



January / February 2009

Jim Willis, Director

www.oregon.gov/odva

GULF WAR ILLNESS IS REAL FEDERAL REPORT CONCLUDES



By Tom Mann

A federal report released November 17 concludes that Gulf War illness is real and that roughly one in four of the 697,000 U.S. Veterans who served in the Persian Gulf War suffer from the illness.

According to the Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses, two chemicals cause Gulf War illness: the drug pyridostigmine bromide (PB pills) given to troops to protect against nerve gas, and pesticides that were widely used – and overused – to protect against sand flies and other pests.

The 452-page report compiled by a panel of scientific experts and veterans serving on the Committee confirms that, “scientific evidence leaves no question that Gulf War illness is a real condition with real causes and serious consequences for affected veterans.”

According to 38 United States Code 1117, Persian Gulf War veterans may experience signs or symptoms of undiagnosed illness or a chronic multi-symptom illness that includes:

- Fatigue
- Unexplained rashes or other dermatological signs or symptoms
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Joint pain
- Neurological signs and symptoms
- Signs or symptoms involving the upper or lower respiratory system

SEE GULF ON PAGE 4

ODVA OFFERS SMALL BUSINESS REPAIR LOAN TO GUARD AND RESERVE

With the goal of helping veterans whose businesses suffered setbacks during their deployment, the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs is offering the Small Business Repair Loan, a zero-interest loan to help veterans get their businesses back on track.

“This program is aimed at our National Guard and Reserve veterans,” ODVA Director Jim Willis explained. “If they are business owners, a long deployment – months away from their business – seriously affects the ability of their company to survive. We want to help these veterans recover their businesses when they get home so they are employed and can employ others,” he said.

The Small Business Repair Loan program offers a zero-percent interest rate and loans up to \$20,000. Applicants must be an honorably discharged veteran, own more than 50 percent of their business, and the business must have had a setback while the veteran was deployed. The veteran must apply for this loan within one year of returning from deployment.

“The commitment of members of the Guard and Reserve is unquestionable,” Willis said. “We need to do all we can to support them when they come home and giving them a hand up to restore a business is the least we can do,” he said.

For more information regarding the Small Business Repair Loan, please contact ODVA at 888-673-8387 or 503-373-2070.

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Director's Message

*Jim Willis,
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Oregon
Department
of Veterans'
Affairs*

A SPECIAL THANKS TO CONTRIBUTORS OF THE GOVERNOR'S TASK FORCE REPORT

As we close out the Holiday Season and begin the new year, it seems a fitting time to say thank you to all the veterans and public officials who took time to offer their contributions to the Governor's Task Force on Veterans' Services. The completed report was submitted to Governor Kulongoski in mid-December and contains recommendations to both the State Legislature and the U.S. Congress.

My sincere thanks also goes to the members of the Task Force who traveled the state to hold meetings with public officials and veterans to get their input. A prioritization process led to the findings and recommendations that are intended to make the greatest impact in serving our veterans and their families.

Another effort underway that deserves our recognition is the creation of the "Chesty Puller Statue." Lieutenant General Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller is respected as a "Marine's Marine." Lt. General Puller's leadership and

bravery continues to inspire Marines across the world. If you are interested in learning more about the statue, you can contact Oregon's own First Sergeant Jim Barnett USMC (Ret.) at firstsgtjrbusme@peoplepc.com. To view a concept of the statue you can visit www.seagoingmarines.com and click on the "Chesty Puller Statue" link.

In mid-December 2008, ODVA undertook a suicide awareness campaign designed to assist veterans who may be having thoughts of suicide. These veterans are encouraged to call **1-800-273-TALK and press 1** to be routed to the Veterans Hotline, which can also be used to obtain guidance for family, friends and employers. Your call is confidential.

Suicide is a personal and family tragedy that impacts veterans at twice the number of other members of our society. In fact, suicide ranks as the leading cause of death among male veterans ages 18 to 24 and the second leading cause of death among male veterans ages 25 to 44.

Another suicide resource available to Oregon's veterans are the Suicide Prevention Coordinators at the Portland and Roseburg VA Hospitals. In Portland you can call Rob Tell at 503-220-8262 Ext 56198 and in Roseburg you can call Colleen Denny at 541-440-2000, Ext 143112.

In closing let me also thank all of our veterans and their families who helped less fortunate veterans during the Holiday Season and those who made contributions to our senior veterans at the Oregon Veterans' Home. Your generosity is appreciated. My staff and I wish all of you a Happy, healthy and successful New Year.

Jim Willis, Director

SHINSEKI NOMINATED AS NEW VA SECRETARY

WASHINGTON, DC – President-elect Barack Obama chose retired General Eric K. Shinseki to be his Secretary of Veterans Affairs. If confirmed by the U.S. Senate, Shinseki will face significant issues at the VA, including enormous backlogs of disability claims, new evidence of Gulf War Illness, and continuing court challenges regarding Agent Orange and "Blue Water" Vietnam Navy veterans.

"A word to my fellow veterans," Shinseki said at his press conference in December, "if confirmed, I will work each and every day to ensure that we are serving you as well as you served us."

