



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 5

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

May 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

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

[www.co.jackson.mn.us/veterans](http://www.co.jackson.mn.us/veterans)  
You can find us on FaceBook too



## WHAT IS A "NEXUS"?

JEFFREY L. GAY, Jackson County VSO

As CVSO's we're asked many times how we put together a claim and how it's proven to be service connected. I hope that the following will better help you understand the process we have to follow.

Before we can submit a claim we must determine how the service connection is related to the current condition. We look at the "In-Service Event" (injury, accident or illness) and then consider how it may be connected to the "Current Medical Condition" (worsening condition, presumption as cause to the original event, how it may have been exacerbated). These two pieces together form what is referred to as a "NEXUS".



### In-Service Event...

What, when & where the event occurred



### What it is now...

Current medical diagnosis relevant to in-service event

To begin the process we rely on you, the Veteran, to supply us with information to build evidentiary proof of the event. This may be military medical records, sick slips, physician statements, buddy statements (eye witness accounts of the event) or anything else you can locate describing the incident or treatment. Sometimes it's merely a DD form 214 showing where you served and that may pin down a presumptive.

Next you need medical proof that the issue was caused by the military and has now worsened. This can be a physician statement, personal statement (from you, family member or friend/buddy), current medical documentation or any other proof of the condition and/or how it may pertain to a military incident.

There are referred to as "Presumptives". Presumptives are proven environments which may be causative to certain medical conditions affecting groups of people in a certain area(s) which have been approved by the government. One example is Agent Orange in Vietnam or the drinking water issue at Camp Lejeune.

All in all the CVSO cannot just "do a claim", it takes research by the Veteran to provide valid proof, some of which they may already have stored away. The CVSO may also assist in some ways to request official documents but the Veteran is the "subject matter expert" as they are the ones who were on the forefront in the beginning.

When wishing to file a claim or an increase to an existing claim be sure that you are prepared with the proof or at least enough information to begin building a case for the claim. Call your local CVSO for assistance and to find out what he or she will need to get this started...

Jackson County Veteran Service Office May 2019

## SPECIAL DAYS

### May is: National Military Appreciation Month

- 1 - Loyalty Day
- 1 - Silver Star Service Banner Day
- 2 - National Day of Prayer
- 8 - VE (Victory in Europe) Day
- 10 - Military Spouse Appreciation Day
- 12 - Mother's Day
- 13 - Children of Fallen Patriots Day
- 18 - Armed Forces Day
- 27 - Memorial Day (Decoration Day)



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!



**On the 12<sup>th</sup> of May we will be hosting Thomas Lyons of the MN Military Radio Hour!**

**Tom will provide information about his weekly show and upcoming events. The MN Military Radio Hour is on KKOJ radio at 3PM Sundays.**

It appears that there may be three new special days to celebrate for Veterans established in the bill (SF 2358) introduced by Senator Bruce Johnson. **POW/MIA Day** would take place each year on the third Friday in September. **Veterans Suicide Awareness Day** would take place the first Saturday in every October moving forward. Finally, **American Allies Day** would take place on June 30 each year.

**NOTE! Your Jackson County Veteran Services Office offers a dedicated workstation in our facility VA Telehealth appointments without a charge! Please call 507-847.4774 to schedule its use once you have an appointment with the VA CTH.**



## SEEING IS BELIEVING

Many in our population require eye-glasses in order to read, see close or see far, or to see at all! There may be alternative measures which we can take such as Lasik surgery or contact lenses but these are often times cost prohibitive, especially when Uncle Sam's footing the bill.

In lieu of that the military, in its infinite effort to provide a GI with everything they need, has chosen a "one style fits all" concept to eye glasses. They suit the purpose of correcting your vision so you are



safer and more effective on the battlefield. However, when it comes to style they've always, well, fell a bit short of current trend...



I guess I have always referred to them as "Buddy Holly" glasses, falling into the area of being trendy. The more popular jargon that was "lovingly" tagged to them was "the BCG", commonly referred to as **B**ir**C**h **C**ontrol **G**lasses".

**NSN 6540-01-147-4675**

**NOMENCLATURE FRAME, Spectacle, Cellulose Acetate**  
Male, Black, Paddle Temples  
50 Eye, 22 Bridge  
Ridgewater Optical Mfg. Co.



**BCGs, were issued to U.S. troops** for decades until 2012, when officials at the Department of Defense realized their iconic prescription eyewear of choice impeded the Servicemember's

ability to seek romantic company. Yes, fraternization was discouraged but we all know that the heart wants what the heart wants... There were many Servicemembers who would rather be blind than wear such atrocious spectacles.

**That seems to have carried over** into today. There are now many styles available to suit your style or personality as well as your prescription. This holds especially true with VA optometrics. However, vivid memories of the BCG's do not fade quickly.

**I have recently had a couple Veterans** come to me who have never taken advantage of VA Optometry expressly for that reason. After some careful negotiation they were convinced that the Government had seen the error in their ways and have chosen a more "fashion friendly" approach toward eyewear.

**I'm a bit fussy myself,** although I did like Buddy Holly, about my choices of attire to include eyeglasses. I have been "issued" my last couple sets of specs, cheaters, gogs, blinkers, shades, or whatever you want to call them, at the VA and have been very pleased! There are many selections of first rate frames!

**They also offer most** of what your civilian eye doctor offers in the way of scratch resistance lenses, progressive lineless bifocals, transition or polarized lenses and more.

**Stop in or call me** to help you set up a vision appointment with the Sioux Falls VAMC!

**Telephone Care: 866-687-7382 VA Nurse**  
**4 p.m.-8 a.m. (CT) Monday – Friday,**  
**24 Hours, Weekends and Federal Holidays.**  
**Primary Care Walk-In Clinic**  
**Monday – Friday 8am-4pm**

## A LITTLE MAY MILITARY HISTORY!



**On May 1, 1960** an American U-2 spy plane flying at 60,000 feet was shot down over Sverdlovsk in central Russia on the eve of a summit meeting between President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Soviet Russia's Premier Nikita Khrushchev.

