



Veteran Services
2100 Campus Drive SE,
Suite 200
Rochester, MN 55904
(507) 328-6355

Olmsted County Veteran Services had a great year in 2014!

The local Olmsted County Veteran Services office served over 2800 walk-in visits of veterans, dependents, and survivors inquiring about benefits to which they were entitled. Annually our county veterans population is now receiving over \$34 million each year as a whole and this number continues to rise each year primarily due to increasing healthcare, and compensation and pension expenditures. Olmsted County has a veterans population of over 10,000 veterans and several of them remain unaware of the benefits that they may have earned. Please refer anyone with recognizable prior military service to our office for benefit screening and information.

Veterans Health Care Choice Cards

BEFORE YOUR VETERANS CHOICE CARD CAN BE USED: you must first meet the following test of eligibility for *Choice Card* benefits. If, after following step 1 of the test you are NOT eligible for benefits, just hold on to your card-you do not need to call the VA medical center.

STEP 1: Personally assess your eligibility for *Choice Card* benefits. Ask yourself these four questions:

1. Have you been told by your local VA medical facility that you will need to wait more than 30 days from your preferred date of the date medically determined by your physician?
2. Is your current residence more than 40 miles from a VA health care facility (including local clinics)
3. Do you need to travel by plane or boat to arrive at the VA medical facility closest to your home of record
4. Does a geographic challenge, such as extensive distances around water or other geological formations, such as mountains, present a significant travel hardship?

STEP 2: If you answered yes to any of the above questions, you MAY be eligible to use your *Choice Card*.

Verify your eligibility by calling 1-866-606-8198.

When you call, please be prepared to provide your current health insurance coverage information, so the VA can assess coverage responsibility.



Chester Woods Disabled Veterans Hunt

On November 13-16, 2014, Chester Woods County Park, just east of Rochester, held its fourth annual Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Hunt. The DAV was honored and excited to be part of this worthwhile event. There were many fine individuals who came together to organize the event. Besides all the staff, many others volunteered their time to help butcher and make deer drives. A total of 17 deer were taken by 45 hunters in the four-day event.



Nursing Home Sweat Suit Program

The Mayo-Hiawatha Chapter 28, DAV, sponsored a disabled veterans sweat suit program. The DAV volunteers, and officers coordinated with the local chapter nursing homes, to find out how many veterans were in long term care facilities, and also to find out the size of clothing they wear. On Veterans Day, November 11, 2014, the sweat suits were delivered by DAV volunteers.





Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV) is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization that has been assisting veterans for over 24 years. Each year MACV receives more than 25,000 contacts, inquiries, and requests from veterans across the state. In 2013, MACV comprehensively served 1,785 veterans and their families throughout Minnesota who were homeless or experiencing a crisis that could lead to homelessness – and the need for services continues to rise. Many homeless and veterans’ organizations recognize MACV’s transitional and permanent housing programs as a model for the nation. We have a passion for serving those in Minnesota who first served us.

MACV is dedicated to honouring those who served us first. MACV does not duplicate any services already available through Federal, State or County veteran benefits. Our first step is to connect a veteran with the Veterans Administration for medical and mental health benefits and the County and State for their programs. However, there are gaps in these services that we fill – primarily housing and employment support. We offer assistance with the following:

- Mortgage • Rent • Utilities • Transportation • Food • Employment
- Legal Referrals through our Vet law Program

Criteria for Selection for Emergency Assistance:

To be eligible for services, clients must be a veteran with 181 days of active duty service. For most programs, MACV follows the same eligibility criteria as the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs. The veteran must be a Minnesota resident (30 days) and homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless and must be motivated to make positive change. To be eligible for housing assistance, the veteran should pay no more than 30% of their income toward monthly housing expenses.

Once a case file has been opened, income verified and eligibility determined, payments are made directly to the service provider (i.e. utility company, landlord, mortgage company) on the client’s behalf. Generally, emergency assistance is provided on behalf of clients on a one-time basis in which the payment is considered to resolve the current crisis. All services are confidential, and release of information for any purpose requires formal written consent by the client.

A MAC-V Outreach coordinator, Mike McLaughlin, (507-345-8258) will be at Olmsted County

2100 Building, 2nd floor, room 226 from 9am to 4pm on the following dates:

- Tuesday January 13 and 27th**
- Tuesday February 10 and 24th**
- Tuesday March 10 and 24th**





PTSD Support Group for Veterans

SEMCIL Veteran Services is 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.

Upcoming meetings:

Thursday, January 29, 2015

NO FEBRUARY MEETING

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



PTSD Support Group for Families and Friends of Veterans

PTSD Support Group

for family members and friends of Veterans

SEMCIL Veteran Services is offering a support group for family members and friends of veterans that suffer from PTSD, or those who have signs and symptoms of PTSD. Maybe you need to talk or just be in the company of another Veteran family. The support group will be a place for families to share, heal and talk about their experiences in dealing with being a family member or friend of a veteran with PTSD.

