



# VETERANS DAY

HONORING ALL WHO SERVED





WE HONOR VETERANS

ON THIS DAY  
OF REMEMBRANCE,  
HOSPICE OF SPOKANE  
BOARD, STAFF AND  
VOLUNTEERS JOIN WITH  
OUR COMMUNITY IN  
REMEMBERING AND  
HONORING OUR VETERANS.



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# VETERANS CHRONICLE

SUNDAY, November 10, 2019

*"Serving Those Who Served"*



Spokane County Regional Veterans Services is a Regional Strategic Partnership with Spokane County, the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Westcare Foundation, leading innovation in Rural Veterans Services by providing comprehensive veterans services in the inland northwest in a state of the art veteran-centric facility supported by web based case conferencing and referral services through VA Serves, Unite Us. We are located at 1117 N. Evergreen Rd., Suite 2, Spokane Valley, WA 99216.

We look forward to serving you!

<https://www.spokanecounty.org/VeteranServices>



Our new service center has over 7000 square feet to expand our services in Eastern WA



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## HOW CAN I GET HELP?

Every county and state has a Veteran Affairs office to answer questions about benefits and provide assistance. There are also other useful resources for veterans in the Inland Northwest.



### GO ONLINE

#### VA.gov

The Department of Veterans Affairs website has resources on every topic relevant to veterans.

#### VA.gov/welcome-kit

The VA Welcome Guide covers all types of benefits and services available for veterans, new recruits, active service members and their families.

#### DAV9.com

Based in Post Falls, Disabled American Veterans Chapter 9 Fort Sherman shares links and information to both local and national help organizations for veterans.

#### Explore.VA.gov/benefits-navigator

Explore VA benefits and discover which ones you and your family may be eligible to receive.



### IN PERSON

#### Spokane County Regional Veteran Service

1117 N. Evergreen Rd.,  
Spokane Valley, WA  
(509) 477-3690

Apply for emergency services, or have any benefits or service questions answered by 5 Veteran Service Officers (VSO) and staff.

#### North Idaho Veteran Services and Benefits Office

120 E. Railroad Ave., Post Falls,  
ID (208) 446-1092

Meet with a VSO or staff for help with VA benefits enrollment, claims or other veteran needs.

#### Goodwill Support Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)

130 E. Third Ave., Spokane, WA  
(509) 828-2449

SSVF helps homeless veterans and their families find housing and connects veterans with other support organizations.



### BY PHONE

#### Spokane County Regional Veteran Service

(509) 477-3690

#### North Idaho Veteran Services and Benefits Office

(208) 446-1092

#### Veteran Crisis Line

1 (800) 273-8255, press 1

#### North Idaho Crisis Center

(208) 625-4884

#### Washington or Idaho 2-1-1

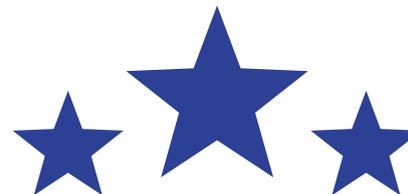
Dial "2-1-1" for health and human resources referrals.

#### Healthcare for Homeless Veterans HCHV

In Person or Phone  
504 E. Second Ave.,  
Spokane, WA

Phone: (509) 435-2019

Provides healthcare and outreach for housing, job opportunities and counseling.



When you list your home for sale, accept the loan type offered to those who protect the land under it.

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# The Man in the Arena

“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.”

*By Theodore Roosevelt*

## The incredible impact of the volunteers

*By Don Walker  
Veterans Help Net*

This Veteran’s Day Special Edition of the Veterans Chronicle is published on the one-year anniversary of Veterans Help Net. In the last 12 months, we have provided most of the information and content for 10 monthly Veterans Chronicles in The Spokesman-Review and four Veteran Press in the CDA/Post Falls Press. We have provided the stories and articles for two 24-page Veterans Day publications and a 16-page Memorial Day edition. We have a vibrant and informative website ([veteranshelpnet.com](http://veteranshelpnet.com)) and an active and impacting Facebook page ([facebook.com/veteranshelpnet](https://facebook.com/veteranshelpnet)).

The Veterans Help Net team is committed to the mission of expanding the awareness to veterans and their families about the benefits and services they have earned.

In our effort to garner supports, we visited with dozens of Veteran Service Organization and talked to hundreds of veterans and volunteers. As I reflected on these we encountered, two things became clear ...

First, there are a lot of passionate, committed Americans out there spending their time and money to find ways to better the lives of those that have served our country.

Second, there is a big difference between saying “Thank you for your service” and doing something to help.

That principle was never stated better than in a speech given by former President Theodore Roosevelt on April 23, 1910, in Paris, France, printed above.

Roosevelt’s sentiment has reverberated in my mind and made me think about how our “veteran volunteers” have done exactly that ... they have entered “The Arena.”

It isn’t the critic or the cynic that enacts change – it is the person who steps up and tries to do something about it.

Many have great ideas and incredible insight, but few are willing to actually enter the Arena and do something to help.

Ideas and good thoughts are nice, but doing and acting are what makes the difference. It’s not “Thank you for your service,” although that is thoughtful. It’s not, “I wish they had treated you better,” even if it is true. It is, “HOW CAN I HELP?”

There are hundreds of volunteers that have jumped into the Arena and are trying to find a way to help. They comment with their actions and they express thanks with their deeds. Instead of offering good words, they offer a hand to help.

The volunteers work every day to make the veteran’s world better. They have “entered the Arena” and they are making a difference

One day at a time. One veteran at a time. One family at a time.

Find a place. Find a group. Find an organization. You can be “The Man in the Arena.”

Veterans Help Net tries to recognize and support those volunteers by highlighting their missions and their good works. Let us know about your organization. Tell us about

an impacting volunteer in the hope we can inspire others to enter “The Arena” and add good works to their good words.

We invite Veteran Service Organizations to share stories about their volunteers. Let’s fill “The Arena” and see what great things we can accomplish. We plan to regularly feature volunteer stories why they jumped in and how they are helping veterans and families.

We hope these stories will inspire others to volunteer.

Thank you for your service and, “How can we help?”

Don Walker  
[Veteranshelpnet.com](http://Veteranshelpnet.com)  
[don@vethelpnet.com](mailto:don@vethelpnet.com)  
(509) 655-9266

If you know of a Veteran Service Organization that needs volunteers or support, please send the information to [info@veteranshelpnet.com](mailto:info@veteranshelpnet.com) to include in future publications and on our website.



Learn more  
at [VeteransHelpNet.com](http://VeteransHelpNet.com).