The sensational incident caused a cancellation of the meeting and heightened existing Cold War tensions. The pilot, CIA agent Francis Gary Powers, survived the crash, and was tried, convicted and sentenced to 10 years in prison by a Russian court.

Two years later he was released to America in exchange for an imprisoned Soviet spy. On his return to America, Powers encountered a hostile public which apparently believed he should not have allowed himself to be captured alive. He died in a helicopter crash in 1977

**On May 7, 1945**, In a small red brick schoolhouse in Reims, Germany, General Alfred Jodl signed the unconditional surrender of all German fighting forces thus ending World War II in Europe.



Russian, American, British and French ranking officers observed the signing of the document which became effective at one minute past midnight on May 9.

Jodl was then ushered in to see Supreme Allied Commander, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, who curtly asked Jodl if he fully understood the document. Eisenhower then informed Jodl that he would be held personally responsible for any deviation from the terms of the surrender. Jodl was then ushered away.

**May 11, 1969** - During the Vietnam War, the Battle of "Hamburger Hill" began. While attempting to seize the Dong Ap Bia Mountain, U.S. troops repeatedly scaled the hill over a 10-day period and engaged in bloody hand-to-hand combat with the North Vietnamese.

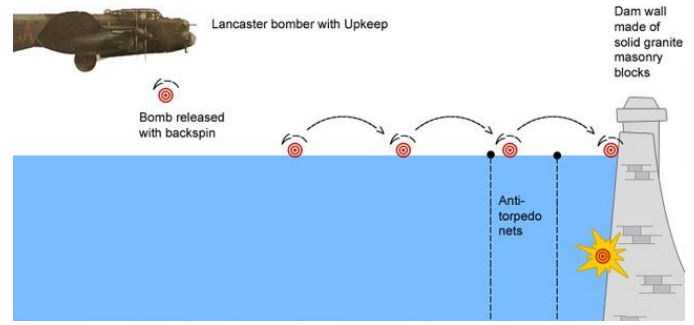
After finally securing the objective, American military staff decided to abandon the position, which the North Vietnamese retook shortly thereafter. The battle highlighted the futility of the overall American military strategy.



**May 19, 1943** - During World War II in Europe, Royal Air Force bombers successfully attacked dams in the German Ruhr Valley using innovative ball-

shaped bouncing bombs that skipped along the water and exploded against the dams. The bombs were referred to as "Dam Busters".

The dams had provided drinking water for 4 million persons and supplied 75% of the electrical power for industry in the area.



## BENEFITS, BENEFITS & MORE BENEFITS

Did I mention "Benefits"? Why I believe I did... As a Veteran there are certain benefits you enjoy and we all give thanks to the Veterans Administration for these. That's good because a great majority is provided by the VA but our individual States off State sponsored Veteran benefits too.

For a concise listing with an explanation of each you can go online to: [www.military.com/benefits/veteran-state-benefits/state-veterans-benefits-directory.html?ESRC=banner.nl](http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-state-benefits/state-veterans-benefits-directory.html?ESRC=banner.nl)

When the page opens there is a list of States, all are hypertext links. You can click on each State and a page will open explaining their State's benefits. Keep in mind though that to receive any of these you must be resident of that State.

Below is a list of the Minnesota State benefits. For more information visit the website above or call your local Veteran Service Officer.

- **Minnesota Veterans Homes Placement**
- **Minnesota Veteran Financial Benefits**
  - **Income Taxes**
  - **Disabled Veterans Property Tax Exemption**
  - **Short Term Financial Assistance**
- **Minnesota Veteran Employment Benefits**
  - **MN Veterans Preference Act**
  - **MN Veterans Preference Act (VPA)**
- **Minnesota Veteran Education Benefits**
  - **Minnesota GI Bill**
  - **Surviving Spouse & Dependent Education Benefit**
- **Minnesota Veteran Recreation Benefits**
  - **Minnesota State Park Vehicle Permits**
  - **Active Duty Hunting & Fishing Licenses**
  - **Firearms Safety Training**
- **Minnesota State Veterans Cemeteries**

If you compare with other states and find something they do that you wish you could have in Minnesota just contact your State Senator. It may be something he/she can bring up and vote on. There's another reason for attending the annual "Veterans Day on the Hill"!

**Keep abreast of your benefits!** Military benefits are ever-changing, keep up with everything from pay to health care by signing up for a free Military.com membership at [www.military.com/benefits/veteran-benefits](http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-benefits). This will send all the latest benefits straight to your inbox, as well as give you access to up-to-date pay charts and more.

**You can also contact** your local Veteran Service Officer to review your records. However, it all begins with you



**Are you considering owning your own business? Here's an opportunity for you to better plan for success!**

## **NEXT SCHEDULED B2B REBOOT IS AT MARSHALL, MN**

**Boots to Business Reboot** is an entrepreneurial education and training program offered by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). The course provides an overview of entrepreneurship and applicable business ownership fundamentals. Veterans of all eras, Active Duty Service members (including National Guard and Reserve), and spouses are eligible to participate.

**During Reboot**, participants are introduced to the skills, knowledge, and resources they need to launch a business, including steps for developing business concepts, how to develop a business plan, and information on SBA resources available to help. The program is facilitated by subject matter experts from the SBA and their extensive network of skilled business advisors.

**Participants that complete** an in-person B2B Reboot course can elect to further their study through one of many B2B online courses, offered at no cost to Service members, Veterans and military spouses. If you wish to join the B2B community please go online to visit at <https://sbavets.force.com>. Sign up for one of the online B2B follow-on courses too.