From 1999 until 2003, Shinseki served as the Army chief of staff, often butting heads with then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. In 2003 before Congress, Shinseki broke ranks with the Pentagon and said he believed it would take several hundred thousand troops to secure Iraq after the initial invasion. Shinseki retired from the military shortly after his remarks.

Obama said he picked Shinseki because he "was right" in predicting that the U.S. would need more troops in Iraq than the current administration predicted.

In a statement on his website, Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Daniel



At left: Retired General Eric K. Shinseki, recently tapped as the new Secretary for the Veterans Affairs Administration by President-elect Barack Obama. Shinseki will face immediate challenges as the new head of the Federal VA.

Akaka (D-Hawaii) praised Shinseki, "I have great respect for Gen. Shinseki's judgment and abilities. I am confident that he will use his wisdom and expertise to ensure that our veterans receive the respect and care they have earned in defense of our nation."



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If you wish to receive the VETS NEWS regularly, send your name and address to the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs, Attention Public Information, 700 Summer Street, NE, Salem, OR 97301-1285. If you are a veteran, please include your era of military service.

When credit is given to the source, VETS NEWS articles may be reprinted. However, please call the editor to assure accuracy and timeliness of the articles. Reunions printed upon space availability. **(Input for the next issue should be received by February 1, 2009.)**

NORTH BEND SOLDIER EARNS SILVER STAR

ITALY – August 27, 2007 is a day 24-year-old Army Spc. Dillon Bergstad of North Bend will never forget. Driving in the second vehicle of a seven-vehicle convoy in the Patika Province of Afghanistan near the Pakistan border, Bergstad and his unit were on their way to establish a security over-watch position for a unit coming up behind them. That's when the ambush hit.

"I recall the first RPG (Rocket-propelled Grenade) going off and after that it was like a car wreck," Bergstad said. As many as 30 enemy fighters attacked the convoy using the juniper trees that lined the road as cover. The enemy was as close as 10 feet from the convoy. This was the day Bergstad earned the Silver Star for valor.

"At first, it felt like any other ambush – adrenaline pumping, gaining fire superiority, and maneuvering from there," Bergstad recounted. "The intensity of the fire that was coming at us just kept up (during the) entire ambush and didn't catch me off guard, but it was surprising because it was like they never had to reload. I know I had to reload at least twice," he said.

While fighting off the ambush, Bergstad exposed himself in his turret to return fire. He was knocked out of his turret three times. The first time his truck was hit by an RPG. The second time he was shot through the right biceps by an armor-piercing incendiary round. Bergstad was thrown from his vehicle a third time when his vehicle was again struck by an RPG. He fought his way back into the turret to continue engaging the enemy. "When I got shot, it kind of pushed me over and knocked me down in the turret. It kind of felt like someone had punched me," he said.

Not quite realizing that he had been shot, Bergstad "went back to business," returning fire at the enemy. "The only thing I could hear was my .50 caliber and the incoming rounds," he said.



Specialist Dillon Bergstad of North Bend receives his Silver Star on August 27, 2007 for valor while his seven-vehicle convoy was ambushed by RPG rounds and small arms fire.

As a result of Bergstad's actions, the gunner of an enemy RPG team was killed and fire from several known enemy machine gun positions were suppressed, according to the medal citation.

When the ambush was over, Bergstad refused medical treatment for his arm until all other wounded personnel were treated first. He refused painkillers and morphine and reported back to duty five days after the attack.

Unknown to Bergstad at the time of the firefight was that his best friend PFC Thomas Wilson of Virginia had died while manning a similar position in the HUMVEE behind Bergstad's. "I would trade 10 of these (medals) to get Thomas back," Bergstad said.

"I don't think I did anything more outstanding than anyone else," Bergstad said of his award, "it was a group effort and if it hadn't been for the men behind me and in front of me it would have turned out a lot worse."

Bergstad, who is attached to the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, has two more years in the Army and hopes to complete his Associates Degree and become a physical therapist working at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. "I think that would be a phenomenal job," he said.

This article has been adapted from The Army Times and Army.mil News as reported by Gina Cavallaro and Sgt. 1st Class Jacob Caldwell.



**Not All Wounds
Are Visible**

1-800-273-TALK

1-800-273-8255

(Suicide Hotline)

**Courage Is Calling
When You Need Help**

**If you're in emotional crisis,
MAKE THE CALL!**

Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs

HEROES IN SISTERS SLATED FOR FEBRUARY

by Christopher Dauterman

BEND - Oregon is home to world-class ski and snowboarding experiences, with 11 resorts that offer acres of mountainous terrain. For wounded veterans who thought they never would ski again, the "Heroes in Sisters" program is providing them a life-changing opportunity.

Wounded warriors wanting to get back on the slopes have the opportunity to partner with Oregon Adaptive Sports (OAS) for a day at Hoodoo Ski Resort in the Santiam Pass on February 7.

Last year, 10 wounded warriors took part in the event. The 2009 event has expanded to include all military personnel and veterans who will receive discounted ski passes.

Veteran service organizations are encouraged to send a wounded warrior to the event. Wounded

warriors will be provided lodging and meals. Amber Blanchard of Bend Parks and Recreation said that \$200 is a suggested donation level to afford sponsorship of a wounded warrior.

