

# VETERANS ADVOCATE

June 2016



## Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs

[Statement from VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald](#) 5/23/16- "On Monday, I made some remarks on how we're working to improve Veterans' satisfaction with the care they receive from VA. It was never my intention to suggest that I don't take our mission of serving Veterans very seriously. In fact, improving access to care is my number one priority and the priority I have set for the entire department. For the last two years, the huge majority of VA employees have worked tirelessly to improve the timeliness of the care and benefits we provide to Veterans. As I've told Veterans Service Organizations, Members of Congress, and myriad other groups of Veterans stakeholders, our goal is to ensure VA becomes the Number 1 customer-service organization in government. To do that, we are following many of the best practices of private sector health care providers and exceptional customer-service organizations. At VA we take our mission of caring for those who "shall have borne the battle" very seriously; we have the best and most noble mission in government. If my comments Monday led any Veterans to believe that I, or the dedicated workforce I am privileged to lead, don't take that noble mission seriously, I deeply regret that. Nothing could be further from the truth. As we approach the Memorial Day holiday and pay tribute to the sacrifices of courageous men and women who placed the interests of others above their own, we at the VA remain focused on our mission to care for those who bravely served our Nation."

# STANDDOWN FOR VETERANS

**The 2016 Veterans StandDown, hosted by Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV), on Tuesday, May 24, 2016 was a success!!**

132 veterans attended, there were 50 service providers participated, 29 veterans were served at the legal clinic and 23 community volunteers and lawyers were present. The original StandDown for veterans was modeled after the StandDown concept used during the Vietnam War to provide a safe retreat for units returning from combat operations. At secure base camp areas, troops were able to take care of personal hygiene, get clean uniforms, enjoy warm meals, receive medical and dental care, mail and receive letters, and enjoy the camaraderie of friends in a safe environment. StandDown afforded battle-weary soldiers the opportunity to renew their spirit, health and overall sense of well-being. That purpose still stands today when MACV hosts a StandDown for veterans and those experiencing an issue that has become a barrier in their lives. The idea is to bring many services to one location and make them more accessible to ALL veterans who otherwise may not seek out services or take advantage of benefits due to them. Michael McLaughlin, the MACV Program & Outreach Manager, says Rochester is an excellent location for a Veteran StandDown because of the large veteran population in southeastern Minnesota and because Rochester is a hub



# Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery - Preston



PRESTON, Minn. (KTTC) -5/29/16

Local veterans, their families and lawmakers gathered Sunday afternoon for the dedication of the State Veterans Cemetery in Preston. The ceremony featured a flyover by military fighters, a parade of flags, musical performances and more. Among the speakers was U.S. Rep. Tim Walz, the highest-ranking enlisted soldier to serve in Congress. He delivered the keynote address. "There's much right in the world when you're sitting here with all of you," Rep. Walz told the crowd. "This is about our heritage. Our shared heritage as Americans and the value that we hold so dear." A Blue Star Memorial was also dedicated during the ceremony. Carol Oeltienbruns addressed the audience. "We are here to pay tribute to our Armed Forces. While we go about our daily lives or while we sleep, the men and women in our Armed Forces fly over our skies, sail our seas, and guard our shores, ensuring our safety," said Oeltienbruns. "And remembering today, we dedicate the Blue Star marker to the honor and glory of all those men and women who have served, are serving, or will serve in the Armed Forces of this great nation." Singer Lynnae Bigler Keune sang the National Anthem and "America the Beautiful," while Kaitlyn Gross sang "God Bless the USA." The 34 ID Band Brass Quintet also performed. "Our responsibility goes beyond just remembering," Rep. Walz said at the podium. "I think the biggest lesson I've always tried to take away, that the sacrifice that was given to us requires us to attempt to live our lives in a manner that's befitting of that sacrifice." The State Veterans Cemetery in Preston is the second such cemetery in the state. The 169-acre site features a public information center, restrooms, and a committal service shelter. The first burials were done on Veterans Day 2015. Both vets who were interred were former mayors of Preston.

