



The Guardian

The Newsletter of the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services

www.nmdvs.org

1-(866) 433-8387 toll-free

September, 2017

DVS Management Meets Staff of the State Veterans; Have Lunch w/Residents



Division managers from the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services joined Secretary Jack Fox and Deputy Secretary Alan Martinez for a briefing of staff members of the State Veterans Home at the Truth or Consequences facility on July 27.

The informal visit allowed DVS upper management to introduce themselves and provide an outline of their divisions to the staff of the state's only long-term residential care facility for veterans—which on July 1 transferred from being managed under the state Department of Health to management by DVS.

DVS Secretary Jack Fox (standing, at left) welcomes staff members of the State Veterans Home at a July 27 briefing at the Truth or Consequences facility.

"Welcome to the DVS family," said DVS Secretary Fox in his introductory remarks. "You, the staff here at the state veterans home, have an excellent reputation for caring for the residents. So we are thrilled and honored

that you are joining us to help fulfill our agency's mission—our only mission--of caring for all veterans in New Mexico."

Secretary Fox reassured the home's staff members that nothing has changed as far as their status as state employees is concerned—that they are simply transferring to another state agency, and that all benefits they've accumulated or are entitled to as state employees will remain the same.

The home will be operated under the DVS Health Care Coordination Division. Director Mitchell Lawrence serves as the liaison between DVS Secretary Fox and Veterans Home Administrator Collen Rundell and has pledged his full support to help the staff.

"I want to echo Secretary Fox by saying that we are all family—the DVS family," said Mr. Lawrence. "My job will be to do all I can to help you do your jobs. I'm looking forward to this new chapter of the state veterans home."

Before the briefing, the DVS managers took a tour of the facility—including the new 59-bed Alzheimer's wing, which is nearing completion—and then had lunch with residents in the cafeteria.

A Transition Ceremony and grand opening of the Alzheimer's wing will take place on November 11—Veterans Day.



DVS Secretary Jack Fox (in orange shirt) sits down to have lunch with U.S. Army veteran Edward Harn (in white sweater).



DVS Health Care Coordination Division Director Mitchell Lawrence (at right, in light-blue shirt) chats with U.S. Coast Guard veteran Thomas Sawyer (left) and U.S. Army veteran Garland Hawkins (center)..



DVS Veterans Business Outreach Center Director Rich Coffel (at left) has lunch with U.S. Air Force veteran Ron Fleming.



DVS Health Care Coordination Division Deputy Director John Griego (right) chats with U.S. Army veteran Joseph Porcarelli.

Statewide Transportation Agencies Gather for 2nd Annual Veterans Transportation

Representatives from public and private transportation agencies from throughout the state gathered in Albuquerque on August 22 for the Second Annual Veterans Transportation Summit hosted by the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS).

(right photo)

The summit, held at the Central New Mexico Workforce Training Center, focused on improving transportation options for veterans to appointments at the Raymond G. Murphy VA Medical Center in Albuquerque, at local VA Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC's) —and also for general transportation needs around a veteran's community.



Difficulty in getting to their medical appointments--and simply around town—continues to be a problem for many veterans in the state, said Secretary Fox in his welcome remarks at the summit.

“It doesn’t matter how great your VA health care system is if a veteran can’t get there,” said Secretary Fox. “That young man or woman who has served our country...that older man or woman who in earlier times served and protected us...they may need help now—and they all deserve our help to help them get treatment, or to get around town.”

Transportation agency representatives talked about the reduced-fare or free services available for veterans—and the need for the agencies to increase the effort to get this out to veterans throughout the state.

New Mexico VA Health Care System Veterans Transportation Services Dispatcher Alan Eggleston provided details about five transportation vans recently acquired by the Raymond G. Murphy VA Medical Center. The vans, he said, are specially equipped to transport wheelchair-bound veterans—including the large motorized units.

“This is a segment of the veteran population which, until these vans came online, were especially limited as far as their transportation options to the hospital,” he said. “We now have five...and plans are to acquire more vans to reach out to more areas of the state.”

He reiterated that this service is free of charge, and that the vans can transport a spouse, adult family member, or caregiver of a wheelchair veteran.

Linkage between transportation agencies throughout the state—with each other and with the VA Hospital’s VTS service, is another vital key to providing better transportation access to veterans, said DVS Health Care Coordination Division Director and summit moderator Mitchell Lawrence.

He said the linking of transportation services can bring a veteran not only across town, but also to a neighboring community—and even all the way into Albuquerque.

(continued)

“One agency may start by picking up a veteran...and then drop him or her off at a transfer spot for another agency for the handoff,” said Mr. Lawrence. “This 2nd agency could then bring him or her to maybe a third...or even fourth agency to complete the process. This can work—but we all need to work together to coordinate and get the word out.”

Representatives from the Rail Runner Express Commuter Train reminded the representatives about the free Veterans Transportation Card, and how Albuquerque and Santa Fe city buses will accept Rail Runner tickets for free connecting rides on its buses. And representatives from Molina Health Care, Presbyterian, United Health Care, and Blue Cross/Blue Shield of New Mexico mentioned free transportation service they provide for their members.

“I want to thank all of you here for your dedication to helping veterans with their transportation needs,” said DVS Secretary Fox in his concluding remarks. “Especially for our rural-area veterans. We can’t punish or neglect veterans because they don’t choose to live in the Albuquerque metro area. They deserve the same support that we and other service agencies provide to those living here in the big city.”