Wounded warriors will enjoy skiing and snowboarding lessons, an overnight stay, enjoyable meals, and much more.

Although planning has already begun, veterans and spouses are encouraged to become active participants. Leaders of veteran service organizations are also urged to support this program.

To learn more call Amber Blanchard at the Bend Parks and Recreation District at 541-419-0314 or email amber@bendparksandrec.org. To get involved with OAS, call Kendall Cook at 541-848-9390 or email oasbend@gmail.com.



PROVIDERS OFFER FREE COUNSELING TO VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

By Tom Mann

Like many Oregonians, Carol Levine watched the news reports about Iraq and Afghanistan and thought about what it would be like to be in combat. She also wondered how anyone could experience such traumatic events and then come home to their families, jobs and society as if nothing happened.

For Carol, this was more than just a passing thought. As a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, she provides mental health counseling in her own practice in downtown Portland and is concerned for Oregon's returning veterans. But, rather than just think about it, Carol decided to do something.

In talking with fellow therapists, they decided that they could offer free mental health counseling to veterans and their families. As the idea grew, so did those who wanted to participate. A group was formed – Returning Veterans Project – and Carol began plugging into all things veteran. Today, her idea has blossomed into a non-profit network of 60 providers, including therapists, chiropractors, acupuncturists, naturopaths and others and if Carol has her way, this network will expand statewide.

"People don't want to deal with the war, think about the war or veterans," she explained. "It's our war whether we like it or not, it's our veterans... This is our responsibility as a society to do this," she said.

As part of her outreach efforts, Carol has been engaging the VA Medical Center, the Vet Center, attending reintegration summits, demobilizations, and other events. "I feel like it would be an unusual person who wouldn't have PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) from a combat experience, she said. "I want to set up a system where it is just assumed you have problems" after a combat tour, she said,



Free counseling sessions are now available for veterans and their families who seek it.

explaining that in such a system appropriate care automatically would be provided.

A unique aspect of the program is its care to families. Federal VA law is very limited in terms of providing veterans' family members mental health care. Carol and her fellow providers welcome family members, including children, to seek the help they need from their project.

Currently, the project is primarily based in Portland; however, they do have providers in Ashland, Salem, and Vancouver. The goal is to expand to every community or region in Oregon, but Carol said she needs someone willing to help organize the network locally. "There are lots of providers who want to participate," she said, but finding that one person to take the lead in a community has been difficult. But, Carol remains committed.

"As the number of years after the war increase, that's when the number of vets will increase," she said. "We definitely see ourselves in it for the long haul."

For more information about the Returning Veterans Project, please visit their website at www.returningveterans.com or call 503-402-1717.

GULF FROM PAGE 1

- Sleep disturbances
- Gastrointestinal signs or symptoms
- Abnormal weight loss
- Menstrual disorders

In combination, these undiagnosed illnesses have been termed Gulf War Syndrome. The report also notes a higher than average occurrence of *Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)*, often referred to as "Lou Gehrig's Disease."

"This is a bittersweet victory, (because) this is what Gulf War veterans have been saying all along," Committee member Anthony Hardie said. "Years were squandered by the federal government... trying to disprove that anything could be wrong with Gulf War veterans."

Several previous reports issued by the Institute of Medicine, an arm of the National Academy of Sciences, had concluded that there was little evidence to support Gulf War Syndrome. However, the Committee's report concludes the previous reports were inappropriately constrained by the VA. According to the panel, the VA ordered the Institute to consider only limited human studies and not extensive animal research, thus skewing the earlier studies.

The Committee's report, titled "Gulf War Illness and the Health of Gulf War Veterans" was officially presented to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James Peake. The report states that the illness comes as a result of multiple "biological alterations" affecting the brain and nervous system.

The report does not rule out other contributing factors, but notes there is no clear link between Gulf War Syndrome and oil well fires, depleted uranium or the anthrax vaccination. The suspect nerve agent pills and pesticides no longer are used in the military.

To view the entire report, go to www.oregon.gov/odva/gulfwar.shtml.

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION NEWS AND NOTES



Oregon Congressman Greg Walden stands with David Mastalski of the VA Medical Center at the groundbreaking event for a new VA Medical Center at the Oregon Veterans' Home.

VA CLINIC GROUNDBREAKING AT THE OREGON VETERANS' HOME

THE DALLES – The Portland VA Medical Center held a groundbreaking ceremony in November for a new VA Clinic to be located at the Oregon Veterans' Home.

When complete, the 1,288 square foot clinic will provide primary care and mental health service to veterans in The Dalles area. "This new facility in The Dalles will ease the burden of travel for more than 1,200 veterans who currently use other Portland VAMC facilities for their medical care," David Stockwell, Portland VA Medical Center, Acting Director said. "We are pleased with the partnership and support of the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs to place primary care and mental health services closer to the veteran population in The Dalles and surrounding communities."

Department Director Jim Willis echoed Stockwell's comments, "This is a great partnership that will benefit veterans in the area and our veterans at the Home," he said. "We are happy to host the VA clinic on our property and look forward to working with them to providing quality care for our veterans."

