



The above mural honoring our Veterans through the era's is on display in our hallway and was created by local artist Galen McCarthy

# VICTOR SIERRA OSCAR COMMO CHECK!

Vol 2 Number 12

"America's Veterans embody the ideals upon which America was founded."

December 2019

This publication is for all Veterans, their families and their communities, compiled solely by the Jackson County Veterans Service Officer. The information provided herein is to keep you informed of upcoming events, newsworthy items and historical data of interest.

Proud member of



MN and National Associations of Veteran Service Officers



"In the aftermath, we are because they were." R.J. Heller,

## OFFICE INFORMATION

The Jackson County Veterans Service Office is located at:

402 White St. (Door 6)  
Jackson, MN 56143  
507.847.4774

[CVSO@co.jackson.mn.us](mailto:CVSO@co.jackson.mn.us)

Monday 8am-4:30pm  
Tuesday 8am-4:30pm  
Wednesday 8am-Noon  
Thursday 8am-Noon  
Friday Closed

(Available for after hour & weekend appointments case-by-case)

## TAKE A PAUSE... PLEASE!

Jeffrey L. Gay, CVSO

*"You can please some of the people all of the time, you can please all of the people some of the time, but you can't please all of the people all of the time."* — John Lydgate

This was quoted by Mr. John Lydgate (c. 1370–c. 1451, an English poet and translator. He is considered one of the leading English poets of the 15th century, and in his own day was often ranked alongside his master, Geoffrey Chaucer) that was made famous by Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of the United States. That remains a truth whose impact is associated yet today with everything we do...

A decision to take-action or not to take-action is met equally by others with disdain and/or praise. All in all, it supports the old adage **"We're damned if we do and we're damned if we don't"**, there seems to be no middle of the road...

Everybody has an opinion, there's an adage about that but I'll save you from its are vulgarity as I'm sure you all know it. With that said, we are creatures whose ideals can change with the wind and therefore can form an opinion and then have that opinion change by new information or evidence. We also have a tendency to close our minds to new ideas which take us out of our comfort zone. We are quick to judge but slow to make amends. I'm sure we have all "sat on the fence" or "waffled" about one thing or another in our lifetimes.

All together this can impede forward movement on certain things where action is required, generally prompt action!

Another Lydgate quote is **"Woord is but wynd; leff woord and tak the dede."** Loosely translated this is **"Word is but wind; leave [the] word and take the deed."** A deed is measurable and has form whereas words can change and the intended message can become skewed or conveniently be forgotten. Like the wind, it can change direction, become stronger or loose its momentum.

By now you're wondering where I'm going with this. I guess I'm trying to say that patience is a virtue we all need to work on and to "take a pause" to consider the ramifications, on yourself and others, of how you decide to react. We all try to do our best and in many cases we are bound by direction out of our control. A good example is guidelines for information needed and procedures which need to be done in positions of employment by the government. I think it called "red tape".

As frustrating as it may be to you it's equally as frustrating for those attempting to facilitate the job stuck between what we may consider common sense and what we have been given to work with or enforce. So, when the words we speak are not just wind, they are instruction, encouragement, education and sincerity expressing a wish to help you. Please, give everyone the benefit of the doubt and be patient with them, they're just doing the best they can to take care of you.

Jackson County Veteran Service Office December 2019

## SPECIAL DAYS

**December is:** Write a Letter to a Friend Month;  
National BINGO Month

- 1 – Civil Air Patrol Birthday
- 5 – Repeal Day *The 21st Amendment ends Prohibition. I'll drink to that! Good news for New Year's Eve!*
- 6 – Saint Nicholas Day
- 7 – PEARL HARBOR DAY
- 10 – Human Rights Day
- 13 – National Guard Birthday
- 14 – Wreaths Across America Day – Vet Cemeteries
- 15 – Bill of Rights Day
- 22 – Winter Solstice *(First Day of Winter)*
- 25 – CHRISTMAS DAY *(Holiday)*
- 31 – NEW YEARS EVE! Celebrate in moderation...



Your Jackson County CVSO will be on the KKOJ Morning Show the **2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of every month.** Tune

in but don't tune out! The show begins at 8:50AM. Question & answer, interesting information, VA Program updates fun facts, straight talk and announcements. This will be geared for all Veterans, their families and Veteran Organizations...



### STAY TUNED - STAY INFORMED!



rough the vehicle of radio, Thomas Lyons of the MN Military Radio Hour provides information pertinent to today! He has a guest most every week and discusses upcoming events nportant to you as the Veteran or military family. *The MN Military Radio Hour is on KKOJ radio at 3PM Sundays.*

### FIRST MONDAY IN LAKEFIELD

Don't forget that the Jackson County Veteran Service Office is located at the Lakefield Library the first Monday of every month, 1-3:30PM. C'mon down and visit! Recommend that you call for an appointment first at 507-847-4774 or just walk in...

### CENSUS JOBS

Are you looking to do something temporarily to put a few extra shekles in your pockets, jing in your jeans and some presidents in your wallet?



Well, its soon to be 2020 and with the passing of the decade comes the need for people to begin "counting noses" in America... It's a census year!

If this interests you or someone you know check it out on-line at <https://2020census.gov/en/jobs.html> and or go ahead and apply on-line!



