

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS



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August/September – 2008

Director's Message

Dear Friends,

The Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs is dedicated to serving veterans and providing the necessary services to ensure all Iowa veterans have an equal opportunity to apply for their entitled benefits. We continue to advocate for veteran benefits at the state as well as the federal level.

Veterans Day at the State Fair was a very successful event with visibly increased participation from veterans, service organizations, and other VA facilities throughout the state. The Iowa Veterans Home booth was a focal point for veterans young and old looking for information on benefits and facilities.



IDVA entry in the 2008 State Fair Veterans Day Parade.

Our 2008 Fall School of Instruction will be held October 14th, 15th, and 16th in Des Moines; we are hoping to have record attendance and participation from our counties across the state.

Plans are continuing for a Veterans' Day event at "Veterans Auditorium" on November 11th. Along with the annual Veterans' Day event,

there will be informational booths for VA benefits and employers looking for veteran employees.

The Iowa Veterans Cemetery has been very busy with multiple funeral services held daily, grounds maintenance, and pre-approval applications inundating the office. I encourage everyone to visit this beautiful memorial.

We are looking forward to having former members of the U.S.S Iowa here in Des Moines for their annual reunion which will be held September 9th -13th. This will be the first time this event has been held in Iowa, and it will be truly an honor to have these heroes among us.

The legislative session is quickly approaching and the department is looking forward to another productive year with our newly elected legislators. Let IDVA know if you have any concerns that we should be addressing when working at the capitol.

Upcoming dates significant to veterans are Patriot's Day on September 11th and National POW/MIA Remembrance Day on September 19th. Please take time on those dates to thank a veteran or to remember the sacrifices veterans have made.

Sincerely,
Patrick J. Palmersheim, Executive Director
Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs

Vietnam Bonus Update

As of August 1st, IDVA has received and processed 1,554 applications for the second Vietnam Bonus Program. The average bonus amount awarded is \$178.52, with 1,036 (66.67%) applications awarded a bonus. To date IDVA has distributed \$184,950.50. ~

Iowa Veterans Cemetery Dedication

After years of planning and many months of construction, the Iowa Veterans Cemetery is dedicated and open!

On July 3, 2008 an estimated 1,000 veterans and their families traveled to Van Meter, Iowa to witness the dedication ceremony.



A view of the gathered crowd from the west side of the committal shelter.

Prior to the dedication, dignitaries representing the Iowa congressional delegation, state legislators, veteran service organizations, government officials and other veteran interest groups toured the facility.

Although it was a little warm, the weather finally cooperated after rain and snow had severely handicapped construction progress throughout the winter and spring months.



Flyover following the National Anthem by the 132nd Fighter Wing.

The ceremony began with the presentation of colors by a Joint Color Guard, the National Anthem by the 34th Iowa Army Band and vocalist SMG Barrett, and an F-16 flyover by the Iowa Air National Guard, 132nd Fighter Wing.

Members of the Knapp and Kenyon families were invited to speak, followed by Senators Grassley and Harkin, and Congressmen Latham, Boswell, and King. Scott Gebhardtshauer represented the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, State Cemetery Grant Program, and former Governor Tom Vilsack provided additional comments. Governor Chet Culver presented the keynote address.



Governor Culver and the Iowa Congressional Delegation. L - R: Senator Grassley, Senator Harkin, Congressman Latham, Congressman Boswell, and Congressman King.

Following Governor Culver's address, the cemetery was dedicated and blessed by Chaplain, CPT Jeffrey Farr. The dedication concluded with a service medley, a 21-gun salute, and taps.



Governor Culver giving his keynote address.

Cemetery Dedication Cont'd



(Above) Dedication of the Iowa Fallen Heroes Monument. The artist, David Rottinghaus, was also present. (Below) The bronze eagle guarding the columbarium walls.



Following the dedication, guests were invited to tour the Administration Building and enjoy refreshments, or participate in the unveiling of the Fallen Heroes Monument. This monument was donated to the Cemetery by the Ames chapter of Beta Sigma Phi, an international women's sorority. This is a memorial to the soldiers and sailors who have given their lives during the course of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

Another addition to the grounds is a bronze eagle, donated by the Iowa National Guard Officers Auxiliary, and placed a few days before the dedication. It is located in front of the columbarium walls.



Another recent addition to the cemetery is a memorial from the Military Order of the Purple Heart (*below*). This monument is found on the memorial walk heading toward the National flag pole. ~



Military Women's Event

Mark your calendars for November 22! Women veterans' service to our country will be celebrated at the Military Women Symposium at the Fort Des Moines Museum and Education Center in Des Moines. The free event begins at 9 a.m. and ends at 1 p.m. Join us for resources, military women health information, and a motivational speaker.

The lively speaker is Elizabeth "Betty" Wall. Her fascinating story is as one of our nation's "Fly Girls." During the years 1934-1944, the Women Air Force Service Pilots (WASPs) of WWII flew every P-47 off the factory line in 1944, flying over 60,000,000 miles of operational flights and 77 different types of military aircraft including the B-29. Betty Wall was one of these 1,074 WASPs. For more about Betty's life, go to:

<http://www.mnlegion.org/paper/html/strohfus.html>.