**B2BR is scheduled for Thursday May 16th** from 8AM – 4PM and is held at:

**Merit Center  
1001 W. Erie Rd. – Marshall, MN 56143**

For more information contact **Don Jackson** at 612.370.2335 or [don.jackson@sba.gov](mailto:don.jackson@sba.gov) or to register for the event go to <https://sbavets.force.com>

**Telephone Care: 866-687-7382 Sioux Falls VA Nurse**  
4 pm-8 am (CT) Monday – Friday, and 24 Hours,  
Weekends and Federal Holidays. **(Primary Care Walk-In Clinic Monday – Friday 8am-4pm)**

**BREAKING NEWS**

**STRAIGHT  
TALK TO YOU!**

## **May - Mental Health Awareness Month**

**"Coaching Into Care"** does not make diagnoses or treat conditions, but we can help you learn more about what you know has been diagnosed, how to recognize the signs that treatment can address, and how you can support the Veteran's recovery. When they don't want to get help, it can be frustrating. Remember there's no one way or right words, everyone's situation is different, but together we'll help you find a path forward.

**To read more** about common mental health conditions and resources available, please visit the VA's Quality of Care Mental Health Awareness Month page. And click the image to use your voice to make a difference during Mental Health Awareness Month.

**To learn how mental health** conditions may be affecting your Veteran and how to talk with them about seeking help, call Coaching Into Care at **(888) 823-7458** Monday through Friday 8am to 8pm Eastern Time or find us on the web

**"Coaching Into Care"** is a proud supporter of the Annual Community Mental Health Summits. Each year there are 145-150 events nation-wide hosted by each VA Medical Center. There have been roughly 610 events over the past 6 years and over 64,000 people have attended at least one event during that time. The Summits bring together the community and VA Medical Center staff. This day is dedicated to discussing mental health issues and to finding solutions to issues that Veterans and families experience. In addition, the goals of these events are to increase awareness of resources and to increase the partnership between Veterans, families, community, and VA.

**Since inception, "Coaching Into Care"** has provided information and resources for Summit Coordinators to disseminate to community providers, Veterans, and their families. We were able to join in person to several events, including those hosted by the Philadelphia VAMC. We offer a special thank you to Philadelphia Site Coordinator, Lori Breen, for her hospitality. We continue to wish great success as the Summits head into their 7<sup>th</sup> year. If you would like more information about Community Mental Health Summits or how to get involved, please email [Cindy.Swinkels@va.gov](mailto:Cindy.Swinkels@va.gov).

## **#BeThere for Former Guard and Reserve Members**

**According to VA's most recent** analysis of Veteran suicide, there were 7,298 suicide deaths among current

**Jackson County Veteran Service Office May 2019**

and former service members in 2016. Former Guard and Reserve members who were never federally activated accounted for 902 suicides, or about 10 percent of the total number of suicides among current and former service members. To help support this population, VA has developed a Toolkit specifically for former Guard and Reserve members who were never federally activated, as well as their families and health care providers.



**Veterans who are in crisis or having thoughts of suicide, and anyone who knows a Veteran in crisis, can contact the Veterans**

**Crisis Line for free, confidential support and crisis intervention 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, text to 838255, or chat online to <https://VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat>**

**If you need help** talking to a Guardsman or Reservist about mental health treatment, call **Coaching Into Care** at (888) 823-7458 Monday through Friday 8am-8pm Eastern.

## **Military Mental Health Conference**

**This 2-day event** is presented by the Military Mental Health Coalition at Camp Ripley: The MMHC is a military/civilian community partnership aiming to unite community mental health providers with existing services and resources to provide quality and timely care for our service-members, veterans and their families.

**Event attendees can include** but are not limited to: Active or retired Veterans and family members, Clinicians, Social Workers, Military Service Professionals.

### **Event Details**

- **The 2-day event has inexpensive lodging options available at Camp Ripley.**
- **Event attendees can include but are not limited to: Active or retired Veterans and family members, Clinicians, Social Workers, Military Service Professionals.**
- **This conference has been approved to provide continuing education credits by the MN Board of Social Work. Applications have been submitted to the MN Board of Marriage and Family Therapy and MN Board of Behavioral Health and Therapy for LPC, LPCC and LADC. In addition, this conference has been designed to meet the Minnesota Board of Nursing continuing education requirements. However, the nurse is responsible for determining whether this activity meets the requirements for acceptable continuing education. A certificate of attendance will be awarded at the end of the program to those who complete the program evaluation.**

### **Event Keynote Speakers**

- **Stacy L. Pearsall got her start as an Air Force photographer at the age of 17. During her time in**

**service, she traveled to over 41 countries and attended the Military Photojournalism Program at S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University. During the three combat tours, she earned the Bronze Star Medal and Air Force Commendation with Valor for combat actions in Iraq. Though combat disabled and retired from military service, Pearsall continues to work as an independent photographer and is an author, educator, military consultant, public speaker and founder of the Veterans Portrait Project.**

- **Chris Buckley is a speaker, teacher and coach who works with men and women to lose weight, improve their relationships and transform their financial situations using a coaching method that changes their habits and underlying beliefs. While going through his own personal struggle with divorce, Chris learned first-hand that overcoming habits and changing beliefs can be difficult and feel insurmountable when trying to do it alone. Chris developed a passion for helping people transform their lives after dealing with depression, nearly losing everything, and picking up the pieces after the dust settled. He now helps individuals break free from the situations that seemed impossible to change. His approach helps them to take action and get results so they can experience the life changes they desire.**

**2019 MILITARY MENTAL HEALTH CONFERENCE**

**MAY 2-3, 2019**

**CAMP RIPLEY TRAINING CENTER  
LITTLE FALLS, MN 56345**

**Keynote Speakers**

**Stacy L. Pearsall** got her start as an Air Force photographer at the age of 17. During her time in service, she traveled to over 41 countries, and attended the Military Photojournalism Program at S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University. During three combat tours, she earned the Bronze Star Medal and Air Force Commendation with Valor for combat actions in Iraq. Though combat disabled and retired from military service, Pearsall continues to work as an independent photographer, and is an author, educator, military consultant, public speaker and founder of the Veterans Portrait Project.