### LEGISLATIVE NOTE ON HEARING

Alex Schueller, USMC Veteran, Veterans Outreach Director

Below is a note I received from the Veterans and Military Outreach Director for U.S. Sen. Tina Smith. Please share this with all you know who may have hearing loss they believed has been caused by their service.

I want to let you know that just before Veterans Day, U.S. Sen. Tina Smith introduced legislation to reduce the red tape many veterans face when trying to get care for hearing loss as a result of their service—something many veterans say is an enormous burden despite being the most common service-connected ailment.

Sen. Smith first heard about this problem during her office's veterans' health care tour last year, which visited some 10 communities throughout Minnesota to hear what health challenges veterans face.

Currently, veterans receiving benefits through the VA must document hearing loss or tinnitus incurred while in the line of duty in order to qualify for benefits when seeking treatment for these conditions. However, many veterans are not diagnosed until after they are discharged. This places a significant burden on veterans to prove that their hearing loss or tinnitus is the result of their time in the military.

Sen. Smith's Veterans Hearing Benefit Act would provide presumption for hearing loss and tinnitus to veterans who served in combat or in a military specialty where they were exposed to repeated loud noises, such as those who worked around heavy artillery. Her goal is to make it easier for veterans to establish service-connection and get the benefits they've earned.

Sen. Smith recently said: "If our veterans experience a health-related issue during their service, it's our job to take care of them. Too many veterans in Minnesotans and across the country have to jump through hoops before getting access to care for hearing loss. I've

introduced this bill to make sure veterans with hearing loss get the care they deserve.”

Hot Links for more information on this bill:  
[www.smith.senate.gov/ahead-veterans-day-us-senator-tina-smith-introduces-bill-help-veterans-get-care-hearing-loss-their](http://www.smith.senate.gov/ahead-veterans-day-us-senator-tina-smith-introduces-bill-help-veterans-get-care-hearing-loss-their)

[www.wdio.com/news/sen-tina-smith-introduces-bill-help-veterans-with-hearing-loss/5545949/](http://www.wdio.com/news/sen-tina-smith-introduces-bill-help-veterans-with-hearing-loss/5545949/)

## ITS JUST AROUND THE CORNER

I hate to be the bearer of bad tidings or a “Debbie Downer” but the end of 2019 is soon upon us. Although Tax Day is “celebrated” on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April no time is better than now to begin preparing for it!



Check out what you will need for state and federal taxes at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) and [www.revenue.state.mn.us](http://www.revenue.state.mn.us) or you can ask your personal tax preparer.

At these sites you can see the tax law changes that will affect your 2019 taxes and get a list of the documents required for filing. Remember, if you’re not the paid preparer you are probably not the person who knows “all things taxes”...



It’s not all doom & gloom if you plan ahead and plan correctly! Give yourself time now to locate receipts and other required documents so you aren’t in a panic when the day comes. Make your tax appointments soon too in order to get a jump start on getting your taxes done and filed. Refunds (if you’re lucky) will come much faster that way too!

## COMENTARY

Unknown

Isn't it interesting how ALL the media is doing flips and bowing down to the young misfits known as the squad? However, I have not seen a single media story highlighting these 3 new Congressmen. Who would you want to represent you and serve the country in Congress?

### The Other Three Freshman Congressmen:

**Jim Baird**,  
Republican from Indiana ~  
lost his left arm in Vietnam.

**Brian Mast**,  
Republican from Florida ~  
lost both legs in Afghanistan.

**Dan Crenshaw**,  
Republican from Texas ~  
lost his right eye in Afghanistan.

All three of these men are **Purple Heart recipients**.

How often have you seen them on the evening news? How often have we seen the two Muslim women and the

communist from NY all blabbering vulgarities and spouting out anti-Israel/anti-American insults.

**Three Purple Heart Veterans were sworn into Congress** with less publicity than 'the new breed of women' and coverage over who wore what.

As so aptly stated by representative mast, "5 eyes, 5 arms, 4 legs—All American."



**This truly is service to country!**

## MILITARY PERSONNEL AND VETERANS MINNESOTA DNR BENEFITS

If you are a resident of Minnesota and are on Active Duty, In the Guard/Reserve or a Veteran you have earned the right for various benefits. You may be eligible, based on several levels, and can find out more by going on-line to:

[www.dnr.state.mn.us/licenses/military/index.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/licenses/military/index.html)

For example, if you have a service connected (S/C) disability of up to 100% you are eligible for the following FREE services:

- *Firearms Safety Training (non-active duty)*
- *Minnesota Conservation Volunteer Magazine*
- *MN State Park Pass*

For 100% S/C disability the level of benefits increases exponentially. Other levels are determined by answering one of the following questions at the website.



- *Discharged from the U.S. Armed Forces within 10 days of the start or during the Firearms Deer Season*
- *Discharged from federal service in the last 24 months - stationed outside of the U.S.*
- *Discharged from the military in the last 24 months - includes National Guard*
- *Veteran with 100% service connected disability*
- *Purple heart recipient*
- *Veterans Home resident*
- *Veteran with any level of service connected disability*
- *U. S. Veterans Administration Hospital patient*

Your service in the military has earned you these rights but it's up to you to apply for the ones you are interested in. Again, to apply please go on-line to: [www.dnr.state.mn.us/licenses/military/index.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/licenses/military/index.html) and answer the three simple questions asked and you're on your way!