## ENROLL TODAY FOR MORE **COVERAGE & BENEFITS**

Kaiser Permanente's Medicare Advantage (HMO) health plan is rated 5 out of 5 Stars in WA for 2020<sup>1</sup>

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- \$0 monthly premium<sup>3</sup> and \$0 annual exam<sup>4</sup>
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- No-cost fitness center membership<sup>6</sup>
- Arizona Snowbird benefit for Pima & Maricopa counties<sup>7</sup>
- Travel benefits for when you're away from home

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Call 1-866-749-5708 (TTY 711), seven days a week, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., or visit [kp.org/wa/spokaneseминаr](http://kp.org/wa/spokaneseминаr) for more seminar dates

**Kaiser Permanente  
Riverfront Medical Center**  
322 W North River Dr  
Spokane, WA

11/13/19 at 5:00 PM  
11/26/19 at 5:00 PM  
12/4/19 at 5:00 PM

**Spokane Eagles Lodge**  
6410 N Lidgerwood Ave  
Spokane Valley, WA

11/20/19 at 10:00 AM  
11/27/19 at 2:00 PM

**CenterPlace at  
Mirabeau Point Park**  
2426 N Discovery Pl  
Spokane Valley, WA

11/14/19 at 10:00 AM  
11/22/19 at 2:00 PM

**Southside Senior and  
Community Center**  
3151 E 27th Ave  
Spokane, WA

11/21/19 at 9:30 AM

**Kaiser Permanente  
South Hill Medical Center**  
4102 S Regal St  
Spokane, WA

11/27/19 at 10:00 AM  
12/3/19 at 10:00 AM  
12/5/19 at 2:00 PM

**Corbin Senior Center**  
827 W Cleveland Ave  
Spokane, WA

11/13/19 at 10:00 AM  
11/25/19 at 10:00 AM

**Kaiser Permanente  
Spokane  
Administrative Center**  
5615 W Sunset Hwy  
Spokane, WA

11/19/19 at 2:00 PM

**My Fresh Basket**  
1030 W Summit Pkwy  
Spokane, WA

11/23/19 at 1:00 PM



<sup>1</sup>Every year, Medicare evaluates plans based on a 5-star rating system. This Star rating applies to Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of Washington. <sup>2</sup>Free with no obligation. <sup>3</sup>For our Centennial Plan. <sup>4</sup>Other copays, cost sharing, or coinsurance may apply. <sup>5</sup>Excludes Basic Plan. <sup>6</sup>Gym initiation fees may apply. See plan for details. <sup>7</sup>Arizona snowbird benefit available on the Centennial and Columbia plans for members who live in Spokane County and reside in Pima or Maricopa counties for up to 6 months a year. Kaiser Permanente is an HMO plan with a Medicare contract. Enrollment in Kaiser Permanente depends on contract renewal. You must reside in the Kaiser Permanente Medicare health plan service area in which you enroll. For accommodations of persons with special needs at meetings, call 1-866-749-5708 (TTY 711). Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of Washington, 1300 SW 27th St., Renton, WA 98057.



# Effects of Toxic Exposure in the Military

By Jean Bledsoe

If you've been following the "Faces of Agent Orange" stories in the last few issues of Veterans Chronicle, you already know something about the effects of Agent Orange on those exposed, as well as on their descendants. But what we've shared so far is only a very tiny tip of an enormous lethal iceberg affecting all eras and branches of service, during war and peace time.

Exposure to toxic – and life-altering – chemicals by military personnel and their dependents didn't begin and end in Vietnam. Agent Orange has just become the orphan "poster child."

Toxic chemical exposure began in WWI with the introduction of mustard gas, chlorine, and phosgene, all of which caused severe lung damage. WWII saw the continued use of mustard gas, and the ushering in of ionizing radiation with the atomic age.

Then came the Vietnam War with pervasive dioxin defoliants, Agents Orange, Green, White, etc., all named for the identifying band of color painted on the barrels. The U.S. military sprayed more than 20 million gallons of various toxic herbicides over Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos from 1961 to 1971.

The Southwest Asia Theater of Operations has and continues to expose service personnel to burning oil fields, pesticides, depleted uranium, open burn pits, airborne particulate matter, and nerve agents, plus BP pills given to protect troops from the effects of these agents.

During all conflicts, there was and continues to be exposure to chemicals, paints, petroleum products, asbestos, and radiation from spent munitions.

The Department of Defense has also identified 401 military sites that could be contaminated with the toxic compounds known as perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), which are found at high levels in a firefighting foam that has leaked into groundwater and contaminated drinking water, including at Fairchild AFB.

In addition, the EPA has identified 41 states with federal facilities on its National Priorities List for contamination cleanup. Obviously, this means these facilities are on their list of toxic contamination sites. This contamination can affect not only personnel at these stations, but their dependents and residents of surrounding communities.

So why is this important to you? These toxins cause serious and often long-term illnesses. Many of these toxins can also cause damage to DNA, which may lead to diseases and birth defects in the children and grandchildren of affected veterans.

## So, what can you do?

**1** Determine if your military service may have contributed to your medical conditions. Where were you stationed? What jobs did you do?

**2** Talk to a Veteran Service Officer to help you gather documentation, fill out forms, and submit them properly. Find contact information in our "How Can I Get Help" section.

**3** Don't give up! This process can take some time, but if it is determined that you have service-connected disabilities and medical conditions, your first monthly payment will be retroactive to the date you filed for disability. The VA uses a special formula to assign a percentage to each disability to determine your total monthly compensation.

**4** Be aware as time goes on, more diseases and conditions will most likely be added by the VA. If your medical condition is not currently qualifying, it may be in the future.

**5** Remember, you made promises when you enlisted in the military, and the government made promises to you in return. Disability benefits are one of those promises. You earned this assistance. This is not important just for yourself, but for your spouse and potentially for your children and grandchildren as well!

