

*Olmsted County
Veteran Services
Veterans Advocate Newsletter
May 2021*

Changes in Olmsted County Veteran Services!

The Veteran Services Office objective is to offer as many services as possible without face-to-face contact. We will do our best to schedule phone appointments as needed or to address needs through the mail, via email, or fax. Many of the stakeholders we are working with are also in the process of implementing similar practices. We are working together to find the best possible solutions that effectively comply with efforts while also minimizing the impact on our veterans and their families.

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Emails:

Admin: Karen Applen, applen.karen@co.olmsted.mn.us

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Operation Desert Storm

In honor of the 30th Anniversary of Operation Desert Storm, the National Desert Storm War Memorial Association will be marching veterans who served during Operation Desert Storm in the 2021 National Memorial Day Parade in Washington D.C.

Criteria:

Active Duty US Military during Desert Shield or Desert Storm (includes activated Guard/Reserve)

Dates:

May 30, 2021 [mandatory registration in Washington D.C.]

May 31, 2021 [parade @ 2pm]

Parade Uniform:

Pants: Desert Camo (6 color; chocolate chip) or light brown khaki (long) pants

Hat: (optional) If a hat is worn, it needs to be the Desert Camo Boonie.

Shirt: A special shirt is being designed for the parade participants and you will have the opportunity to purchase this shirt on/about April 2021.

Parade Route:

The Parade Route is 1 mile long. We have limited spaces for Veterans to ride in a vehicle during the parade. These spaces are reserved for those who are physically unable to march in the parade.

Hotel Accommodations:

Our Group hotel rate is \$149.00 per night.

When you are confirmed for the parade you will be given the hotel details.

Register to march in the Parade:

Send an email to Jill Etter with your name, branch of service, and when/where you served during Operations Desert Shield/Storm. DCparade2021@gmail.com



Chester Woods Park

Through December 2021 Chester Woods is offering free park entrance for all!

Veterans with a service connected VA Disability rating can obtain a free pass to Chester Woods annually, but this will not be a factor now that the park is offering free admission through the end of the year.

Daily Park Hours: 5 a.m. to 10 p.m.

- Swimming Beach
- Boat launch and fishing
- Water equipment rentals
- 16 miles of hiking trails
- 5 miles of groomed trails for cross-county skiing or fat tire biking
- 7 picnic areas
- 50-unit campground and restrooms with showers

Many native plant and animal species



Dear GI Bill® Student,

As we enter Spring peak season for GI Bill® enrollment processing, we want to make you aware of how we process your enrollment. The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) is committed to processing enrollments as quickly as possible and does so in the date order they are received. Our targets are 24 days for original (first time) applications and 12 days for supplementals (re-enrollments). We expect to continue to hit these targets throughout the Spring enrollment period, but unique factors may cause some claims to take longer than that.

To ensure you receive your GI Bill benefits in a timely fashion, we recommend that you:

- Plan ahead of time. You can use [the GI Bill Comparison Tool](#) to estimate the general level of benefits you should expect.
- Enroll as early as you can and avoid changing your course schedule as much as possible once you are enrolled.
- Get to know and stay in contact with your School Certifying Officials. You can find them by searching [the GI Bill Comparison Tool](#) for your school and scrolling down to “Contact Details.”
- Be sure you understand your school’s procedures regarding requests for certification to VA.
- If you do drop/add hours, contact your School Certifying Official immediately to mitigate potential overpayment.
- If you have changed your bank account or moved to a new address, please contact VA Education Service to update your information either on the [GI Bill website](#) through our “[Ask a Question](#)” link or by phone at 1-888-GIBILL-1 (1-888-442-4551). **If we do not have your correct information, your payment will be delayed.**
- If you need to contact us by mail, use the address of the Regional Processing Office handling your claim. You can [find your Office and the mailing address on our website](#). **If you use a different address, we may not receive your message.**
- If you are experiencing financial hardship due to a delay in payment, we ask that you contact the Education Call Center at 1-888-GIBILL-1 (1-888-442-4551) between 7 a.m. - 6 p.m. Central Time, Monday-Friday. VA will expedite any hardship request.

As a reminder, [we have posted FAQs about how your benefits will be protected during the COVID-19 pandemic](#), as well as a [fact sheet with basic information and resources for students](#). VA has also developed the COVID Coach App to help both Veterans and their families cope with feelings of stress and anxiety they may be experiencing during the COVID-19 pandemic. It’s available for iOS

Federal Funding Confirmed for New MN Veterans Homes

Minnesota's proposed new State Veterans Homes project to be located in Preston will receive federal funding this year.

- In Preston, the facility will enjoy fantastic views from its hilltop location that includes 54 residential units. The project cost is estimated at \$32.2 million and a total of 79 FTEs will be needed to operate the facility.

Construction could begin as early as early fall 2021 with an anticipated 18-month construction schedule.

Memorial Day Ceremonies **AT MN State Veteran Cemeteries**

Memorial day ceremonies for all MN Veteran Cemeteries will again be virtual for 2021. A link will be sent when it comes available.