## **FREE ADMISSION TO THE MN ZOO!**

**ATTENTION VETERANS AND THOSE STILL SERVING! Mark these dates on your calendar!**

**Military personnel and Veterans** receive free admission, free parking, and half-price admission for family members to the Minnesota Zoo in Apple Valley Nov. 11 until Jan. 1.



**November 11, 2019 – January 1, 2020**

### **Minnesota Zoo**

Military personnel receive **free admission**, free parking, and half-price admission for family members.

### **SSA Gift Shops**

Military personnel receive **20% discount** on purchases, excluding promotional and clearance items.

### **Lancer Food Service**

Military personnel receive **20% discount** on food purchases, excluding free-standing kiosks and alcohol purchases.

**Also remember that all year long** Military personnel and Veterans receive \$2 off regular admission and \$1 off regular admission for family members.

*(Valid military ID or proof of military service is required)*



In the attached link for the "Health-e Vet" newsletter there are several invaluable tidbits of information concerning your health. You can go on-line to <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USVHA/bulletins/26cf004>.

The highlights are "The Conversation You Can't Miss" (talking about sharing your family history over the holidays), "Where Are My VA Lab Test Results", the "Great American Smokeout!", "Diabetes and Eating Out" (this may pertain to many with dietary restrictions besides diabetes), "Gulf War Illness" (discusses an app that is available which will answer questions you might have about Gulf War illnesses), "Stomach Cancer Basics" and "Patient Statements Online".

**If you have not yet logged on** and set up your account I would urge you to. There's a lot of great information out there concerning our health. It's easy! Just go **online to** <https://www.myhealth.va.gov> and click on "create an account"!

*With Respect and Honor We Thank You*  
**VETERANS!**

## **VETERANS ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSION**

Last month, **19Nov2019**, your local CVSO hosted a round-table discussions for Veterans facilitated by representative from Senator Amy Klobucha's office. Included in this event were also MN DEED and the MN Department of Veteran Affairs. Also in attendance were the MACVSO (Veteran Service Officers Association) president and the Public Relations Director from the VAMH in Sioux Falls.

**Although those participating** in the event were small in number there was a good exchange of information. Most of the issues discussed were The Mission Act, the confusing VA paperwork, VSO Van trips, Legislative update and the DVOP program (*Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program*).

**Overall it went well** and we are looking forward to the next one.

## **VIETNAM ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION**

**The Minnesota Military Museum**, in partnership with Twin Cities Public Television and Concordia University, St. Paul, present this 2019-20 series held at Concordia University on the 3rd Monday of month (September through May). Parking and admission are free (a small donation to the museum is appreciated). This new series is an opportunity for Veterans (and those interested in the war and its legacy) to gather on a monthly basis to honor, remember and understand this tumultuous time.



- **Dec. 16:** *Wounded in Action* - Combat wounded Veterans will discuss their experiences being wounded in action, evacuated from the battlefield and their recovery. Combat medics and military nurses will discuss their work treating and saving the battlefield wounded.
- **Jan. 20:** *Return to Vietnam* - Many years after the end of the war Veterans have returned to Vietnam and have had a variety of experiences, usually positive. Often these trips bring a sense of closure or open doors to new life experiences or opportunities. Veterans will discuss their experiences returning to the places in Vietnam where they served in their youth.

**All events begin at 7 p.m.** at Concordia University's Buetow Auditorium on Hamline Avenue just south of I-94. Signs will be posted.



**300 Hamline Avenue North  
St. Paul, MN 55104**

For more information and complete schedule please go online to <https://www.mnvietnam.org/>

**VETERAN SERVICE OFFICERS NOTE:**



Our office has the entire PBS Vietnam War series on DVD and the accompanying book "The Vietnam War". If you are interested in this series being shown over several nights please let me know.

There is a lot of information in this series for Vietnam Veterans, their families and for the public to view and possibly get a better understanding of that era.

I'm sure it may bring deep lying emotions for some and fond memories of the people who served together as brothers and sisters in arms for all.

If we do this it would be good to have a roundtable discussion / decompression following each showing.

If you would like this series to be offered please contact me at 507.847.4774 or via e-mail to [CVSO@co.jackson.mn.us](mailto:CVSO@co.jackson.mn.us).

**BATTLE OF THE BULGE 75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY**



December 2019 is the 75th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge. With a front that spanned areas of Belgium and Luxembourg, this WWII battle's most intense fighting took place in the dense forests of southeast Belgium. There, American soldiers fought tirelessly alongside Belgian and Allied soldiers, giving their lives to solidify the greatest values of freedom and democracy.

For the occasion of the 75th anniversary, many celebrations are being organized in Europe culminating with an official celebration in the Ardennes on December 16, 2019 commemorating the immense sacrifice of American and Allied soldiers, and the sacrifice of their loved ones.



The Belgian Ambassador invites you to join them in Belgium to remember this milestone of World War II together with traveling Veterans, their families, American officials and other invited dignitaries. Your local WWII Veterans Association should have information on how to take part in the trip to Europe next month.

More details on the program of the commemorations in Belgium can be found at the Belgium Remembers website and the Europe Remembers NUTS Weekend at Bastogne event site.