The Portland VA Medical Center team is temporarily seeing currently enrolled veterans one day per month in a space donated by the Oregon Veterans' Home. When completed, the new clinic will see patients four days per week.

The Portland VA Medical Center serves more than 60,000 veterans in Oregon and Southwest Washington. In addition to the main campus located on Marquam Hill, the Medical Center operates the Vancouver, Wash. campus and Community Based Outpatient Clinics located in east Portland, Hillsboro, Salem, Warrenton and Bend, Ore.

VA ANNOUNCES TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT INCREASES

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that eligible veterans will see an increase in the mileage reimbursement they receive for travel to VA facilities for medical care.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake announced that he will use his authority to raise the mileage reimbursement from the 28.5 cents per mile to 41.5 cents per mile for all eligible veterans.

"We owe it to our veterans to give them the best care possible," Peake said. "The increase will once again provide assistance to our veterans, especially in these difficult economic times, to help offset gasoline costs and to assist veterans with access to the VA's world-class health system."

Congress, which mandates such increases, recently provided funding to VA to increase the reimbursement rate, which went into effect on Nov. 17, 2008. Service connected veterans, veterans receiving VA pensions, and veterans with low incomes are eligible for the reimbursement.

"As I have traveled the country and spoken with many of our veterans, they have expressed the need for such an increase," Peake added. "We are pleased to be able to provide them with the increase needed and we will continue to work with our veterans to ensure they receive the quality care they need."

While increasing the payment, the current deductible amounts applied to certain mileage reimbursements will remain frozen at \$7.77 for a one-way trip, \$15.54 for a round trip, and capped at a maximum of \$46.62 per calendar month. On Jan. 9, 2009, these deductibles will decrease to \$3 for a one-way trip, \$6 for a round trip, with a maximum of \$16 per calendar month. Deductibles can be waived if they cause a financial hardship to the veteran.

VA OPENS OUTPATIENT CLINIC IN HILLSBORO

HILLSBORO – The Veterans Administration has opened a Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in Hillsboro. The 23,000 square foot building is the latest of 11 CBOCs in Oregon.

The VA hopes to relieve pressure on the VA Medical Center in Portland by having area veterans use the Hillsboro CBOC for their primary care.

By June 2009, VA outpatient clinics are scheduled to open in the Oregon City area and in The Dalles. A part-time clinic also will open in Lincoln City. The VA has implemented the CBOC network in an effort to provide primary care and mental health services closer to where veterans live.

VA HEALTHCARE OUTREACH CLINIC TO OPEN IN GRANTS PASS

Beginning December 3, the VA will bring healthcare closer to VA enrolled veterans living in rural Josephine County. The VA Southern Oregon Rehabilitation Center and Clinics (VA SORCC) in White City is opening a healthcare outreach clinic in Grants Pass as part of their Rural Healthcare Initiative. The Grants Pass West VA Outreach Clinic will be held each Wednesday through Friday at 520 S.W. Ramsey Avenue, Suite 102, Grants Pass, Ore., between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. The clinic will not be full service at the onset, but will offer primary care services for chronic medical conditions including blood draws and limited health screenings, and mental health services.

According to Dr. Max McIntosh, Director of the White City VA, more days of operation and expanded services will eventually be added if the demand for care warrants the additional services. "Veterans living in rural areas need to have more convenient access to their VA care. There are a number of veterans rurally positioned that do not take advantage of VA care available to them, even though they need help, simply because of social, economic and geographic barriers. We are doing all we can, including partnering with local private sector healthcare organizations to help eliminate those barriers in Southern Oregon." McIntosh said.

Enrolled veterans living in the most remote areas of Josephine County will be contacted by letter and provided appointments first. Gradually, all enrolled veterans within the county will have the opportunity to be phased into clinic appointments. "This 'phasing-in' process will ensure we reach the more remote veterans right away. They are a good portion of the vets who have not been able to get to the care they need," said McIntosh. The VA SORCC plans to keep in touch with veterans regularly as their capability to add more enrolled veterans to the clinic's appointment schedule becomes feasible. Additionally, those veterans not enrolled in the VA healthcare system can acquire applications for care at the clinic. General VA information and assistance will be provided on how to complete the "10-10" application to determine eligibility for care.

If you're a veteran and would like more information about the Grants Pass West VA Outreach Clinic, contact Tracy Dekelboum, 541-830-7423.

2009 COLA ANNOUNCED

The 2009 cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for military retired pay, SBP Annuities, Social Security checks, and VA disability and survivor benefits are 5.8 percent effective Dec. 1, 2008. It will appear in January checks.

WOMEN VETERANS CONFERENCE PLANNED FOR 2010

SALEM – The 2010 Oregon Women Veterans' Conference has been scheduled for March 19 and 20 at Seven Feathers Casino in Canyonville. All women veterans are invited to participate.

This free event honors women for their service and helps educate these veterans as to the benefits they have earned and issues unique to women veterans.

In 2008, the first Tri-State Women Veterans' Conference was held in Pendleton. Participants from Oregon, Washington and Idaho were thrilled with the event. "Coming to this conference has made me feel so proud to be a veteran," said one woman. "This has been one of the most important things that I have ever done," said another.

For more information about the 2010 Oregon Women Veterans' Conference, visit the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs website at www.oregon.gov/odva/wvc.shtml.