Elizabeth "Betty" Wall in her flight uniform

The Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs is one of the sponsors for the "Military Women Event", including: Tama County Veterans Affairs, Ft. Des Moines Museum and Education Center, Iowa Gold Star Museum, 132nd Fighter Wing/Family Support Office, the Iowa Veterans Home, Iowa Department of Public Health, Governor's Office, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women. Honorary Chairs include Representatives Jody Tymeson and Helen Miller.

This free event is made possible through the generosity of local veterans' service organizations and businesses. If you would like to be involved as a sponsor, or for more general information about the event, contact the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women at 515.281.4461 or women@iowa.gov. ~

Website

The redesigned Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs webpage has been launched and is available on the Web. Visit the new site at www.iowava.org. The webpage has been completely revamped to make veterans affairs information more accessible, current, and informative.

We are now working with the Department of Administrative Services to make IDVA application forms dynamic. This means veterans or their loved ones will be able to complete forms online and email the form to the department. This will streamline the application process and add an additional option to assist our veterans. ~

Indigent Veteran Burial

A recent *Des Moines Register* article outlined the "Missing in America Project," a group dedicated to identifying the unclaimed remains of America's veterans. So far they have identified one Iowa veteran, who was laid to rest at the Iowa Veterans Cemetery on August 25th.

IDVA has also contacted the Iowa Funeral Home Association to identify unclaimed veteran remains. Although, no remains were brought to our attention, we applaud the efforts of the "Missing in America Project" in helping Iowa veterans rest in peace.

The Iowa Veterans Cemetery is an excellent resource for Iowa counties charged with indigent veteran burial. Since there is no fee for veterans, counties need only bear the cost of cremation. Feel free to contact the cemetery with any questions related to this subject at 515-996-9048.~

Don't Forget!!!!

**FY 2009 County Grant Program for Veterans
Applications are being accepted**

Apply soon to get this year's funding!

Lottery Tickets for Veterans

July was a very busy month for veterans and IDVA. Just a few days following the opening of the Iowa Veterans Cemetery, the Iowa Lottery unveiled the new lottery tickets that benefit the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund.



Veterans, Legislators, County Directors, IDVA staff and Lottery staff pose for a picture at the Iowa Lottery Press Conference.

The outdoor event was held on Camp Dodge at the Gold Star Museum, with military equipment as a fitting background.

The main author of the legislation, Representative McKinley Bailey (D - Webster City), was present to address the crowd, as was John Derner from the American Legion and Patrick Palmersheim, Executive Director of the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs. Speakers stressed the importance of providing assistance to all veterans while recognizing the sacrifices made by military families serving in the Global War on Terror.



A display of the first lottery ticket that was introduced on July 14, 2008. A second, pull-tab ticket was available a few weeks later.



Representative McKinley Bailey, commenting on the new Lottery tickets benefiting veterans.

Lottery proceeds are collected quarterly, so the Trust Fund should receive its first deposit in the coming months. It is anticipated that once fully implemented, the tickets will annually generate approximately \$3 million to the Trust Fund.

Every ticket sold contains IDVA's 800 number (1-800-vet-iowa) for veterans to call for veteran benefit information. ~

National Commander of the American Legion

Congratulations to "Iowa's Own" David Rehbein, for being elected National Commander of the American Legion.



Dave has served as a member of the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs since May, 2006; it is truly an honor to have a National Commander of a Veteran Service Organization working so closely with the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs. This year-long position will be an incredible opportunity for Dave and Iowa! Way to go Commander! ~

Fall School of Instruction

The 2008 Fall School of Instruction will take place October 14th, 15th, and 16th at the Merle Hay Holiday Inn. Contact Patty Hamann at Cedar County to register for this year's event.

Scheduled classes include a panel on presenting a ratable claim to the VARO, the new GI Bill, Vocational Rehabilitation, pensions, and appeals. There will also be presentations on state programs such as the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund, the County Grant Program for Veterans, and the new legislation pertaining to County VA Offices. ~

Additional Photos



Operation Military Kids. This entry in the State Fair Veterans Day Parade followed IDVA. The group is a part of the ISU Extension 4-H Youth Development and is a program to support the children and families of deployed soldiers.



Setting the bronze eagle on the Cemetery grounds.

County Office Hours and Accreditation Requirements

New legislation goes into effect July 1, 2009, requiring each county to have a veterans affairs office that employs a person providing veteran affairs services, benefits, and information for a minimum amount of hours as follows:

- Counties with a population of 30,000 or less - 20 hours per week
- Counties with a population of 30,001 to 60,000 - 30 hours per week
- Counties with a population of 60,001 or greater - 40 hours per week

The law change also requires counties to have an Executive Director or Administrator certified by IDVA as being accredited by the National Association of County Veteran Service Officers (NACVSO). NACVSO accreditation is a requirement of employment for the Executive Director or Administrator. The Executive Directors or Administrators will also be required to have email, internet, and general computer training.

IDVA will be providing a School of Instruction in October of 2009. NACVSO will be contracted to provide accreditation training and continuing education requirements for accreditation. This school will take place in Des Moines and schools will be held at least annually to allow county staff to maintain accreditation.

In anticipation of the costs associated with this new law, the legislature provided a \$10,000 allotment that will be given to each county to pay for the increased hours or for training.

Since the law does not take effect for another ten months, IDVA is working with the Commission and counties to have draft rules available for the county school this October. A letter will be sent out to County Boards of Supervisors outlining the law change and to inform them of the funding attached to the new law. ~

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