



From Left to Right, Honor Guard Members Salute the Wreath at the Wreaths Across American Ceremony. Doug Larseon, Jeremy Penman, Robert Porter, Governor Jon Huntsman, Wesley Smock, Mark Lamb, Dennis Howland and Terry Schow in front. Also in the Back ground, Bugler Travis Giuden playing taps  
Photo By Larry Dawson.

## The Post 9-11 GI Bill: *The Good and The Bad*

By Berni Davis, Editor

As many of you are already aware, there is a new GI Bill in town, in fact, this is the most comprehensive chapter of the benefit to ever come out. It will include allowances that, until now, have been nearly unheard of outside of the VA's Vocational Rehabilitation program. However, like any new program, there are still many questions to be asked and answered regarding this new chapter.

This benefit will become effective in August of 2009, unlike Chapter 1607, otherwise known as the Reserve Education Assistance Program (REAP), there will not be retroactive payments and no payments made for courses taken prior to August. Also, for individuals who will begin the GI Bill for the first time under the Post 9-11 chapter, there are some On-the-Job Training and Apprenticeship programs that may not be covered. However, those who began those programs on another chapter and then transfer to the new Chapter 33 will still continue to be covered.

One of the major perks of the new chapter is that it can be transferred to a family member, however, in order to be eligible to transfer the Veteran must still be serving and must commit to an additional four years of service. Retirement-eligible service members would be allowed to transfer unused GI Bill benefits to family members if they can complete at least four additional years of service before retiring, under a preliminary decision on the Post-9/11 GI Bill. The decision is both good and bad news for people nearing the end of a military career. It's good news for those with more than 20 years of service, who are rarely prime targets for retention bonuses, because they won't automatically be excluded from one of the most significant upgrades in family benefits since the creation of the all-volunteer force in the early 1970's. The new GI Bill creates a way for career members to pay for the full college education of at least one person who could use benefits created by the new law, or divide the unused benefits among several family members. Benefits will average about

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## Utah Veterans Take Part in National Remembrance

By Larry Dawson, Staff Reporter

On a snowy December 8th, Governor Jon Huntsman laid a wreath at the Viet Nam Memorial at the Utah State Capital grounds. Prior to that event, a ceremony was held in the rotunda of the State Capital with various speeches and tributes given to Utah's Veterans, current service members and their families.

The event was held in conjunction with a national program known as "Wreaths Across America," which focuses on remembering, honoring and teaching the values of freedom for which our military has fought and died. On this date, a wreath was placed in state capitols throughout the United States as a means to express appreciation and remember the past, present and future sacrifices of our military.

Coordinating Utah's program was Dennis Howland from the Ogden VFW Post 1481 and an Honor Guard from the same post. Mr. Howland was asked to offer a moment of silence to remember our state's Veterans, to contemplate national unity and to remember families.

Governor Huntsman's remarks centered on the history of the wreath in assisting people with the importance of memorials and offering "a simple thanks". Governor Huntsman reminded the attendees that between 600 to 800 Utahans serving in the National Guard are in battle zones. That doesn't include other Utahans in other branches of the military services. He asked that people visit the families and offer any help they need; this is the best way to offer our sincere thanks.

Mr. Terry Schow, Executive Director of the Utah Department of Veterans Affairs was the next speaker introduced by Mr. Howland. Mr. Schow asked that we remember our veterans by using the number 1227. He noted that there is 1 surviving World War I Veteran, 2 million World War II Veterans, 2 million Korean War Veterans and 7 million Viet Nam Veterans.

The Wreath was taken outside, by an Honor Guard representing each branch of the Military, into a beautiful snowy backdrop where it was placed by the governor in a place of honor at the Vietnam Memorial. The Wreath was then dedicated by Mark Lamb of Post 1481 and TAPS was played by Travis Gividen.

## VA To Offer Health Care to Previously Ineligible Veterans

From VA Office of Media Relations

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced on January 8<sup>th</sup>, plans to reopen enrollment in its health care system by July 2009 to about 265,000 veterans whose incomes exceed current limits.

"We're pleased to be able to offer what has been called 'the best care anywhere' to many more new veterans," said Dr. James B. Peake, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. "We'll be able to provide these newly enrolled veterans with the kind of timely, high quality health care veterans who already use our system are accustomed to."

The change affects veterans whose incomes exceed the current VA means test and geographic means test income thresholds by 10 percent or less. Congress provided funds in VA's fiscal year 2009 budget to support the new enrollment.

In 1996, Congress established a priority-based enrollment system for VA and a uniform package of medical benefits for all enrollees. The legislation opened enrollment

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**Did You Know . . .****Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance Program (DEA)**

The VA has a program, Dependents' Educational Assistance, which provides education and training opportunities to eligible dependents of certain veterans. The program offers up to 45 months of education benefits. These benefits may be used for degree and certificate programs, apprenticeship, and on-the-job training. If you are a spouse, you may take a correspondence course. Remedial, deficiency, and refresher courses may be approved under certain circumstances.

**Eligibility:** You must be the son, daughter, or spouse of:  
1-A veteran who died or is permanently and totally disabled as the result of a service-connected disability; 2- The disability must arise out of active service in the Armed Forces; 3-A veteran who died from any cause while such service-connected disability was in existence; 3-A servicemember missing in action or captured in line of duty by a hostile force; 4- A servicemember forcibly detained or interned in line of duty by a foreign government or power; 5- A servicemember who is hospitalized or receiving outpatient treatment for a service connected permanent and total disability and is likely to be discharged for that disability.

**Period of Eligibility:** If you are a son or daughter and wish to receive benefits for attending school or job training, you must be between the ages of 18 and 26. In certain instances, it is possible to begin before age 18 and to continue after age 26. Marriage is not a bar to this benefit. If you are in the Armed Forces, you may not receive this benefit while on active duty. To pursue training after military service, your discharge must not be under dishonorable conditions. VA can extend your period of eligibility by the number of months and days equal to the time spent on active duty. This extension cannot generally go beyond your 31<sup>st</sup> birthday, there are some exceptions. Step Children of eligible Veterans are also eligible, however you must show proof of marriage.

If you are a spouse, benefits end 10 years from the date VA finds you eligible or from the date of death of the veteran. If the VA rated the veteran permanently and totally disabled with an effective date of 3 years from discharge a spouse will remain eligible for 20 years from the effective date of the rating. This change is effective October 10, 2008 and no benefits may be paid for any training taken prior to that date. For spouses of servicemembers who died on active duty benefits end 20 years from the date of death.

**How to Apply:** Obtain and complete VA Form 22-5490, Send it to the VA regional office. A parent or guardian must sign the application for those under 18.

If you have started training, take your application to your school or employer. Ask them to complete VA Form 22-1999, Enrollment Certification, and send both forms to VA.

**Widows of Service Connected Veterans Benefits**

From VA Benefits Update and Assistant Director National Veterans Service Gerald Manar notice 18 Dec & VA News Release 24 Dec 08

Every surviving spouse of a veteran receiving VA disability benefits at the time of his death, if the death was after 31 DEC 96, should call the VA. On 12 DEC 08, the headline War veteran widows wrongly denied help in an AP story told the sad tale of another benefits miscue at the Department of Veterans Affairs. In recent years VA has been plagued by negative headlines, from a stolen laptop with personal information on millions of veterans to claims document shredding at a majority of VA regional offices around the nation. The War veteran widows headline was not exactly accurate. As Paul Harvey says, here's the rest of the story:

Each year the Federal government pays compensation and pension to millions of disabled veterans. Compensation is paid for service-connected disabilities (war service not required); pension goes to wartime veterans who are totally disabled and have a low income. Checks are direct deposited or mailed out each month for the preceding month.

Under the law, both benefits end on the last day of the month in the month preceding the veteran's death (e.g., if a veteran dies on 10 JUN, the benefit is terminated on 31 MAY). Since it may take days or weeks for VA to receive word of a veteran's death, and may take more time to process that information, benefit checks are often sent out after a veteran dies.

In 1996 Congress changed the law to allow the surviving spouse (for the sake of simplicity, let's call them widows) to receive or keep the veterans benefit for the month of death. This change applies to the widows of all veterans, whether the veteran had wartime service or not.

VA's implementation of the change in law was less than elegant: to make it easy on itself widows were required to contact the VA to claim that last check. Usually, that claim was in the form of an application for death benefits. Those who were awarded death benefits received either an amount equal to the last check or their new death benefit, whichever was greater.

