remarks from Secretary Nicholson. Patricia Vandenberg, Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Policy and Planning, stated the mission of VHA is to honor America's veterans by providing exceptional healthcare that improves their health and well-being. She talked about a major initiative pertaining to obesity and diabetes; the VA's vision as a system to be a patient-centered and integrated healthcare organization for veterans; and the VHA's desire to be safe, effective, efficient, and compassionate. Vandenberg outlined the two current areas of concern: access to care and understanding the next generation. She also gave an important reminder - women veterans do not have to be enrolled in VA health care to get treatment for sexual trauma.

Also participating was Dr. Mary Nelson, PHD,

Chair, Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS). The committee reports annually to the Honorable Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense. The committee was chartered to provide independent advice and recommendations on matters and policies relating to women in the military. Members of the committee visit 15 sites, including Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine and Guard units as well as two overseas locations. They also visit troops in Iraq via video teleconferencing. Childcare centers and schools are included when they do installation visits. If there is not a school on post, the members visit a school that is comprised mostly of military children. They organize focus groups with men and women, divided by rank, and also have family focus groups.

Cheryl Beversdorf, RN, MHS, MA, President & CEO, National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, presented information on collaborating with community based organizations serving homeless women veterans. Homelessness is not a condition, it is a result. The result of lack of access to healthcare, lack of livable income, shortage of affordable housing, long separation from family, friends and support networks, high occupational stress, and many other factors

can ultimately lead to homelessness. In the past ten years, homelessness among women veterans has risen from just 2 percent to 7 percent. Women veterans are more than three times more likely to become homeless than non-veteran women.

In 2000, the VA established a homeless Women Veterans Program under the VA Special Need Women's Program. Women Veterans Programs are designed to provide outreach for the community, to identify female veterans who are homeless or at high risk of becoming homeless, provide case management for medical and psychiatric needs, provide assistance with navigating the VA and social welfare systems, provide residential treatment and respond to clinical needs.

By the end of the NASWVC conference, several national resolutions regarding women veterans were adopted, which address violence against women, a call for a study on the increased rate of breast cancer among military women, a call for testing and treatment of coronary microvascular syndrome, increased funding for mental health care, expanded funding to include full-time Women Veterans Program Managers at all VA Medical centers and additional funding for veterans outreach programs.

The next NASWVC conference will be May 15-17, 2007 at the Radisson Hotel in Branson, Missouri.★



A record 32 state Women Veterans Coordinators attended The Seventh Annual Conference of the National Association of State Women Veterans Coordinators, held May 30 – June 3, 2006 in Reno.

## Service-Disabled Veteran- Owned Small Business

The Veterans Benefit Act of 2003 (15 U.S.C. 657f) created the procurement program for small business concerns owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans (commonly referred to as the "Service-Disabled Veteran-owned Small Business (SDVOSB) Procurement Program").

The purpose of the Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business Program is to provide Federal contracting assistance to service-disabled veteran-owned small business concerns.

To increase contract awards to the SDVOSB program the President signed the Service Disabled Veterans Executive Order (EO 13360) on 20 October 2004 mandating more effective implementation of the Service Disable Veterans Goals and set-asides authorized in the Small Business Act referenced above. Subsequently, the Office of Federal Procurement Policy and the Administrator of the Small Business Administrations signed a joint memo on 12 January 2005, requesting each agency develop a strategy to meet the mandates of the Executive Order.

Why am I writing about this you ask? It is because we here at Hill AFB have had difficulty meeting our assigned goal for prime contract awards to SDVOSBs. One reason is because this is a somewhat new program, only been around since 2003, therefore, many firms who could potentially qualify as an SDVOSB may not be aware of the program, or of what it takes to qualify as an SDVOSB, and therefore our pool of available contractors is still pretty small. And the requirements for qualifying as an SDVOSB aren't as dramatic as you might think.

Please help us help you! You've served your country honorably; this program was established to recognize that service and to help you in your business endeavors. To see what you need to do to qualify, go to this website: <http://www.vetbiz.gov/>

It should lead you to most of the important aspects of this program, what you need to do, how to do it, etc. Then if you feel you have met the criteria, and you have a business that can provide something we need, give us a call at (801) 777-4143. We'd love to hear from you and we'd love to do business with you.