**Chris Buckley** is a life coach who works with people to lose weight and improve relationships by changing their habits and beliefs. Chris started his military career as an Army Medic in the National Guard and then transferred to the Army Reserves and became a Construction Engineer. He graduated from Southeast Tech in 1998 and worked at Wheeler Tank and Graco before being mobilized in 2004 to train Military Personnel for deployments around the world. Chris worked his way up through the ranks working as a Medic, Observer, Controller & Trainer, Operations NCO, Pre-Deployment Trainer, Overseas Counter IED Instructor, First Sergeant, Liaison NCO and was selected for promotion to Sergeant Major in 2011.

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[FACEBOOK.COM/MILITARYMENTALHEALTHCOALITION](https://www.facebook.com/militarymentalhealthcoalition)  
[WWW.MILITARYMENTALHEALTHCOALITION.COM](http://WWW.MILITARYMENTALHEALTHCOALITION.COM)

***“Your mental health is a priority. Your happiness is an essential. Your self-care is a necessity.”***

~ Unknown

**Jackson County Veteran Service Office May 2019**

## VA's improvements to Veteran community care under MISSION Act on track for June 6 implementation

As the one-year anniversary of President Trump's signing of the VA Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks (MISSION) Act of 2018 approaches on June 6, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is making significant strides in implementing major improvements to community care for Veterans.

"The Veteran is at the center of everything we do," VA Secretary Robert Wilkie said. "Through the MISSION Act, Veterans will have more choices than ever in getting timely, high-quality care. Most important, Veterans will be able to decide what is important and best for them."

The MISSION Act will strengthen VA's health care system by improving both aspects of care delivery and empowering Veterans to find the balance in the system that is right for them,

A key aspect of the MISSION Act is the consolidation of VA's community care programs, which will make community care work better for Veterans and their families, providers and VA employees. When this transition is complete, the following will occur:

- Veterans will have more options for community care.
- Eligibility criteria for community care will be expanded, including new access standards.
- Scheduling appointments will be easier, and care coordination between VA and community providers will be better.
- Eligible Veterans will have access to a network of walk-in and urgent care facilities for minor injuries and illnesses.

"Transitioning to the new eligibility criteria for community care should be seamless for Veterans," Wilkie said. "Veterans will continue to talk to their care team or scheduler as they have been doing to get the care they need."

VA also has been working closely with community providers to ensure Veterans have a positive experience when receiving community care. For example, VA has developed education and training materials to help community providers understand some of the unique challenges Veterans can face.

Going forward, community care will be easier to use, and Veterans will remain at the center of their VA health care decisions.

In addition to information VA has made available digitally, Veterans enrolled in VA health care can expect to receive a letter in the mail providing details on where to go for more information.

For more information about community care under the MISSION Act, visit

[www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/58621/new-eligibility-criteria-a-major-improvement-over-existing-rules/](http://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/58621/new-eligibility-criteria-a-major-improvement-over-existing-rules/)

## VA CogSMART PROGRAM

Memory, problem-solving skills and attention to detail can all play a major role in a Veteran's everyday life. They are rooted in one thing: cognitive ability.

Improving the ability to think more clearly can affect everything from completing simple tasks more efficiently



to building positive relationships or finishing that tough grad school course. CogSMART — a program developed in part by VA researchers — is helping Veterans improve their cognitive functioning through learning new strategies to work around cognitive difficulties.

The CogSMART intervention has been shown to improve cognitive performance and quality of life in Veterans and civilians alike. Studies reveal improvements in attention, memory and problem-solving, which can lead to improvements in everyday functioning at home, work and school and in relationships as well. CogSMART strategies have been used to treat patients with traumatic brain injury (TBI) and various mental health conditions.

### Key focus areas

CogSMART focuses on a few areas of cognitive ability that can be improved by taking simple actions over time. Goals of the CogSMART intervention include helping patients:

**Improve attention:** Becoming aware of details in conversation to improve attention span over time.

- **Plan ahead:** Using daily calendars and to-do lists to keep a schedule on track and avoid missing important deadlines.
- **Improve learning and memory:** Applying multiple strategies to increase learning, such as visualizing information to be learned, and to make memories "stick."
- **Effectively solve problems:** Defining problems and brainstorming potential solutions.

CogSMART strategies and habits help Veterans with tasks like planning and assigning due dates, using daily calendars, prioritizing tasks, using "can't



miss reminders" to cue tasks, writing things down and creating a home for frequently misplaced items like keys, wallets and cellphones. These skills are

important to all Veterans — especially students, whose activities often require focusing and time management. In addition, building these skills not only improves cognitive ability but also reduces the potential for cognitive slip-ups that increase stress.



### Positive feedback from Veterans

**Time and time again**, Veterans say in evaluations that they would recommend CogSMART to other Veterans with cognitive difficulties like their own. They report that CogSMART has practical applications in their lives, including:

- Reducing stress in daily life
- Providing tools for managing big and small tasks
- Establishing a daily routine
- Increasing organization

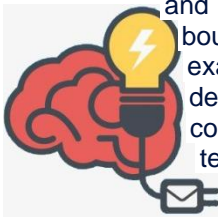
### CogSMART and Veteran mental health

**Veterans may experience challenges** related to cognitive ability, especially when managing the effects of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), TBI or other conditions that may have cognitive symptoms. The good news: Research shows that the CogSMART program can be effective regardless of the cause of a Veteran's particular cognitive challenges.