**Here is a list of medical conditions and diseases associated with toxic exposures in the military.**

**Presumptive Service-Connected Illnesses Recognized by the VA as Connected to Agent Orange Herbicide Exposure**

Acute Peripheral Neuropathy  
Adult Onset Type II Diabetes Mellitus and its subsequent complications  
AL Amyloidosis  
Chloracne  
Hepatitis B  
Hodgkins Disease  
Ischemic heart disease  
Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma  
Parkinson's disease  
Peripheral Neuropathy  
Porphyria Cutanea Tarda  
Spina bifida in children conceived after veteran first arrived in Vietnam

**Cancers**

Adult Fibrosarcoma  
Alveolar Soft Part Sarcoma  
Angiosarcoma  
Cancer of the Bronchus  
Cancer of the Larynx  
Cancer of the Lung  
Cancer of the Prostate  
Cancer of the Trachea  
Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia  
Clear Cell Sarcoma of Aponeuroses  
Clear Cell Sarcoma of Tendons  
Congenital Fibrosarcoma  
Dermatofibrosarcoma  
Ectomesenchymoma  
Epithelioid Malignant Leiomyosarcoma  
Epithelioid Malignant Schwannoma  
Epithelioid Sarcoma  
Extraskelatal Ewing's Sarcoma  
Hairy cell leukemia  
Hemangiosarcoma  
Infantile Fibrosarcoma  
Leiomyosarcoma  
Liposarcoma  
Lymphangiosarcoma  
Lymphoma  
Malignant Giant Cell Tumor

of the Tendon Sheath  
Malignant Fibrous Histiocytoma  
Malignant Glandular Schwannoma  
Malignant Glomus Tumor  
Malignant Hemangiopericytoma  
Malignant Mesenchymoma  
Malignant Shwannoma with Rhabdomyoblastic  
Multiple Myeloma  
Proliferating Angiedotheliomatosis  
Rhabdomyosarcoma  
Sarcoma  
Soft Tissue Sarcoma  
Synovial Sarcoma

**Birth Defects**

Spina Bifida: children born to either male or female Vietnam veterans

**Children born to female Vietnam veterans**

Achondroplasia  
Cleft Lip and Cleft Palate  
Congenital Heart Disease  
Congenital Talipes  
Equinovarus  
Esophageal and Intestinal Atresia  
Hallerman-Streiff Syndrome  
Hip Dysplasia  
Hirschprung's Disease  
Hydrocephalus Due to Aqueductal Stenosis,  
Hypospadias  
Imperforate Anus  
Neural Tube Defects  
Poland Syndrome  
Pyloric Stenosis  
Syndactyly: fused digits  
Tracheoesophageal Fistula  
Undescended Testicles  
Williams syndrome

**Persian Gulf War and Global War on Terror: August 2, 1990 to present**

Gulf War Illness  
Leishmaniasis  
Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)  
Brain cancer  
Immune-system disorders and other wide-ranging symptoms, including  
Chronic pain, fatigue  
Memory loss

Increased risk of birth defects in children of veterans exposed to depleted uranium

**The following diseases are associated with toxic exposures occurring on U.S. military installations around the country.**

**From long-term exposure to benzene and other solvents in contaminated water:**

Leukemia  
Anemia  
Bleeding disorders  
Harm to reproductive organs  
Cancers  
Thyroid disfunction  
Changes in mood, memory, attention, and reaction time

**Exposure to asbestos in older buildings and ships:**

Mesothelioma  
Asbestosis

**Exposure to PFAS in contaminated drinking water:**

Birth defects  
Cancers  
Infertility  
Reduced immune responses in children

**Lead in metal products such as solder and pipes, explosives, artillery, ammunition:**

Decreased memory and concentration  
Weakness in fingers, wrists, or ankles  
Increases in blood pressure  
Anemia

**High levels of exposure can cause:**

Severe damage of the brain and kidneys  
Miscarriage  
Impaired sperm production

This is not a complete list of environmental toxins but should give you information to start your hunt.

**BRIGHTON COURT ASSISTED LIVING COMMUNITY**

**Welcome Home!**

**Meet Luke.**

At Brighton Court, we want our residents and visitors to always feel welcome and comfortable, just like at home. And who better to greet you than our very own Luke!

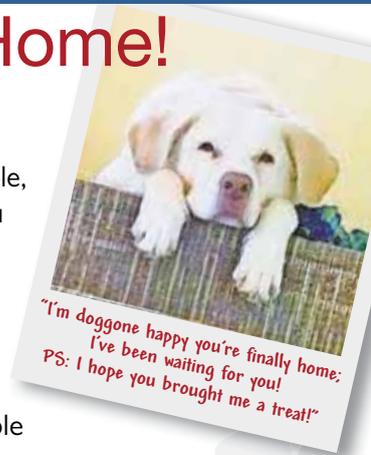
**Introducing Luke, Resident Ambassador.**

Luke lives at Brighton Court Assisted Living and Memory Care. He is a friendly and lovable Golden Lab.

You can always find him welcoming our new residents to his community. When he's not around he is probably keeping a resident company in their apartment.

For more information about Brighton Court or to schedule a tour and meet Luke please call **509.926.4533**.

**Brighton Court**  
**Assisted Living Community**  
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Spokane Valley, WA 99216



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# Veterans moved by gratitude on Inland Northwest Honor Flight

By Don Walker

In April 2019, I attended an Honor Flight as a guardian for my lifelong friend, Vietnam veteran Bryan Bledsoe. I observed and wrote about the impacts and healing that occurred among the veterans, guardians, and volunteers.

This October, I was honored to be the guardian on an Honor Flight for another lifelong friend and buddy, Bill Tibbitts. My observation on this adventure was that the trip and the interaction meant a lot to Bill and the other 94 veterans on board.

I believe Bill felt that he was among “compadres” and that they understood what he went through and how his service has impacted his life and health. The Honor Flight veterans felt safe with each other and comfortable around the committed and passionate volunteers.

Bill and the others were moved by the gratitude, greeting and cheers they received all along the way. He shook dozens of hands in the Washington, D.C. area and hundreds back in Spokane. Bill loved it when they said, “Welcome home” and especially loved it when they said, “We will never forget what you did for us.”

I love you, Bill. Thank you and I promise we will never forget.

“How does one friend adequately tell another how much they made your life easier during our trip to Washington D.C.? You never wavered once in our time together. You looked out for me and I wanted you to know how appreciated it was. You took your job seriously and I was thankful that you did. I can never repay your kindness towards me.”

- An Honor Flight veteran to a guardian

On the airplane, I was seated between two Vietnam combat veterans, Jerry Usher from Post Falls, Idaho, and Cisco Cortez

from the Tri-Cities. Stories flowed over me and to me from these quality men.

Cisco always had a positive spin on anyone and everything; he was easy to talk to and easy to like.

Jerry was slow to open up, but soon his stories flowed. He inspired me how he recognized and overcame many difficult veteran related issues. During one of our conversations, Jerry said the following:

“When I was in Vietnam, we always wondered what the world would be like when we got home. We wondered what in the world was changing. When I got home ... I discovered the only thing that had changed was me.”

I believe this is true of many veterans, maybe all combat veterans. War changes you and your battles are not over when you leave the battlefield. God bless and help you all.

As I reflected on the impact of the Honor Flight, I asked myself: Why does work so well? Why is so impactful and meaningful? What makes this organization and event different than some others?

It is not the destinations, although they are incredible. It is not the memorials, even though they are dramatic and inspiring.