### UTAH BOYS' STATE WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY *A Forum in Citizenship, Self-Government and Public Service*

The American Legion, Department of Utah and Weber State University announced the Utah Boys' State curriculum for the Class of 2007 provides (3) semester hours of university credit for those that complete the one week seminar. The credit is generally transferable to other universities and can be used in conjunction with other earned "AP" and concurrent enrollment credits. Utah Boys' State is sponsored to supplement high school civics instruction for students who have completed the 11<sup>th</sup> grade. The Class of 2007 will meet during the week of June 11-15, 2007, on the campus of Weber State University.

Electronic applications and information can be obtained as follows:

[weber.edu/academicaffairs/misc/utboysstate.html](http://weber.edu/academicaffairs/misc/utboysstate.html) (Application Online)

For more information regarding this program or other academic or general information contact one of these numbers:

**Program Information: (801) 539-1013**  
**Academic Information: (801) 626-6516**  
**General Information (801) 626-8732**

For more information about  
obtaining an ad contact the  
Utah Division of Veterans  
affairs.

**1-800-894-9497**



## VA Warns of Telephone Scam

Returning veterans should be aware of a phone scam in the Midwest (Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Michigan, and Minnesota). The scam begins with a phone solicitation asking about deployment and post-deployment related questions, then a second caller on the line asks for their social security number. Last year in October, another similar Midwest scam involved callers identifying themselves as working for the "Patient Care Group," and added that the Department of Veterans Affairs recently changed protocols for dispensing prescriptions and asked for the veteran's credit card number.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs added, "VA does not call veterans and ask them to disclose personal or financial information over the phone and warned veterans not to give their social security numbers or credit card numbers over the phone."

Veterans with questions about VA services should contact the nearest VA medical center or call, toll-free, 1-877-222-8387.

## ATTENTION ALL VETERANS, WIDOWS AND DEPENDENTS

An Outreach representative from the Division of Veterans Affairs will be in your area to assist you in understanding and applying for your rightful VA benefits, preparing and documenting applications for compensation, pension, medical and other benefits.

This is a free service and veterans do not need to be members of any veterans organizations to qualify for assistance.

The outreach representative will be working out of your local Department of Workforce Services Office on scheduled days. This service is offered once or twice a month, depending on you area, please contact you local office for times or see [www.veterans.utah.gov](http://www.veterans.utah.gov) or call 1-800-894-9497 for details.

### HELP WANTED:

### ATTN: OEF/OIF VETERANS

**And other \$\$\$\$ Motivated Individuals!**

**\$1600-\$2000 A month potential!**

Expanding West Valley based company  
currently Seeks motivated hardworking  
individuals for F/T or P/T positions.

Sales, Marketing, Warehouse and  
Customer Service positions available in  
various locations throughout the state  
No experience necessary, training provided  
Management Opportunities Available!

**Call Jim at (801)952-8999  
for application information**

## Vet requests from Utah

**By: Veterans Advisory Council**

As Utah's 2007 legislative session begins, the Governors Veterans Affairs Advisory Council has asked several legislators to run bills proposed by various veterans organizations. Each is designed to address something in the life of Utah's veteran population.

More than twenty items were considered as groups like the Disabled American Veterans, Purple Heart, American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Vietnam Veterans of America asked their members what the legislature could do to make their lives better, or state government regulations less limiting.

At the top of the list of priorities was a request to build the 120 bed state Veterans Nursing Home in western Weber County. Although the Legislature had previously approved bonding for 1/3 of the cost of the facility (with the Federal Government picking up the remaining 2/3), the formula used by the US Department of Veterans Affairs makes receipt of their money at least four years away. Meanwhile, construction costs, according to the state's Division of Facilities Construction and Management (DFCM) estimates, will escalate at \$1.2 million per year, in 2006 dollars.

When told that the waiting list for beds in any facility is more than a year in length, many families of older veterans simply reply that their veteran will have passed away by them. Thus, the need will not be served.

A couple of proposals will, by the time this is published, have been made to Governor Huntsman to get construction started during summer 2007, with completion scheduled for early 2009. Administrators of the Nursing Home program anticipate that, on the day those doors open, all 120 beds will be filled.

### Vets need to Know

Many of the state's 160,000 veterans have no inkling of the various federal and state programs they have earned through their service in the US armed forces. Therefore, The second priority for legislative action is upgrading the Division of Veterans Affairs to Department status.