CPT James Ahn Special Forces Memorial Scholarship



Captain James Ahn, a graduate of UC Riverside and the Claremont McKenna College Army ROTC program, died in 2015 during a parachute training operation while participating with his Special Forces unit in Washington State.

For all of us who knew and loved James, he will never be forgotten. He was the consummate person and professional who was respected by everyone he came in contact with.

In James' honor, we are sponsoring an annual scholarship of \$1,000 to a Special Forces Veteran who is working towards the completion of a higher education degree.

"He had a big smile and would always grin ear to ear," Master Sgt. Dan Linderman said. "He always found time to smile about something and made friends with our Asian counterparts. They latched onto him."

Requirements

Former Special Forces Service Member

Full time student pursuing degree/certification completion at an accredited post secondary institution including graduate school, university, college, community college, or vocational/technical institution.

Applicants must complete the application in full by June 1, 2021

Please apply online at: [CPT James Ahn Memorial Scholarship - Gain Service Academy Admission](#)



PTSD Support Group

Want to: Know that others are going through something similar to you? Learn tips on how to handle day-to-day challenges? Meet new friends or connect with others who understand you? Learn how to talk about things that bother you or how to ask for help? Learn to trust other people? Hear about helpful new perspectives from others? Then this is the group for you!

SEMCIL, and Olmsted County 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.

Sometimes the most painful injuries aren't physical. Whether it's PTSD, TBI, combat stress, or any other mental health condition, we're here to help you get through it. The group will be facilitated by Jennifer Shumaker, Veteran and Olmsted County Veterans Service Officer.

Thursday, May 27

630pm-800pm

VFW

2775 43rd Street NW

Rochester, MN 55901

Jennifer Shumaker

(507) 328-6324

shumaker.jennifer@co.olmsted.mn.us

Trolling For The Troops

Lodging
& Meals
Provided

Prizes
awarded for
best anglers!

Applications due April 14, 2021

Thursday - Friday

June 3-4, 2021

Camp Ripley, MN



Well known professional fishermen
and others will guide a Veteran and a
Soldier for a day on Mille Lacs Lake
or the Mississippi River

Space is limited. For more information or to apply, visit us at
www.mnvetsoutdoors.org or email us at mnvetsoutdoors@gmail.com

Must be a resident of Minnesota and a veteran of
the United States Armed Forces



Minnesota
Veterans & Veterans
Trust Fund



LOCAL MEETINGS

Some organizations have resumed meetings. Call each one respectively for more information.

Rochester American Legion Post 92

(507)282-1322
915 21st Ave SE
Rochester, MN 55904
3rd Tuesday of each month
7pm
Auxiliary Unit 92
3rd Tuesday of each month
5:30pm
Sons of the American Legion
2nd Thursday of each month
6PM
Legion Riders
3rd Thursday of each month
7pm

Rochester VFW Post Meeting

(507) 289-6818
2775 43rd St. NW
Rochester, MN 55901
2nd Tuesday of each Month VFW Post 1215
7pm
Marine Corps League
4th Tuesday of each month
7pm

Byron American Legion Post 119

(507) 775-6871
505 Frontage Road NW, Byron, MN
3rd Monday of the month
6pm

Vietnam Veterans of America

(507) 990-1347
Meets 4th Monday each month
at 7:00pm,
Vietnam Veterans Spouse Support Group
Meets 4th Monday each month
At 7:00pm
Thor Detachment 606 Marine Corp League Meeting
4th Tuesday of the month, 7pm
MOPH
3rd Thursday of the month 6pm
VFW Post 1215
2775 43rd St NW, Rochester, MN 55901

Stewartville American Legion Post 164

(507) 533-9281
1100 2nd Ave NW, Stewartville
Meeting 3rd Monday each month, 7:30pm

Stewartville VFW Post 8980

(507) 533-9281
1100 2nd Ave NW, Stewartville
Meeting 1st Monday each month, 7pm

DAV Meeting

(507) 773-5055
1652 Hwy 52 N, Rochester, MN 55901
2nd Monday, of each Month Rochester's Elks Lodge
5:30pm dinner, meeting at 6:00pm

Korean Veterans

Every Monday at Grandmas Kitchen
1514 N Broadway, Rochester, MN 55906
(Silver lake plaza)
8 AM

Kasson American Legion Post 333

(507) 634-4353
212 West Main Street , Kasson, MN 55944
Third Thursday of the month, 8pm

Chatfield VFW Post 6913

(507) 867-3144
9- 2nd St SW, Chatfield, MN
2nd Monday of the month 7:00pm

Eyota American Legion Post 551

(507) 545-2688
2nd Monday each month 6:30pm
11 Madison Ave NW
Eyota, MN 55934
Legion Riders
4th Wednesday each month 7:30pm

Pine Island American Legion Post 184

(507)356-8991
108 1st Ave SE
Pine Island, MN
2nd Monday of the month 7PM

Oronoco VFW Post 9647

(507) 367-4635
5 MN Avenue S
Oronoco, MN 55960
First Tuesday of each month 7pm
Auxiliary meeting same time, separate meeting

Dodge Center American Legion Post 384

(507) 633-6420
401 Highway St W
Dodge Center, MN 55927
2nd Monday each 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.”

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