TASK FORCE COMPLETES FINAL REPORT



The Governor's Task Force on Veterans' Service submitted its Final Report to Governor Theodore Kulongoski (third from right) on December 10 completing the Task Force's work. Attending the meeting were Task Force members (L-R: Michelle Kochosky, BG Mike Caldwell, Chair Paul Evans, Project Officer Tom Mann, Mic Alexander, Gary Barth, Bob Plame, Jack Heims, Mike Burton, Kevin O'Reilly, Dan Estes, Tino Ornelas, Jerry Lorang, Governor Kulongoski, Scott McCrae, and ODVA Director Jim Willis. You can find the Task Force Final Report at www.oregon.gov/odva/taskforce.

PERSONALITY DISORDER DISCHARGES SCRUTINIZED

WASHINGTON, DC – Under pressure from Congress and following the Army's lead, the Department of Defense has imposed a more rigorous screening process on the services for separating troubled members due to "personality disorder." The intent is to ensure that, in the future, no members who suffer from wartime stress get tagged with having a pre-existing personality disorder, which leaves them ineligible for service disability compensation.

Since the attacks of 9/11, more than 22,600 service members have been discharged for personality disorder. Nearly 3,400 of them, or 15 percent, had served in combat or imminent danger zones. Advocates for these veterans contend that at least some of them were suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or traumatic brain injury but it was easier and less costly to separate them for personality disorder. By definition, personality disorders existed before a member entered service so they are not qualified for a service-related disability rating.

During the last 18 months, lawmakers and advocates for veterans have criticized Defense and service officials for relying too often on personality disorder separations to release members who deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan or other another areas of tension in the Global War on Terrorism. A revised DoD instruction (No. 1332.14), which took effect without public announcement in August responds to that criticism. It allows separation for personality disorders for members currently or formerly deployed to imminent danger areas if:

- The diagnosis by a psychiatrist or a PhD-level psychologist is corroborated by a peer or higher-level mental health professional;
- The diagnosis is endorsed by the surgeon general of the service, and
- The diagnosis took into account a possible tie or "co-morbidity" with symptoms of PTSD or war-related mental injury or illness.

Sam Retherford, director of officer and enlisted personnel management in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, said adding "rigor and discipline" to the process when separating deployed members for personality disorder is "very important," considering what is at stake for the member.



Lending A Helping Hand

Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs

Claims and Counseling

- Service-Connected Disability
- VA Health Care Enrollment
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- GI Bill
- Pension
- Dependent and Survivor Benefits



800-692-9666

Whether you're just back from a combat zone or have been home for 60 years, you may be eligible for federal VA benefits. Give the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs a call so we can direct you to the Veteran Service Officer nearest you!

ODVA WANTS YOUR MILITARY SERVICE STORIES



Leland Henry, 82, a World War II Navy veteran, donated two scrapbooks filled with newspaper clippings to the Josephine County museum that depict a chronological history of that war. This photo shows three pages from one of the books.

SALEM— As part of Oregon’s 150th birthday celebration next year, the Oregon Department of Veterans’ Affairs (ODVA) will be producing a book containing the history of Oregon veterans and we need your help.

The ODVA will begin collecting pictures, stories, articles, letters and histories of Oregon veterans from all eras, from the Civil War through the present day. The Department is very interested in your pictures and information as part of this project.

If you are interested in helping ODVA with this project, please consider sending us copies of your photographs and other memorabilia. We would be very interested in your written military histories.

For more information as to how you can contribute to this project, please contact either Mike Allegre or Robin Steckley at 503-373-2085 or via email at mike.allegre@state.or.us or robin.steckley@state.or.us.

LEAVE BENEFITS EXPAND FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

U.S. Department of Labor’s final rule will expand FMLA for military families and clarify rules for workers and employers

The Labor Department has written new rules to expand Family and Medical Leave Act benefits that represent a dramatic change in how National Guard and reserve members and caregivers responsible for seriously injured troops will be treated by employers.

One benefit, which applies immediately, allows up to 26 weeks of unpaid time off without fear of losing a civilian job for spouses, parents, siblings, children or other blood relatives taking care of seriously injured or disabled service members. The one catch is that it only applies while the injured service member is still in the military, and ends after separation or discharge.

A second benefit, which employers have 60 days to implement, allows families of mobilized Guard and reserve members up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave, with their job fully protected, for a variety of deployment-related reasons, including attending military briefings, handling legal or financial issues, emergency child care arrangements and even taking a vacation of up to five days if the service member gets mid-deployment rest and recuperation leave.

Families of active-duty members are not eligible for the deployment-related time off because Congress did not authorize it, Labor Department officials said.

Joy Dunlap of the Military Officers Association of America said the two additions to the Family and Medical Leave Act, known as

FMLA, will be a great boon to families who are struggling with the demands of ongoing military operations. But blocking active-duty families from the deployment leave is something her association plans to challenge, she said.

“They included a wide variety of things, and I think this is going to be very positive for the family members of those covered,” Dunlap said.



“This will help them to take care of important household matters and help them protect marriages, and will help retention of service members.”