Proposed in years past, this action would complete the spirit of HB 140, carried by House Speaker Marty Stephens during his final year in that office. His vision was to incorporate all functions of government that touch the lives of veterans into a single office.

Functions such as the state Veterans Cemetery, the current State Veterans Nursing Home, and the outreach program (to go into communities off the Wasatch Front to educate veterans) were consolidated.

But the state is funded in several other areas for the exclusive use of vets. As an example, many Department of Workforce Services offices around the state have individuals whose total compensation is funded by the federal government. Their mission, as stated in the US Department of Labor contract, is to counsel veterans about employment and training. Among the groups are disabled veterans, and new veterans. Unfortunately, on occasion these individuals who are called DVOP(Disabled Veterans Outreach Program) or LVER(Local Veterans' Employment Representative) are required to work on public assistance programs thus diluting their primary emphasis of employment and training. Last year three of the largest veterans organizations passed resolutions at their National Conventions reaffirming the need to emphasis Employment and Training of veterans and condemning the practice of using DVOP/LVER personnel on public assistant program. These resolutions also advocated utilizing these personnel for advising veterans of their earned benefits and programs.

Another example is a two person office, currently in the State's Board of Regents (the office that coordinates the efforts of the State's colleges and universities), who manage 300 or so programs specifically targeting veterans getting university degrees. Although that might seem a large number of programs, the office only has to look at ten to twelve each year, and since these programs are vet-related, it seems to the veterans community that these two individuals should work for the Veterans Affairs Office.

•see Legislature pg 11

## Veterans Issues in Washington

**Washington, DC** - Congressman Bob Filner (D-CA), Chairman-designate of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, named Malcom A. Shorter, a retired Army Lieutenant Colonel with experience on Capitol Hill to lead the House Veterans Affairs panel in the 110th Congress.

Following is a list of current bills in the US Congress that have been referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. For more information on current legislation go to [www.veterans.house.gov](http://www.veterans.house.gov). Also, if have strong support of dissent for any of these issues contact your local Congressional office.

H.CON.RES.5 : Expressing support for the designation and goals of "Hire a Veteran Week" and encouraging the President to issue a proclamation supporting those goals. Sponsor: Rep Holt, Rush D. [NJ] (introduced 1/4/2007)

H.R.23 : To amend title 46, United States Code, to provide benefits to certain individuals who served in the United States merchant marine (including the Army Transport Service and the Naval Transport Service) during World War II. Sponsor: Rep Filner, Bob [CA] (introduced 1/4/2007)

H.R.67 : To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the outreach activities of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep McIntyre, Mike [NC] (introduced 1/4/2007)

H.R.81 : To amend title 38, United States Code, to provide that members of the Armed Forces and Selected Reserve may transfer certain educational assistance benefits to dependents, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Bartlett, Roscoe G. [MD] (introduced 1/4/2007)

H.R.92 : To amend title 38, United States Code, to establish standards of access to care for veterans seeking health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Brown-Waite, Ginny [FL] (introduced 1/4/2007)

H.R.112 : To amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the payment of stipends to veterans who pursue doctoral degrees in science or technology. Sponsor: Rep Davis, Jo Ann [VA] (introduced 1/4/2007)

H.R.156 : To amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the payment of dependency and indemnity compensation to the survivors of former prisoners of war who died on or before September 30, 1999, under the same eligibility conditions as apply to payment of dependency and indemnity compensation to the survivors of former prisoners of war who die after that date. Sponsor: Rep Holden, Tim [PA] (introduced 1/4/2007)

H.R.303 : To amend title 10, United States Code, to permit certain additional retired members of the Armed Forces who have a service-connected disability to receive both disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs for their disability and either retired pay by reason of their years of military service or Combat-Related Special Compensation and to eliminate the phase-in period under current law with respect to such concurrent receipt. Sponsor: Rep Bilirakis, Gus M. [FL] (introduced 1/5/2007)

H.R.402 : To amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for annual cost-of-living adjustments to be made automatically by law each year in the rates of disability compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors of certain service-connected disabled veterans. Sponsor: Rep Knollenberg, Joe [MI] (introduced 1/11/2007)

H.R.463 : To amend title 38, United States Code, to terminate the administrative freeze on the enrollment into the health care system of the Department of Veterans Affairs of veterans in the lowest priority category for enrollment (referred to as "Priority 8"). Sponsor: Rep Rothman, Steven R. [NJ] (introduced 1/12/2007)

