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Schedule of Events:

*VA Nebraska-western Iowa
Welcome Home Event for
Operation enduring Freedom
and Iraqi Freedom veterans –
April 5th, 2008, Holiday Inn
CoCo Key water Resort.
Contact Jody Kennedy at VA
NWI for further information
402-995-4714*

Service Organization Meetings:

*1st Tuesday of the month - Disabled
American Veterans Chapter No. 5 -
7:30 p.m.*

*2nd Tuesday of the month –
American Legion - Treynor,
Amvets – Walnut*

*1st Wednesday of the Month
Hancock American Legion and
auxiliary*

Pottawattamie Commission of Veteran Affairs UPDATES



February 2008

Protecting the jobs of returning soldiers

The Iowa Senate has unanimously approved a bill to help military service members return to their jobs after serving their country. I was proud to be there when the legislation was signed by Governor Culver on February 14 in a Statehouse ceremony.

A U.S. Army Reservist from Iowa who was denied her job when she returned after 15 months on active duty was the spark for this legislation.

The new law requires that employees returning from military service be given a position of like seniority, status and pay if they are not returned to their original position. This change is consistent with the federal Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act.

Employers who violate the law will be held responsible for reinstating their employee and for back pay, lost benefits, and seniority and pension adjustments. They will also face prosecution on misdemeanor charges. The new law takes effect immediately.

Expanding services, funding for Iowa veterans

The Senate has also unanimously approved a measure that would expand services for Iowa veterans.

The legislation broadens the allowable expenses that can be paid using the interest from the state's \$5 million Veterans Trust Fund. Prescriptions, in-home nursing care, and vision, hearing and dental care would be included.

Under current law, interest can be used for nursing home care, but not in-home care. Veterans can get travel expenses for follow-up medical care, but spouses cannot receive reimbursement for travel to see a veteran hospitalized with a service-related illness or injury.

The new legislation would also allow low-income veterans to apply for assistance to pay for emergency vehicles, home repairs or temporary housing. This would be in addition to money available to them at the county level.

By expanding the list of qualified expenses that can be covered by interest from the Veterans Trust Fund, we can better serve the needs of those who've served our country. The bill now goes to the House for further consideration.



The *Cell Phones for Soldiers* program was started in April 2004 by 13-year-old Brittany Bergquist and her 12-year-old brother Robbie of Norwell, Massachusetts.

Robbie and Brittany's goal is to help our soldiers serving overseas call home. They hope to provide as many soldiers as possible with prepaid calling cards. Through generous donations and the recycling of used cell phones, Robbie and Brittany have already distributed thousands of calling cards to soldiers around the globe. Cell Phones for Soldiers hopes to turn old cell phones into more than 12 million minutes of prepaid calling cards for U.S. troops stationed overseas in 2007. To do so, Cell Phones for Soldiers expects to collect 15,000 cell phones each month through a network of more than 3,000 collection sites across the country.

The phones are sent to ReCellular, which pays Cell Phones for Soldiers for each donated phone – enough to provide an hour of talk time to soldiers abroad.

“Americans will replace an estimated 130 million cell phones this year,” says Mike Newman, vice president of ReCellular, “with the majority of phones either discarded or stuffed in a drawer. Most people don't realize that the small sacrifice of donating their unwanted phones can have a tremendous benefit for a worthy cause like Cell Phones for Soldiers.”

Cell Phones for Soldiers was founded by teenagers Robbie and Brittany Bergquist from Norwell, Mass., with \$21 of their own money. Since then, the registered 501c3 non-profit organization has raised almost \$1 million in donations and distributed more than 400,000 prepaid calling cards to soldiers serving overseas.

“Cell Phones for Soldiers started as a small way to show our family's appreciation for the men and women who have sacrificed the day-to-day contact with their own families to serve in the U.S. armed forces,” says the teens' father, Bob Bergquist. “Over the past few years, we have been overwhelmed by the generosity of others. But, we have also seen the need to support our troops continue to grow as more troops are sent overseas for longer assignments.”

Through increased fundraising efforts, the Bergquist family hopes to raise more than \$9 million in the next five years to fund new programs, such as providing video phones with prepaid service to allow soldiers abroad to see their families on a regular basis.

Donate A Phone

It's simple and FREE! Every phone you donate will help increase the amount of talk time we're able to provide to our troops!

When donating your cell phone(s), please keep in mind:

You can help the charity even more by applying your own postage. If you pay for the postage, we can put more money toward calling cards for our troops!

- **Donated cell phones are sold to a company that recycles them.** The money we receive from recycling cell phones is used to purchase calling cards that we send to troops in need.
- **Minimize weight and save on postage by mailing cell phones only.** Batteries, chargers and accessories are not required but gladly accepted.

CONTACT: Bill Williams, Organizer
Email: bwilliams1951@cox.net



CONTACT: John Liebsack,
CELL: 402-612-0210
State Adjutant & Quartermaster
Dept. of Nebraska, VFW
Work: 402-464-0674
Email: vfwne@alltel.net

HEARTLAND HONOR FLIGHT INITIAL TRIP TO FLY WW II VETS ON MAY 21, 2008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Jan 7, 2008 - Omaha, NE -- The National Honor Flight program is spreading its wings. The first Heartland Honor Flight will take to the skies with WWII veterans from Nebraska and Western Iowa. Their destination will be Washington D. C., where they will personally tour America's "Thank You" for their service, **their** World War II Memorial.

The one-day trip is open to all WWII veterans in Nebraska and Western Iowa, departing Omaha Wednesday, May 21, 2008. Veterans are escorted and cared for by guardians (volunteers) who accompany them as they visit the WWII, Iwo Jima, Korean and Vietnam Memorials. The guardians pay their own way. All expenses are provided at no cost to the WWII veterans. In fact, donations from WWII veterans will not be accepted. They have given us a free world. Now it's our turn to pay them back.