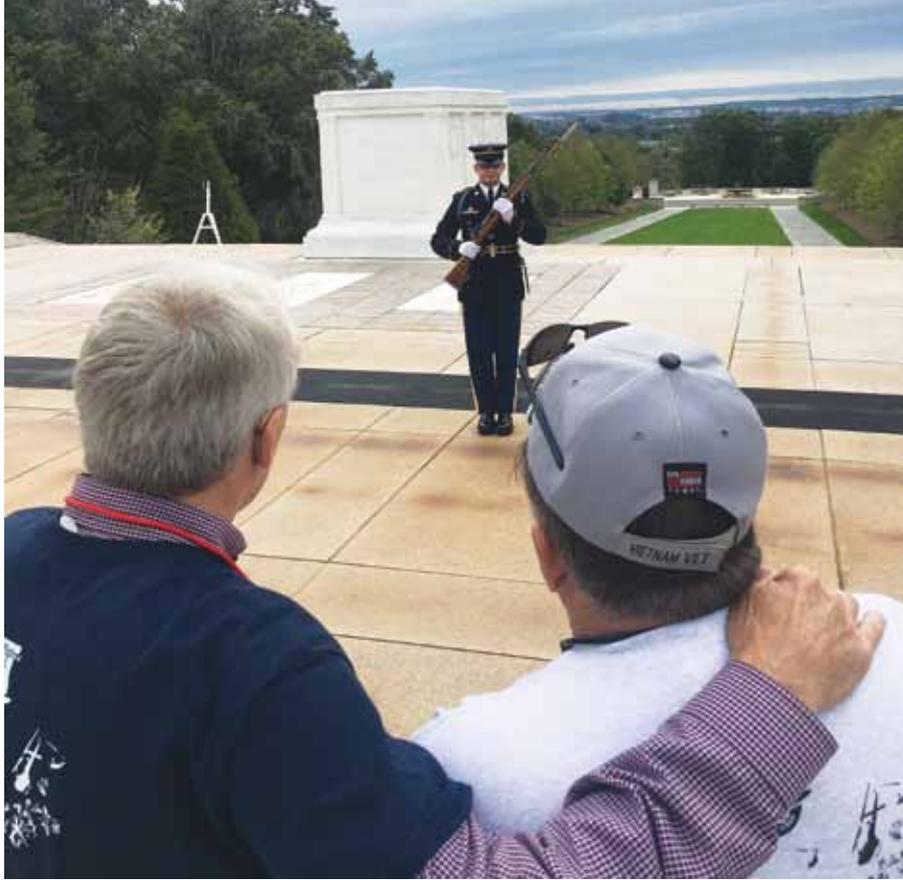
The reason for Inland Northwest Honor Flight’s life-changing impacts is the passion and commitment of the volunteers.

Thousands of volunteer hours are required to plan and coordinate for every 37-hour Honor Flight. All of these hours are given to recognize and help combat veterans. It isn’t for self-glorification. Volunteers get their reward in the tears and gratitude of the veterans, their families and their friends.

My sincere thanks to all who make these Honor Flights possible. God bless you all.

**“At the core, the American citizen soldiers knew the difference between right and wrong, and they didn’t want to live in a world in which wrong prevailed. So they fought, and won, and we all of us, living and yet to be born, must be forever profoundly grateful.”**

*Stephen E. Ambrose*



## Veterans Chronicle success

A Vietnam veteran read an article in a recent edition of Veterans Chronicle. He visited the Spokane County Veterans Services Center to meet with a Veteran Service Officer. He had never interfaced with the VA since returning from Vietnam.

He now has a VA compensation rating of 100% permanent and total (P&T) disability. He was not expecting this compensation when he made an appointment to find out about his VA benefits.

If you are veteran who has not accessed your VA benefits, see the "How Can I Get Help?" section to begin the process!



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1201 N. EVERGREEN RD., SPOKANE VALLEY

# Hey Veterans DID YOU KNOW?

## **ARE YOU A VETERAN IN CRISIS OR CONCERNED ABOUT ONE?**

If you or someone you know are experiencing thoughts of suicide, please reach out for help immediately.

The Veterans and Military Crisis Line is a confidential resource with support 24/7 to connect those in crisis with qualified, caring responders. Many responders are veterans themselves and have faced the challenges experienced by many service members.

The Veterans and Military Crisis Line, text-messaging service, and online chat provide free VA support for all service members, including National Guard and Reserve, veterans and family members; VA registration or enrollment is not required.

CALL 1-800-273-8255 and press 1

ONLINE [www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/chat](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/chat)

TEXT 838255

Need crisis assistance while overseas? The following overseas locations have direct crisis line numbers:

In Europe: Call 00800 1273 8255 or DSN 118

In Korea: Call 0808 555 118 or DSN 118

In Afghanistan: Call 00 1 800 273 8255 or DSN 111

You can also chat online at [www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/military-crisis-line](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/military-crisis-line).

## **THE VA DOES NOT PAY FOR VETERAN FUNERALS OR CREMATIONS?**

The only thing that is free of charge is burial or inurnment at a state or national veterans cemetery (spouses are \$300). Veterans that qualify must either be cremated or in a casket, which the VA does not pay for, nor do they pay for embalming, urns, or memorial or funeral services. For those veterans who do qualify for VA death benefits, there is a partial reimbursement after the fact. The amounts provided are a fraction of actual costs in most cases. For more information, contact Kellie Richardson at [KellieR91@yahoo.com](mailto:KellieR91@yahoo.com) or call (509) 714-7482.

## **TYPE II DIABETES MAY QUALIFY VIETNAM VETS FOR VA BENEFITS?**

If you develop Diabetes Mellitus (Type II), you are automatically eligible for some VA health care benefits and a monthly disability check? Due to presumed exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam, there are currently 14 listed diseases that automatically qualify you to receive compensation. Conditions secondary to diabetes are also covered, including neuropathy, chronic kidney failure and heart disease. Contact your Veterans Service officer (VSO) for more information or for assistance in filing a claim. This is a free service and you do not need to belong to a specific organization to receive help.

## **THE POST-9/11 GI BILL CAN PAY FOR YOUR EDUCATION?**

Approved training includes graduate and undergraduate degrees, vocational or technical training, on-the-job training, flight training and much more. All training must be approved for GI Bill benefits. To learn more, contact your Veteran Service officer. In North Idaho, contact Department of Labor Veteran Representative Robert Shoeman at (208) 457-8789. In Eastern Washington, contact WorkSource Spokane at (509) 532-3101.