H.R.513 : To amend the Service members Civil Relief Act to enhance the protection of credit ratings of active duty military personnel who are activated for military service. Sponsor: Rep Brady, Robert A. [PA] (introduced 1/17/2007)

S.117 : A bill to amend titles 10 and 38, United States Code, to improve benefits and services for members of the Armed Forces, veterans of the Global War on Terrorism, and other veterans, to require reports on the effects of the Global War on Terrorism, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Obama, Barack [IL] (introduced 1/4/2007)

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## Salt Lake City—Remodel/Renovation

**By: Dennis McFall**

Plans are underway to complete the construction of a non-denominational chapel and multi-purpose room at the Utah State Veterans' Nursing Home in Salt Lake City. Current space does not allow for religious meetings in an adequate manner. Funds for the construction have been provided by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS Church) and the Utah State Legislature. Each will provide \$250,000 and the balance will be paid from an asset replacement fund at the nursing home. It is expected that the total cost will approach \$750,000 and construction will include some remodeling of current space to re-locate office space and the existing Board of Trustees meeting room in order to accommodate the current remodel/renovation plans. Contributions to assist in this construction program are welcome and will be greatly appreciated. Selection of an Architectural and Design company is currently in process and bids are expected to be released for the construction contract in February 2007. Those wishing to contribute and assist in this project are asked to contact Dennis McFall at 801-755-8722 for additional information.

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## Military Funerals and Honors

Military Funerals and Honors is a nation-wide program the Utah Army National Guard is implementing in an effort to better serve our Veterans. Our commitment is to honor those who have served our Nation, to recognize their sacrifice and contributions, and to provide the most proficient and professional funeral honors possible. We will be creating highly trained, professional teams to perform military honors whenever called upon. We would also like to assist the different Veterans organizations who are called out on funeral details. There are new benefits for anyone participating in this program. For further information or as needed please call the State Coordinator Jim Slade. He can be reached by phone at 878-5791 or by email at [james.slade@us.army.mil](mailto:james.slade@us.army.mil).

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## Marine Corps League Assists Toys for Tots

The Lieutenant B Simmons Detachment 1159 of the Marine Corps League distributed 13,012 toys to 3,232 children this Christmas across northern Utah, southern Idaho and Rock Springs, WY. This is the second year this detachment has worked with the Marine Corps Reserves in achieving its mission of Toys for Tots. Ben Setter, Jr. Vice Commandant for Detachment 1159, and Cindy Davidson were the main coordinators for this project and part of the success is due to their commitment. This is a project that the Marine Corps League in northern Utah will continue to pursue.

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## Marine Corps League: Newest Detachment in Utah

By: Joseph Surace

The City of Tooele is the recipient of the newly formed Marine Corps League detachment, SGT Rodney M. Davis Detachment #1251. SGT Rodney M. Davis was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions in the Vietnam conflict. This is the fifth detachment formed in the state of Utah. It will be meeting at the Search and Rescue Building in Tooele every third Thursday of the month at 1900 hours.

Marine Hal McConnell was the Organizing Officer and was elected to be its first Detachment Commandant, Marine Duke North is the Sr. Vice Commandant, Jr. Vice Commandant Richard Delgado, Judge Advocate Glen Tomboc, Joy Chamberlin will be the Adjutant/Paymaster, Cordale Gull is the Detachment Chaplain and Rogelio Martinez is the SGT-at-Arms.

## Important Telephones Numbers

Utah State Division of Veterans Affairs	(801) 326-2372
Toll Free Outside Salt Lake City	1-800-894-9497
Utah Veterans Memorial Cemetery	(801) 254-9036
Utah Veterans Nursing Home	(801) 584-1900
SLC VA Regional Office	1-800-827-1000
George E. Wahlen VA Medical Center	(801) 582-1565
Toll Free Outside Salt Lake City	1-800-613-4012
VA Education (G.I. Bill)	1-888-422-4551
Military Order of the Purple Heart	(801) 326-2471
VA Home Loans Eligibility Center	(801) 244-6711
Toll Free Outside Salt Lake City	1-888-244-6711
SLC Vet Center	(801) 584-1294
Provo Vet Center	(801) 377-1117
Veterans Upward Bound	(801) 726-5572
Homeless Veterans Fellowship Ogden	(801) 392-7662
Disable American Veterans	(801) 326-2375

## Important Websites

Utah Division of Veterans Affairs: [www.veterans.utah.gov](http://www.veterans.utah.gov)

Department of Veterans Affairs: [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

## Project Opportunity Involving

By: Jessica Womack and Shannon Mockli

Victoria Marks, acclaimed filmmaker from University of California, Los Angeles, is arriving to Salt Lake City to create a dialogue between Iraqi Veterans and University of Utah Modern Dance students through the creation of a new film. We are University Project Coordinators for this film and are seeking out Veterans who are interested in being in this film. The shooting of this film will take place between the dates of February 19th through March 2nd. Time commitment and meeting place for the film are flexible based on individual needs.