Raymond G. Murphy VA Medical Center (Veterans Transportation Services)

Service to/from the VA hospital within the Albuquerque metro area...plus Gallup

https://www.albuquerque.va.gov/services/Patient_Travel.asp

Rail Runner Express Commuter Train

Commuter train service from Belen to Santa Fe...with several stops in the Albuquerque metro area (with connecting service to the ABQ Ride bus/public transit system) <https://www.riometro.org/>

ABQ Ride

City of Albuquerque’s bus/public transit system (with connecting service to the Rail Runner Express Commuter Train) <https://www.cabq.gov/transit/>

Santa Fe Trails

City of Santa Fe’s bus/public transit system (with connecting service to the Rail Runner Express Commuter Train) <https://www.santafenm.gov/transit>

North Central Regional Transit District

Bus service to/from Santa Fe...and Taos, Los Alamos, Rio Arriba, rural Santa Fe county....plus the pueblos of Pojoaque, Nambe, Tesuque, San Ildefonso, Santa Clara, and Ohkay Owingeh. (with connecting service to the Rail Runner Express Commuter Train) <http://www.ncrtd.org/>

Southeastern New Mexico Veterans Transportation Network

For veterans in Rowell/southeastern New Mexico and the VA hospitals in Albuquerque or Big Spring (TX)--or the CBOC’s in Alamogordo, Artesia, Hobbs, and Roswell. <https://www.senmtransport.com/>

Disabled American Veterans (DAV)-Department of New Mexico

For disabled veterans to/from the Albuquerque Raymond G. Murphy VA Medical Center, the 15 CBOC clinics throughout the state, or the state’s four Vet Centers. <http://davnewmexico.org/>

Southern NM Honor Guards Sweep Top Awards at 2017 Honor Guard Conference

It was a southern New Mexico “sweep” at the Ninth Annual Honor Guard Conference presented by the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services, the New Mexico National Guard, and the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) on August 25 in Albuquerque at the New Mexico Veterans Memorial.

The first-place finisher in the “Small Unit” (no rifle volley squad) category during the competition phase was the Marine Corps League Gaffney-Oglesby Detachment #1328 Honor Guard from Silver City.

In the “Large Unit” category (with rifle volley squad and bugler), the Marine Corps League El Perro Diablo Detachment #478 Honor Guard from Las Cruces took the top prize.

Taking the top prize in the Bugler competition, where entrants performed a “live” rendition of *Taps*, was Don Spann from the Marine Corps League Gaffney-Oglesby Detachment #1328 Honor Guard from Silver City.

The competition phase followed demonstrations on how to perform a military funeral with full honors by Honor Guards from the New Mexico Army National Guard, Kirtland Air Force Base, and the United States Navy. The annual conference also provides an opportunity for new Honor Guards to register with the state’s Military Honors Burial Program, and for all units to get updates from DVS on information or procedures set by the program. A free catered lunch was also provided courtesy of the AARP.

The program was established by the DVS to ensure that families of all honorably discharged veterans have access to a military funeral, with honors provided by all-volunteer Honor Guards located throughout the state. For more information about the Military Honors Burial Program, contact Josetta Rodriguez at Josetta.rodriguez@state.nm.us.



Finishing in first place in the “Small Unit” category (no rifle volley squad) was the Marine Corps League Gaffney-Oglesby Detachment #1328 Honor Guard from Silver City.

LEFT PHOTO: Don Spann (Bugler), Frank Donohue (w/back to camera), and John Sterle (facing camera). Mr. Spann also took top honors in a separate Bugle competition.

RIGHT PHOTO: John Sterle (left)...and Frank Donohue (right)



LEFT PHOTO: The winner in the “Large Unit” category (with rifle volley squad) was the Marine Corps League El Perro Diablo Detachment #478 Honor Guard from Las Cruces.



RIGHT PHOTO: Members of the winning Honor Guard (from L to R): Ray Rivera, DVS Deputy Secretary Alan Martinez, DVS Cemetery Program Director Tom Wagner, Don Hanlin, Jesse Rodriguez, Hector Torres, Albert Evaro, Ruben Telles, Joe Mendiola, Eddy Grooms, Neri Fietze, Stan Dyer, Andres Rivera and Joe Montoya.



Before the competition phase, the volunteer Honor Guards watched military funeral demonstrations performed by Honor Guards from Kirtland Air Force Base, the United States Navy, and the New Mexico Army National Guard (right photo).

Purple Heart Recipients Honored at Special Ceremony in Santa Fe

Purple Heart Award recipients from throughout New Mexico were honored for their sacrifice at the first ever Purple Heart Recognition Ceremony in Santa Fe on August 26 at the Santa Fe Veterans Memorial.

The ceremony was presented by the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS), the New Mexico National Guard, the Military Order of the Purple Heart, Berardinelli Family Funeral Service, and the City of Santa Fe to honor recipients of our nation's oldest combat decoration.

The Purple Heart medal is presented to members of the U.S. Armed Forces who are wounded in combat action, or awarded posthumously to the next of kin in the name of those who killed in action or die of combat-related wounds. It is our nation's oldest combat decoration, dating back to the end of the Revolutionary War, when then-General George Washington wanted to honor all those who were injured in combat during the war.

"This is not an honor that anyone wants," said Military Order of the Purple Heart State Commander Robert Bibeau in his remarks during the ceremony. "But I'm thankful for grass-roots efforts like today's ceremony. It is certainly the most amazing 'thank you' for your service' that is imaginable to me."

DVS Secretary Jack Fox thanked Purple Heart recipient for their extraordinary sacrifice. During his Keynote Address, the Secretary said the award is a deeply personal one to everyone who is awarded it—and how personal it is to him. He told the story of how—as a young boy living in Roswell—he stumbled upon the award presented to his dad for wounds his dad suffered in World War II.