## **A MESOTHELIOMA DIAGNOSIS MAY QUALIFY FOR VA MEDICAL CARE AND DISABILITY?**

Over 3,000 patients are diagnosed with mesothelioma each year, and nearly one-third of those patients are veterans. Mesothelioma is a malignant tumor caused by the inhalation of asbestos fibers; many military jobs have resulted in asbestos exposure. More information about this condition can be found at more detail can be found [www.mesotheliomahub.com/veterans](http://www.mesotheliomahub.com/veterans).

An honorably discharged veteran with mesothelioma may be eligible for VA medical care and disability compensation, if they meet the following criteria:

1. A current diagnosis of an asbestos-related illness recognized by the VA.
2. Proof the service member worked with or was exposed to asbestos during service.
3. A 'nexus letter' from a doctor proving the diagnosis is a result of asbestos exposure.

To file a VA claim, a veteran can:

1. Apply online through eBenefits at [www.ebenefits.va.gov](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov).
2. Contact a qualified attorney, Veterans Service Organization, or claims agent for help at [www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation](http://www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation).
3. Visit a VA regional office ([www.benefits.va.gov/benefits/offices.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/benefits/offices.asp)).

See "How Can I Get Help?" to get started.

## **BENEFITS ARE AVAILABLE FOR VIETNAM VETERANS WITH PARKINSON'S DISEASE OR PROSTATE CANCER?**

Due to presumed exposure to Agent Orange for "boots on the ground" Vietnam veterans, these are two of 14 currently listed presumptive diseases that automatically qualify veterans to receive VA health care benefits and a monthly disability check.

If this sounds like you or someone you know, contact the Spokane County Regional Veterans Services at (509) 477-3690 or the North Idaho Veteran Services and Benefits at (208) 446-1092 for help filing a claim or enrolling in the VA medical system.

For more information about the 14 presumptive diseases associated with Agent Orange, visit [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/conditions/](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/conditions/).

## **LOW-INCOME WARTIME VETERANS CAN GET A PENSION?**

VA helps veterans and their families cope with financial challenges by providing supplemental income with the Veterans Pension, a tax-free monetary benefit payable to low-income wartime Veterans. A veteran must have at least 90 days of active duty service, with at least one day during a wartime period to qualify. Other minimum requirements include at least one of the following: age 65 or older; totally and permanently disabled; a patient in a nursing home receiving skilled nursing care; receiving Social Security Disability Insurance; or receiving Supplemental Security Income.

If you're an Idaho veteran who may be eligible for a non-service connected pension, contact Darryl at (208) 446-1092. Washington veterans should contact Spokane County Regional Veteran Service Center at (509) 477-3690.

## **PURPLE HEART RECIPIENTS CAN SAVE THOUSANDS ON VA LOAN FEES?**

If you are in the market for a VA home loan and have been awarded a Purple Heart, you will be able to save thousands of dollars on your loan thanks to a new law. Purple Heart recipients will be exempt from the funding fee that the Department of Veterans Affairs charges on its guaranteed home loans starting Jan. 1, 2020. To receive this exemption, you must provide proof of your Purple Heart award to the lender and the VA before the loan closing date.

## **BUSINESSES CAN QUALIFY FOR TAX BREAKS BY HIRING VETERANS?**

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a federal tax incentive for businesses that hire candidates from certain target groups, including qualified veterans. Your company can reduce federal business taxes from \$2,400 to \$9,600 per eligible employee.

Apply online through a Secure Access Washington (SAW) account. All applications must be submitted within 28 days of the employee's start date. If you don't have a SAW account, register through [WorkSourceWA.com](http://WorkSourceWA.com).

## **TINNITUS IS ONE OF THE MOST COMMON DISABILITIES AMONG VETERANS?**

If you have ringing in your ears (tinnitus) and/or hearing loss that developed due to military service, you may be eligible for VA health care benefits and a monthly disability check? Contact a Veterans Service officer for more information. This is a free service and you do not need to belong to a specific organization to receive help.

## **YOU CAN GET FREE FLU SHOTS AT WALGREENS?**

VA and Walgreens are national partners, providing no-cost flu shots to VA health care enrolled veterans. Just show your Veterans Health Identification Card and another form of photo ID at any Walgreens Pharmacy through March 31, 2020.

## **YOU CAN TRACK AND MONITOR YOUR HEALTH WITH MY HEALTHEVET?**

My HealtheVet is the VA's Personal Health Record. It was designed for veterans, service members, their dependents and caregivers. As a registered user, you can build your own personal health record that you manage and control yourself. All users who have a Basic account are able to view their self-entered information. VA patients can upgrade to an Advanced or Premium account, which allows you to view parts of your VA health record and/or DoD Military Service Information.

For help signing up, contact your Veteran Service Officer or a VSO listed in the "How Can I Get Help" section.



## Veteran Benefits in Washington State

### HOUSING BENEFITS

The state of Washington runs four state veterans homes in Ortig, Port Orchard, Spokane, and Walla Walla.

Eligible applicants must meet the following criteria: served at any time, in any branch of the United States Armed Forces including the National Guard; received an honorable discharge and reside in Washington State. The spouse of a resident or widow of an eligible veteran is also eligible, as are Gold Star parents who lost a child while serving in the armed forces.

### FINANCIAL BENEFITS

#### **Disabled Veteran Property Tax**

**Exemption:** Veterans with a 100 percent service-connected disability and an income of less than \$40,000 (not including VA disability payment) may be exempt from paying property tax on their home. Surviving spouses may also qualify.

#### **Free License Plates for Disabled**

**Veterans:** Veterans who have been receiving 100 percent VA disability for at least one year can receive a free disabled veteran vehicle license plate.

### EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

**State Employment:** Honorably discharged combat veterans or those with a campaign ribbon, and their surviving spouses, get preference for state jobs. For state jobs that require an examination, five percent will be added to the score of a non-combat veteran, ten percent will be added to the score of a combat veteran, and five percent will be added to the score of a mobilized guard or reserve member.

**Military Service Credit:** Washington State Department of Retirement Systems offers military service credit to qualified public employees. If a veteran receives military retirement, they will get 5 percent added no matter what. Honorable discharge is required.

### *Translating Military to State*

**Credentials:** Military training may count towards certain healthcare profession credentialing requirements, if the state determines it is substantially equivalent to standards.

#### **Military Commercial Drivers License**

**Skills Test Waiver:** Veterans seeking a Commercial Drivers License (CDL) may get a waiver of the skills test if they are currently licensed, and operated a CDL in the last 90 days as a part of their military duties. The written test can't be waived.

#### **Washington State Conservation Corps:**

The Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs in partnerships with local counties, the Washington State Department of Ecology, and federal agencies operates several internship and paid programs. These programs work to restore and protect Washington State's natural resources.