Dunlap also cautioned that Family and Medical Leave Act benefits are not available to everyone. Generally, benefits are provided only to workers at companies with 50 or more employees who are full-time workers with at least a year on the job, she said.

Victoria Lipnic, assistant labor secretary for employment standards, said the rules attempt to be as generous as possible under limitations of the law but acknowledged there are restrictions. “We were as generous as we could be,” she said.

Caregiver leave has been authorized under FMLA since January, but regulations explaining how companies are supposed to apply it have only now been finalized, Lipnic said. Under the rules, a caregiver can take up to 26 weeks of unpaid leave over one year, with the clock beginning on the first day of leave.

The policy allows leave to be taken only once per injury, but more than one person in a family might qualify. If there is a second injury or a subsequent diagnosis of a new problem, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, the benefit could be used again, Lipnic said.

While FMLA applies to a limited group of immediate family members, military caregiver leave has a broader definition under which spouses, siblings, parents, children and next-of-kin — the nearest blood relative — could qualify. In extended families, more than one blood relative could receive the leave, Lipnic said.

The deployment leave program, which applies to Guard and reserve families, is aimed at people whose lives are “turned upside down” and who “have a lot of issues to deal with,” Lipnic said.



FRIENDS OF THE HOME



Donations to the Oregon Veterans' Home Trust Fund continue to be received. We deeply appreciate the thoughtfulness and generosity of an ever-growing number of Friends of the Home. To become a friend of the Home, use the gift form on page 11, and make a tax-deductible donation today. Those who contributed during the months of October and November, 2008 are listed below:

Sally Turchetta
 Lloyd and Lani Holgate
 Kathleen R. Blome
 Military Order of the Cooties,
 Rimrock Pup Tent #8
 John and Marjorie Pursley
 James and Marion Crews
 Dr. Richard K. Staggenborg
 B.J. McFarland
 Rocco Laraia
 American Legion Post 110
 Steven L. Covey
 Woodworkers District Lodge 1—IAM
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 United Steelworkers of America—
 Local 9170
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 DAV Auxiliary Yamhill County 5
 Carpenters Local #1065
 VFW Auxilliary Post 922
 Tom and Virginia Hake
 James and Patricia Mulvey
 Paul E. Burger
 VFW Post 4184
 Lois Hughes
 Sid and Burnice Smith
 Gretchen G. Johnson
 Darrell and Winifred Mitchell
 Marilyn Shaw
 VFW Ladies Auxiliary Post 9611
 American Legion Auxiliary Unit 41
 VFW Auxiliary Post 4108
 VFW Columbia River Auxiliary Post 1909
 David Child
 Howard Gonser
 American Legion Auxiliary Unit 95
 Hood River Church of Christ
 Jim and Katrina White
 NCOA National Defense Foundation
 Sky View Middle School—
 Mrs. Schelske's 6th Grade Classes
 R.T. Federspiel
 Keith Jallen
 Bill and Karen Wright
 VFW Dallas Post 3203
 Frank and Susan Palmer
 Dirk Kruysman
 American Ex-Prisoners of War
 Department of Oregon
 Ernest V. Smyres
 Eugene Robertson
 Allan and Elizabeth Jones
 Fred Stovel
 Donald and Edith McDaniel
 Milton L. Perkins

Lorris A. Hollinger, Jr.
 James K. Schmidt
 American Legion Auxiliary,
 Bay Area Unit 34
 Amalgamated Transit Union—
 Division 757
 Larry and Sarah Keil
 Clyde B. Spence
 Virginia Wood
 Screaming Eagles QWL—USPS
 Linda Ulrich
 Darrell and Lael Cooksley
 Roy and Edith Tribe
 Frank Stallone
 Joe and Anita Pashak
 Betty Rutherford
 Gene and Janice Kuch
 Phyllis Hunt
 Roger L. Dick
 Amy Kaser
 Fred R. Fax
 Mary F. Fax
 Kenneth C. Morod
 VFW Post 4108
 Stars Cabaret and Steakhouse
 Oregon Trail Good Sams Club
 K.R. Blome
 Air Force Association—
 Columbia Gorge Chapter 216
 MOAA—Central Oregon Chapter
 VFW Grizzly Post 353
 DAV Auxiliary Dow V. Walker #25
 Spencer, Libby and Powell
 VFW Auxiliary Post 2471
 St. Helens Elks Lodge
 American Legion Auxiliary 25
 Craig C. Nowland
 Ed and Harriet Kelly
 American Legion Auxiliary—lone
 American Legion Post 136
 Women Marines Association—
 Portland Rose Chapter
 Farmers Insurance

Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs
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- * Call ODVA at 1-800-828-8801 ext. 2141 or 503-373-2141
- * Write to ODVA's Privacy Officer to have a copy mailed to you; or
- * Ask for a copy the next time you visit ODVA.

COPING WITH THE STRESS OF DEPLOYMENT



By Christopher Dauterman

WASHINGTON, DC – Since the 1800's the American Red Cross has supported families during periods of war. Continuing that tradition, the Red Cross is offering a new training course entitled, "Coping With Deployments: Psychological First Aid for Military Families" with the goal of helping these families cope with the stress of war.