The problem, of course, was that many widows did not apply for death benefits or payment of the last check. As a consequence, a large number of widows failed to receive money to which they were entitled. To be fair, most of these checks were for \$100-200:

real money but not usually crucial to making the mortgage. However, some were \$2,500 or more: serious money that could spell the difference between eating every day of the month and skipping meals or not paying bills.

VA will begin issuing retroactive payments to eligible surviving spouses at the end of DEC 08. Payments will continue to be issued as additional unpaid beneficiaries are identified and VA is able to obtain current address information.

VA is in the process of identifying every veteran who died between 1996 and December 2008 and was receiving a compensation or pension check when he died. It is reviewing its computer records to see if the veteran was married at the time of death and working with Social Security to obtain current addresses for widows. VA promises to make press announcements, news releases and perform outreach to try and locate every widow who may be entitled to the veteran's last check. To date VA has identified nearly 11,000 surviving spouses of deceased veterans who will receive a lump-sum payment to correct an error in their VA benefits. Payments were to be released to these survivors on 29 DEC 09. The total value of the payments is about \$24 million. Also documented were more than 73,000 who had been previously paid.

VA promises to fix the computer program. And it has briefed the major veteran service organizations. VA says that it wants every surviving spouse of a veteran who died after 31 DEC 96, who is unsure whether they received the veterans last check either separately or as part of their award of death benefits, to call 1-800-749-8387 Mon thru Fri 07-1900 CST and speak with a counselor. The counselor will need information that identifies the veteran (either his Social Security number or his VA claim number). They will also ask for the full name of the surviving spouse, a current address and a phone number. The VA counselor will forward that information to people who will research VA records to see if the last check was ever paid. If it was not paid, and the caller can be identified as the surviving spouse, then VA will issue a new check. Inquiries may also be submitted through the Internet at <http://www.vba.va.gov/survivorsbenefit.htm>.

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Veterans Memorial Park and Cememtry on Memorial Day where flags are placed on the Veterans grave. Photo By Berni Davis.

**Veterans Voice ad rates:**

Full Page (10x16): \$450  
1/2 Page (10x8): \$280  
1/4 Page (5x8): \$160  
1/8 Page (5x4): \$100  
1/16 page (2x5): \$ 50

Email your suggestions  
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It's your Voice, let it be heard

USE YOUR VOICE!!!  
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## Disney Parks Celebrate U.S. Military With Free, Multi-day Admission to Theme Parks in 2009

From Walt Disney World Public Relations Office

As Disney Parks ask "What Will You Celebrate?" and invite guests to turn their personal milestones into magical family vacations in 2009, America's military personnel will have one more reason to celebrate: Free multi-day admission to Disney's U.S. theme parks.

With the "Disney's Armed Forces Salute" offer, active and retired U.S. Military personnel, including active members of the United States Coast Guard and activated members of the National Guard or Reservists, can enjoy complimentary, multi-day admission into Disney's U.S. Theme parks, great rates at select Walt Disney World and Disneyland Resort hotels, and additional special ticket offers for family members and friends.

"For so many of the men and women who serve in our U.S. Military, time together with their families is cause enough for celebration," said Jay Rasulo, chairman of Walt Disney Parks and Resorts. "We are grateful for their service and hope 'Disney's Armed Forces Salute' will allow our troops to create wonderful, magical memories with their family and friends."

At Disneyland Resort in Southern California:

Through June 12, 2009, each active or retired member of the U.S. Military can receive one complimentary three-day "Disney's Armed Forces Salute" ticket valid for admission to both Disneyland and Disney's California Adventure parks. During the offer period, active or retired U.S. Military personnel also may make a onetime purchase of an adult or child three-day "Disney's Armed Forces Salute Companion" ticket for up to five family members (including spouse) or friends for the price of an adult 1-Day Park Hopper ticket.

Disneyland Resort hotels are also offering special room rates for active or retired military personnel. For example, at Disney's Paradise Pier Hotel, active or retired members of the military and their families may find hotel rooms starting at \$119 per night during value season, with great savings during other times of the offer period. This offer is available through June 12, 2009, and the number of rooms available at these special rates is limited.

For information regarding "Disney's Armed Forces Salute" at the Disneyland Resort, or to make reservations, military personnel may call 714/956-6424. At the Walt Disney World Resort in Florida:

From January 4 to December 23, 2009, each active or retired member of the U.S. military may obtain one complimentary five-day "Disney's Armed Forces Salute" ticket with Park Hopper and Water Park Fun & More options. This ticket is valid for five days of admission into the four Walt Disney World theme parks, plus a total of five visits to a choice of a Disney water park, DisneyQuest Indoor Interactive Theme Park or certain other attractions. During this offer period, active or retired U.S. military personnel may also make a one-time purchase of up to a maximum of five, five-Day "Disney's Armed Forces Salute Companion" tickets for \$99 per ticket, plus tax, for family members (including spouse) or friends. Although this ticket for family members and friends does not include either the Park Hopper or Water Park Fun & More options, this ticket can be upgraded to add either such option, or both, for an additional \$25, plus tax, per option. All tickets and options are non-transferable and must be used by Dec. 23, 2009. Ask about the great rates that may be available at select Walt Disney World or Disneyland

Resort hotels for active or retired U.S. military personnel during this offer period.

For information on the "Disney's Armed Forces Salute" offer at the Walt Disney World or Disneyland Resort, or to make reservations, active and retired U.S. Military personnel may call the ITT office on their base. Information is also available at [www.disneyworld.com/military](http://www.disneyworld.com/military).

Other Offer Details:

Complimentary "Disney's Armed Forces Salute" tickets for the Walt Disney World or Disneyland Resort may be obtained only by active or retired U.S. military personnel, including active members of the United States Coast Guard and activated members of the National Guard or Reservists.

Please see a participating U.S. military base ticket office for an exchange certificate for the complimentary "Disney's Armed Forces Salute" ticket for the Walt Disney World or Disneyland Resort. The exchange certificate will need to be redeemed for such ticket by the active or retired military personnel at a Main Entrance theme park ticket window. (maximum of 1 such complimentary ticket per service member, regardless of where the exchange certificate is obtained).

"Disney's Armed Forces Salute Companion" tickets for family members and friends may be purchased only by active or retired U.S. military personnel, including active members of the United States Coast Guard and activated members of the National Guard or Reservists (or their spouses, but not both).

"Disney's Armed Forces Salute Companion" tickets for admission to the Disneyland Resort can be purchased only at participating U.S. military base ticket offices. "Disney's Armed Forces Salute Companion" tickets for admission to the Walt Disney World Resort can be purchased only at participating U.S. military base ticket

offices (including at the Shades of Green Resort at the Walt Disney World Resort), or at Main Entrance theme park ticket windows.

Military personnel (or their spouses) who purchase "Disney's Armed Forces Salute Companion" tickets for family members and friends at participating U.S. military base ticket offices (including at the Shades of Green Resort at the Walt Disney World Resort) will receive exchange certificates to be redeemed by such military personnel (or their spouses) for tickets at Main Entrance theme park ticket windows (one ticket per exchange certificate).

The military personnel (or spouse) will be required to present valid military identification (which, for activated members of the National Guard or Reservists, also includes orders showing active status between Jan. 1, 2008 – Dec. 23, 2009 for the Walt Disney World Resort and between Jan. 4, 2009 – June 12, 2009 for the Disneyland Resort) for all ticket transactions (including to exchange and redeem the exchange certificates for the tickets at Main Entrance theme park ticket windows). A valid ID may also be required for admission.

"Disney's Armed Forces Salute Companion" tickets are limited to five per service member (regardless of place of purchase and whether purchased by service member or spouse) and all five must be purchased at the same time. Accordingly, no service member (or spouse) may purchase "Disney's Armed Forces Salute Companion" tickets at any military base ticket office if that service member (or spouse) previously purchased "Disney's Armed Forces Salute Companion" tickets (whether at that same military base ticket office or at any other military base ticket office or place).

First day of use of "Disney's Armed Forces Salute" complimentary tickets and "Disney's Armed Forces

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### Donate your used vehicle, running or not, to the Disabled American Veterans, Department of Utah (DAV)

The TAX-DEDUCTIBLE proceeds from your donated vehicle will assist the DAV with purchase of new vans, used to transport our veterans to and from their VA Medical appointments.