**CogSMART strategies have been** combined with cognitive processing therapy (CPT) to more efficiently treat PTSD and cognitive symptoms; in research trials it is referred to as SMART-CPT. One study compared the effectiveness of SMART-CPT to standard CPT: One hundred Veterans with cognitive complaints, PTSD and history of mild-to-moderate TBI received either CPT or SMART-CPT for 12 weeks. The results revealed that both groups' PTSD symptoms improved, but compared with traditional CPT, SMART-CPT produced greater improvement in participants' attention, memory recall, forward-thinking memory and problem-solving skills.

### The future of CogSMART

**The expanding capabilities of artificial intelligence** and related technologies continue to push the boundaries of mental health care. For example, one VA research team is developing a robot with potential uses for cognitive therapy. Through exciting technologies like this, CogSMART and related training programs will reach even more Veterans within the VA health care system and beyond.



**The CogSMART treatment manual** is available at [www.cogsmart.com](http://www.cogsmart.com) and as a web-based app that can be used in a self-guided manner or in conjunction with a clinician. For an introduction to the program, visit the CogSMART YouTube channel.

**BREAKING NEWS**

**STRAIGHT TALK TO YOU!**

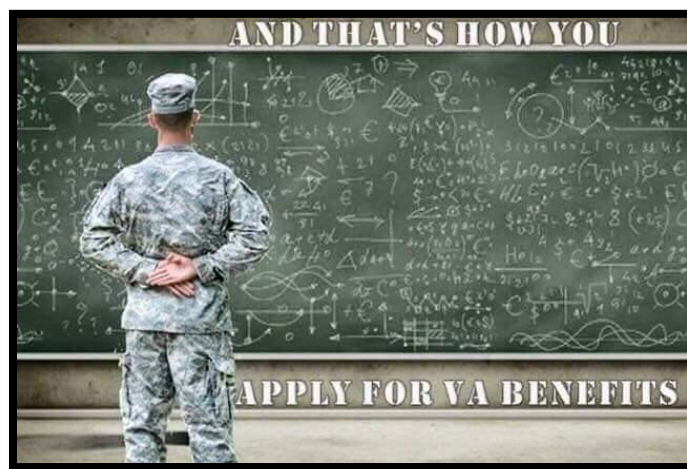
**As many of you are aware**, on January 29, 2019 the US Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit ruled in favor of Procopio stating that those who served off the coast of Vietnam (*within 12 nautical miles*) are entitled to benefits

for presumptive conditions for those who served in Vietnam.

**Please see Ryan's talking points below** which will assist you in answering veterans' questions on the matter.

- **Very positive that Secretary Wilkie** said he's not recommending that Department of Justice challenge Procopio
- **Seems very likely that VA will** be forced to right the wrong of denying earned benefits to Blue Water Navy veterans
- **However, this isn't decided yet.** Department of Justice has the final say on whether or not to challenge.
- **The final day to challenge** the Procopio ruling is April 29. We'll know for sure by then.
- **VFW is already in discussions with VA** on how they will need to address Blue Water Navy claims, with the goal of delivering benefits to veterans as soon as possible.
- **The Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act (HR 299)** is still necessary because it addresses other questions on Agent Orange exposure, like the definitions of "territorial waters" and expansions of eligibility for certain Thailand and Korea veterans.

Link to VFW official statement [www.vfw.org/media-and-events/latest-releases/archives/2019/3/va-recommends-dropping-blue-water-navy-legal-battle](http://www.vfw.org/media-and-events/latest-releases/archives/2019/3/va-recommends-dropping-blue-water-navy-legal-battle)



## **MEMORIAL DAY 2019**

Jeffrey L Gay

**We all know Memorial Day** as the "Gateway to Summer"! Indeed it is...



**It is also a time to celebrate** the lives of those who have passed before us, especially those who have donned the uniform in service of our great nation's military.

**In the beginning this was know as** "Decoration Day".

**Jackson County Veteran Service Office May 2019**

This was a day when all of the soldiers graves were decorated in reverence. Essentially it is explained as this excerpt quoted from "Wikipedia.com":

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memorial\\_Day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memorial_Day)

"On May 1, 1865, in Charleston, South Carolina, recently freed African-Americans held a parade of 10,000 people to honor 257 dead Union Soldiers, whose remains they had reburied from a mass grave in a Confederate prison camp. Historian David W. Blight cites contemporary news reports of this incident in the Charleston Daily Courier and the New-York Tribune. Although Blight claimed that "African Americans invented Memorial Day in Charleston, South Carolina", in 2012, Blight stated that he "has no evidence" that the event in Charleston inspired the establishment of Memorial Day across the country. Accordingly, investigators for Time Magazine, LiveScience, RealClearLife and Snopes have called this conclusion into question.

In 1868, copying the Southern annual observance of the previous three years, General John A. Logan of the Grand Army of the Republic, an organization of Union veterans founded in Decatur, Illinois, established Decoration Day as a time for the nation to decorate the graves of the Union war dead with flowers. By the 20th century, various Union and Confederate memorial traditions, celebrated on different days, merged, and Memorial Day eventually extended to honor all Americans who died while in the military service.

On May 26, 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson designated an "official" birthplace of the holiday by signing the presidential proclamation naming Waterloo, New York, as the holder of the title. This action followed House Concurrent Resolution 587, in which the 89th Congress had officially recognized that the patriotic tradition of observing Memorial Day had begun one hundred years prior in Waterloo, New York. The village credits druggist Henry C. Welles and county clerk John B. Murray as the founders of the holiday. Scholars have determined that the Waterloo account is a myth.

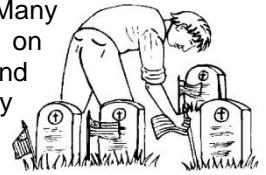
Starting in 1868, the ceremonies and Memorial Day address at Gettysburg National Park became nationally known. In July 1913, veterans of the United States and Confederate armies gathered in Gettysburg to commemorate the fifty-year anniversary of the Civil War's bloodiest and most famous battle.