You can contact the Embassy of Belgium via e-mail at [Tanguy.Watteeuw@mil.be](mailto:Tanguy.Watteeuw@mil.be) for more details on opportunities to join the Battle of the Bulge celebrations. Or you may visit the links below:

<https://belgiumremembers44-45.be/>

<https://europere remembers.com/experience/nuts-weekend/>



**PEARL HARBOR REMEMBRANCE DAY**



December 7<sup>th</sup> marks the anniversary of "...the day that will live in infamy...", as spoken by then President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

The Infamy Speech was brief, running to just a little over seven minutes. Secretary of State Cordell Hull had recommended that the President devote more time to a fuller exposition of Japanese-American relations and the lengthy, but unsuccessful, effort to find a peaceful solution. However, Roosevelt kept the speech short in the belief that it would have a more dramatic effect.

This speech was in answer to the unprovoked surprise bombing attack on Pearl Harbor, HI by the Japanese.

The following two paragraphs are excerpts from Wikipedia.com: "Japan intended the attack as a preventive action to keep the United States Pacific Fleet from interfering with its planned military actions in Southeast Asia against overseas territories of the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and the United States.

The attack commenced at 7:48 a.m. Hawaiian Time (18:18 GMT). The base was attacked by 353 Imperial Japanese aircraft (including fighters, level and dive bombers, and torpedo bombers) in two waves, launched from six aircraft carriers. All eight U.S. Navy battleships were damaged, with four sunk. All but USS Arizona were

later raised, and six were returned to service and went on to fight in the war.”



**There will be celebrations and memorials** on this day. Please consult your local papers or your Legion's/VFW's for more information on the times and locations.

**This is a time to honor as well as** a time to educate our youth what role this event played our nations history.

## **PREPARING FOR A VETERANS "FINAL CONVOY HOME"**

**Preplanning for end-of-life issues is not** something that is a high priority for me. I think I got that from dad, he never wanted to discuss the subject. I don't blame him but having gone through both my parent's funerals where last wishes weren't written down or lists of important papers weren't made has made me a believer that it has to be done. Like the Boy Scout motto we too have to "Be Prepared".

**Here are a couple of things to help you through this process.**

**First is a book called "Planning Your Legacy".** It's **FREE** for you and helps to put you in charge of your own funeral. If you're that kind of person you can put the "fun" in funeral just by letting people know what you want for your service and so forth...



**This book also covers** listing of important documents and where they are stored to help the family

be better prepared for the last-minute administrative issues.

**The next thing is to purchase** your eternal resting place. Be sure you keep the receipts and location description so it'll be easy to locate when the time comes. Don't forget, as a Veteran you are eligible to be interred at any of the Minnesota State Veteran cemeteries width is generally better of your pocketbook!

**Last, but certainly not least,** is the purchase of the vessel which will carry you into eternity. There are several options here and many choices. Caskets are expensive, they may be purchased or ordered locally through your funeral home or you can purchase one especially adorned with your service branch indicia. These may be found on-line, isn't Google a wonderful thing?

**There are organizations and individuals** who do make and sell or furnish the family with a simple wooden casket or urn. Many who do this are veterans themselves and do it out of respect. Again, to find these a Google search is a good place to begin.

**One such person who is a local (Windom, MN) local** wood hobbyist. He's built several and distributed them, without charge, to Veteran families although a donation for the cost of materials would be appreciated. Below is an excerpt from an e-mail I received.

*"Here are a few examples of my urns. I would appreciate if you would stop by to see them for yourself and maybe take a few with you to share with those you serve who are in need."*

Vay



**Another place you can go** for these is Anoka, MN, "Free Urns For Veterans". See the poster for their information.

**Each FREE Urn is professionally handmade** using quality oak wood and is personalized with a Military service seal and a name plate that lists the Veteran's name, rank, military service and life dates.

**However, "Free Urns for Veterans"** only accepts urn requests from current Minnesota Veterans within 1 year from the date of death

whereas other locally prepared urns may have another policy concerning time/date of death.

# Free Urns for Veterans

Nonprofit, 501 (c) (3) | Federal Tax ID# 47-2412901

Made for Veterans, by Veterans & Our Families



**Our Purpose is to provide free urns to Minnesota Veterans.** Each FREE Urn is professionally handmade using quality oak wood and is personalized with a Military service seal and a name plate that lists the Veteran's name, rank, military service and life dates.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
**How does a Veteran's family receive a free urn?** When a Minnesota Veteran dies, families can complete an urn request form on our website or contact Free Urns for Veterans directly.

**For More Information:**

- Call: 612-991-4608
- Email: [free.urns@gmail.com](mailto:free.urns@gmail.com)
- Scan QR code below



Scan  
QR Code



Like Us  
on Facebook!

These FREE urns are made possible by generous donations. If you would like to donate to Free Urns for Veterans, please visit our website at [www.freeurnsforveterans.org](http://www.freeurnsforveterans.org) for more information.

[www.freeurnsforveterans.org](http://www.freeurnsforveterans.org) | [free.urns@gmail.com](mailto:free.urns@gmail.com)  
Free Urns for Veterans | P.O. Box 689 | Anoka, MN 55303

**Don't forget to talk with your local Veteran Service Officer** for the book mentioned above and to order the Veterans grave marker or tomb stone. All Veterans are entitled, minimally, to a funeral casket flag. Generally, the funeral home will take care of this for you as long as you let them know the deceased was in fact a veteran along with a copy of his/her DD form 214 (*Military Discharge*).

If you have any questions please contact your local Veteran Service Officer.