**CALL 1-801-359-8168**

**DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS**

**DEPARTMENT OF UTAH**

**273 EAST 800 SOUTH**

**SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84111**



Utah DAV Members at the Scholarship Dinner at the University of Utah. From Left to Right: Eric McGinnis, National Service Officer Supervisor; John Maher, Adjutant; Heidi Hopper, HSC; Student; Jack Bills, Finance Committee; and Dave Estey, Department Commander. Three students on back row. Photo courtesy of the DAV, Department of Utah.

## Utah DAV Offers Scholarships

By John Maher, DAV, Dept. of Utah Adjutant

The Disabled American Veterans, Department of Utah, established two ongoing scholarships funds with the University of Utah, dating back to 1981. Each scholarship, one is the Endowed Scholarship in the Department of Physical Therapy and the second in Nursing and Health, is awarded on an annual basis by a selection process established by the university.

The scholarship in Physical Therapy is awarded annually to junior, senior, or graduate student in the Department of Physical Therapy who are pursuing studies in physical therapy that have excelled academically and are in need of financial assistance. Applicants must have worked or be working with those who are physically handicapped or disabled or have a desire to do so upon completion of their training, and must be residents of the State of Utah. Preference shall be given to disabled American Veterans or children of disabled veterans as established by Federal statutes

who would qualify under the terms of the agreement. The ending Market value of this fund as of 6/30/2008 was established at \$81,886.

The scholarship for the school of nursing has the identical requirement but it also includes a statement which asks that those who receive assistance from the scholarship fund shall, when they are financially able and capable to do so, reimburse the scholarship fund an amount equal to that which they have received so that future students may have the opportunity to receive assistance. The ending Market value of this fund as of 6/30/2008 was established at \$81,837.

These DAV scholarships make it possible for students to reach their educational goals through financial assistance and enrichment programs that include service leaning, clinical research and community outreach. DAV support enables students to participate fully while juggling multiple responsibilities of family, and academics.

## Benefits Delivery At Discharge

By Berni Davis, Editor

The US Department of Veterans Affairs, in an effort to expedite claims filed by servicemembers still in service, has implemented the Benefits Delivery at Discharge Program, referred to as BDD by those at the VA and service organizations. This program involves service members filing their claims for service connected disability when they are 180-90 days away from getting out of the military.

The benefits of this program are that the exam's that are required for the VA to grant any benefits are completed by the military and sent to the VA Regional Office for processing with all necessary evidence. This then is a ready to rate claim and the VA has less developing they must do, or less evidence they have to track down.

These claims are all centralized, all service members whose home of record is west of the Mississippi river

are sent the Salt Lake City, the rest are sent to Winston-Salem, NC.

Veterans Service Organizations become very important for these specific claims because the service officers make sure all rating are assigned properly and also act as a central point of contact for Veterans outside of Utah who may have a difficult time contacting the Salt Lake Regional Office by phone.

The American Legion recently deployed a National BDD Representative to the Salt Lake Regional Office. This representative reviews rating decision for recently discharged or retired military personnel that have requested representation from the American Legion.

This representative, after reviewing the rating decisions and the claims files, attempts to resolve any errors or omission with the VA office prior to the finalization of the rating. This results in fewer appeals by the Veterans and less delays. This representative can be contacted at (801) 326-2381. The DAV and VFW also have representatives for the BDD program in Salt Lake.

### EXPANDED HEALTH BENEFITS

As of January 2008, medical and dental benefits have been expanded for Veterans of OEF/OIF. Previously, these Veterans were eligible for 2 years of medical care and a one time dental treatment that had to be applied for within 90 days of discharge. The new benefit has expanded that coverage to 5 years and the time to apply for the dental treatment to 180 days. To apply for your medical benefits log on to <http://www1.va.gov/health/index.asp> or call 1-800-613-4012.

### Health Care Continued from page 1

in VA's health care system to all eligible veterans and required that each year the Secretary of Veterans Affairs assess veterans' demand for services and determine if the necessary resources are available to provide timely, quality care to all enrollees.

Enrollment for the lowest priority of the eight groups—veterans who are not being compensated for a military-related disability and who have incomes above a set threshold—was suspended on January 18, 2003, although veterans in that priority group who were already enrolled for care were permitted to remain enrolled.

VA originally suspended enrollment for Priority 8 veterans because it was unable to provide all enrolled veterans with timely access to its health care due to a tremendous growth in the number of veterans then seeking enrollment. VA now plans to reopen enrollment for a portion of these veterans without compromising the Department's ability to provide high quality health care services to all enrolled veterans who are eligible for care.

VA's computer systems are being modified to accommodate the changes, and the Department is preparing communication and education materials to ensure that Congress, veterans service organizations, and the public are aware of the coming changes.

"The rule will take effect by June 30, 2009, if the regulatory process proceeds smoothly," Peake said. "We look forward to welcoming these newly eligible veterans into the VA system. VA will continue to monitor wait times to ensure the quality of care is not adversely affected."

## 1st Annual Disabled American Veterans Van Program Fund raiser

- Saturday March 14, 2009
  - Fraternal Order of Eagles Aerie 67  
- 1104 West 2100 South Salt Lake City, Utah
  - 5:30 PM
  - \$5.00 per Ticket
- Fun Night \* Raffle \* Spaghetti Dinner \* Lots of Friendship

The DAV Van Transportation Program transports ALL veterans in the outlining areas to the George E. Wahlen VA Medical Center in Salt lake City for medical appointments There is no costs to any veteran for this very valuable program: all service organization members as well as nonmember veterans are welcome to schedule a free ride to their appointments. One hundred percent (100%) of all monies raised from this event will be used to purchase replacement vans. Call Heidi Hopper at (801) 582-1565 Ext. 2003 to schedule an appointment.

### RESERVATION FORM

{ } Please reserve \_\_\_\_\_ tickets in the name of \_\_\_\_\_ to be picked up at the door. Please find Check # \_\_\_\_\_ enclosed.  
{ } I am unable to attend but wish to make a donation to the Van Program. Please find my check \_\_\_\_\_ enclosed.

PLEASE MAIL RESERVATIONS AND DONATIONS TO DAV HEADQUARTERS: 273 EAST 800 SOUTH, SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84111 John P. Maher

# American Legion Department of Utah Receives 2008 Best of Salt Lake City Award: U.S. Local Business Association's Award Plaque Honors the Achievement

From the U.S. Local Business Association

WASHINGTON D.C., December 4, 2008 — American Legion Department of Utah has been selected for the 2008 Best of Salt Lake City Award in the Non-Profit Organizations category by the U.S. Local Business Association (USLBA).

The USLBA "Best of Local Business" Award Program recognizes outstanding local businesses throughout the country. Each year, the USLBA identifies companies that they believe have achieved exceptional marketing success in their local community and business category. These are local companies that enhance the positive image of small business through service to their customers and community.

Various sources of information were gathered and analyzed to choose the winners in each category. The 2008 USLBA Award Program focused on quality, not quantity. Winners are determined based on the information gathered both internally by the USLBA and data provided by third parties.

About U.S. Local Business Association (USLBA) U.S. Local Business Association (USLBA) is a Washington D.C. based organization funded by local businesses operating in towns, large and small, across America. The purpose of USLBA is to promote local business through public relations, marketing and advertising.

The USLBA was established to recognize the best of local businesses in their community. Our organization works exclusively with local business owners, trade groups, professional associations, chambers of commerce and other business advertising and marketing groups. Our mission is to be an advocate for small and medium size businesses and business entrepreneurs across America.

If you need to contact the American Legion Service Officer, the number to the Salt Lake office is (801) 326-2380. They can also be reached across Northern and Eastern Utah during monthly outreach.



*Fox Company was activated December 1, and gather for a photo opt with the women involved with gathering the camouflage scarves (so far over 500 have been crocheted, and requests are still coming in from around the state). Involved in this effort are the Ladies Relief Society (LDS Church), Marine Corps League Auxiliary, Unwind Yarn Store, Lady Volunteers from the George E. Wahlen VA Medical Center, Lady Volunteers from the Intermountain Medical Center, Ladies from the Presbyterian and Lutheran Churches in Cedar City & St. George, and friends and families of Fox Company. The Scarves will be mailed directly to the troops when they arrive in country and will include comfort items for their use.*

## Veterans Tribute Tower Needs Funds to Become Reality

This year the people of Utah will have a golden opportunity to honor the memory and sacrifices of our veterans as the new Veterans Nursing Home is completed in Ogden. Here, on the grounds, a Veterans Tribute Tower will be erected and dedicated with a 250- pound bronze bell, poured, polished and rung for the first time on site.