The following is a description of the project: The basic idea of the project is to create "Conversations" between veterans living in SLC and dance students. These conversations will take the form of interviews, shared stories, movement and theater. Ellen Bromberg, Prof. Modern Dance University of Utah will be filming the project and we are planning on creating a documentary of some kind with the material we gather.

We seek to create an opportunity for both the Veteran and University Dance community that simultaneously benefits both populations. We would like to connect with veterans returning from Iraq, but understand that may not be possible. (A reason for seeking this specific population of soldiers is that they are approximately in the same age range as University students. —not to mention the fact that we are all trying to understand what is happening.)

We are hoping to offer an opportunity to veterans to participate in a new community, sharing stories and developing new relationships. We believe that contact between these two groups will yield opportunities to speak about the shared experience of a generation, and to create common bonds across differences of experience, privilege, etc.

Here is our contact information if you know of anyone who would be interested in participating in this project or have any questions: Shannon Mockli, [shannonmockli@yahoo.com](mailto:shannonmockli@yahoo.com), and Jessica Womack, [jswoma@yahoo.com](mailto:jswoma@yahoo.com).

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## Property Tax Abatement Increases

Effective January 2007, the amount that disabled veterans can abate from property tax increased from a maximum of \$206,214 to \$214,263. Increases like this occur annually based on the consumer price index. Another important change affecting the property tax abatement is that effective Jan 2008, disabled veterans will only have to file for the property tax abatement one time, as opposed to every year. What this means is that after the initial filing in 2008, veterans will no longer have to submit all the paper work and forms that they have been doing on an annual basis (unless the percentage of their disability rating changes). This will make things easier and eliminate the need for veterans to chase paperwork and make the trip to the county clerks office. For more information please go to [www.veterans.utah.gov](http://www.veterans.utah.gov).

Disability %	Exemption Amount	Disability %	Exemption Amount
10%	\$21,426.30	60%	\$128,557.80
20%	\$42,852.60	70%	\$149,984.10
30%	\$64,278.90	80%	\$171,410.40
40%	\$85,705.20	90%	\$192,836.70
50%	\$107,131.50	100%	\$214,263.00

## TO ALL RESERVISTS/NATIONAL GUARD OIF/OEF VETERANS

All members of the National Guard and Reserves who have been activated in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom are eligible for two years of care at VA Medical Centers. This is a limited time opportunity for care, you only have two years after returning from deployment for this benefit.

In some instances, care can continue beyond the initial two years, however, the enrollment criteria is stricter.

Call 1-800-613-4012 to take advantage of this opportunity.



Utah Army National Guardsman Paul Holton distributes toys to Iraqi children. He founded Operation Give, a nonprofit organization that coordinates the collection and distribution of items for Iraqi children. Operation Give is also working with Stars for Stripes to send Christmas stockings to troops in Iraq. Courtesy photo from [www.operationgive.org](http://www.operationgive.org)

## Locally Founded Operation Give Supports Troops Overseas

From [www.operationgive.org](http://www.operationgive.org)

ASY from Coast to Coast and Across the

It's Christmas in July for two ASY team members who are teaming up early to ensure that our troops overseas will have overflowing stockings from home this December 25th. "Operation Christmas Stocking" is a collaborative effort between **Operation Give** and **Stars for Stripes**, two ASY groups who work together to support our troops throughout the year. Last year they sent more than six tons of stockings to our troops in Afghanistan, and this year they plan to ship more than twenty tons, at least 10,000 stockings, of Christmas cheer to service members deployed in Iraq. "If we take care of every boot on the ground, then we will start giving them to the kids," said Judy Seale, president and CEO of Stars for Stripes. "[We] cannot send too many." Paul Holton, founder of Operation Give, notes that efforts like Operation Christmas Stocking are important to the troops because it's a tangible show of support from home. Suggested items for donation include: Christmas cards and decorations, CDs/DVDs, hand sanitizer and other personal toiletry items, personal fans, socks, games, calling cards, sunglasses, non-perishable food items, disposable cameras, or toys for the troops to give to Iraqi children. Due to the time it takes for shipments to reach Iraq, the groups are starting early in order to complete the program by October 15th. For more information on how to donate stockings to Operation Christmas Stocking, email [operationgive@comcast.net](mailto:operationgive@comcast.net)