## CIVIL AIR PATROL'S 78<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY

**The CAP's Mission: "Supporting America's communities with emergency response, diverse aviation and ground services, youth development, and promotion of air, space, and cyber power."**



Since Civil Air Patrol's formation during the earliest days of World War II, this vigilant organization of citizen Airmen has been committed to service to America.

**It was founded on Dec. 1, 1941**, to mobilize the nation's civilian aviation resources for national defense service, CAP has evolved into a premier public service organization that still carries out emergency service missions when needed — in the air and on the ground.

**As a Total Force partner and Auxiliary** of the U.S. Air Force, Civil Air Patrol is there to search for and find the lost, provide comfort in times of disaster and work to keep

the homeland safe. Its 60,000 members selflessly devote their time, energy and expertise toward the well-being of their communities, while also promoting aviation and related fields through aerospace/STEM education and helping shape future leaders through CAP's cadet program.



**Civil Air Patrol's missions** for America are many, and today's adults and cadets perform their duties with the same vigilance as its founding members — preserving CAP's 75-year legacy of service while maintaining its commitment to nearly 1,500 communities nationwide.

### Vision Statement

Civil Air Patrol, America's Air Force auxiliary, building the nation's finest force of citizen volunteers serving America.

### Core Values

Integrity, Volunteer Service, Excellence and Respect.

For more information go online to:

- <https://www.gocivilairpatrol.com/> or
- <https://mankatocadets.weebly.com/>

## NATIONAL GUARD BIRTHDAY



**The National Guard includes** the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard. These two components have a mission to equip, train, and deploy when needed in emergencies for contingencies around the world.



**The National Guard Birthdate is** observed on **December 13<sup>th</sup> annually** while the Air National Guard birthdate is observed **September 18<sup>th</sup>**.

**The birthday of the National Guard** may surprise you. The National Guard official site lists the official date as December 13, 1636.

No, that's not a misprint. The "Weekend Warriors", of which I was one, are older than the United States Army!

**The date the Massachusetts** colonial legislature authorized a consolidation of the colony's militias into three regiments was indeed on December 13, 1636.

There are four United States Army units considered direct descendants of the 1636 reorganization. The units are the following:

- 101st Engineer Battalion
- 101st Field Artillery Regiment
- 181st Infantry Regiment
- 182nd Infantry Regiment

**All four belong to** the Massachusetts Army National Guard.

**Today, more than ever**, the expanded mission of the National Guard has seen them involved in numerous active duty deployments. Their optempo for training has

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intensified exponentially which provides them with increased readiness but has also become a burden on their civilian employers.



**Minnesota is host to the 34<sup>th</sup> Red Bull Division** with a proud battle history throughout the years.

As “citizen soldiers” their motto is “Always Ready, Always There!” accepting the responsibilities which accompany it. Other countries have mirrored our citizen soldier concept implementing it as part of their defense design.

**Unlike the military’s reserve forces** the National Guard has a mission compounding their already sworn duty as a Reserve of the Army (*and the Air Force*). The National Guard also has a State mission and may be called out by their respective governors for disasters and other such emergencies.

Protecting the servicemember’s employment upon being deployed is the USERRA law simply stating that the servicemember must retain his job at the level it was upon activation. There are also provisions protecting it during drills and training periods.

#### **USERRA: Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act**

**To intervene with employment issues** there is a DoD organization that provides information and education as well as ombudsman services. This referred to the



Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR).

**ESGR is comprised of volunteers** who may or may not

have a military background but have a passion for helping our Guard and Reserve servicemembers and their employers.

**If you would like to become** an ESGR volunteer please contact me, **Jeff Gay, 507.530.8378** or e-mail me at [jlymang@gmail.com](mailto:jlymang@gmail.com). It involves a very small amount of time commitment, is rewarding and once annually you get to rub shoulders personally with the shakers and movers of both the military and the civilian employment or corporate world. It’s a great way to network too! Oh, and you are then considered a volunteer employee of the Department of Defense!

For more on ESGR go to [www.esgr.mil](http://www.esgr.mil).

## **COMMISSARY, MILITARY SERVICE EXCHANGE, AND MWR ACCESS EXTENDED**

According to the Department of Defense, starting Jan. 1, 2020, all service-connected Veterans, Purple Heart recipients, former prisoners of war



(POW), and individuals approved and designated as the primary family caregivers of eligible Veterans under the Department of



Veterans Affairs Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) can use commissaries, exchanges, and morale, welfare and recreation (MWR) retail facilities, in-person and online.

For more information regarding these privileges and access to military installations, visit

[www.militaryonesource.mil/expanding-access](http://www.militaryonesource.mil/expanding-access)

#### **Who is eligible Jan. 1, 2020?**

- Veterans
  - Purple Heart recipients
  - former prisoners of war
  - Veterans with 0-90% service-connected disability ratings

*(For former service members who have not yet sought disability compensation from VA, visit [www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/](http://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/))*

- **Medal of Honor recipients and Veterans with 100% service-connected disability ratings are already eligible under existing DOD policy.**

- **Caregivers**

- On Jan. 1, individuals approved and designated as the primary family caregiver of an eligible veteran under the PCAFC will be eligible for these privileges.
- For information about primary family caregivers in the PCAFC, visit <https://www.caregiver.va.gov/>.