The tower will be fabricated by the Verdin Company, as a part of their efforts to erect 100 of these towers across America. The tower will be transported to Utah, along with the company's mobile foundry unit. During a two-day series of events, the Tower will be unveiled and erected near the entrance of the new nursing home. With community

participating in the casting of the bell, a special dedication ceremony will include the bell's first ringing.

\$320,000 must be raised from the community in order for this tribute to be placed. All donations will be accepted including the use of a crane to transport the tower and laborers to complete the project.

Only two tribute towers have been erected thus far, one in Indiana in 2007 and the other in Florida in 2008.

If you would like to participate or get more information please contact 1-800-894-9497.

Veterans Tribute Tower, honoring the past, saluting the present and inspiring the future for all American Veterans.



*Above, members of the Honor Guard place the wreath at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at the Utah State Capitol Grounds. Right, honor guard members carry the wreath down the steps of the capitol on a very snowy December day to join in the Nation Wide Wreaths Across America Ceremony. Photo's by Larry Dawson*



# The VA Salt Lake City Health Care Opens A New Community Based Outpatient Clinic in West Valley

From the VA Health Public Affairs Office

The opening of this new Western Salt Lake Community Based Outpatient Clinic (photo left) is an important event for the Salt Lake City VA Healthcare System and the Department of Veterans Affairs and further demonstrates our commitment to meet the healthcare needs of our veterans. This new CBOC can serve up to 9,000 veterans, and is already taking good care of patients as of January 5, 2009. Due to a growth in our Veteran population in the western part of Salt Lake and Tooele

counties; coupled with the need for more space within our main facility at the George E. Wahlen VA Medical Center, we decided to relocate our Red Clinic to the new clinic located on 2750 South 5600 West in West Valley City, Utah.

Veterans can receive their primary care, mental health care, pharmacy, and laboratory services. We also offer nursing case management, diabetic education, nutrition (dietician) services, and diabetic retinal (eye) screening. Please joins us for our Grand Opening Celebration



The Outside of the new Outpatient Clinic in West Valley City, photo courtesy of VA Health System, Salt Lake City.

Friday, January 23, 2009 at 11 a.m.

If you have questions about this move or feel the need to change your primary care provider assignment, you may call (801)584-1280.

## Class Action Lawsuit Filed Against Department of Defense

Source: The News Emily McIntosh article 3 Dec 08

**DOD PTSD LAWSUIT:** Lawyers with Center City's Morgan Lewis & Bockius have filed a class-action suit against the Department of Defense, alleging that it illegally denied medical and disability benefits to Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder. The lawsuit said the Army failed to follow its own rules when it denied the services and payments to the veterans. "Almost two million U.S. armed services personnel have been deployed around the world as part of the U.S. efforts to combat global terrorism," said the lawsuit, filed in the U.S. Court of Federal Claims in Washington. "Countless thousands of these service men and women have been exposed to traumatic events during combat, and many have returned home with a variety of psychological and mental injuries." The lawsuit shines a light on the long-festering psychological and physical ailments of some returning veterans. It also illustrates a long-standing tradition among larger law firms in which they donate legal services to persons who cannot afford legal representation. Lawyers say they hope to burnish the reputation of their profession with these so called pro-bono representations, while also bolstering the legal system itself, which is, in the end, the source of their income.

The class-action lawsuit was filed on behalf of five Army veterans along with the National Veterans Legal Services Program, a nonprofit group that represents veterans and active service members in disputes with the government. The veterans allege that they each were discharged from duty after an Army review board concluded that they had suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and thus could no longer serve. Yet, in violation of federal law, the suit contends, the veterans' disabilities were not rated severe enough to qualify them for both ongoing disability payments and medical coverage for themselves and their families. The Army has not seen the suit and, as a result, declined to

comment on it, according to Lt. Colonel George Wright of the Public Affairs Office in Washington. According to Barton Stichman, co-director of the veterans legal services program, the veterans named in the lawsuit should qualify for between \$120 and \$660 a month in disability payments. James Kelley II, a Morgan Lewis labor and employment lawyer based in Washington who helped draft the complaint, said that class action, if it succeeds, could hike benefits for thousands of veterans who have been denied disability and medical benefits. Congress added language to a defense appropriation bill earlier this year that sought to require the Pentagon to pay the benefits, Kelley said. "The Army disregarded that," he said.

Each of the veterans named in the lawsuit saw combat action in either Iraq or Afghanistan and returned home with classic symptoms of (PTSD) - anxiety attacks, moment of paranoia, sleepless nights, nightmares and other maladies. One of the plaintiffs, Juan Perez, enlisted in the Army in May 2002 and was deployed to Iraq a year later. He was stationed near the border of Iraq and Syria. While there, he was exposed to multiple explosions from mortars, IEDs (Improvised Explosive Devices) or roadside bombs, and small-arms fire. He returned to the United States after completing a tour of duty. He was sent back to Iraq in April 2005 and again was involved in combat. For his service, he was given the Army Commendation Medal and the Combat Action Patch. When Perez returned to the United States, he was diagnosed with traumatic brain injury and PTSD. In APR 06 he was found unfit for continued military service because of the disorder, but the Army failed to sign off on disability payments for him, according to the lawsuit. "There is a pact our country has with people who serve our country in time of war," said Stichman. "And it is very disappointing when the Army does not comply with that."

## VA Ramps Up Job Search for Injured Vets

From the VA Office of Media Relations

WASHINGTON – Thirty percent of employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) are veterans – the second highest ranking among cabinet departments after the Department of Defense — and nearly 8 percent of VA employees are service-connected disabled veterans. But the VA intends to increase the number of disabled veterans who obtain employment in its workforce.

"I am proud of this effort," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "VA knows the true quality of our men and women, and we should be a leader in employing them."

Peake said all severely injured veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will be contacted by VA's Veterans Employment Coordination Service to determine their interest in — and qualifications for — VA jobs. So far, that office has identified 2,300 severely injured veterans of those wars, of whom 600 expressed interest in VA employment.

The coordination service was established a year ago to recruit veterans into VA, especially those seriously injured in the current wars. It has nine regional coordinators working with local facility human resources offices across the country not only to reach out to potential job candidates but to ensure that local managers know about special authorities available to hire veterans. For example, qualified disabled veterans rated by the Defense Department or VA as having a 30 percent or more service-connected disability can be hired non-competitively.

"Our team is spreading the message that VA is hiring, and we want to hire disabled veterans," said Dennis O. May, director of VA's Veterans Employment Coordination Service.

VA coordinators participate in military career fairs and transition briefings, and partner with veterans organizations, the Department of Labor's Veterans Employment and Training Service, as well as VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service, the Marine Corps' Wounded Warrior Regiment and the Army's Warrior Transition Units.

### Volunteers Needed

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- Ft. Douglas Museum
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Call 1-800-894-9497 to find out about opportunities in your area

# VA Assisting Veterans with Health Care Cost

From VA Office of Media Relations

WASHINGTON — For veterans struggling financially due to a job loss or decreased income, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers an assortment of programs that can relieve the costs of health care or provide care at no cost.

“With the downturn in the economy, VA recognizes that many veterans will feel the effects,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. “Therefore, it is important that eligible veterans learn of the many ways VA has to help them afford the health care they have earned.”

Veterans whose previous income was ruled too high for VA health care may be able to enter the VA system based upon a hardship if their current year’s income is projected to fall below federal income thresholds due to a job loss, separation from service or some other financial setback. Veterans determined eligible due to hardship can avoid copays applied to higher-income veterans. Qualifying veterans may be eligible for enrollment and receive health care at no cost.

Also eligible for no-cost VA care are most veterans who recently returned from a combat zone. They are entitled to five years of free VA care. The five-year “clock” begins with their discharge from the military, not their departure from the combat zone.

Each VA medical center across the country has an enrollment coordinator available to provide veterans information about these programs. Veterans may also contact VA’s Health Benefits Service Center at 1-877-222 VETS (8387) or visit the VA health eligibility website at [www.va.gov/healtheligibility](http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility).