"He never talked about the award," said the Secretary. "When I asked him how he got it, he replied, 'I was shot by a German.' I asked why he carried a Nazi shoulder patch in his wallet. He replied 'Because I killed this boy...and I carry this to remind me how ugly war is.'"

Santa Fe Mayor Javier Gonzales also thanked Purple Heart recipients for their extra sacrifices, and read aloud a Proclamation declaring the day as "Purple Heart Day in Santa Fe."

The Purple Heart Award as we know it today was created in 1932. More than 1.8 million Purple Hearts have been awarded since. There are an estimated 4,000 Purple Heart recipients currently living in New Mexico.

Purple Heart Recipients were called up to the stage area to be recognized during the August 26 Purple Heart Recognition Ceremony at the Santa Fe Veterans Memorial.

More Than 300 Memorial Bricks Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Angel Fire Ceremony



Dozens of volunteers—mostly Run For The Wall riders—laid more than 400 memorial bricks on September 4 at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Angel Fire.

The bricks bore the names in honor of active-duty military personnel or veterans from various war eras. They were placed alongside a walkway at the Memorial, adjacent to other brick-lined walkways bearing the names of nearly 3,000 military personnel laid in previous years.

A brief ceremony was highlighted by the appearance of Hershel “Woody” Williams. In addition to being awarded a Purple Heart, Mr. Williams was awarded a Medal of Honor—our nation’s highest combat award—for extreme heroics during the Battle of Iwo Jima in World War II. Another Medal of Honor and Purple Heart recipient, Gallup resident and Korean War hero Hiroshi Miyamura, was also scheduled to attend but had to cancel at the last minute.



Medal of Honor Recipient Hershel “Woody” Williams (in dark blue hat/suit, at podium) thanked the state of New Mexico for honoring veterans with the Memorial Bricks at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Angel Fire.



Medal of Honor Recipient Hershel “Woody” Williams (at left) meets with DVS Cemetery Program Director and Double Purple Heart Recipient Tom Wagner. “It was a great honor for me to meet Mr. Williams,” said Mr. Wagner. “He was a tremendous warrior who went on to do great things in his long post-war career as a Veterans Service Officer with the VA. He is a great man.”

Vietnam War Veteran-Artist Donates Painting to Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Angel Fire



Former USMC Captain and current artist Denham Clements donated his painting, *Vietnam Elogy*, to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Angel Fire on August 7 (left photo, with Vietnam Veterans Memorial Supervisor Debra Herbst.) Mr. Clements served in Vietnam from 1968-69 where he lead his men through the jungles near Da Nang, South Vietnam. He pursued his love of painting shortly after his service—taking three years to complete *Vietnam Elogy* in February of 2014.

“More than just another commentary on an epoch in the U.S. Marine Corps and history, this creation transformed into a tribute to the men and women who fought in the Vietnam War,” said Mr. Clements. “In many ways, it is a chronicle of their history and is a living and visual memorial to those brother and sisters who gave their last final measure of devotion... ‘Elogy’ is forever dedicated to them and their families.”

Cremated Remains of Ten Unclaimed Veterans to be Laid to Rest at the Santa Fe National Cemetery



Last year's Forgotten Heroes Funeral

The cremated remains of ten veterans who, upon their deaths went unclaimed by family members, will be laid to rest with full military honors at a 10:30 a.m. Forgotten Heroes Funeral on September 22 at the Santa Fe National Cemetery.

The interment of the deceased veterans is in accordance with the state's *Forgotten Heroes Burial Program*, which was established by the state to provide a full military funeral for any honorably discharged veteran who, upon death, goes unclaimed by family members or friends. These funerals ensure that all honorably discharged veterans, because they have served our country, have earned the right to be buried with honor and dignity because of their service to our country and will not be alone at the end.

The public is invited to join the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services to serve as “family” to provide a proper goodbye and “Final Salute” for these ten fallen veterans.

Upcoming PBS-TV Veteran/Military-Related Programming



THE VIETNAM WAR

A Film by Ken Burns & Lynn Novick

**The VIETNAM WAR is a 10 part, 18-hour documentary film series
airing on Channel 5.1, KNME-TV / New Mexico PBS – Over Two Weeks**

Sunday, Sept 17 – Thursday, Sept. 21 and continues

Sunday, Sept. 24 – Thursday, Sept. 28, at 7:00 pm

(repeats at 8:30 pm or 9:00 pm

(Running times vary. Please check www.nmpbs.org for that night's airtimes.)

This epic story of THE VIETNAM WAR features testimony from nearly 80 witnesses, including many Americans who fought in the war and others who opposed it, as well as Vietnamese combatants and civilians from both the winning and losing sides.

Ten years in the making, the series brings the war and the chaotic epoch it encompassed to life. It includes rarely seen, digitally re-mastered archival footage from sources around the globe, historic television broadcasts, evocative home movies, audio recordings from inside the Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon administrations, as well as more than 100 iconic musical recordings.

NOTE: Contains graphic video/images. Viewer discretion and parental supervision of minors is advised

New Mexico Adjutant General Ken Nava Promoted to Major General



With his wife Dawn by his side (in blue-green dress), New Mexico Adjutant General Ken Nava is promoted to the rank of U.S. Army Major General by Governor Susana Martinez at a promotion ceremony on July 31.

Governor Susana Martinez promoted New Mexico National Guard Adjutant General Kenneth Nava to the rank of Major General on July 31, 2017—a rank more commonly known as a “two-star” general after the number of stars displayed on a U.S. Army Major General’s uniform emblem.