#### ***Required credentials.***

- **Veterans**

- On Jan. 1, Veterans eligible solely under this act who are eligible to obtain a Veteran Health Identification Card must use this credential for in-person installation and privilege access. The card must display the Veteran’s eligibility status (*i.e., PURPLE HEART, FORMER POW or SERVICE CONNECTED*). Apply here: [www.va.gov/healthbenefits/vhic/index.asp](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/vhic/index.asp).
- Veterans eligible solely under this act who are not enrolled in or are not eligible to enroll in VA health care, or who are enrolled in VA health care, but do not possess a Veteran Health Identification Card will not have access to DoD and Coast Guard installations for in-person commissary, exchange, and MWR retail privileges, but will have full access to online exchanges and American Forces Travel.
- Medal of Honor recipients and Veterans with 100% service-connected disability ratings are eligible for DoD credentials under DoD policy.

- **Caregivers**

- Eligible caregivers will receive an eligibility letter from VA’s Office of Community Care.
- If you are a primary family caregiver under the PCAFC and lose your eligibility letter, please call 877-733-7927 to request a replacement. Please allow two weeks for processing.



## A CHRISTMAS FACTOID!

Jeff Gay, VSO



Here comes Santa Clause...  
Here comes Santa Clause...  
Right down Santa Claus Lane...

Here's hoping all your holiday shopping gets done in a timely manner! I's sure many of you travel to the "brick & mortar" stores to shop and others do it leisurely from their recliners via the Internet.

I was thinking about on-line shopping and it being all the rage... Then I thought about "back in the day" when I was a kid and the Christmas catalogs would arrive. Wow! A real day of excitement with thoughts and dreams looking at the colorful picture of toys and such.

I then realized, on-line shopping is not new! Where today we have Amazon and so many others, back in our day we had sears-Robuck and Montgomery Ward. It was just called something different, we referred to it as "Mail Order"!

Just like back then the toys and other wares came to us in the mail or arrived at the store outlet and we'd pick them up there. Nobody stealing packages delivered by UPS or FedEx off our porches, our stuff was safely in the back room of the store ready for pick-up.

You see, as much as things change they really don't! It's just the technology we see change, Christmas is still Christmas filled with joy and fond memories...

## JOYOUS NEW YEAR!

We all love to celebrate on New Years Eve, with or without the renderings of copious amounts of spirituous libation. If it's the latter you do please keep in mind that a sober driver is the key to a fully enjoyable evening.

I'm sure Santa even likes to celebrate now that his delivery job is done but I'll bet Rudolph whose nose shines bright (and not from the booze) takes good care of Santa and the elves getting them home safe and sound.



## HANDMADE CANES! FREE FOR VETERANS

A local Jackson Veteran, Allen Koster, makes handmade canes and walking sticks from Diamond Willow and is offering them FREE for Veterans!

The Jackson VSO has some on hand, stop by, take a look and take one home!



## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Please place these numbers close by in case you would ever need to call one. We hope that the need never arises but we also understand that it's a real possibility. Better to be prepared and to know where to call for help when help is needed...

National Suicide Prevention Hotline

1-800-273-8255

Annual Veterans Suicide Awareness Day is held annually the first Saturday in October

NATIONAL PROBLEM GAMBLING HELPLINE

1-800-522-4700



1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1

OR TEXT TO "838255"



minnesotaveteran.org | 1-888-LinkVet (546-5838)

DON'T FORGET – LIKE US ON FACEBOOK!

[www.facebook.com/JacksonCountyMNVeteranServices](http://www.facebook.com/JacksonCountyMNVeteranServices)

or visit online at [www.co.jackson.mn.us/veterans](http://www.co.jackson.mn.us/veterans)

HOW COPY? OVER...

GOOD COPY! OUT!

See y'all next month!



The sole responsibility for content is Jeffrey Gay, Jackson Veteran's Service Officer.



## GOIN' ON-LINE

This section was run in our very first issue and I thought it good to revisit it. These are web addresses which can help you, entertain you and keep you abreast of news, views and changes in benefits. Keep an eye out for additions to the list as we move forward!

### FIND A LOCAL CVSO

MN Ass'n of Vet Service Officers [www.macvso.org](http://www.macvso.org)

### NEWS & VIEWS

Marine Times [www.marinecorpstimes.com](http://www.marinecorpstimes.com)  
Air Force Times [www.airforcetimes.com](http://www.airforcetimes.com)  
Military Times [www.militarytimes.com](http://www.militarytimes.com)  
Military.COM [www.military.com](http://www.military.com)  
SOFREP News <https://sofrep.com/news/>

### BENEFITS & OTHER INTERST

U.S. Veterans Affairs [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)  
MN Dept. of Vet Affairs <https://mn.gov/mdva/>  
My Health-e Vet [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)

### SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

American Legion [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org)  
MN American Legion [www.mnlegion.org](http://www.mnlegion.org)  
Veterans of Foreign Wars [www.VFW.org](http://www.VFW.org)  
Disabled American Vets [www.DAV.org](http://www.DAV.org)  
AMVETS <http://amvetsnsf.org>  
Vietnam Vets of America <https://yva.org/>  
Military Order of Purple heart <https://moph.org>