The Red Cross developed the course to address the stress and strain of deployments on military family members to include spouses, children, parents, siblings and significant others of servicemembers and veterans. Actively licensed Red Cross mental health professionals teach the course. The Red Cross worked closely with subject matter experts from the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines to include active duty, National Guard and Reserve commands, in development of the final curriculum.

The course provides significant information on resiliency strategies for adults and children. Resiliency is the process of how one quickly recovers from adversity or change. The course also explains the easy steps involved in psychological first aid which involves providing immediate support to people in distress. A significant resource and referral section in the course helps families identify resources that can provide additional assistance to them quickly.

When taken as a single session, the course lasts four hours. It also can be divided into a module that focuses on adult issues which lasts two and one-half hours, or a module focusing on children's issues which lasts 90 minutes.

The course is available at no charge to military family members of active duty, Reserve and National Guard members, as well as veterans and their families. It is being offered in 16 states, including Oregon.

"The American Red Cross is rooted in a proud tradition of providing support to servicemembers, veterans and their families for more than 100 years," said Sherri L. Brown, senior vice president, Service to the Armed Forces. "We are thankful that we can be there to help those who have served our nation."

Family groups can contact the local chapter to look at scheduling a course.

Wii GAMING SYSTEM ENGAGES VETERANS' HOME RESIDENTS

THE DALLES – A resident at the Oregon Veterans' Home, who had not golfed in 15 years, recently played three holes. Other veterans have begun a bowling league. Still another veteran is fishing, skeet shooting and boxing.

No, the Vets' Home has not turned into a recreation area. But the Home did buy the popular Wii gaming system, the interactive system which allows participants to use hand controls and body movements to manipulate the various games.

"Interest and participation started out slow, but is going gangbusters now," said Admissions and Liaison Officer, Linda Adams. "The games have involved residents that normally do not participate in activities."

There are men's and women's Wii bowling leagues, and Wii is being used throughout the country as a form of rehabilitation for patients. The Home has set up the game in three units.

"I think it is great how we have found yet another way to keep our residents active and participating with one another," Director Jim Willis said. "It is just one more thing that makes the Veterans' Home special."



MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTION PROGRAM

Thanks to the generosity of donors to the Magazine Subscription Program, veterans residing at the Oregon Veterans' Home enjoy reading current magazines.

The individuals listed below have recently joined dozens of previous donors to this meaningful program. Their generosity is greatly appreciated by our veteran residents.

Norma Bright

Dawn Jurado

Craig Nowland

Steve Besse

Richard Cutler

R.T. Federspiel

Edward M. Kelly

For information concerning the Magazine Subscription Program, please contact Linda Adams at the Oregon Veterans' Home by calling 1-800-846-8460 or 541-296-7152 or by e-mailing ADAMSL@odva.state.or.us.



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REUNIONS

Merchant Marine and Armed Guard will hold their 23rd annual convention May 14-17, 2009 in Tampa, Florida. Coordinating with The American Victory, a historic cruise will be offered May 16, 2009 during the convention. To sign-up for progress updates, call 352-397-1540, or email morrisharvey27@yahoo.com. For more information on The American Victory, visit the website: www.americanyictory.com

American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor will hold their 69th annual convention May 26-30, 2009 in San Antonio, Texas. For reservations, contact the Omni San Antonio Hotel at the Colonnade, 9821 Colonnade Blvd. San Antonio, TX 78230, call 1-800-THE-OMNI/ 1-800-843-6664, website www.omnihotels.com. Reservations must be made by May 8, 2009.

Naval Cryptologic Veterans Association is having their 31st national reunion September 9-12, 2009 in Portland, Oregon. NCVA is composed of and welcomes active and retired members of the IWO and CT community, including Net Warfare Command and the former Navel Security Group. For information, call 360-256-5788 or 541-689-0721, email 2009portland@usncva.org, website www.usncva.org.

Nike Veterans is having their national reunion September 11-13, 2009 in Anchorage, Alaska at the Sheraton Anchorage, 401 E 6th Avenue, Anchorage, AK 95501. For information, contact Greg Durocher, 907-786-7009 or 907-337-2553, email gfdurocher@usgs.gov.

Submit reunion information to:

Public Information
Department of Veterans' Affairs
700 Summer St NE
Salem, OR 97301-1285
Email: Sue Shaffer, shaffes@odva.state.or.us
Fax: 503-373-2362

CAMP LEJEUNE WATER SYSTEM CONTAMINATED

CAMP LEJEUNE, NC – The Marine Corps is searching for at least 500,000 people who have visited Camp Lejeune, N.C., and could be at risk for health problems due to the drinking water on base. Chemicals from a building used to wash clothes for dry cleaning and degreasing were found in the water system.

More than 80,000 people have registered, which is only a fraction of the veterans and visitors who could be affected. Those who have visited or lived on the base between 1957 and 1987 should register by visiting the Marine Corps' Camp Lejeune Water Study website <https://clnr.hqi.usmc.mil/clsurvey/> or by calling 877-261-9782.

GOT YOURS YET?

The Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs has worked with the Oregon Department of Motor Vehicles and the Oregon Legislature to bring you new graphic designed veteran license plates for your vehicle. Now you can show your loyalty to your branch of service or show that special medal you earned.