“Major General Nava has proven himself time and again as a capable leader both at home and abroad,” said Governor Susana Martinez. “I’m proud to promote him to this distinguished rank today. I know he’ll continue to serve our state and country with honor and distinction.”

MG Nava has served with the New Mexico National Guard (NMNG) for nearly 30 years, and as Adjutant General of the New Mexico National Guard, the Santa Fe native is the state’s top military officer, overseeing

more than 4,000 soldiers and airmen.

“I’m honored and humbled to receive this promotion, and I’m looking forward to continuing to lead the men and women in uniform tasked with protecting our state and nation,” said MG Nava. “I look forward to building on the Guard’s storied legacy of integrity, diligence and -- most importantly -- service to our friends, family and neighbors in communities large and small across the state.”

September 12 is Military & Veterans Day at the State Fair

Military veterans and National Guard/Reserve/active-duty personnel will be admitted free to the New Mexico State Fair for *Military and Veterans Day at the State Fair* on Tuesday, September 12.

This annual day at the state fair in Albuquerque is presented by the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services, the New Mexico National Guard, and the New Mexico State Fair to honor and thank the men and women who have served our country as members of the United States Armed Forces. Veterans, National Guard/Reserve personnel, and retirees must present either a valid Uniformed Services Retiree Identification Card, a veterans-designation driver’s license, VA Veterans Health ID Card, or a copy of their DD-214 Separation Papers at the gate in order to obtain the free admission. Active-duty personnel must show a valid Uniformed Services ID card. Non-veteran/non-military spouses or family members are not eligible for the free admission.

At 11 o’clock, a brief ceremony on the main stage will highlight this year’s theme: The commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the start of the Bataan Death March. Fairground gates open at 9am, and free parking is available at Gate 8. The New Mexico State Fairgrounds is located at 300 San Pedro Drive NE in Albuquerque. For more information about *Military & Veterans Day at the New Mexico State Fair*, contact Josetta Rodriguez at Josetta.rodriguez@state.nm.us or Tom Griego at tgriego31@comcast.net.

Free Legal Advice Clinic in Albuquerque for Veterans

The New Mexico VA Health Care System and the State Bar of New Mexico/Young Lawyers Division are presenting a free Civil Legal Advice Clinic for military veterans and National Guard/Reserve Unit personnel on Tuesday, September 12 from 8:30am-11am in Albuquerque at the New Mexico Veterans Memorial, located at 1100 Louisiana Blvd. SE.



Volunteer attorneys will be there to offer legal advice concerning non-criminal issues involving family law, divorce/child support cases, consumer rights complaints, bankruptcies, landlord-tenant disputes, foreclosures, and employment disputes. No appointments are necessary. The volunteer attorneys will help on a first-come, first-served basis and will limit sessions to 20-minutes. They ask that you bring any paperwork relevant to your case—claims documents, court documents, and any correspondence—to make things easier for them to help.

Representatives from Goodwill Industries of New Mexico, the United South Broadway Corporation, the Roadrunner Food Bank, and other service provider agencies will also be there for further assistance.

For more information, please contact Lisa Anderson at lisa.anderson1@va.gov or (505) 265-1711/ext. 3434.

DVS to Host Benefits Outreaches in Albuquerque Public Libraries, Community Centers

The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services will be hosting outreach visits in the Albuquerque metro area/Valencia County/Socorro County this fall as part of a continuing effort to reach more veterans in Bernalillo County—the state's most veteran-populated county—and the two neighboring southern counties. No appointments are necessary, as assistance will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis. More listings will be provided in the next editions of *The Guardian*. Outreach visits by DVS staff will be hosted at the following locations:

Albuquerque

Sep. 27	10am-1pm	Erna Fergusson Public Library	3700 San Mateo NE
Oct. 4	11am-2pm	Los Duranes Community Center	2920 Leopoldo Rd. NW
Oct. 25	10am-1pm	Central & Unser Public Library	8081 Central NW
Nov. 1	11am-2pm	Taylor Ranch Community Center	4900 Cachina St. NW
Nov. 29	10am-1pm	Taylor Ranch Public Library	5700 Bogart NW

Belen

Sep. 28	9am-4pm	State DVR Bldg.	911 W. Castillo Ave.
---------	---------	-----------------	----------------------

Isleta Pueblo

Sep. 14	9am-4pm	Tribal Administration Office/Bldg. A	Tribal Road 40
---------	---------	--------------------------------------	----------------

Socorro (Socorro County)

Sep. 21	10am-3pm	Workforce Solutions Bldg.	109 Faulkner St.
---------	----------	---------------------------	------------------

Women Veterans News

Women Veterans Gather for Informal “Chill Out” at the Santa Fe Vet Center



The Santa Fe Vet Center, Women Veterans of New Mexico, and the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services hosted a “Chill Out” for women veterans on August 26 at the Vet Center.

The informal get-together was a chance for women veterans to meet other women veterans and get to know representatives from the three agencies in a casual, non-structured setting...with plenty of burgers, hot dogs, soft drinks, and fresh-cut fruit served to all.

“We invited women veterans to just to visit

with each other over lunch and share our stories. No presentations or speeches,” said DVS Women Veterans Program Coordinator Melanie Suazo. “This was a true blessing-- just a wonderful day to chill out and enjoy each other’s company.”

There were also free samples provided by DoTerra Essential Oils, as and free treatments provided by Acupuncturists Without Borders and Seimei Therapy & Yoga. More “Chill Outs” are scheduled at Santa Fe Vet Center—with an eye towards planning gatherings at the state’s other three Vet Centers.