Since the cemetery dedication at Gettysburg occurred on November 19, that day (or the closest weekend) has been designated as their own local memorial day that is referred to as Remembrance Day.

The preferred name for the holiday gradually changed from "Decoration Day" to "Memorial Day", which was first used in 1882. Memorial Day did not become the more common name until after World War II, and was not declared the official name by Federal law until 1967.<sup>[67]</sup> On June 28, 1968, Congress passed the Uniform Monday Holiday Act, which moved four holidays, including Memorial Day, from their traditional

dates to a specified Monday in order to create a convenient three-day weekend. The change moved Memorial Day from its traditional May 30 date to the last Monday in May. The law took effect at the federal level in 1971. After some initial confusion and unwillingness to comply, all 50 states adopted Congress' change of date within a few years."

It is still a day where many people visit cemeteries and memorials on Memorial Day, particularly to honor those who died in military service. Many volunteers place an American flag on each grave in national cemeteries and at local cemeteries this is generally done by local Service Organizations.



### Celebratory memorial programs

are hosted in many communities with pomp and ceremony. I urge you to take the time and attend one or more in your area. Be sure your kids or grandkids are along as it's quite educational too in-so-much-as the display of respect and Americanism.



If you go to the MDVA link there is a listing of statewide Memorial Day events:

<https://mn.gov/mdva/news/events/#/list/appld/2/filterType/Category/filterValue/Memorial%20Day%20Events/page/1/sort//order/>

Then head to the grill with the charcoal aglow and listen to the burgers and brats as they sizzle and cook! Have a memorable, fun and safe Memorial Day holiday weekend!



## PREPARING FOR OUR "END OF LIFE" JOURNEY

As we celebrate the lives of those who have answered the heavenly call we must be cognizant and realistic that someday that call will come to us and we will answer it whether we believe we are ready or not.



Your County Veteran Service Officer has a



guide which is in a no-nonsense format helping you and, more importantly, your family plan for what needs to be accomplished and know the location of important documents for that inevitable day.

The program is entitled "Planning Your Legacy", a VA Survivor's and Burial Benefits Kit. It's written in a workbook format and may be used not only for the



Veteran but for any family member as well. This booklet is free for the taking.

**As a family member** I have experienced the finality of the lives of both my parents. Dad had never wanted to even talk about the end of days so, ergo, there was nothing planned or prepared for to include location of finds, important papers, etc. Mom was much better prepared and made the final “chores” of love for the next of kin easier and less painful. Just having the location of important documents makes a world of difference!

*“I used to be scared of death until I found out it’s now called ‘end of life.’ Phew, that was close!”*

— Stewart Stafford

**Some of the topics** of this workbook include the following, but is not limited to that:

- **How to apply for benefits**
  - Which benefits you may apply for
- **Record of Personal Affairs**
  - Marriage/Birth information
- **Documents**
  - Insurance
  - Banking (Savings/Loans/Trusts)
  - Annuities
  - Social Security
  - VA and Military Records (DD form 214)
  - Deeds/Rental Agreements
- **Personal Wishes/Instructions**
  - Funeral/Burial Arrangements
  - Church/Clergy
  - Pall Bearers
  - Music, verse, burial vs. cremation, etc.
  - Personal message
  - Biography or Obituary
- **Additional Information, do you have:**
  - “Do Not Resuscitate” Order?
  - “Living Will or Health Directive”?

**It also includes sample forms** and checklists for you to use as a guide so you have the needed information upon visiting your CVSO to expedite the paperwork. As well as how/where to get the Casket Flag, how to order the memorial marker (*It also lists what types are available*).

**The legacy guide can really help you** locate and organize important documents which may be useful in other aspects of your life’s business. It also gives you peace of mind knowing that doing this is helping to take care of your loved ones.

**Again, I cannot express enough** the fact that this is useful for everybody in your family, regardless of age, especially in the event of a premature death by accident or illness.

*“By acknowledging my impermanence, I can consider if there is anything I can do now to help my loved ones who will be left behind cope with losing me and to facilitate healing.”*

— Lisa J. Shultz



**Straight from the VA!**  
[www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/](http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/)  
Go here to view latest Press Releases from the VA!

## **VA and Microsoft partner to enhance care, rehabilitation and recreation for Veterans with limited mobility**

**Xbox Adaptive Controllers will be distributed across facilities within nation’s largest integrated health care system**

**WASHINGTON** — Today, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Microsoft Corp. announced a new collaboration to enhance opportunities for education, recreation and therapy for Veterans with mobility limitations by introducing the Xbox Adaptive Controller — a video game controller designed for people with limited mobility — in select VA rehabilitation centers around the country.

**The partnership, which was formalized** April 18, will provide controllers and services to Veterans as part of therapeutic and rehabilitative activities aimed at challenging muscle activation and hand-eye coordination, and greater participation in social and recreational activities.

**“This partnership is another step toward** achieving VA’s strategic goals of providing excellent customer experiences and business transformation,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “VA remains committed to offering solutions for Veterans’ daily life challenges.”

**Together, VA and Microsoft** identified an opportunity to introduce or reintroduce gaming to Veterans with spinal cord injuries, amputations and neurological or other injuries at 22 VA medical centers across the United States. Microsoft is donating its Xbox Adaptive Controller, game consoles, games and other adaptive gaming equipment as part of the collaboration.



collaboration



**Designated VA staff will engage** with Veterans using the equipment and share feedback with Microsoft on therapeutic utility and the Veteran experience.

**“We owe so much to the service** and sacrifice of our Veterans, and as a company, we are committed to supporting them,” said Satya Nadella, CEO of Microsoft. “Our Xbox Adaptive Controller was designed to make gaming more accessible to millions of people worldwide, and we’re partnering with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to bring the device to Veterans with limited mobility, connecting them to the games they love and the people they want to play with.”