### RECREATION BENEFITS

Disabled veterans with at least 30 percent disability can get free camping, moorage, campsite reservations, watercraft launching, trailer dump, and day use at state parks. Discounted hunting and fishing licenses are available to 30 percent and greater disabled veterans (resident or non-resident), and to those over 65 with any disability. Active duty members stationed in Washington can buy hunting and fishing licenses at the resident rate.

### VETERANS CEMETERY

The Washington State Veterans Cemetery is located in Medical Lake. In general, veterans discharged under conditions other than dishonorable and their spouses and dependent children are eligible for burial. There is no residency requirement. There is no charge for veteran interments, and a one-time fee of \$300 fee for eligible dependents.



## Veteran Benefits in Idaho

### HOUSING BENEFITS

**There are three state veterans homes in Idaho:** Boise, Lewiston, and Pocatello. Applicants may be peacetime or wartime veterans; wartime veterans retain priority admission status. Applicants must have been discharged under honorable conditions and be an Idaho resident. Applicants must be unemployable as a result of age, illness, or disability, and must apply for and be eligible for Medicaid benefits or must pay a monthly fee.

### FINANCIAL BENEFITS

**Income Tax:** Military pay is tax free if stationed out-of-state. Military retirement is tax free for retirees over 65 or disabled retirees over 62, as well as unremarried surviving spouses.

**Property Tax:** Effective July 1, 2018, veterans with a 100 percent service-connected disability may apply to reduce their property taxes by as much as \$1,320.

**Grocery Tax Credit:** Veterans age 65 or older, or disabled veterans age 62 or older, may claim the Grocery Tax Credit even when not required to file an income tax return if VA disability benefits are the veteran's only income.

**Financial Assistance:** Provides up to a \$1,000 grant, in cases of extreme emergency, to wartime veterans in need of assistance. Must have entered the military from Idaho or lived within the state for at least five years. The event or emergency must have occurred within 90 days of the request.

### EMPLOYMENT PREFERENCE

Idaho state employment gives preference points for active duty veterans. Honorably discharged veterans get 5 preference points, disabled veterans get 10 preference points. Unremarried surviving spouses can get the same points as the veteran.

### RECREATION BENEFITS

Idaho veterans with 100 percent service-connected disability get free access and camping at Idaho State Parks. Resident disabled veterans may be eligible for reduced fees for licenses and tags for hunting and fishing. Nonresident disabled veterans with a VA disability rating of at least 40 percent are eligible for nonresident DAV reduced fees for licenses and tags.

### VETERANS CEMETERY

The Idaho State Veterans Cemetery is located adjacent to the Dry Creek Cemetery in Northwest Boise. The eligibility requirements for burial at the Idaho State Veterans Cemetery follow the National Veterans Cemetery eligibility requirements and Idaho law. There is no requirement to be a resident of the state of Idaho.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Coping with Anger Workshop

Mondays, 2-4 p.m.

Spokane Veteran Center

13109 E. Mirabeau Pkwy., Spokane Valley

Meet with other veterans in a confidential group setting to work through anger problems together. Learn how to increase mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotional regulation and interpersonal effectiveness while practicing remaining in the here and now. Learn more about the clinical symptoms of PTSD and gain a better understanding of the neurobiology and emotional changes that may occur in traumatic experiences. You've done your duty for our country. Now it's time to do your duty for yourself. A complete intake assessment is required, as well as a DD214. Contact facilitator Kenneth Dube, M.A., at (509) 444-8387 with questions.

### Veteran's Auction

Monday, Nov. 11, 2 p.m.

Jack and Dan's Bar & Grill

1226 N. Hamilton St., Spokane

Metal flag from 509 Metalworks has been ordered.

### Free Dinner for Veterans

Monday, Nov. 11, 3-7 p.m.

Spokane Eagles Aerie 2

6410 N. Lidgerwood St., Spokane

All veterans eat for free; \$8 for non-veterans. Choice of chicken fried steak or baked chicken, mashed potato, gravy, vegetable, roll and dessert. Call (509) 489-3030 for more information.

### Spokane Young Marines Veterans

#### Day Breakfast

Saturday, Nov. 16, 8:30-10:30 a.m.

VFW Post 1435

192 S. David St., Spokane Valley

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# Birth defect numbers in children of Vietnam veterans alarm experts

By Steve Andrews  
WFLA News Channel 8

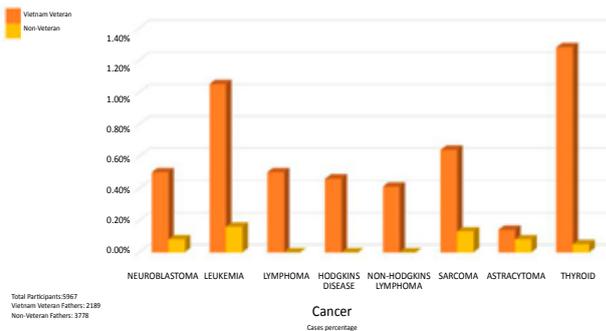
Rates of cancer, learning disabilities and physical birth defects in the children of Vietnam veterans are staggering when compared to those in children of non-veterans.

Birth Defect Research for Children's latest research shows mounting evidence that these children, now in their 30s, 40s and 50s exhibit health problems across the board.

"It's so compelling to look at the data, I mean every time I look at it, I go wow!" said Betty Mekdeci, Executive Director of Birth Defect Research for Children.

## Birth Defects Research for Children, Inc.

National Birth Defects Registry - Children of Vietnam Veterans and Non-Veterans



More than 2.5 million Americans served in South Vietnam during the war. Each one was presumably exposed to a harmful herbicide called Agent Orange, which is known to cause cancers, leukemia, heart disease and more.

Ms. Mekdeci is alarmed by what she sees in children of Vietnam veterans.

"The proof is mounting every day. Because you don't like it, that doesn't make it go away," she said.

Her research reveals birth defects showing up at a higher rate in children of Vietnam veterans than non-veterans.

Leukemia, thyroid cancer, along with ovarian cysts are

showing up at 10 times and higher than the rate of children of non-veterans.

"We're also starting to see auto-immune problems, childhood cancers, increases in allergic conditions," she said.

Learning disabilities numbers are eye-popping.

"We have an avalanche of children with the main thing are these neurodevelopmental problems," Ms. Mekdeci added.

Dyslexia, attention deficit disorders and depression rates are all much higher than those in children of non-veterans.

"We have had a lot of indication that the mothers may be having some effect from the fathers being exposed, mental disorders, female cancer, things like that," Ms. Mekdeci explained. "We know that there are chemicals that are found in seminal fluid, this is not new stuff."

Agent Orange ravaged Navy veteran Lonnie Kilpatrick's heart. He was exposed on Guam.