### MILITARY SERVICE BRANCHES

US Army [www.goarmy.com](http://www.goarmy.com)  
US Marine Corps [www.marines.mil](http://www.marines.mil)  
US Navy [www.navy.mil](http://www.navy.mil)  
US Air Force [www.airforce.com](http://www.airforce.com)  
US Coast Guard [www.uscg.mil](http://www.uscg.mil)  
National Guard (Army/Air) [www.nationalguard.com](http://www.nationalguard.com)

### OF INTEREST TO MILITARY RETIREES

TRICARE Health [www.tricare.com](http://www.tricare.com) \*  
DFAS MyPay (Finance) <https://mypay.dfas.mil> \*  
Military Officers Assn. [www.moaa.org](http://www.moaa.org)  
DoD Lodging Site [www.dodlodging.net](http://www.dodlodging.net) \*  
America's Warrior Part. [americaswarriorpartnership.org](http://americaswarriorpartnership.org)  
Dental & Vision – FEDVIP [www.benefeds.com](http://www.benefeds.com)

### OTHER LINKS PROVIDING INFO AND ASSISTANCE

Nat'l Archives (Records) <https://archives.gov/veterans>  
MACV (Financial/Legal) [www.mac-v.org](http://www.mac-v.org)  
Minnesota LinkVet <https://minnesotaveteran.org>  
Senior Linkage Line [www.seniorlinkageline.com](http://www.seniorlinkageline.com)  
Wounded Warrior Proj. [www.woundedwarriorproject.org](http://www.woundedwarriorproject.org)  
"Make the Connection" [www.MakeTheConnection.net](http://www.MakeTheConnection.net)  
MN Military & Vet Exch. [www.mnme.us](http://www.mnme.us)

### VETERANS MALL, LODGING & VACATIONS

Armed Forces Exchange [www.aafes.gov](http://www.aafes.gov) \*  
Armed Forces Lodging [www.dodlodging.net/](http://www.dodlodging.net/)  
AF Vacation Club [www.afvclub.com](http://www.afvclub.com)

(\*\* denotes must be still serving Active Duty, Reserve or Guard and military retirees)

## "WHO YA GONNA CALL?!"

From time to time you need to call for help. Besides your local CVSO the numbers below may be helpful for you to call direct!



### Resources for SW/WC MN Area Veterans

VAMC, Sioux Falls, SD 605.336.3230  
(Toll Free) (800.316.8387)  
(Press "0" or your party's extension to interrupt message)

VA Nurse & Telephone Care 866.687.7382  
Telephone Triage x7140  
Patient Advocate x6688  
Pharmacy Refills 855.560.1723  
VA Billing Questions 866-347-2352

CBOC, Spirit Lake, IA 712.336.6400  
CBOC, St James, MN 507.375.9670

MN Vet's Home, Luverne, MN 507.283.6200  
Toll Free 877.588.8387

Vet Center, Sioux Falls, SD 605.330.4552

MACV, Mankato Office 507.345.8258

SW Ctr for Independent Living 507.532.2221

MDVA SW MN Higher Education Coordinator 507.537.7213

MDVA Tribal VSO, SW MN 507.637.1534

MDVA Veterans Linkage Line 888.546.5838  
Senior Linkage Line 800.333.2433

VA Crisis Line/Suicide Line 1.800.273.TALK  
press 1 (273.8255)

Defense Finance & Acc't. Svc 888.332.7411  
TRICARE West Region 844.866.9378

### MN Veterans Service Organizations' Dept. HQ's

The American Legion 866.259.9163  
Veterans of Foreign Wars 651.291.1757  
Disabled American Veterans 651.291.1212  
Military Order Purple Heart 651.227.4456  
Vietnam Veterans of America 651.224.6345

### IDENTIFICATION CARDS/DEERS UPDATES

(Call for appointment and bring proper paperwork)

NG Armory, Mankato, MN 507.389.6219  
100 Martin Luther King Drive Mon-Wed-Fri

114<sup>th</sup> FW (Airport), Sioux Falls, SD 605.988.5845  
1201 W. Algonquin St.

196<sup>th</sup> MEB, Sioux Falls, SD 605.357.2900 or  
800 W. National Guard Drive 2985

NG Armory, Montevideo, MN 320.269.9284 or  
711 S. 17<sup>th</sup> St. 5180  
Mon-Fri / 9am-3pm

YOUR  
LOCAL  
CVSO

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## **IMPORTANT NOTE FOR MILITARY RETIREES OR THOSE STILL SERVING**

Sometimes we put things on the proverbial "back burner" and then forget about them. I know I do! It's very important to take care of things immediately after they occur to include changes in your personal status. Sometimes this can have an unexpected impact on you in a less than favorable manner.

**Most common are changes of** address or other contact information. Others still may be a change in marital status or adding new dependents. In any case, be cognizant of this and inform service providers of any change you might have. Below is the contents of an e-mail I received from DFAS and I'd like to share it with you!