## HAVE YOU HEARD?

Wounded service members leaving the military will have easier, quicker access to veterans benefits with the expansion of a pilot program offering streamlined disability evaluations at 19 military installations, representing all military departments. The Disability Evaluation System (DES) pilot started in the National Capitol Region in coordination with DoD to test a new process that eliminates duplicative, time-consuming and often confusing elements of the current disability processes of the two departments. The pilot has already expanded to Fort Meade, Md. and Fort Belvoir, Va. The remaining 17 installations will begin upon completion of site preparations and personnel orientation and training, during an eight-month period ending in May 2009. In November 2007, VA and DoD implemented the pilot test for disability cases originating at the three major military treatment facilities in the national capitol region. To date, over 700 service members have participated in the pilot. The single disability examination pilot is focused on recommendations from the reports of the Task Force on Returning Global War on Terrorism Heroes, the Independent Review Group, the President’s Commission on Care for America’s Returning Wounded Warriors (the Dole/Shalala Commission), and the Commission on Veterans’ Disability Benefits.

# New Law Authorizes Veterans’ Salutes during National Anthem

From VA Office of Media Relations, Washington DC

WASHINGTON — Veterans and active-duty military not in uniform can now render the military-style hand salute during the playing of the national anthem, thanks to changes in federal law that took effect this month.

“The military salute is a unique gesture of respect that marks those who have served in our nation’s armed forces,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. “This provision allows the application of that honor in all events involving our nation’s flag.”

The new provision improves upon a little known change in federal law last year that authorized veterans to render the military-style hand salute during the raising, lowering or passing of the flag, but it did not address salutes during the national anthem. Last year’s provision also applied to members of the armed forces while not in uniform.

Traditionally, members of the nation’s veterans service organizations have rendered the hand-salute during the national anthem and at events involving the national flag while wearing their organization’s official headgear.

The most recent change, authorizing hand-salutes during the national anthem by veterans and out-of-uniform military personnel, was sponsored by Sen. Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma, an Army veteran. It was included in the Defense Authorization Act of 2009, which President Bush signed on Oct. 14.

The earlier provision authorizing hand-salutes for veterans and out-of-uniform military personnel during the raising, lowering or passing of the flag, was contained in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2008, which took effect Jan. 28, 2008.

# Nearly 11,000 Survivors to Receive Retroactive Payments by New Years: Search for Other Eligible Survivors Continues

From VA Office of Media Relations

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has identified nearly 11,000 surviving spouses of deceased veterans who will receive a lump-sum payment before the New Year to correct an error in their VA benefits. Also documented were more than 73,000 who had been previously paid. VA officials are still tracking down eligible survivors.

“I am pleased that our task force working to correct this problem has been able to identify this first group this week,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. “We understand the difference these funds can make for these surviving spouses, especially during the holiday season.”

Payments will be released to these survivors on Dec.

29. The total value of the payments is about \$24 million.

At issue is a 1996 federal law that makes a surviving spouse eligible to receive the veteran’s VA compensation or pension benefit for the month of the veteran’s death. VA failed to properly implement that law in all cases.

Most likely to have been affected by this problem are surviving spouses who never applied for VA survivors’ benefits following the death of a veteran. Eligible for the payment are surviving spouses of veterans who died after Dec. 31, 1996. The Department doesn’t have current addresses for many of them, which makes the process of contacting them difficult.

VA has established a special Survivor Call Center (1-800-749-8387) for spouses who believe they may be eligible for this retroactive benefit. The Call Center is open Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Central Standard Time. Inquiries may also be submitted through the Internet at <http://www.vba.va.gov/survivorsbenefit.htm>.



**Vet Center Mobile Outreach-** By Ray M. Ross, LCSW, Team Leader

The Salt Lake City and Provo Vet Centers will soon have a new Mobile Vet Center to provide outreach and readjustment counseling services to veterans and their families throughout the state of Utah. These vehicles are equipped with confidential counseling offices and can also be used as an emergency response vehicle. Ray Ross, Team Leader of the Vet Centers, stated that this will add to their current Outreach they are already providing and will be a new chapter in their 30 year program. For further information, please contact the Vet Center at (801) 584-1294 or toll free (800)613-4012, extension 1294.

### New GI Bill: Continued from page 1

\$80,000 spread over 36 months, though amounts will vary by location. Basic benefits, if not divided among multiple people, would cover the full cost of tuition and fees for a four-year public college or university, plus a living stipend based on rental housing costs near the campus and a \$1,000 annual book allowance. The bad news is that some retirement-eligible people won't qualify because high-year tenure rules will force them out in fewer than four years. And if they sign a commitment, begin sharing their benefits but fail to serve the full four years, they could be forced to repay the government for the used benefits.

This benefit is paid in four ways, 1- Tuition and Fees paid to the school; 2- Monthly Housing Allowance paid to the Veteran; 3- Books and supplies stipend paid to the Veteran; and 4- a relocation allowance paid only to certain Veterans who must relocate from a rural area to attend school.

The amount that the Veteran will get of the previous types of payments is based on the amount of time spent on active duty. A maximum amount is predetermined for each type of payment. Tuition and fees is based on the highest, in state, public institution's tuition in the state where the Veteran's state, for Utah it is the University of Utah. The housing allowance is based on the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) rate for an active duty E-5 with dependents in the same zip code, which for Salt Lake County is \$1,223, Ogden area is \$990 and Utah County area is \$1,055. Tuition and fees is \$1,000 per year and the rural relocation is a one time \$500

## VA Launches Partnership for NGO Outreach Peake: VA Tapping the Power of Communities

From the VA Office of Media Relations

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced a new partnership to help non-government organizations (NGOs) plan, improve and carry out their own programs on behalf of veterans, their families and their survivors.

"VA has a track record of success in working with non-profit groups and businesses that have their own programs for veterans, but we can do more" said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "By tapping into the power and resources of NGOs, we can ensure more veterans, families and survivors receive not only VA services, but also other assistance in their own communities."

Under the new *NGO Gateway Initiative*, launched today with the Veterans Coalition Inc., a non-profit organization formed more than two years ago by several major national veterans groups, the Veterans Coalition is available to assist NGOs in identifying the unmet needs of veterans, families and survivors, working with VA to help minimize duplication of effort and confusion among NGOs with programs for veterans. In addition, the program will encourage continuous feedback from NGOs on issues such as physical and mental health, employment, and satisfaction with government services and benefits affecting veterans.

"The Veterans Coalition is dedicated to marshalling energy and resources from all communities to better serve service members, veterans and their families", said Harry Walters, chairman of the Veterans Coalition and former administrator of the Veterans Administration. "Together we can do a better job than any of us can do alone."

VA will provide a senior-level, career federal employee

payment. The BAH rate gets tricky if one is doing on-line course, in some cases it will not be paid.

The chart, right, shows what percentage of each maximum payment will be paid for the amount of active duty time spent after Sept. 10<sup>th</sup>, 2001 NOT including basic and advanced training or other active duty for training. This is also cumulative, which is a major difference from the CH 1607 benefit, meaning a National Guard member who deployed three different times can add up the months from each deployment.

Now, the VA has developed a program, The Yellow Ribbon Program, to assist students who are attending schools more expensive than what CH 33 will cover. This is an optional program that the VA and the school enter in together where to school can waive half of the remaining tuition and the VA will pay the other half.

For example, a Veteran who served 3 year active duty and thus qualifies for the full benefit, the school the Veteran wants to attend costs \$10,000 a semester but the highest in state public school is only \$7000 a semester. So the school and the VA can agree that the school will waive \$1,500 of the tuition and the VA will fund the remaining \$1,500.

If the school the Veteran chooses is less expensive than the amount they are eligible for, the tuition and fees will be paid in full by the VA, the Veteran will NOT receive the difference.