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# Salute to Women Veterans 2016



June 18th, 2016; 8am-4pm

Metropolitan State University, 700 7th St E, St. Paul MN 55106

**Free and open to all women who served or are currently serving**

*Resources, benefits, workshops, lunch provided*

*Holistic health practitioners on site, engaging speakers to be announced!*

To register, visit <https://salutetowomenveteranstc.eventbrite.com>

**MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT  
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

*Women Veterans Program*

*Connecting and Empowering Minnesota Women Veterans*



# RED CARPET ORIENTATION



Would you like to learn how to navigate the VA system?  
Come join us for an informational meeting for new and established patients.

Some of the topics that will be covered:

Co-managed care

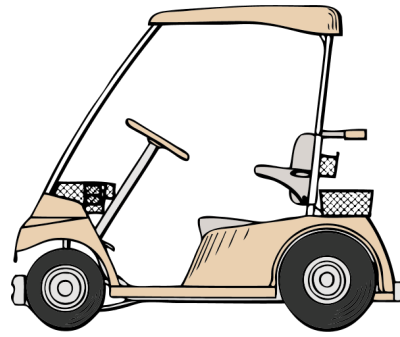
Mental health

Women's health

Every 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month in room 117, at 2:00pm

At the Rochester VA Clinic, 3900 55<sup>th</sup> Street NW

Please call CVSO's to make an appointment at 507-328-6355



# 6th Annual CPL Curtis M. Swenson Memorial Golf Benefit

Saturday June 4, 2016

10:30 am – Registration

11:30 am – Program

12:00 Noon – Shotgun Start

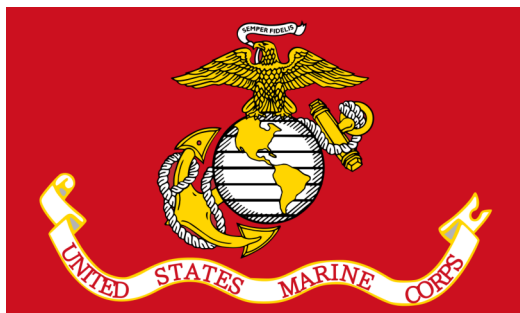
6:00 pm – Dinner – Auction Items

\$90.00 per person / \$360 per 4-some – includes golf, cart, dinner

\$20.00 – per person Dinner only

Hole Sponsorships Available – \$300 / \$500 / \$1,000

This event is FULL as of May 3, 2016 – Please call Scott at 285-0305 or email at [scott@wpgolf.com](mailto:scott@wpgolf.com) to get on a waiting list for golf or to sign up for the dinner only, for dinner only please provide # of people and credit card #



# **PATRIOT SPONSORS AND THE DAY OF MN HONOR VETERANS JUNE 15 2016**



**VETERANS JOIN US FOR A ROUND OF GOLF!  
OPEN TO ALL VETERANS - TEAMS OF 4 ARE ENCOURAGED**

**NO COST TO VETERANS.**

**REGISTRATION 6:30 AM**

**TEE OFF 7:30 AM**

**LUNCH PROVIDED TO PARTICIPATING GOLFERS**

**SERVICE OFFICERS ON SITE FOR CLAIMS ASSISTANCE**

**To Sign Up go to**

**<http://davmn.org/outdoors/veterans-morning-golf/>**

**651-291-1212.**

**VISIT [www.davmn.org](http://www.davmn.org)**



## **PTSD Support Group for Veterans, Friends, and Family**

SEMCIL and Veteran Services are offering a support group for Veterans that have been diagnosed with PTSD, or those who have signs and symptoms of PTSD, and their family members. Maybe you need to talk or just be in the company of your extended Veteran family. The support group will be a place for Veterans to share, heal and talk about their experiences in dealing with PTSD. We will be there for each other.

We are our brothers and sisters keepers because the oath we took to never leave a fallen comrade has no expiration date. For many of us, combat veterans, there are daily reminders of combat stress. The group will be facilitated by Jennifer Shumaker, Veteran and Olmsted County Veterans Service Officer.