"I've had heart issues my whole life," Lonnie's daughter Keri Ackerson said.

Keri and her daughter Emma suffer from brain malformations tied to Agent Orange. By age 9, Emma had to have brain surgery.

"You've got lots of the veterans dying but the children and the grandchildren are going on and we're talking about thousands and thousands," Ms. Mekdeci stated.

Following my report last year raising questions about passing on the poison to grandchildren, Birth Defect Research for Children began more research.

The findings are preliminary, but concerning.

"It's very concerning, it's very much like what we're seeing with the children," Ms. Mekdeci added. "You can't afford to ignore this because you don't like what we're finding, you can't afford to say, it's going to go away if you just look the other way."

## Benefits of veteran-owned business certification

Washington State has a certification for veterans and service members who are business owners. Certification is free and requires only basic veteran discharge status and business information to complete.

### WHY CERTIFY YOUR VETERAN- OR SERVICE MEMBER-OWNED BUSINESS?

Washington State agencies have been asked by Governor Inslee to do 5% of their purchasing from veteran- or service member-owned businesses. By linking the WDVA certified veteran- or service member-owned businesses list to WEBS, state agencies can identify WDVA Certified Businesses and track purchasing goals.

It will also help private businesses and citizens across the state with easy access to your business information through the list of veteran- or service member-owned businesses in their communities.

Veteran- or service member-owned businesses registered in WEBS and certified by WDVA will be listed on the WDVA website at <https://pr-webs-vendor.des.wa.gov/VendorSearch.aspx>.

Plus, certification makes you eligible to apply for the Veterans Linked Deposit Program, which can improve access to capital for enterprising by decreasing interest rates on small business loans by 2%.

And certified veteran-owned businesses can also display a unique flag and logo for the public.

### WHERE DO I START?

Washington Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) and Washington Electronic Business Solution (WEBS) have streamlined the registration and certification process for vendors who want to do business with Washington State agencies or municipalities.

Visit [pr-webs-customer.des.wa.gov](http://pr-webs-customer.des.wa.gov) to register your business in WEBS.

To receive veteran- or service member-owned business certification, you must provide:

**Proof of honorable veteran status with one of the following:** DD214 member 4 copy, Retired VA ID Card, Retirement Certificate, Discharge Certificate, or (if currently serving) your military ID, badge, recent paystub, or letter on military letterhead.  
**Proof of 51% ownership with one of the following:** Master Business application, business plan, operating agreement, meeting minutes, shares report, stock certificate breakdown, tax forms with ownership

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[www.dva.wa.gov](http://www.dva.wa.gov)

percentage, or (if sole proprietorship) your license. (If a community property or two veterans 50/50 split, you are eligible, as long as the veteran maintains day to day operational control of the business.)

Proof the business is a Washington State Enterprise, which is defined as an enterprise that is incorporated in the state of Washington as a Washington domestic corporation, or an enterprise whose principal place of business is located within the state of Washington for enterprises that are not incorporated.

Certification documentation can be submitted by several ways:

Email: [vob@dva.wa.gov](mailto:vob@dva.wa.gov)

Fax: Attn: VOB 360-725-2197

US Mail: WDVA Business Registry  
PO Box 41150  
Olympia, WA 98504-1150

If you have any questions, you can contact [vob@dva.wa.gov](mailto:vob@dva.wa.gov).

*Do you know a veteran that owns a business?  
Let them know about this opportunity!*

*Veterans Chronicle plans to publish a list of veteran-owned businesses every month that will also be posted on [veteranshelpnet.com](http://veteranshelpnet.com).*

*To help with the certification process, talk to a Veteran Service Officer at WDVA Regional Center or WorkSource Veteran Services. Contact information can be found in the "How Do I Get Help" section.*

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# VETERANS SERVICE OFFICERS

Veteran Service Officers (VSOs) are trained, certified and accredited advocates for veterans! They are not VA employees. Assistance is FREE. Contact them before you call the VA.

Every state and most counties have a Veteran Affairs office, and many Veteran Service Organizations (DAV, VFW and American Legion) also have VSOs. At right is a directory of some VSOs in North Idaho, Northwest Montana and Eastern Washington.

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**Marcy Bennett**  
NMLS# 507122  
Residential Loan Officer  
509-227-5461



**Ken Hunt**  
NMLS# 506480  
Residential Loan Officer  
509-462-5805



**Deidre Arnold**  
NMLS# 643782  
Residential Loan Officer  
509-227-5497



**Lisa Knight**  
NMLS# 785378  
Residential Loan Officer  
509-462-5809



**Mike Coffey**  
NMLS# 699335  
Residential Loan Officer  
509-227-5465



**Laura Lund**  
NMLS# 507140  
Residential Loan Officer  
509-227-5492

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# DIRECTORY

## NORTH IDAHO



**Tom Freeman**  
Kootenai County Veteran Service Officer  
Post Falls Office of Veterans Advocacy  
120 E. Railroad Ave., Post Falls  
(208) 446-1090



**Darryl Heisey**  
North Idaho State Service Officer  
Post Falls Office of Veterans Advocacy  
120 E. Railroad Ave., Post Falls  
darryl.heisey@veterans.idaho.gov  
(208) 446-1092



**Susan Hendrixson**  
Shoshone County Veteran Service Officer  
700 Bank St., Suite 120, Wallace  
mmsec@co.shoshone.id.us  
(208) 752-3331  
M-Th 9 a.m.-5 p.m.



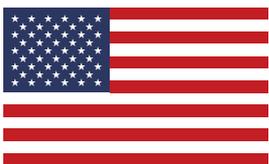
**Bryan Hult**  
Bonner County Veteran Service Officer  
1500 HWY 2, Ste. 122, Sandpoint  
bhult@bonnercountyid.gov  
(208) 446-1092 (208) 255-5291  
M-Th 8 a.m.-5 p.m. (call/email for appointment)



**Steven Moffitt**  
Tribal Veteran Service Officer  
Benewah County  
850 North A Street, Plummer  
smoffitt@cdatribe-nsn.gov  
(208) 686-2800, ext. 2085



**Scott Thorsness**  
North Idaho State Service Officer  
Post Falls Office of Veterans Advocacy  
120 E. Railroad Ave. Post Falls  
scott.Thorsness@veterans.idaho.gov



**John Tucker**  
Boundary County Veteran Service Officer  
6355 Lincoln St., Bonners Ferry  
jtucker@bonnercountyid.gov  
(208) 446-1092, (208) 267-8611  
Thursday, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

## MONTANA



**Carolyn Collins**  
2989 HWY. 93 North, Kalispell  
Appts. available Monday and Friday  
Walk-ins welcome Wednesday  
carolcollins@mt.gov  
(406) 755-3795