Another positive thing about the new GI bill is that service members will have 15 years from the last discharge from active duty to use the benefits. This is a

### Combined time of Active Duty\*

### Percentage of Maximum Benefit

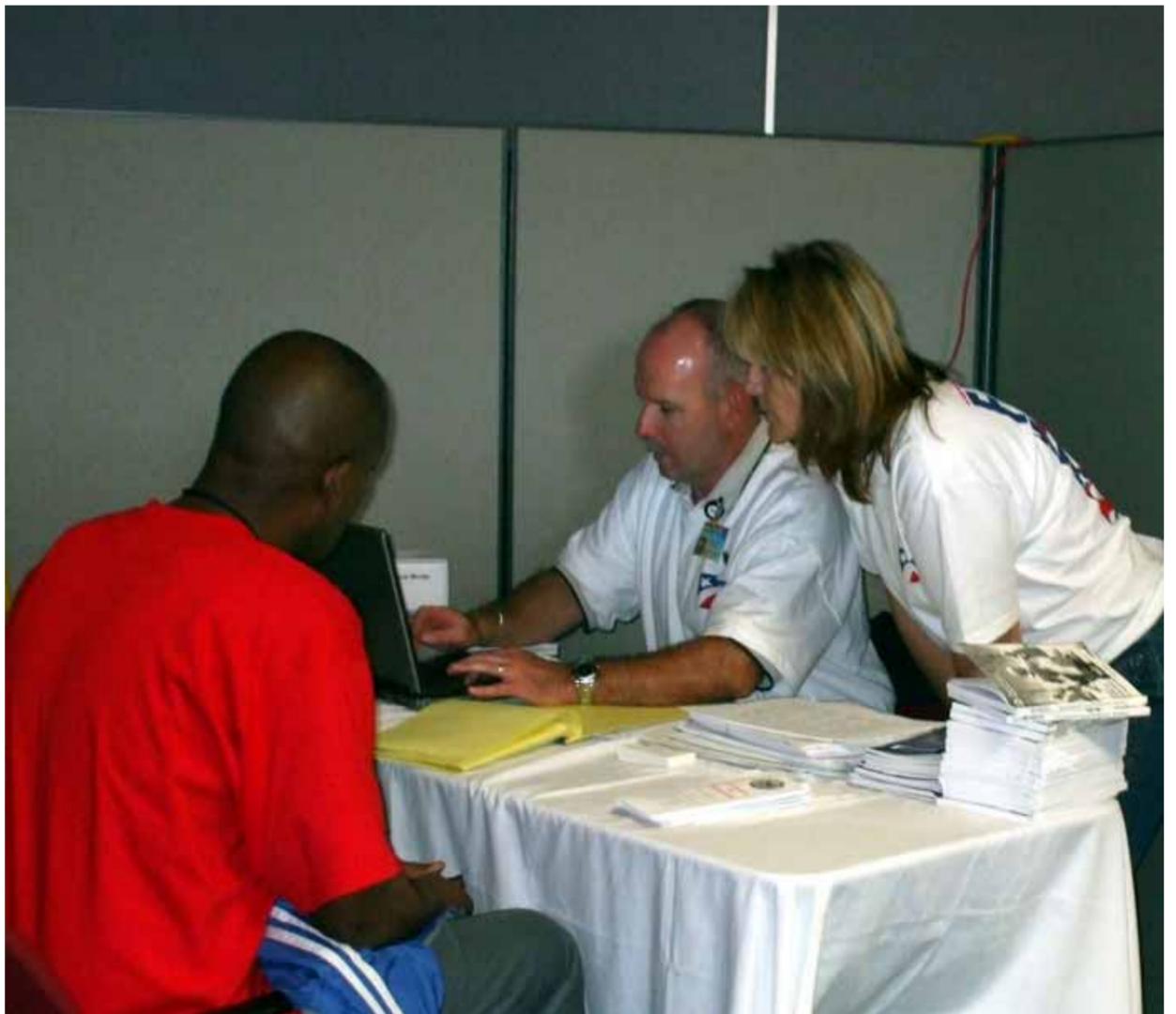
36 Months or more	100%
At Least 30 Months and discharged for service connected disability	100%
30 Months but less than 36	90%
24 Months but less than 30	80%
18 Months but less than 24	70%
12 months but less than 18	60%
6 months but less than 12	50%
90 days but less than 6 mo	40%

\*Post 9/10/2001

vast improvement from the previous CH 30, which expired 10 years after discharge, although it still has an expiration date, which is something that many disagree with.

Another thing to keep in mind, once a service member selects this new GI Bill they will be unable to go back to a previous chapter. Also, each chapter can be used for up to 36 months of benefits, no chapters combined can give any more than a total of 48 months of benefits.

At the end of the day, this is an excellent program, assuming that it gets off to a good start and the VA is fully ready to implement it when August rolls around, it will provide great opportunity to many Veterans to pursue higher education. Please refer to [www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov) for more and updated information.



Rick Lawrence and Janalee Green from the VA Regional Office assist a Veteran at the Homeless Veterans Stand Down. This event is held every year on the first Friday in November to assist Homeless in obtaining all benefits and services available to them. This year, the Stand Down assisted 182 Veterans.

to serve as an ombudsman to assist NGOs with their programs to serve veterans. To ensure a cooperative relationship, VA's deputy secretary will serve as a non-voting advisory liaison to the group's board of directors. VA has a long tradition of working with national veterans

service organizations on programs benefiting all veterans. VA also has had close relationships with private-sector groups, churches, charities and other non-profit organizations that provide housing for homeless veterans. This new gateway initiative is one more way to extend services to our veterans.



For Battered Women & Children: Safe Harbor Crisis Center Director Sheila Richins, center, receives a \$400 check from members of the Bountiful Marine Corps League Detachment (l-r) Edward Klint, Robert Bruhn, Betty Helland, Gene Helland, and Dick Wheelock Detachment Chaplain, and Committee Chairman for the Community Action Program. Photo Courtesy of the Marine Corps League.

## Marine Corps League in Bountiful Raises Money for Battered Women and Children

By Joe Surace

Funds were recently raised by the local L/Cpl. Dion J. Stephenson Detachment #1014 of Bountiful, via the Marine Corps League Rose Program through the assistance from the Wal-Mart Supercenter of Centerville for the needs of battered women and children in the Davis county area.

The Detachment is recognized by the IRS as a 501 (c) (4) entity, and is organized as a not-for-profit organization, and operated exclusively for social welfare purposes.

The Detachment is in receipt of its Solicitor's Permit from the Utah Commerce Department and has kicked off it's campaign to raise funds for the various southern Davis County community need.

Contributions are channeled into the communities via the local police and fire departments, schools and classroom needs, VAV's at the George E. Wahlen VA Medical Center, local scholarship foundations, the Utah Veterans Nursing Home, and local libraries, and many more.

## VA Announces \$22 Million for Rural Veterans Peake: Down Payment on Expansion of Services

From the VA Office of Media Relations

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has provided \$21.7 million to its regional health care systems to improve services specifically designed for veterans in rural areas.

“This special allocation is the latest down payment on VA's commitment to meet the needs of veterans living in rural areas,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. “VA will take to our rural veterans the health care services they have earned.”

Within the last year, VA has launched a major rural health initiative. The Department has already created a 13-member committee to advise the VA secretary on issues affecting rural veterans, opened three rural health resource centers to better understand rural health issues, rolled out four new mobile health clinics to serve 24 predominately rural counties, announced the opening of 10 new rural outreach clinics in 2009 and launched a fleet of 50 new mobile counseling centers.

The extra funding is part of a two-year VA program to improve the access and quality of health care for

veterans in geographically isolated areas. The program focuses on several areas, including access to health care, providing world-class care, the use of the latest technology, recruiting and retaining a highly educated workforce and collaborating with other organizations.

More specifically, the new funds will be used to increase the number of mobile clinics, establish new outpatient clinics, expand fee-based care, explore collaborations with federal and community partners, accelerate the use of telemedicine deployment, and fund innovative pilot programs.

The new funds will be distributed according to the proportion of veterans living in rural areas within each VA regional health care system, called VISNs, for “Veterans Integrated Service Networks.”

VISNs with less than 3 percent of their patients in rural areas will receive \$250,000. Those with population of rural veterans between 3 percent and 6 percent will receive \$1 million each. And VISNs with more than 6 percent of their veterans population in rural areas will receive \$1.5 million.

to seven million service members, veterans and family members.

The dividend payments are being sent to an estimated one million holders of VA insurance policies on the anniversary date of their policies. Sent automatically through different payment plans, the amounts vary based on the age of the veteran, the type of insurance, and the length of time the policy has been in force.

The dividends come from the earnings of trust funds into which veterans have paid insurance premiums over the years, and are linked to returns on investments in U.S. government securities.

VA officials caution veterans about a long-running scam in which various groups charge fees to “locate” veterans who are eligible for the dividends. Veterans eligible for the dividends have had VA life insurance policies in effect since they left the military and have received annual notifications from VA about the policies.