Greg Rowley (left) of the American Legion presents David Mitchell, (right) US Army Veteran who served in both Iraq and Afghanistan with a certificate and medal for his involvement with the American Legion National Convention.

## Legislature

•continued from pg 9

### Moving into the 21st Century

Some have suggested that Utah should continue to manage veterans-related governmental programs as they have always done. But, the state's veterans think Utah needs to jump—with both feet—into the 21st century.

The model suggested for the Utah Department of Veterans Affairs is one that is, in one way or another, nearly the same as is currently used in nearly half the states in America.

It is ironic that the programs and services the States of Utah offers to new veterans, as a result of the Global War on Terror, are spread all over the governmental landscape. While no other state has had the high percentage of mobilization for the War On Terror Utah has, they seem to have better organization of the programs offered.

As members of the Governors Veterans Affairs Advisory Council, we sincerely hope that legislators will see the wisdom in consolidating functions in a single office, so the often-scarce resources available for Utahans who have served their nation as well as their state will be well and

## Harvard Gives Federal Hospitals Top Grades

### Secretary Nicholson: Second Accolade for

WASHINGTON —A comprehensive study by Harvard Medical School concludes that federal hospitals, including those run by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), provide the best care available anywhere for some of the most common life-threatening illnesses.

"This recognition by Harvard should assure veterans of the quality of VA's world-class health care system," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson. "Veterans have earned only the best. And we can prove that's exactly what VA is providing."

The study was published December 11 in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*, a journal for health care professionals. Researchers looked at congestive heart failure, heart attack and pneumonia across the health care industry and found that patients in federal facilities are more likely to receive high-quality care than those in for-profit hospitals.

Dr. Michael J. Kussman, VA's Acting Under Secretary for Health, said the report is the latest example of VA setting standards for health care in the United States.

"This study further demonstrates that VA is providing high quality health care to veterans," Dr. Kussman said. "Our computerized system of electronic health records and performance measurement means that veterans are getting the top-level care and treatment they have earned through service to our country."

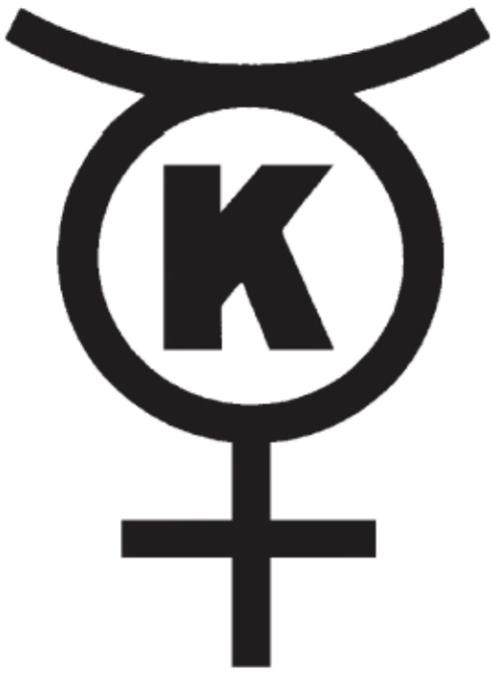
The study found that hospitals operated by the federal government and the military received higher performance ratings than other hospitals studied. A large percentage of federal hospitals are operated by VA.

"This suggests that lessons learned from (VA's) decades-long experience in quality improvement deserve further study," said Dr. Bruce Landon of Harvard, the study's lead author.

The study assessed the quality of care for congestive heart failure, acute myocardial infarction—commonly referred to as heart attack—and pneumonia in more than 4,000 hospitals in the United States.

The Harvard Medical School study is the latest recognition of the high quality of VA health care. In 2006, VA received a prestigious "Innovations in American Government" Award from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government for its advanced electronic health records and performance measurement system.





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