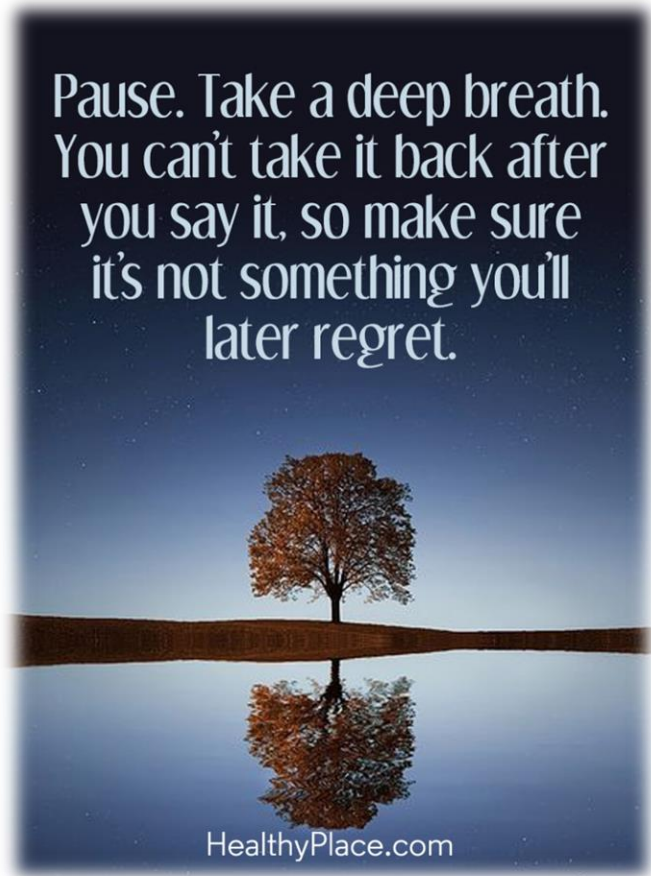
**Microsoft and VA have a long-standing** strategic partnership, working together for more than 20 years to

provide the best possible care and service to Veterans. Gaming is a popular pastime of military personnel, and access to the Xbox Adaptive Controller in VA rehabilitation centers provides the opportunity for Veterans to experience gaming's various benefits, including staying connected with friends and family across the world, building esprit de corps through competitive or cooperative gameplay and providing stress relief.

**Microsoft's initial contributions** will be allocated across 22 VA facilities. In addition, the controllers and other equipment will be available for Veterans to use at events hosted by VA's Office of National Veterans Sports Programs and Special Events, such as the National Veterans Wheelchair Games.

**The Minneapolis VA HCS** is one of the 16 centers who have confirmed participation to date, with at least six additional centers to come:

For more information on partnering with VA, visit: [www.va.gov/HEALTHPARTNERSHIPS/index.asp](http://www.va.gov/HEALTHPARTNERSHIPS/index.asp)



## **Support Our Troops License Plate Fund Awards Grants**

**SAINT PAUL, Minn.** – The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) announced today the recipients of the competitive (2018 Cycle II) **Support Our Troops (SOT)** license plate fund grant program.

- *Fishing for Life, Inc.:* \$20,000

- *Middle River Veterans Outdoors, Inc.:* \$20,000
- *Honor Flight Twin Cities:* \$50,000
- *23rd Veteran:* \$89,920
- *Region Five Development Commission:* \$92,400

**The MDVA SOT grant program** offers a competitive grant process which allows organizations to apply for funding. These grants, ranging from \$1,000 to \$100,000, are focused on supporting and improving the lives of Veterans and their families.

*“Congratulations to our diverse group of grant recipients for their commitment to serving Minnesota Veterans in many different ways,”* said Commissioner Larry Herke, Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs. *“I also thank those Minnesotans who purchase SOT license plates. Without support from the thousands who are ‘driving home their support’ every day, these grants would not be possible.”*

### **Fishing for Life, Inc.**

**Fishing for Life will use** this grant to expand their Next Gen Program which will serve 10 youth of Minnesota Veterans at no charge by matching them with a Fishing for Life volunteer guide.

### **Middle River Veterans Outdoors, Inc.**

**Middle River Veterans Outdoors, Inc.** will use this grant to provide differently-abled Veterans and family members outdoor fishing and hunting experiences with the aid of a tracked wheelchair.

### **Honor Flight Twin Cities**

**Honor Flight Twin Cities will cover the cost** of airfare for 75 Minnesota WWII and Korean Veterans to visit the memorials dedicated to their service in Washington, DC.

### **23rd Veteran**

**23rd Veteran will use this grant for** their 23V Recon Project which will provide Veterans in the seven-county Metro area and greater Minnesota a 14-week transition course designed to retrain Veterans' brains to associate negative triggers with positive events.

### **Region Five Development Commission**

**Region Five Development Commission** will use this grant for the VetCSA Program (Community Supported Agriculture), locally grown healthy twice-monthly food shares as well as recipes, cooking demos and nutrition education. This no-cost program will be provided to 50 food-deprived Veterans and their families living in the five-county area which includes Cass, Crow Wing, Morrison, Todd and Wadena Counties.

### **About the SOT License Plate Program**

**Deployments and military service** can put a strain on families, finances and health. Purchasing a Support our Troops License plate helps Minnesota military, Veterans and families in the following ways:

- Grants through Support Our Troops program
- Benefits the CORE program, which provides family counseling, with specialty services available for children; financial counseling, debt management and mental health counseling
- Emergency financial assistance
- Helping homeless Veterans secure shelter and access to benefits
- Outreach to diverse communities across Minnesota, helping provide Veterans with access to earned benefits
- Community seminars on health conditions associated with military service

To purchase SOT plates, visit your local DMV office. SOT plates are also available from auto dealerships. Be sure to ask about SOT plates when you purchase your next new or used vehicle.