Dividends are paid each year to veterans who served between 1917 and 1956 and who hold certain government life insurance policies.

## Some Veterans to See Another Travel Reimbursement Increase

From the VA Office of Media Relations

Service-disabled and low-income veterans who are reimbursed for travel expenses while receiving care at Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities will see an increase in their payments beginning January 9.

A recently passed law allows VA to cut the amount it must withhold from their mileage reimbursement. The deductible amount will be \$3 for each one-way trip and \$6 for each round trip — with a cap per calendar-month of \$18, or six one-way trips or three round trips, whichever comes first. The previous deductible was \$7.77 for a one-way trip, and \$15.54 for a round trip, with a calendar-month cap of \$46.62.

“I'm pleased that we can help veterans living far from VA facilities to access the medical and counseling help they deserve, especially in the current economic climate,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. “Together with the increased mileage rate approved last month, we can further reduce the financial hardship some veterans undergo to use our superior health care.”

In November, Peake announced VA's second increase in the mileage reimbursement rate during 2008, from 28.5 cents to 41.5 cents a mile.

Service-disabled and low-income veterans are eligible to be reimbursed by VA for the travel costs of receiving health care or counseling at VA facilities. Veterans traveling for Compensation and Pension examinations also qualify for mileage reimbursement. VA can waive deductibles if they cause financial hardship.

## One Million Vets Share \$320 Million in VA Insurance Dividends Peake: Payments “Tangible Evidence” of Nation's Commitment

From the VA Office of Media Relations

WASHINGTON – One million veterans are in line to share \$319.8 million in annual insurance dividends during 2009, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

“These dividends are tangible evidence of VA's continuing commitment to safeguard the interests of America's veterans,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake.

VA operates one of the nation's largest life insurance programs, providing more than \$1 trillion in coverage

### **VETERANS: Need Help?**

### **Have Questions?**

Contact a benefits advisor at the Utah

Department of Veterans Affairs

• 1-800-894-9497

• (801) 326-2372

[veterans.utah.gov](http://veterans.utah.gov)



Jan 9 2009 Debbie Smith, right, Social Worker Ogden CBOC receiving a vest from area Vietnam Veterans in appreciation for her work with veterans with mental health issues

## Construction Proceeds at Veterans Nursing Home in Ogden

By Dennis McFall, Project Manager

Veterans will soon have another option for long term care in northern Utah. The Veterans Nursing Home in Ogden is under construction with a target completion date of November 2009. This accelerated schedule will allow for the dedication of this state of the art facility to take place on Veterans Day, and will highlight the efforts of Utah's veteran community over the past 5 years. Site preparation is underway, and cement is scheduled to be poured the week of January 19, 2009.

This 120 bed Skilled Nursing Facility, located at 1102 North 1200 West in Ogden, will provide much needed long term care for veterans statewide, but particularly for those in the northern counties. Feel free to drive by and track the construction progress. Additional facilities are scheduled for both Utah County and for the St. George area but a great deal of work is yet to be done in those locations to secure land and funding. Grants for construction of all facilities have been approved by the VA but not funded. Fortunately our Utah Legislature stepped up last year and provided funds to construct the Ogden nursing home on the premise that once the VA grant is funded the state will be repaid 65% of the cost, most likely in 3-5 years because of our priority ranking on the VA project list, and depending on the budget situation in Washington DC.

The Ogden facility will provide 90 beds for long term health care and 30 beds for specialized care such as dementia, most notably Alzheimer's Disease. The facility will incorporate much of what the VA has termed Culture Change. Instead of a single large building with long hallways and a somewhat "medical" environment, the plan includes four separate units, each with 30 beds, and each with its' own dining and social area. The intent is to provide as much of a homelike atmosphere as possible, with freedom to move about various areas or "neighborhoods". Large garden areas are also planned. A total of 16 private rooms will be available with the balance being semiprivate accommodations. All recognized Therapy Services will be available along with social and recreational activities.

In this state owned facility, veterans are eligible to have up to 50% of the cost of their care paid by the Veterans Administration through the VA Per Diem Program. In addition regulations are now being finalized that will cover the entire cost of care for veterans with a disability rating of 70% or greater. This per diem is available only in a state veterans nursing home such as this, the one in Salt Lake City, and those projected for Utah county and St. George. The cost to completely furnish the buildings is substantial and contributions are currently welcome from the community. For more information on how you or your organization might help please contact the Utah Dept. of Veterans Affairs at 801-326-2372.

## VA, DOT, DOD Steer Vets toward Safe Driving: Deadly Toll from Post-Deployment Car Crashes

From the VA Office of Public Affairs

WASHINGTON – With motor vehicle crashes being a leading cause of deaths among combat veterans during the first years after their return home, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Department of Defense (DOD) are working together to reduce these accidents.

Today, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Installations and Environment Wayne Army, and Acting Administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration David Kelly announced the creation of a new program designed to identify needed research involving recently returned veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan and to increase awareness of the importance of safe driving among newly-demobilized veterans.

"VA is committed to helping our returning heroes with world-class health care and educational benefits, home loans, job training and now with a specific safe-driving program," said Secretary Peake. "Together with our partners at DOT and DOD, we will be able to collect and analyze data that will be used to develop a comprehensive outreach initiative to target veterans with specific needs — and ultimately to save lives."

Experts in transportation safety, veterans' health and medical care, and public health are identifying gaps in current knowledge and developing a strategic plan for addressing key research questions, in fields ranging from epidemiology to psychology and biomechanics.

Participants in the strategic planning process include scientists and policy officials from VA, DOT, DOD and Department of Health and Human Services, as well as non-governmental experts. The resulting strategic plan will lay out research needs and identify priorities for the initiative.

"Our returning combat veterans have already put themselves in harm's way to protect our way of life. Now it's our turn to take action," said David Kelly, Acting Administrator of the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA). "NHTSA can offer knowledge and expertise to address challenges such as these. Working side-by-side with the Department of Veterans Affairs, we are committed to tackling this problem and reducing the number of veterans killed and injured on our nation's roadways."

The safe-driving initiative strives to increase awareness of motor vehicle crashes among veterans and the importance of safe driving, seatbelt and helmet usage, and other measures. To reach out to veterans and their families, VA will create a national educational program using the Department's network of medical centers, community clinics, drop-in counseling centers (Vet Centers), and veterans benefits offices.

The initiative will also include outreach to mobilize national veterans service organizations; the nation's governors and state police, safety officers, and state highway safety officials; and the private sector - including employers; automobile, motorcycle and sports vehicle dealers and manufacturers; the motor vehicle insurance industry; and driving and motorcycle racing enthusiasts' organizations. NASCAR legend and safe driving advocate, Richard Petty, will also be an active partner in the initiative.

"Richard Petty Driving Experience (RPDE) is thrilled to be working with VA, DOT and DOD on such a worthwhile project to save veterans' lives," said NASCAR legend Richard Petty. "We want to bring more attention to the continuing problem of veteran drivers and their safety through our involvement. Last year alone, RPDE operated over 1,100 event days, ran almost 1 million miles on track and had a staff of professional drivers. We have the commitment, the knowledge to teach, and the infrastructure to take this initiative to many markets." According to the Department of Transportation, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for all Americans between the ages of eight through 34. Men constitute about 70 percent of all traffic deaths. In the past decade, both deaths and injuries from motor vehicle crashes have gone down in the United States, due to increases in seat-belt use and decreases in alcohol involvement, among other factors.

Nonetheless, motor vehicle accidents remain a major concern in the military and among veterans as the greatest cause of accidental fatalities. Several studies have reported an increase in post-deployment deaths among military personnel who served in a combat zone compared to their non-deployed counterparts, who are in the military but not deployed to a war, after both the Vietnam War and the 1991 Gulf War. Preliminary evidence also indicates this is the case with veterans from the Global War on Terror.

For more information regarding the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Transportation's safe driving initiative for veterans, please visit [www.safedriving.va.gov](http://www.safedriving.va.gov).

## Psychological Health, Traumatic Brain Injury Outreach Center Opens

From the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense

The Department of Defense announced the opening of a 24-hour outreach center to provide information and referrals to military service members, veterans, their families and others with questions about psychological health and traumatic brain injury.

The new center, operated by the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE), can be contacted around the clock, 365 days a year, by phone at (866) 966-1020.

The center can address everything from routine requests for information about psychological health

and traumatic brain injury, to questions about symptoms a caller is having, to helping callers find appropriate health care resources.