The DVS Women Veterans Program

In 2016, the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services created its Women Veterans Program to help women veterans with any of their VA or state veterans benefits needs.

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), women represent the fastest growing segment of the overall veteran population in our country. There are 2,051,484 women veterans in America—about 9.5% of the total veteran population of 21.6 million. Here in New Mexico, there are 17,173 women veterans —also 9.5% of the state’s veteran population of 168,709.

The program is under the direction of Program Coordinator Melanie Suazo. Ms. Suazo retired from the New Mexico Army National Guard as a Sergeant Major in June of 2015 following a distinguished 27-year career. She can be contacted at melanieA.suazo@state.nm.us or (505) 827-6370.

Female Military Veteran Business Leaders Share Their Tips for Success

(from The Military Times)

One of the highlights of last month's Women Veterans Leadership Summit organized by *The Mission Continues* was a panel from prominent business leaders on how to navigate the transition from military life to civilian careers.

Below are excerpts from that event, designed to focus on ways women leaving the service can use their experience to succeed in workplaces very different than their military posts:

Know Your Mission

Amy Gravitt, executive vice president at HBO Programming, is a Navy veteran who served on board the aircraft carrier USS Constellation during the Persian Gulf War:

"It was quite a change going from the Navy to the entertainment industry. I took an unpaid internship with a production company. So I went from being a lieutenant and having a ton of responsibility and having people who worked for me to being the low man on the totem pole, by far.

"What got me my start in the industry and got me to where I am now is that I was the best intern. I went into this industry that was a mess and had no systems in place, and I started organizing it like my division on the ship ...

"The company I worked for was George Clooney and Steven Soderberg's company, and there were a lot of eager film students there who wanted to talk to them about films and ideas. And I knew they did not want to hear my ideas. They weren't interested in me pitching them movies.

"So, I did the job that made their lives easier, and I was recognized for that."

Appreciate Your Service

Paula Boggs, founder of Boggs Media, served as an Army attorney and later went on to serve in the U.S. Attorney's office and various technology firms.

"By the time I got to Dell Computers, there were very few people who had military experience. I was like a unicorn. But because of that, there was a heightened awareness of who the military was and what they were doing. And this was pre-9/11.

"A lot of tech companies are heavily male. So I was a unicorn in the sense of being a veteran, and a unicorn in the sense of being a woman. All the greater in figuring out how to capitalize on those two things in a setting like that...

"As a team building exercise, we were doing war games, playing Army ... There was a moment when Michael Dell, founder of the company, just stopped and said, 'Guys, Paula really did this!' And you'd see this awe, this transformative moment. 'She did something we can only play at.'

"Never underestimate how special being a veteran is, particularly in this post 9/11 environment ... There's this moment now in the country where veterans are not understood, but there is an elevated awareness of who you are and the specialness of the service you have given."

Embrace the Civilian Workplace

Nana Adae, executive director at JP Morgan Private Bank, spent seven years in the Navy specializing in communications and signals, including assignments in Japan, Greece and Spain.

"One of the things that I stress is that people just need to know you, because if it's all about whether or not people like you, that's a very superficial way of thinking about how you're going to be judged. And unfortunately as women, I think a lot of times we put our head down. We just want to work. We don't want to have any of the noise about who we really are or what's going on with us because that might complicate things.

"But truthfully, in the work environment, the more successful people are the people who are known."

Don't Exaggerate Your Skills or Limitations

Gravitt: "You'll make a million mistakes along the way ... so don't be too eager to move up quickly. Make sure you're ready to ride without the training wheels before you take them off."

"When you make a mistake, apologize once and move on. Nobody else is going to obsess about your mistake, so you shouldn't. Just figure out what you can learn from it. It doesn't mean you have terrible instincts. It doesn't mean that you're bad at your job. It just means that you made a mistake. People do it all the time."

Keep Looking for Mentors

Boggs: "One of the most powerful mentors for me was my last assignment. I worked in the White House on the Iran-Contra investigation. My boss was a civilian, middle-aged white guy. I was a 20-something black female.

"On the surface, not like me at all. But saw something in me that reminded him of himself, and became my champion for the first 15 years of my career. Years later, someone wrote an article where I called him the most significant mentor of my career. He called me and said, 'Paula, I never considered myself your mentor. You were just my friend.' But he was that to me."

"Mentors can be everywhere ... keep an active peripheral vision, because you just never know."

The New Mexico Veterans Business Outreach Center



The New Mexico Veterans' Business Outreach Center (VBOC) is locally available to assist entrepreneurial-minded veterans.

Created by the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services, the VBOC can help veterans with formulating a business plan, marketing strategies, business funding options, franchising opportunities, and anything else a veteran needs to start or expand a small business.

The VBOC is located in the DVS' Albuquerque Northeast Heights office at 5201 Eagle Rock Blvd. NE. Entrepreneurial-minded veterans can contact VBOC Director Rich Coffel at (505) 383-2401 or richardl.coffel@state.nm.us. More information about the VBOC can be found at www.nmvboc.org.

In southern New Mexico, veterans can contact VBOC Veterans Business Advisory Jim Cassidy at (575) 624-6002 or jamesM.cassidy@state.nm.us.