**Thursday, June 30, 2016  
(Potluck, Guest Speaker)**

**Thursday, July 28, 2016**

**6:30pm-8:30 p.m.  
American Legion Post 92**

315 1st Ave NW,  
Rochester, MN, 55901  
Jennifer at 507-328-6324 or [shumaker.jennifer@co.olmsted.mn.us](mailto:shumaker.jennifer@co.olmsted.mn.us)



## *Veteran Motorcycle Ride Events*

Saturday, June 4, 2016, Rides for Heroes  
11:00am, 736 South Benton Drive, Sauk Rapids, MN

Saturday, June 4, 2016, 2 Wheels 4 Heroes  
8:00am, 7731 Lake Drive, Lino Lakes, MN

Saturday, June 18, Freedom Run  
12PM, 320 Main Street North, Minnesota Lake, MN

Saturday, July 16, DAV Heroes Ride  
Registration begins at 10am, kickstands up 12pm, Rochester Harley Davidson, 7180 Hwy 14 East



### Other upcoming local

**American Legion**  
3rd Tuesday of each month  
315 First Ave NW  
Rochester, MN 55901  
7pm  
**Legion Riders**  
2nd Thursday of each month  
7pm  
**Forty et eight at the American Legion**  
2nd Tuesday of each month  
7pm  
**Military Order of the Purple Heart**  
3rd Thursday of each month  
6pm  
**Gulf War Veterans 1st Monday of each month**  
7pm

**Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter # 1110**  
American Legion, 315 1st Ave N W, in Rochester, Minnesota  
4th Monday of the month at 7PM. If the 4th Monday is a holiday, we meet the 3rd Monday

**VFW Post Meeting**  
2nd Tuesday of each Month VFW Post 1215  
16 6th Street SW, Rochester, MN 55902  
7pm

**DAV Meeting**  
2nd Monday, of each Month Rochester's Elks Lodge  
1652 Hwy 52 N, Rochester, MN 55901  
5:30pm dinner, meeting at 6:00pm

**Korean War Veterans**  
Every Monday at Grandmas Kitchen  
1514 N Broadway, Rochester, MN 55906  
(Silver lake plaza)  
7am

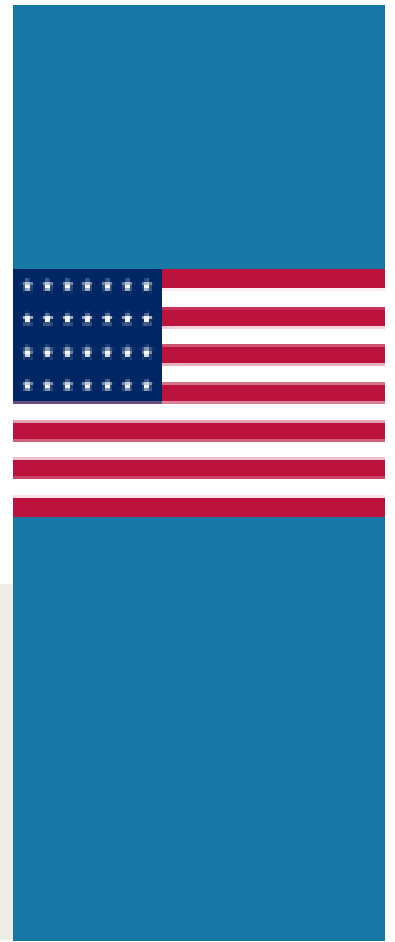
**Marine Corp League Meeting**  
4th Tuesday of the month, 7pm, VFW Post 1215 16  
6th Street SW, Rochester, MN 55902

**POW/MIA Riders Association, Member Meeting**  
2nd Saturday of the month 11am-1pm, VFW Post  
1215 16 6th Street SW, Rochester, MN 55902

**Byron American Legion**  
505 Frontage Road W  
Byron, MN 55920  
3rd Monday of month, 7pm



**“To promote the interests and welfare of veterans, their dependents and survivors and to enhance their quality of life through counseling, claims assistance, education, advocacy and special projects.”**



Veterans Services  
2100 Campus Drive SE,  
Suite 200  
Rochester, MN 55904