To receive a notice when the next grant cycle opens, or to learn more about how to apply for an SOT grant, visit <https://mn.gov/mdva/resources/federalresources/grants/>

## The march to Memorial Day: VA & Carry the Load team up to honor the fallen

Memorial Day honors Americans who died while defending the nation and its values. It's a day that allows us to remember our fallen heroes who put service before self. That is why VA's National Cemetery Admin. is partnering with Carry The Load this year. Together, the goal is to honor Veterans and restore the true meaning of Memorial Day.

"Carry The Load", an organization dedicated to remembering the fallen, established three marching routes that thousands of participants will take as they relay toward Dallas, Texas, from April 25 through May 22. The route will cover over 11,000 miles, and will make stops at 26 VA National



Cemeteries in 17 states. In conjunction with the arrival of Carry the Load and its relay teams, each national cemetery along the route will unveil a commemorative "Tribute to the Fallen" plaque honoring Veterans and Gold Star families.

**Fort Snelling National Cemetery – Minneapolis, MN – May 2, 2019 @ 5 p.m. CST**

VA will share images, videos, and stories from the national relay and NCA dedication ceremonies along the way, and post them here. Each page on this post will serve as a place to document and organize the day's events.

VA will also dedicate a "Veteran of the Day" feature to the memory of a fallen Veteran who is interred at a national cemetery from April 25 to May 22. These features will be published on our Facebook and Instagram accounts.

You can also see our shared social media content by following these hashtags: [#CarryTheLoad](#), [#NoVeteranEverDies](#), [#USMAReeves](#)

## TAKIN' THE SHOW ON THE ROAD!



It has begun! Your Jackson County Veteran Service Office has taken his "office show on the road!"

Jackson County is not a large county in the scheme of things but sometimes there are some personal factors to cause it to

be an impediment to travel.



Many of our Veterans have to travel from in and around our great county to get to our office. In view of this and the fact that our name does indicate the word "service" in it, Veteran Service Officer, I've decided that it may be easier to provide a greater service by coming to you.



With the technology we enjoy these days a static office is no longer the only option to provide the assistance you ask for.

What can we do remotely? Pretty much everything we can do in the office! I bring along my laptop computer, printer/copier/scanner, cellular phone, cables-cords-&-stuff all set up to take advantage of the Internet. We're able to "VPN" to the office network so I am able to access the bulk of my software.

The only real drawback is that I can't bring your paper files with me. I'd have to lug around four 5-drawer filing cabinets and I'm getting too old for that... However, I have an app for that!

OK, maybe it's not an app like on your phone but we can handle this sort of shortfall by calling my office and making an appointment for when I'm there. If you do that, VOILLA!, I can bring those files along that I need for the scheduled appointments.

Even better, in the near future we will be digitizing all of our records and then I WILL have access remotely for your files. What a wonderful world we live in...

OK, I suppose you would like to know where and when this is to occur! I hosted my first remote visit on May 1<sup>st</sup> at the Lakefield library. I had scheduled one appointment but ended up with four who showed. I was busy enough at that time that I didn't



Jackson County Veteran Service Office May 2019

have time to even log on to the Internet and fire up the VPN. The first person was anxiously awaiting my arrival... I would call that a good omen!

If you aren't familiar with the acronym VPN it stands for "Virtual Private Network". It adds a level or more of security to the Internet so what work I do on it is not available to anyone trying to hack it.

Thus far I have reserved the **first Monday of the month** through September. I will be **OPEN FOR BUSINESS** in **Lakefield** at the library from **1PM through 4PM**.

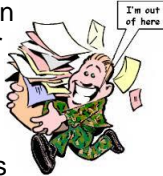


Keep an eye to the newspaper, this may be expanded to include Heron Lake once monthly as well.

When you do come in to see me I ask that you bring, minimally, your military discharge form (DD form 214) and any other paperwork you feel might be pertinent to filing a claim. If you make an appointment I should be able to tell over the phone you what you should bring for your appointment. If you are a walk-in just bring the discharge.



If you don't recall what your DD form 214 is or where you put it just remember that it was among all those forms you received when you were discharged. It was the one your out-processing NCO told you to file with your county recorder when you got home. If you're like the rest of us that little piece of advice was either forgotten or regarded as just a suggestion.



If there are any changes to the date/time It should be on our website at [www.co.jackson.mn.us](http://www.co.jackson.mn.us) or posted on the library door. Inclement weather will be treated case by case. You can call the office at 507.847.4774.

## BIKING JUST FOR THE HEALTH OF IT...

It's summer again and you want to shed some of that winter growth around your mid-section? A great way to do that is to go bicycling...



I'm sure you've heard the adage "...it's like riding a bike, you never forget." I'm sure that as true as that is there will be some of us (me) who have gotten a little rusty and it wouldn't hurt to get the basics of it again.

Jackson is hosting a "Bike Basics for All" program. This is a program for **ALL AGES** and skill sets. Basic bicycling, night riding, winter riding, trail riding, commuting, and more!

The program will include bike safety, being safe and comfortable on the road and trail, basic bicycle maintenance, bicycle courtesy, etc.



For more information please call or e-mail Luke Ewald or Jackson County Community Education at (cellular) 612.597.0433 or (office) 507.847.6627 or email to [lukeewald89@gmail.com](mailto:lukeewald89@gmail.com)

A great way to also experience the new Jackson County Bike Trail system at Belmont County Park!

### 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

NATIONAL PROBLEM GAMBLING HELPLINE

1-800-522-4700



Veterans Crisis Line  
1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1

OR TEXT TO "838255"

Veterans Linkage Line™

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

HOW COPY? OVER...

GOOD COPY! OUT!

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)

See y'all next month!



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