Presidential Emergency Signing Extends the Life of the VA Veterans Choice Card Program

(story courtesy of The Military Times)



**VA Secretary
David Shulkin**

**For more news from the VA
and for benefits
information, visit
www.va.gov**

**The VA has a regional
Benefits office in
Albuquerque.
For more Information:
[www.benefits.va.gov/
albuquerque](http://www.benefits.va.gov/albuquerque)**

**For information about VA
health care, visit the
website of the New
Mexico VA Health Care
System at:
www.albuquerque.va.gov**

Veterans can continue using the Veterans Choice Act, thanks to an emergency extension signed by President Donald Trump this spring to temporarily save the program from expiring on August 7.

The signing sets the stage for a Congress to expand the program and allow more access to private care for veterans.

The Choice Card program allowed vets facing lengthy wait times at Veterans Administration facilities or living more than 40 miles from the nearest VA to seek care in the private sector. Those already in the program will not need to re-apply under the bill signed by the President, VA officials said.

The new bill -- the Veterans Choice Improvement Act -- addressed a major complaint of veterans' service organizations by directing the VA to cover co-pays and deductibles directly for private care rather than reimbursing veterans for paying up front.

VA Secretary Dr. David Shulkin said at the signing ceremony that the Choice extension was a precursor of "the great things that are to come to fulfill the president's commitments that he made to veterans."

Shulkin has said that he will present to Congress this fall proposals to overhaul the Choice program to give veterans more options for private care and better integrate the VA with the private sector.

The new bill authorizes \$2.1 billion in additional funds for the Veterans Choice Program (VCP). The law reflects the ongoing commitment of the VA and Congress to make sure veterans get the right care, at the right time, from the right provider.

The new funds represent a short-term, temporary funding solution for VCP that will enable the VA to increase the number of appointments scheduled and ensure payments are made to community providers.

Impact to Veterans

The new funding helps ensure VCP-eligible veterans continue to have access to care in their communities.

Impacts to Community Providers

The new funding helps ensure that community providers are able to continue to provide care to VCP-eligible veterans and receive payment for authorized VCP care.

(continued)

Impact on VA Medical Facilities

The new funding will allow VA medical facilities to refer veterans to VCP to the maximum extent possible.

In addition to referring those veterans eligible for VCP based on distance (residing more than 40 miles from the closest VA medical facility with a full-time primary care provider), wait times (30-days from the clinically indicated date), or other criteria (such as special criteria for residents of Alaska, Hawaii and New Hampshire),

VA medical facilities may use the “Choice First” business process to refer veterans to community providers when services are unavailable. VA medical facilities may also use traditional community care when services are unavailable. This local flexibility is important to ensure veterans get the care they need and that VCP and traditional community care funds are used in the most optimal manner.

Next Steps

The VA will continue to work with stakeholders to secure funding for VCP for the remainder of FY2018 and to establish a single, consolidated community care program that is simple to understand, easy to administer, and meets the needs of veterans and their families, community providers, and VA staff.

This includes combining existing accounts for VA community care into one account or ensuring flexibility between accounts.

Frequently Asked Questions

Has the VA changed how veterans are referred to VCP?

There are no changes on how veterans are deemed eligible for VCP and are subsequently referred to a VCP community provider.

How are VA medical facilities specifically authorized to use VCP funds?

The VA will continue to refer eligible veterans to VCP. This includes those Veterans eligible for VCP based on distance (residing more than 40 miles from the closest VA medical facility with a full-time primary care provider), wait times (30 days from the clinically indicated date), service unavailable at the VA facility (“Choice First” business process), or other criteria (such as special criteria for residents of Alaska, Hawaii and New Hampshire).

The VA will continue the utilization of VCP for all eligible Unusual or Excessive Burden (UEXB) VCP Veterans. This includes all provisions of this section of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014.

Why were additional funds needed for VCP?

VCP was originally established as a temporary program in 2014 to quickly expand access to care for Veterans. The program is set to expire when the original \$10 billion dollars is exhausted. Because the VA has separate accounts for VCP and its traditional community care programs, and cannot transfer funds between accounts, additional funds were needed to continue VCP. This accounting structure creates barriers to the VA using community care funds in the most optimized way.

What is the VA’s plan for addressing community care funding issues and its overall approach for improving VA community care?

The VA continues to work with Congress to address funding for the VA community care, including VCP, and to combine the VA’s community care programs into a single, modern, consolidated community care program that is easy to understand, simple to administer, and meets the needs of veterans and their families, community providers, and VA staff.

President Trump Signs Bill to Extend the Life of the GI Veterans Education Benefits Bill

President Donald Trump signed into law the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act--known as *the Forever GI Bill*--bringing significant changes to veterans' education benefits. The bill garnered strong bipartisan support in Congress, passing unanimously in both the House and Senate.

Here are 11 things you should know about the new *Forever GI Bill*.

1. There's no longer an expiration date.

Previously, veterans had to use their Post-9/11 GI Bill within 15 years of their last 90-day period of active-duty service. That requirement is going away.

This portion of the law will apply to anyone who left the military after January 1, 2013. It will also apply to spouses who are receiving education benefits through the Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship for family members of service members who have been killed in the line of duty since Sept. 10, 2001.

2. Purple Heart recipients will get more benefits.

The new GI Bill allows anyone who has received a Purple Heart on or after Sept. 11, 2001 to receive 100 percent of the benefits offered under the Post-9/11 GI Bill, which includes coverage of tuition costs at a public school's in-state rate for 36 months and stipends for textbooks and housing.

Previously, Purple Heart recipients were beholden to the same time-in-service qualifications for the GI Bill as other service members. This meant that Purple Heart recipients without a service-connected disability who did not reach 36 months of service were only eligible for a percentage of the benefits and not the full amount.