WWII veterans interested in going on the trip may find an application form at: www.honorflight.org or www.vfwne.com or by contacting either the VFW in Lincoln (402-464-0674) or the Honor Flight National Office (937-521-2400) in Springfield, Ohio. The veterans are selected based upon the order in which the applications are received.

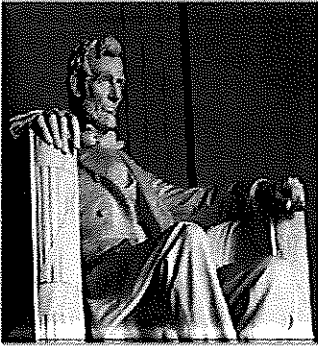
Time is not on our side. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs and Arlington National Cemetery statistics, about 1,200 WWII Veterans pass away EACH DAY. The youngest WWII Vet is 80 years old. In another 5 to 10 years, most WWII Veterans will be gone. We are asking the public's support to help make this trip possible for these veterans who saved the world ... before it's too late. Unfortunately, Honor Flight receives no corporate or government sponsorship. We are funded solely by public donations, and we need \$75,000 to make this Heartland Honor Flight happen.

If you would like to support this inaugural Heartland Honor Flight, you may call the Nebraska VFW at 402-464-0674 to make a donation by phone using your credit card, or you may send your check to: Heartland Honor Flight – VFW, P.O. Box 4552, Lincoln, NE 68504.

Every World War II veteran can remember where he was when President Roosevelt addressed the nation: "*Yesterday, December 7, 1941, a date which will live in infamy, the United States was suddenly and deliberately attacked by the naval and air forces of the empire of Japan.*" Their lives were forever changed.

Honor Flight Network, now in its fourth year, is committed to positively changing the lives of WWII veterans with a trip to Washington D.C. to visit their Memorial. Honor Flight has safely transported over 5,000 veterans to our nation's capitol. If you would like more information about Honor Flight, please visit our web site at www.honorflight.org, call (937) 521-2400, or write: Honor Flight Inc., 300 E. Auburn Ave, Springfield OH 45505. **Local information can be obtained by contacting the Heartland Honor Flight organizer, Bill Williams at 402-612-0210.**

Honor Flight Network founder, Earl Morse, said of our WWII veterans: "*They collectively and literally saved the world, but for 60 years, they had no national memorial to their service and the ultimate sacrifices of their friends. In 2004, a WWII Memorial for our nation's most senior heroes was dedicated; however, now in their 80's and 90's, they have no means to visit it. The Honor Flight Network began as a small token of our appreciation to get WWII Veterans out to visit THEIR memorial, to visit America's "Thank You" for their incredible accomplishments and the sacrifices of friends that never made it home.*"



I know there is a God, and that He hates injustice and slavery. I see the storm coming, and I know that His hand is in it. If He has a place and work for me—and I think He has—I believe I am ready.

—Abraham Lincoln

- Local Resources:**
 Omaha VAH – 346-8800
 DAV VAH Transportation- 402-449-0659
 West Central Community Action - 322-5966
 Workforce Development Center – 242-2136
 Department of Human Services – 328-5661
 Vet Center – 402-346-6735
 Department of Veteran Affairs – 1800-827-1000
 Legal Aid – 328-3982
 Family Housing Advisory Service – 322-4436



DID YOU KNOW?

- Filing for VA benefits is a “FREE” benefit to the veteran and his or her dependents. If you are paying for these services; STOP!
- Do you require quality nursing home assistance? Are you an Honorable Discharge Veteran or the widow of an honorably discharged veteran? You may meet the requirements to stay at the Iowa Veteran Home.
- A 0% Service-Connected hearing disability can entitle the veteran to hearing aids through the VA Medical Center.
- A 10% Service-Connected rating can entitle the veteran to hearing aids and or eye glasses through the VA Medical Center.
- Purple Heart Recipients are automatically qualified for medical care Priority Group 3.
- A service-connected disability can be increased when the disability worsens and medical documentation is available as proof. When you apply for a rating increase three things could possibly happen to your rating:
 1. Rating is Increased
 2. Rating is Decreased
 3. Rating remains unchanged
- Pharmacy co-pays through the VA are \$8.00 per 30 day supply, and are refillable by phone.
- VA Pension is designed to assist veterans with non-service-connected disabilities who meet a minimal income threshold

Office Locations And Hours

Pottawattamie County Commission of Veterans Affairs
 223 South 6th Street, Court House Annex
 Council Bluffs, Iowa 51501
 712-328-5797 FAX 712-328-5726 e-mail: veterans@pottcounty.com
 Monday –Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 pm closed 12:00-1:00 p.m.
 Avoca Court House Tuesdays 8:00 am – 4:00pm 712-307-6409

Commissioners:
 Andrew Trautman, Chairman
 Michael Carter, Secretary
 Philip Jacobs, Member

Staff:
 Darlene McMartin, B. S.W., Administrator
 Peggy Becker, Case Worker III
 Lori Swisher, Case Worker I
 Michael Grap, Clerk II
 Pamela Wilke, Receptionist

The staff of the Veterans Service can assist you with the following subjects:

- Compensation or Pension
- Disability Retirement
- Death Indemnity Compensation
- Appeal to Board of Veterans Appeal
- Hospital and Outpatient Benefits
- State of Iowa Benefits
- Educational Benefits
- Vocational Benefits
- Debt Waivers
- Obtaining Lost Military Records
- Review of Military Discharge
- Claims for Insurance Payments
- Burial Allowance