**Ryan Keeler**  
2989 HWY. 93 North, Kalispell  
Appts. available Monday and Friday  
Walk-ins welcome Wednesday  
rkeller@mt.gov  
(406) 755-3795

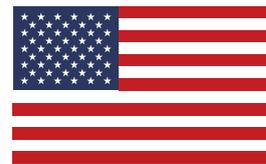


**Bryan T. Zipp**  
2989 HWY. 93 North, Kalispell  
Appts. available Monday and Friday  
Walk-ins welcome Wednesday  
bzipp@mt.gov  
(406) 755-3795

## WASHINGTON



**Eric Blackburn**  
Spokane County Veteran Service Officer  
Spokane County Regional Veteran Service Center  
1117 N Evergreen RD., Suite 2, Spokane Valley  
(509) 477-3690  
eblackburn@spokanecounty.org



**Claudette Becker**  
Spokane County Veteran Service Officer  
Spokane County Regional Veteran Service Center  
1117 N Evergreen RD., Suite 2, Spokane Valley  
(509) 477-3690  
cbecker@spokanecounty.org



**Adrian Wall**  
Spokane County Veteran Service Officer  
Spokane County Regional Veteran Service Center  
1117 N Evergreen RD., Suite 2, Spokane Valley  
(509) 477-3690  
awall@spokanecounty.org

*Imagine a vision  
with a purpose:*  
**The American Legion**  
adds the purpose to  
**many visions**



*By David Sutton  
US Army Veteran  
American Legion Post 241  
Chaplain/Historian*

A vision without purpose is simply churning your wheels and seemingly getting nowhere ... but purpose without the vision will soon turn to drudgery.

Veterans are sometimes faced with this situation when they are discharged from active service. They have the dream of being appreciated for their service and being rewarded and honored because they sacrificed a portion of their lives to ensure America's great vision of freedom and peace.

So where does a young veteran begin to extend their adventures, disciplined lifestyle, patriotism and love for other veterans who were part of the same experiences? What outlet do these young men and women have to express their concern for other veterans? And where can they find benefits meant for them?

There are several well-established veteran organizations, many of which are more specialized than others. To name a few the VFW, DAV Wounded Warriors and the American Legion.

Why should you join? There are four major reasons, so let's explore one of them: The American Legion.

First, veterans join the American Legion because they receive assistance to ensure their proper and entitled benefits. Young veterans are trained to help others find proper benefits. The American Legion assists disabled vets get help by providing information, referrals, resources, death benefits and other vital topics. Young soldiers, Marines, sailors and airmen can not only receive, but give as well.

Secondly, National Security may be at stake. That may sound a little out of the way, but not really. American Legion Posts nationwide organize and send care packages and give support to



our troops. The American Legion's position on national defense, homeland security, border control, and military support is all part of a long-held value that key to world stability is strong support of our servicemen and women. Legion members help returning troops work through their discharge and return to civilian life by supporting groups like blood donor programs, Tricare, POW and MIA, and Blue Star Banners and Gold Star families.

Thirdly, young veterans join as an extension of Americanism, from American Legion Baseball and oratorical competition to training at Boys and Girls State. American Legion shooters become Olympians and national rifle shooting champions support programs that recruit and train boys and girls to learn gun safety and shooting skills. There are Scouting opportunities, law enforcement education, scholarships, U.S. Flag protection and education, ROTC, and voter registration activities. All these programs and more need young veterans to

support and lead them.

Finally, the American Legion guides children and youth. There are opportunities to work through the Child Welfare Foundation and the Family Support Network. Did you know that in 2017 American Legion's Child Welfare Foundation awarded \$618,606 to 20 nonprofit groups who care for the well-being of American youth?

Young veterans are vitally needed to serve in veteran organizations. Check out the organization where your interest and passions are. Be a serving, caring veteran.

Give us a chance to add purpose to your vision. The American Legion Post 241 meets on the second Tuesday of every month at Holman Gardens (2nd floor) at 12912 E. 12th Ave. in Spokane Valley.

American Legion Post 241  
P.O. Box 1696  
Veradale, WA.99037



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# Am I eligible for VA disability compensation?

You may be able to get VA disability benefits or compensation if you have a current illness or injury (known as a condition) that affects your body or mind and you meet the requirements listed below:

**Both of these statements are true:**

1. You served on active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training.
2. You have a disability rating for your service-connected condition.

**At least one of these statements is true:**

1. You got sick or injured while serving in the military and can link this condition to your illness or injury (called an in-service disability claim).
2. You had an illness or injury before you joined the military, and serving made it worse (called a pre-service disability claim).
3. You have a disability related to your active-duty service that didn't appear until after you ended your service (called a post-service disability claim).

Some presumed disabilities include a chronic (long-lasting) illness that appears within one year after discharge, an illness caused by contact with contaminants (toxic chemicals) or other hazardous materials, or an illness caused by your time spent as a prisoner of war (POW).

There are a number of conditions that may qualify for VA disability benefits, including: chronic back pain resulting in a current diagnosed back disability; breathing problems resulting from a current lung condition or lung disease; severe hearing loss; scar tissue; loss of range of motion (problems moving your body); ulcers; or cancers caused by contact with toxic chemicals or other dangers.

You may also be able to get VA disability benefits for: traumatic brain injury (TBI); post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); depression; or anxiety.

Both veterans and their qualified dependents are eligible for disability compensation.

If this sounds like you or someone you know, contact your local Veteran Service Officer (see "How Can I Get Help?") for assistance in filing a claim.



## App combines telehealth tools for faster service

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently launched a new mobile application designed to save veterans and their caregivers time online.

VA Launchpad for Veterans simplifies and organizes several existing tools and resources into one convenient location to help manage health care needs.

"VA has developed dozens of apps for veterans to take charge of their health care," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "VA Launchpad makes it easier to have these important tools available at your fingertips."

VA Launchpad arranges all of VA's apps into five categories for veterans: health management, health care team communication, vital health information sharing, mental health improvement and quality of life improvement. The new app enables veterans to access all the features with a single secure login.

The app also includes many mental health care and personal improvement tools for individuals who are not enrolled in VA health care services. These tools are free and do not require secure logins to use.

VA Launchpad for Veterans is available for download in the Apple App Store and Google Play. To access VA's secure apps within VA Launchpad, users must be a VA patient and have one of the following accounts: Premium My HealthVet, DS Logon Level 2 (Premium) or ID.me.

Learn more at [mobile.va.gov/app/va-launchpad-veterans](https://mobile.va.gov/app/va-launchpad-veterans).



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