Aleks Morosky, national legislative director for Military Order of the Purple Heart, said there have been 52,598 Purple Heart recipients who were wounded in action during post-9/11 conflicts, though it's unclear how many would immediately benefit from this provision. An estimated 660 Purple Heart recipients each year over the next 10 years will be able to take advantage of the increased benefits.

"We think that anybody who has shed blood for this country has met the service requirement by virtue of that fact," Morosky said. "Everybody sacrifices, everybody puts themselves in harm's way, but Purple Heart recipients are certainly among the service members who have sacrificed the most." This provision will go into effect in August 2018.

3. More people are eligible for Yellow Ribbon.

The Yellow Ribbon Program is a voluntary agreement between schools and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to split school costs not covered by the GI Bill, reducing or eliminating the amount students must pay themselves.

The Forever GI Bill will expand eligibility for this program to surviving spouses or children of service members in August 2018 and active-duty service members in August 2022.

Previously, only veterans eligible for GI Bill benefits at the 100 percent level or their dependents using transferred benefits were eligible for Yellow Ribbon.

(continued)

Some college degrees in science, technology, engineering and math fields take longer than four years to complete, which is why the new law authorizes an additional school year of GI Bill funds on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Scholarships of up to \$30,000 will be available for eligible GI Bill users starting in August 2018. Only veterans or surviving family members of deceased service members are eligible for this scholarship — not dependents using transferred benefits.

5. Veterans hurt by school shutdowns will get benefits back.

A provision in the new GI Bill that will restore benefits to victims of school closures has been a long-time coming for the staff at Student Veterans of America.

“We’ve been getting calls for several years now, beginning with the collapse of Corinthian (Colleges), from student veterans whose lives were put on hold,” said Will Hubbard, vice president of government affairs for the nonprofit, which has more than 500,000 student members. “Every day we wasted until it passed was another day that they had to wait.”

This provision will retroactively apply to GI Bill users whose schools have abruptly closed since January 2015, for credits earned at the shuttered institutions that did not transfer to new schools. This will include the thousands of veteran students who were attending the national for-profit chains Corinthian Colleges and ITT Technical Institute when they closed in 2015 and 2016, respectively. It would also provide a semester’s worth of reimbursement for GI Bill users affected by future school closures, as well as up to four months of a housing stipend.

6. The VA will measure eligibility for benefits differently.

Starting August 2020, this bill changes the way the VA uses time in service to calculate eligibility.

Previously, service members with at least 90 days but less than six months of active-duty service would be eligible for up to 40 percent of the full GI Bill benefits. Under new regulations, the same 90-days-to-six-month window is equal to 50 percent of benefits. Service members with at least six months and less than 18 months of service will be eligible for 60 percent of benefits.

This change will tend to benefit reservists more due to the nature of their service, according to a spokeswoman for the Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs.

7. Reservists can count more of their service toward eligibility.

Starting next August, members of the National Guard and Reserve will be able to count time spent receiving medical care or recovering from injuries received while on active duty toward their GI Bill eligibility. This will apply to all who have been activated since 9/11.

The Forever GI Bill also allows individuals who lost their Reserve Educational Assistance Program when the program ended in 2015 to credit their previous service toward their eligibility for the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

8. Housing stipends will decrease slightly.

The government will pay for the expansions represented in the Forever GI Bill through a 1 percent decrease in housing stipends over the next five years. This will bring veterans’ housing stipends on par with what active-duty service members receive at the E-5 with dependents rate. (Veterans on the GI Bill currently receive a slightly higher housing allowance rate than active-duty E-5s with dependents.)

This change will take effect on Jan. 1, 2018 and will only apply to service members who enroll in GI Bill benefits after that date. No one currently receiving a housing stipend from the VA will see a reduction in benefits.

(continued)

“On a month-to-month basis, they would never see less money,” said SVA’s Hubbard, explaining that the 1 percent reduction will come from the total the VA would have spent over five years.

Starting in August 2018, housing stipends previously calculated based on the ZIP code of a student’s school will be based on where a student takes the most classes. Also in August 2018, reservists will continue to receive their monthly housing allowance under the GI Bill on a prorated rate for any month during which they are activated, preventing them from losing a whole month’s worth of funds.

9. Benefits can be transferred after death.

A provision of the new GI Bill offers more flexibility with the transfer and distribution of benefits in case of death. If a dependent who received transferred benefits dies before using all of the benefits, this provision gives the service member or veteran the ability to transfer remaining benefits to another dependent. This will go into effect August 2018 and apply to all deaths since 2009.

This provision also gives dependents of deceased service members the ability to make changes to their deceased loved one’s transferred benefits.

Ashlynn Haycock, senior coordinator of education support services for the nonprofit Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, explains that currently, only a service member has the authority to make changes to the benefits they’d like to transfer.

So, if a service member dies after transferring 35 months of benefits to one child and one month of benefits to another, for example, the family would not be able to make future changes to the GI Bill’s distribution among that service member’s dependents.

10. Surviving family members will get more money, but less time.

Surviving spouses and children of service members who are receiving benefits through the Survivors’ and Dependents’ Educational Assistance Program will see their monthly education stipend increase by \$200.

DVS Santa Fe Veterans Service Office Moves to New Location

The office of the Santa Fe-based Veterans Service Officer of the New Mexico Department of Veterans’ Services (DVS) has moved to a new location.

Veterans Service Officer Jeff George has relocated to the Santa Fe Workforce Connection Building, Suite 2A, at 301 West DeVargas Street in downtown Santa Fe.

As with all twelve DVS field offices statewide, “walk-ins” are welcome—but veterans, National Guard/ Reserve personnel and their spouses or widows needing assistance with their VA or state veterans’ benefits are encouraged to schedule an appointment by contacting Mr. George at (505) 476-7903 or jeff.george@state.nm.us.