The group will be facilitated by Connie While, Veteran and SEMCIL Veterans Services Coordinator. This will be hosted quarterly, coinciding with the PTSD support group for veterans.

Thursday, January 29, 2015

6:30pm-8:30 p.m.

American Legion

POST 92

315 1st Ave NW, Rochester, MN 55901

SEMCIL at 507-285-1815



Education



VA is now accepting applications for the Fry Scholarship from surviving spouses of Service Members. VA educational benefits have been expanded under Section 701 of this Act. Specifically, this section extends the Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship to surviving spouses of military personnel who die in the line of duty after September 10, 2001. Prior to this Act, only children of those who died in the line of duty were eligible for this benefit. Eligible spouses will be entitled to up to 36 months of the full, 100% level, of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. This includes the tuition and fee payment, a monthly housing allowance, and a books and supplies stipend. These eligibility changes will be implemented effective January 1, 2015. To apply for the Fry Scholarship, please stop out to Olmsted County Veterans Service Office, Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm to complete the application.

VA Disability Benefits

The 2015 COLA (Cost-of-Living Adjustments) is 1.7% which is slightly higher than last year's increase of 1.5%. However, it is the third year in a row where it is less than 2 percent and represents about \$20 a month increase for social security recipients. Cola impacts benefits to about 1.96 million military retirees and 4 million disabled veterans.

The 2016 COLA (Cost-of-Living Adjustments) were released at the end of October, 2015 right after the September Consumer Price Index was released.

Veterans Benefits Compensation Rate Tables are effective December 1st, 2014 and thus far the VA disabilities rate tables have been released. We're checking daily on all tables. See below for most recent tables.

Cola Effective & Payment Dates:

- Retired military veterans, VA rates for compensation and pension for disabled veterans and surviving families will be effective December 1, 2014 and will be reflected on the first check to be paid on December 31, 2014.
- Social Security benefits will increase beginning with the December 2014 benefits, which are payable in January 2015.
- Federal SSI payment levels will increase effective for payments made for January 2015.





FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 29, 2014

Media Contact:

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(612) 845-7036

Women Veterans Gather to Purchase New License Plates

SAINT PAUL, Minn. –New Year, New Plates! On January 2nd Women Veterans will line up to purchase the newly designed Women Veterans' License Plate. The plates bear the inscription "Woman Veteran" and follow criteria established by a working group of Women Veterans and Public Safety employees. These are the first Veterans plates in Minnesota that specifically refer to Women Veterans.

According to the bill's author, State Sen. Alice Johnson, the specialty license plate will go a long way toward removing the invisibility that many of the Minnesota's 29,000 women Veterans feel.

Women are the fastest growing population within the Departments of Defense and Veterans' Affairs. "Although female Veterans have served in every country America has been engaged in, many times they are not recognized for their contribution to our country," Sen. Johnson said. "This license plate is a small way Minnesota can recognize, thank, and honor our female Veterans."

A group of women Veterans will gather at the Town Square DMV, in St. Paul at 10am to purchase the first plates. Any woman wanting a plate should bring their DD214, (Discharge papers) to the DMV and request a woman Veterans license plate. Motorcycle and Disabled Plates are also available. Estimated costs for application and fees are \$20.

About MDVA

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs is a cabinet level state agency dedicated to serving Minnesota Veterans and their families. In addition to overseeing the five State Veterans Homes, MDVA helps eligible Veterans and families secure state and federal benefits and provides programs and services relating to higher education, benefits, burial, claims, outreach and Veterans employment. Veterans and their families are encouraged to visit MinnesotaVeteran.org or call 1-(888)-LinkVet for more information about benefits.

Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs
20 West 12th Street, St. Paul, MN 55155



Upcoming local events

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

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

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)
8 AM

Marine Corp League Meeting
4th Tuesday of the month, 7pm, American Legion
315 First Ave NW, Rochester, MN 55901

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

American Legion Post 92 Membership Dinner

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 10TH, 2015
5:00 PM SOCIAL HOUR 6:00 PM DINNER
POST 92 CLUBROOM; ROCHESTER, MN**

Menu:

**Choice of Sirloin of Beef or
Chicken Supreme,
Roasted Baby Red Potatoes,
Carrots, Homemade Rolls
with Butter, Garden Salad
with choice of Dressing,
And Cheesecake**

Ye Olde Butcher Shoppe Catering

**PLEASE CHOOSE YOUR MEAL OPTION AND SIGN UP AT THE POST OR
CONTACT ANGIE AT 507-252-1659**

**** MEMBERS FREE WITH A PAID 2015 MEMBERSHIP**

****ADDITIONAL GUESTS \$12.00 EACH**



“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.”



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