Just visit your local DMV office and ask how you can get one of the new veteran license plates for your automobile.

As an added bonus, a percentage of the money raised on the license plates is returned to the Oregon Veterans' Home. So you are helping others as you adorn your vehicle with new graphic plates.



Oregon Veterans' Home Gift Form

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THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE OREGON VETERANS' HOME!
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OREGON MILITARY MUSEUM SCHEDULED FOR TEMPORARY CLOSURE

CLACKAMAS – The Oregon Military Museum is temporarily closed and has begun its transition to a new facility at the Oregon National Guard's Camp Withycombe, near Clackamas.

Museum services and activities will be suspended until the grand re-opening. These include public visits, group tours, access to library, archives and collections for research purposes, off-site community displays of artifacts and vehicles, and artifact and library book donation offers.

The museum must relocate from four of its buildings by June 1, 2009 to make room for the 41st Infantry Division Armed Forces Reserve Center that will serve 1,300 soldiers.

Museum artifacts will be housed in the existing Clackamas Armory. The re-opening will be announced at a later date.

"Change is always hard," said Tracy Thoennes, museum director. "But, this is an amazing growth opportunity for this quiet little museum. This move will allow us to better serve our audiences, preserve our military history, and to tell meaningful and relevant stories of how military history and the National Guard impact Oregonians."

The new location will require reconfiguration to meet the needs of the museum's exhibition, education, administrative, collections, and research functions. The increased space and better facilities will provide long-term benefits to the museum and its audiences, Thoennes said.

Museum master planning is underway to estimate the costs of this remodeling and to develop a capital campaign to fund the needed improvements.

The Oregon Military Museum has been at its current location since it was established by the Oregon Military Department in 1975 as the state's official military history repository.

The museum's mission is to tell the story of Oregon's military heritage, focusing on the early militia through today's Oregon National Guard, to collect and ensure access to historical artifacts and archives, to preserve the items entrusted to the museum's care, and to educate and inspire visitors through exhibits, living history and interpretive programs.

The museum's artifact collection has more than 13,000 objects, 25,000 library volumes, and 750 cubic feet of archives, valued at about \$6 million. It is part of the U.S. Army Museum System and the National Guard Museum System.

For more information, contact Capt. Stephen Bomar at 503-584-3885

VETERANS' SERVICE OFFICERS

County	Telephone Number	Service Officer
Baker	541-523-8223	Jane Chandler
Benton	541-758-1595	Don Johnson
Clackamas	503-650-5631	Janice Harlan-Raisl
Clatsop	503-325-2429	Kenneth H. Rislow
Columbia	503-366-6580	Joseph Pyle
Coos	541-396-3121 Ext. 362	Mary Ann Sackett
Crook	541-447-5304	Angela Gilley
Curry	866-298-0404	Frank Van Meter
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Grant	541-575-1631	Bruce B. Makela
Harney	541-573-6024	Anne Lessar
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Jackson	541-774-8214	Marty Kimmel
Jefferson	541-475-5228	Tom Weiss
Josephine	541-474-5454	Lisa Shipley
Klamath	541-883-4274	Kathy Pierce
Lake	541-947-6043	G. Don Boone
Lane	541-682-4191	Joseph Reiley
Lincoln	541-574-6955	John Reed
Linn	800-319-3882	Kim Grooms
Malheur	541-889-6649	Bill Thomson
Marion	503-373-2085	ODVA
Morrow	877-999-8387	Juanita Cox
Multnomah	503-988-3620 Ext. 26123	Katie Pereaault
Polk	503-373-2085	ODVA
Sherman	541-565-3408	Paul Conway
Tillamook	503-842-4358	Steve Weld
Umatilla	541-278-5482	Peggy Raines
Union	541-962-8802	Timothy H. Jederberg
Wallowa	541-426-3155 Ext. 241	Renee Beaudoin
Wasco	888-804-1817	Patrick Scranton
Washington	503-846-3054	Doug McEllven
Wheeler	800-982-1172	Paul Conway
Yamhill	503-434-7503	Debbie Gill

Service Organizations	Telephone Number	Service Officer
American Legion	503-412-4771	Greg Demarais
American Veterans (AMVETS)	503-412-4767	Bill Talley
Blinded Veterans Association	541-265-9087	Frank Armstrong
Disabled American Veterans	503-412-4750	Jay E. Woodbury
Military Order of the Purple Heart	503-412-4770	Jennifer Burt
Paralyzed Veterans of America	503-412-4762	Ken Fink
Veterans of Foreign Wars	503-412-4757	Jack Zule

State Offices-ODVA	Telephone Number	Service Officer
Salem	1-800-692-9666 or 503-373-2085	Gus Bedwell Rita Nickleberry Mitch Sparks Gina Thomas Doug Yerke
Portland	503-412-4777	Deanna Barnes DeJay Hartman Ron Kincaid Linda McMillan Gordon Padgett Ed Van Dyke

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Meetings of the Advisory Committee are held in the Director's Conference Room, Oregon Veterans' Building, 700 Summer Street NE, Salem, Oregon.

Special needs will be met for those who have a disability. For arrangements and meeting dates, please call 503-373-2383.



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