The center serves members, leaders and healthcare providers of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, National Guard, Reserve and all uniformed services, along with veterans of all the services. The families of service members and of veterans are also served by the new center. More information is available at <http://www.dcoe.health.mil>

# BURIAL IN ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

Arlington National Cemetery is the most well known Veteran Cemetery and is also seen as the most prestigious. So many Veterans and family members wonder what it takes in order to have Arlington as a final resting place. Here is some good information to know- Arlington does not make prearrangements. However, upon the passing of the veteran or veteran's spouse, the surviving spouse or personal representative should contact a local funeral home to arrange for any desired services in the hometown. While the surviving spouse or personal representative is at the funeral home, the funeral director should telephone the Interment Office at Arlington National Cemetery (703) 607-8585 to arrange for the interment service. Before scheduling the service, the cemetery staff will need to determine the eligibility of the deceased. Upon verification of eligibility, they will schedule the interment. You can assist in the process ahead of time by making sure you have the proper documentation and your survivor(s) know where to locate that information. The key document required is your DD-214 (discharge/separation from the military). The DD-214 generally provides all required information for verifying eligibility. The Web site [www.arlingtoncemetery.org](http://www.arlingtoncemetery.org) contains detailed information on the documentation required for verification of eligibility. Funeral honors available to eligible retirees, (regardless of interment at Arlington) consist of a minimum of two uniformed armed forces members (one from the service of the deceased), the folding and presentation of the American flag, and ceremonial bugle or a recording of "Taps" if a bugler is unavailable.

The eligibility requirements for ground burial in Arlington National Cemetery are listed below. The last period of active duty of former members of the Armed Forces must have ended honorably.

An active duty member of the Armed Forces (except those members serving on active duty for training only); a veteran who is retired from active military service with the Armed Forces; a veteran who is retired from the Reserves is eligible upon reaching age 60 and drawing retired pay; and who served a period of active duty (other than for training); a former member of the Armed Forces separated honorably prior to 1 OCT 49 for medical reasons and who was rated at 30% or greater disabled effective on the day of discharge; a former member of the Armed Forces who has been awarded one of the following decorations: Medal of Honor; Distinguished Service Cross (Navy Cross or Air Force Cross); Distinguished Service Medal; Silver Star; Purple Heart; the President of the United States or any



Government issued headstone in Section 31 looking east with the Washington Monument in the background, photo from [arlingtonnationcemetery.org](http://arlingtonnationcemetery.org)

former President of the United States; a former member of the Armed Forces who served on active duty (other than for training) and who held any of the following positions: An elective office of the U.S. Government, Office of the Chief Justice of the United States or of an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States; any former prisoner of war who, while a prisoner of war, served honorably in the active military, naval, or air service, whose last period of military, naval or air service terminated honorably and who died on or after 30 NOV 93; the spouse, widow or widower, minor child, or permanently dependent child, and certain unmarried adult children of any of the above eligible veterans, the surviving spouse, minor child, or permanently dependent child of any person already buried in ANC; the parents of a minor child, or permanently dependent child whose remains, based on the eligibility of a parent, are already buried in ANC; the widow or widower of: a member of the Armed Forces who was lost or buried at sea or officially determined to be missing in action, a member of the Armed Forces who is interred in a US military cemetery overseas that is maintained by the American Battle Monuments Commission, a member of the Armed

Forces who is interred in Arlington National Cemetery as part of a group burial.

It is also important to understand military funeral honors are not automatic. The next of kin must request the honors and the funeral director must contact the appropriate agency, most have this information and will make the arrangements for the Veteran. Funeral services are provided Mon thru Fri, except federal holidays, during the hours 9:00 a.m. through 3:00 p.m. Family and friends should arrive at the cemetery approximately one half hour prior to the scheduled service time and must provide their own transportation for funeral services at the Cemetery. They will be required to drive from the administration building or chapel to the gravesite. The cemetery is open year round (365 days) for visitation from 8:00 a.m. through 5:00 p.m. 1 OCT thru 31 MAR and 8:00 a.m. through 7:00 p.m. 1 APR thru 30 SEP.

Starting early next year, the Army will allow full military funeral honors at Arlington for all soldiers killed in action. Full military honors include a caisson, band, colors team and an escort platoon in addition to the standard honors of a firing party, bugler and chaplain. In the past, the caisson was available only for officers killed in action because of limited availability. Interment may be casketed or cremated remains.

## Disney: Continued from page 3

Salute Companion" tickets at the Disneyland Resort must be no later than June 12, 2009 and tickets expire 13 days after the first day of use or June 25, 2009, whichever occurs first. Last day of use on "Disney's Armed Forces Salute" complimentary tickets and "Disney's Armed Forces Salute Companion" tickets at the Walt Disney World Resort is Dec. 23, 2009.

Tickets must be used by the same person on any and all days. "Disney's Armed Forces Salute" complimentary tickets may be used only by the service members to whom they are issued. "Disney's complimentary tickets may be used only by the service members to whom they are issued. "Disney's Armed Forces Salute Companion" tickets may be used only by the friends and family members for whom they are purchased. May not be combined with any other offer.

## IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS:

Utah Dept of Veterans Affairs:	326-2372
Toll Free:	1-800-894-9497
VA Regional Office:	1-800-827-1000
VA Medical Center:	1-800-613-4012
Local:	(801) 582-1565
VA Education Line:	1-888-442-4551
VA Home Loans:	1-888-244-6711
DAV:	(801) 326-2375
VFW:	(801) 326-2385
American Legion:	(801) 326-2380
Military Order PH	(801) 326-2471
Veterans Cemetery	(801) 254-9036
Veterans Nursing Home:	(801) 584-1900
Transition Assistance:	(801) 523-4937

**Be Our Messenger:  
Volunteer at the George E. Wahlen VA Medical Center  
Call (801) 584-1241**

**The Disabled 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 the Van call the following number: 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** (FLYING J) (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*

## **2008 VAN SCHEDULE FOR IDAHO, PRICE and ST. GEORGE**

FOR APPOINTMENTS CALL:

IDAHO: (208) 221-0362

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

x. 2003

February: 2, 4, 6, 10,  
 12, 18, 20, 24, 26  
 March 2, 4, 6, 10, 12,  
 16, 18, 20, 24, 26, 30  
 April: 1, 3, 7, 9, 13, 15,  
 17, 21, 23, 27, 29

## **2008 VAN SCHEDULE FOR LOGAN, VERNAL, ELKO, ELY, AFTON, ROCK SPRINGS**

FOR APPOINTMENTS CALL:

LOGAN AND VERNAL: 1-800-613-4012

x2003

February: 3, 5, 9, 11,  
 13, 17, 19, 23, 25, 27  
 March 3, 5, 9, 11, 13,  
 17, 19, 23, 25, 27, 31  
 April: 2, 6, 8, 10, 14,  
 16, 22, 24, 28, 30

YOU CAN ALSO SEE A NATIONAL SERVICE OFFICER FROM THE DAV AT THE VA MEDICAL CENTER ON AN APPOINTMENT ONLY BASIS. THESE REPRESENTATIVES ARE AT THE HOSPITAL TO ASSIST VETERANS WITH CLAIMS AND ISSUES RELATED TO THE VA BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION, INCLUDING DISABILITY COMPENSATION AND PENSION. PLEASE CALL 1-800-61-4013 EXT 2003 TO SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT.

OUTREACH REPRESENTATIVES, FROM VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS ARE ALSO AVAILABLE ACROSS THE STATE AT VARIOUS WORKFORCE SERVICES OFFICES. CITIES INCLUDES: BEAVER, BLANDING, BRIGHAM CITY, CEDAR CITY, CLEARFIELD, DELTA, FILLMORE, KANAB, LOGAN, MANTI, MIDVALE, MOAB, NEPHI, OGDEN, PANGUITCH, PRICE, PROVO, RICHFIELD, ROOSEVELT, SALT LAKE METRO, DOWNTOWN, SOUTH, ST. GEORGE, TOOELE AND VERNAL.

PLEASE GO TO [VETERANS.UTAH.GOV](http://VETERANS.UTAH.GOV) FOR AN UP TO DATE SCHEDULE, OR CONTACT YOUR LOCAL WORKFORCE SERVICES OFFICE FOR A DATE AND TIME A SERVICE OFFICER WILL BE AVAILABLE.