***Did you know that** if you don't update your retired pay account in a timely manner, it could adversely impact your loved ones?*

***Many issues can arise** if DFAS is not notified of life-changing events, especially for your Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP).*

***Informing DFAS about life-changing events** in a timely manner is one way to make sure your dependents are taken care of with the Survivor Benefit Plan. Promptly notifying DFAS ensures the correct premiums are billed and your loved ones will not face challenges in receiving their SBP annuity payments.*

***Below are examples** of common life events and how deadlines impact your SBP coverage:*

***At retirement, you're single with no children.** After retirement, you marry or have a child. Notify us within ONE YEAR by sending us a DD Form 2656-6 and a copy of the marriage or birth certificate if you want SBP coverage.*

***You divorce and elect former spouse coverage.** Your former spouse passes away and you later re-marry. Notify us within ONE YEAR of your re-marriage by sending us a DD Form 2656-6 and a copy of your new marriage certificate if you want SBP coverage for your new spouse.*

***Find out more** about changing SBP coverage: <https://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary/provide/sbp/change>*

**This also applies to other offices** which may, from time to time, need to contact you. If you are a military retiree or still serving another is DEERS (*Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System*). DEERS is what drives all of your benefits. Keep them informed lest you miss out on some benefits.



Making these updates or changes can be as easy as stopping into a local DEERS ID card office. Other means of contact and making changes are:

- Log into: [www.dmdc.osd.mil/milconnect/](http://www.dmdc.osd.mil/milconnect/)
- Call 1-800-538-9522 (TTY/TDD: 1-866-363-2883)
- Fax updates to 1-800-336-4416 (Primary) or 1-502-335-9980 (Alternate)

Note: Addresses must be a physical address; P.O. boxes can't be used.

Mail updates to:

**Defense Manpower Data Center Support Office**  
**Attn: COA**  
**400 Gigling Road**  
**Seaside, CA 93955-6771**

**ALL VETERANS:** Another Office who needs to be updated is your local Veteran Service Office. In Jackson you can stop in at 402 White Street (Door #6) to call to 507.847.4774.

**Now days, with many people using their cell phones** exclusively, its near to impossible to find a number and address in a phone book. This creates a real problem when we have to contact you and the last number we have is no longer in service. Same for your e-mail. E-mail is a very important means of communication and if you haven't provided your VSO one yet please do so as soon as possible.

**Charles Dickens once said** that "*Electric communication will never be a substitute for the face of someone who with their soul encourages another person to be brave and true.*" This is true! I like to look and get looked straight in the eye when talking. Please make it a point to stop in to your local CVSO's office if for no other reason than to say hello! I'll bet a lot more will be said too... Communication is what makes the world go 'round!

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## **CVSO (Retired) JEFF JOHNSON UPDATE!**

**Since my predecessor, Jeff Johnson, retired** he's been really scarce around town. I hadn't seen Jeff for several months but ran into him the other day at the grocery store. For any of you wondering he is still alive and kicking but keeping busy on the home front. He said he doesn't get into town much straying not far from home. He's been busy fixing things up around the acreage and also helping his son with the harvest. It seemed as though he really took to the retired life however I don't see a rocking chair in the mix just yet!



# SEASONAL EMERGENCY WARNINGS – SAVING LIVES ON THE FLY!

In Minnesota, nearly any time of the year is a time for changes in weather conditions from T-storms to tornadoes, blizzards to extreme cold, excessive heat to flooded roads, etc. In any case you need to be aware of changing conditions as they happen to stay safe on the road or in your home.

**Being notified in time can save your life!** There are several ways to know what's happening with your weather and the first is to be vigilant! Other ways are to listen to the radio for watches and warnings, have a "Weather Radio" to get immediate warnings or you can sign up for the "civic ready" network. Having the network on your cellular phone will provide instantaneous information about weather and some important road condition information or closures.

**To sign up is so easy even I was able to do it!!!!!!** Merely complete the form below, mail it, FAX it, scan and e-mail it or just drop it off at the Jackson County Sheriff's Office or Emergency Management office at (402 White Street, Door #6). After that when you hear that all familiar "DING" on your cellular phone you may be receiving important weather information.

## Jackson County, MN Sheriff's Office & Emergency Management

405 4th Street  
Jackson, MN 56143  
507-847-4774

Sign up online at:  
[mn-jacksoncounty.civicready.com](http://mn-jacksoncounty.civicready.com)  
or fill out this form  
and return it to us.



Email Address:  
*(Optional-only needed to create an account online)*

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Name:

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Phone #:

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Address:  
**\*\*Must provide an address to receive weather alerts.**

Indicate which types of alerts that you would like to receive:

Alert Type	Text	Voice	Email
Emergency Alerts			
Severe Thunderstorm Warnings			
Tornado Warning			
Blizzard/Winter Storm Warning			
Burn Ban			
Community Events			
General City Information			
Road Closures			

MnDOT snowplow operators will do their part to make highways safe and motorists should remember to:

- **Stay alert** for snowplows, which turn or exit frequently and often with little warning. They also may travel over centerlines or partially in traffic to further improve road conditions.
- **Stay back** at least 10 car lengths behind the plow. Don't drive into a snow cloud.
- **Slow down** to a safe speed for current conditions.
- **Turn on your headlights and wear your seat belt.**
- **Turn off the cruise control.**
- **Be patient** and remember snowplows are working to improve road conditions for your trip.
- **Don't drive distracted.**
- **Check MnDOT's road conditions map at [www.511mn.org](http://www.511mn.org)**
- **For more tips on winter driving safety go to [mndot.gov/workzone/winter.html](http://mndot.gov/workzone/winter.html).**



**When I was a kid this was how I 'vaped'!**  
**I didn't need no cigarette-like gadget!**

**For more information on the dangers of Vaping or smoking cessation please contact Luke Ewald, Community Wellness Partners, at 507.847.6930**