The rest of the DVS Santa Fe-based operations remain in their current locations: The State Benefits Division on the main floor of the nearby Bataan Memorial Building, and the Office of the Cabinet Secretary at 406 Galisteo St.

NMDVS FIELD OFFICES

There are New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services field offices throughout the state to assist veterans and their eligible dependents with filing for VA and state veterans' benefits. Each office is managed by a nationally-certified Veterans' Service Officer who is committed to helping fellow veterans with their veterans benefits needs

Below are the NMDVS field offices (LISTED IN ALL CAPITAL LETTER HEADINGS) and outreach locations (*shown in italicized headings with an asterisk*). Please contact your nearest office to set up an appointment.

ALAMOGORDO	ALBUQUERQUE #1	ALBUQUERQUE #2
(vacant) For assistance, call the NMDVS Las Cruces office at (575) 524-6220 or 6124	Theresa Zuni 500 Gold Ave. SW (505) 346-4810 theresa.zuni@state.nm.us	Gordon Schei 5201 Eagle Rock Ave. NE (505) 383-2404 gordon.schei@state.nm.us
<i>Anthony*</i>	<i>Artesia*</i>	<i>Aztec*</i>
(Las Cruces Office Outreach) George Vargas (575) 524-6124 george.vargas@state.nm.us	(Carlsbad Office Outreach) Dagmar Youngberg (575) 885-4939 dagmar.youngberg@state.nm.us	(Farmington Office Outreach) Beverly Charley (505) 327-2861 beverly.charley@state.nm.us
CARLSBAD	<i>Clayton*</i>	CLOVIS
Dagmar Youngberg 101 N. Halagueno (575) 885-4939 dagmar.youngberg@state.nm.us	(Raton Office Outreach) Gary Fresquez (575) 445-8282 gary.fresquez@state.nm.us	Matthew Barela 904 W. 6th Street (575) 762-6185 matthew.barela@state.nm.us
<i>Cuba*</i>	<i>Deming*</i>	<i>Española*</i>
(Albuquerque Office Outreach) Gordon Schei (505) 383-2409 gordon.schei@state.nm.us	(Santa Clara Office Outreach) Bradley Brock (575) 912-3166 bradleya.brock@state.nm.us	Outreach temporarily halted due to Taos office vacancy. For help, please call the main Santa Fe office toll-free @ 1-(866) 433-8387
FARMINGTON	GALLUP	GRANTS
Beverly Charley 101 West Animas/Room 104 (505) 327-2861 beverly.charley@state.nm.us	(vacant) For assistance, call the NMDVS Grants office at (505) 287-8387	Tyrre Saavedra 515 East High St.. (505) 287-8387 tyrre.saavedra@state.nm.us
HOBBS	<i>Holloman AFB*</i>	LAS CRUCES #1
Dalton Boyd 2120 N. Alto Street (575) 397-5290 dalton.boyd@state.nm.us	For assistance, call the NMDVS Las Cruces office at (575) 524-6220 or 6124	J.R. Turner 2024 E. Griggs Ave. (575) 524-6220 jr.turner@state.nm.us

LAS CRUCES #2	LAS VEGAS (NM)	Lordsburg*
George Vargas 2024 E. Griggs Ave. (575) 524-6124 george.vargas@state.nm.us	Karen Abeyta 917 Douglas Avenue (505) 454-0068 karen.abeyta@state.nm.us	(Santa Clara Office Outreach) Bradley Brock (575) 912-3166 bradleya.brock@state.nm.us
Los Lunas*	Mora*	Quemado*
(Albuquerque #1 Office Outreach) Theresa Zuni (505) 346-4810 theresa.zuni@state.nm.us	(Las Vegas, NM Office Outreach) Karen Abeyta (505) 454-0068 karen.abeyta@state.nm.us	(Santa Clara Office Outreach) Bradley Brock (575) 912-3166 bradleya.brock@state.nm.us
RATON	Reserve*	ROSWELL
Gary Fresquez 200 N. 3rd St. (575) 445-8282 gary.fresquez@state.nm.us	(Santa Clara Office Outreach) Bradley Brock (575) 912-3166 bradleya.brock@state.nm.us	(vacant) For assistance, call the NMDVS Carlsbad office at (575) 885-4939
Ruidoso*	SANTA CLARA (Grant County)	Santa Rosa*
For assistance, call the NMDVS Las Cruces office at (575) 524-6220 or 6124	Bradley Brock 11990 U.S. Hwy 180 East (575) 912-3166 bradleya.brock@state.nm.us	(Las Vegas, NM Office Outreach) Karen Abeyta (505) 454-0068 karen.abeyta@state.nm.us
SANTA FE	Socorro*	Sunland Park*
Jeff George 301 W. DeVargas St./Suite 2A (505) 476-7903 jeff.george@state.nm.us	(ABQ #1 Office Outreach) Theresa Zuni (505) 841-5346 theresa.zuni@state.nm.us	(Las Cruces Office Outreach) George Vargas (575) 524-6124 george.vargas@state.nm.us
TAOS	Truth or Consequences*	Tucumcari*
(vacant) For assistance, call the NMDVS Las Vegas office at (505) 454-0068 or Raton at (575) 445-8282	(Las Cruces Office Outreach) JR Turner (575) 524-6220 jr.turner@state.nm.us	(Las Vegas, NM Office Outreach) Karen Abeyta (505) 454-0068 karen.abeyta@state.nm.us