

NEWS AND NOTES FOR FLORIDA VETERANS

Veterans Service Center, VA Regional Office
St. Petersburg, FL

May 2008



The "News and Notes for Florida Veterans" is published monthly by the Veterans Service Center, VA Regional Office, St. Petersburg, Florida, to provide information on VA benefit programs to veterans and dependents in Florida. The material presented does not have the effect of laws or regulations. Please send questions or comments on this newsletter to Veterans Service Center, ATTN: "News and Notes," PO Box 1437, St. Petersburg, FL 33731. We do not have the resources to maintain a mailing list for distribution to individuals; however this newsletter is available on the St. Petersburg VA Regional Office web site at www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete.

VA CALLING ALL RECENT COMBAT VETERANS (VA News Release) WASHINGTON – On May 1, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will begin contacting nearly 570,000 recent combat veterans to ensure they know about VA's medical services and other benefits. A contractor-operated "Combat Veteran Call Center" will telephone two distinct populations of veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan.

In the first phase, calls will go to an estimated 17,000 veterans who were sick or injured while serving in Iraq or Afghanistan. VA will offer to appoint a care manager to work with them if they don't have one already. Care managers ensure veterans receive appropriate care and know about their VA benefits.

For five years after their discharge from the military, these combat veterans have special access to VA health care. The Department screens combat veterans for signs of post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury. VA personnel have been deployed to the military's major medical centers to assist wounded service members and their families during the transition to civilian lives.

For the new call center, the second phase will target 550,000 Operation Iraqi Freedom-Operation Enduring Freedom (OIF-OEF) veterans who have been discharged from active duty but have not contacted VA for services. Once contacted, veterans will be informed about VA's benefits and services.

The initial calls will be made by a private contractor, EDS, which specializes in technology.

"FLORIDA VETS FIRST" LAUNCHED (Governor's Press Office April 17, 2008) "Florida Vets First" is a collaborative effort spearheaded by the Agency for Workforce Innovation, Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs and Workforce Florida, Inc. The new initiative creates a unified, seamless approach to addressing the needs of Florida's military veterans, servicemembers and their families.

At the interactive Web site, www.FloridaVetsFirst.com,

information and links to services ranging from employment and training assistance to health care, aid for the homeless, housing and benefits.

VA NAMES NEW NATIONAL CEMETERY IN JACKSONVILLE (VA News Release) WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has named the national cemetery to be constructed in Jacksonville, FL, as the "Jacksonville VA National Cemetery." The new cemetery is at 4083 Lannie Road, north of the Jacksonville International Airport and approximately five miles from Interstate 295 on 569 acres acquired from the city. The telephone number is 904-358-3510. The cemetery will serve 189,000 veterans in the region who are not currently provided burial space by a nearby national or state veterans cemetery.

VA selected Arleen Vincenty as the first director of the new national cemetery. She begins her duties immediately.

Ms. Vincenty had been the director of the Puerto Rico National Cemetery since November 2006. She was cemetery director at the Natchez National Cemetery in Mississippi, the Fayetteville National Cemetery in Arkansas and the Salisbury National Cemetery Complex in North Carolina.

VA anticipates construction of the first phase of development to begin this summer. VA has awarded a \$1.25 million contract to the firm of England, Thims & Miller of Jacksonville to design the master plan for the project. Initial construction will prepare a small burial area to ensure that veteran burials can take place before all phase one facilities are completed. In addition to burial areas, phase one will consist of approximately 50 acres, including roadways, an entrance area, an administration and public information center, a maintenance complex with buildings, a maintenance yard and parking, a flag assembly area, a memorial walkway and committal service shelters. Other infrastructure improvements will include grading, drainage, fencing, planting, an irrigation system and utilities. Interment areas will include traditional full-casket gravesites, pre-placed crypts, in-ground

ECONOMIC STIMULUS PAYMENTS Even though April 15 has passed, there is still time for retirees, disabled veterans and others who normally do not file a tax return to submit a 2007 form to receive an economic stimulus payment. For persons filing to establish eligibility for the stimulus payment, filing by October 15 means the IRS can process the return and issue a stimulus payment before the end of the year. For more information, go to www.irs.gov.

MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONIES The public is invited to attend these events.

Barrancas National Cemetery (Pensacola Naval Air Station). On Saturday, May 24, the Boy Scouts will place American flags on the gravesites. The Memorial Day Service begins at 9:00 AM (CDT) on May 26 in the Main Post Chapel. The Navy Choir will perform at 8:30 AM. The guest speaker will be Judge Joseph Tarbuck, a former Prisoner of War from the Korean Conflict. For information call 850-453-4108.

Bay Pines National Cemetery (10,000 Bay Pines Blvd, St Petersburg) Service begins at 9:00 AM on May 26. The featured speaker will be Congressman C. W. "Bill" Young. Shuttle service will be provided from the parking lot to the cemetery. For information call the Bay Pines VA Medical Center Voluntary Service, which is in charge of the ceremony, at 727-398-9394.

Florida National Cemetery (6502 SW 102nd Ave, Bushnell) - Service begins at 10:00 AM on May 26. The guest speaker will be Rear Admiral Leroy Collins, Jr., USNR (Ret), Executive Director of the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs. Guests are invited to arrive early and enjoy the patriotic and inspirational musical prelude, which will begin approximately 15 minutes prior to the ceremony. The cemetery's Public Information Center will be open from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM to assist visitors with inquiries. Wheelchair and scooter parking is available at Shelter B. Parking attendants will be directing traffic. For information, call 352-793-7740.

South Florida National Cemetery (6501 State Road 7, Lake Worth) Ceremony begins at 4:00 PM on May 26. For information, call 561-649-6489.

St. Augustine National Cemetery (104 Marine St, St. Augustine) Service begins at 10:00 AM on May 26. For information call the Florida National Guard Public Affairs Office at 904-823-0166.

IMPORTANT DATES IN MAY

May 1 payments for April due

May 8 last day to input change of address or establish direct deposit on compensation and pension awards in time for the 05-30-2008 payments

May 20 last day to change or cancel direct deposit on compensation and pension awards in time for the 05-30-2008 payment

May 26 Federal holiday - Memorial Day

May 30 payments for May due

VA FACILITIES ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

VA Regional Office, St. Petersburg - PO Box 1437, St. Petersburg, FL 33731 1-800-827-1000

Regional Processing Office, Atlanta, GA (education claims) - PO Box 100022, Decatur, GA 30031-7022 1-888-GIBILL1 (442-4551)
Telephone number for Chapter 30 self-verifications 1-877-823-2378

VA EFT Information Hotline (electronic funds transfer - direct deposit) 1-877-838-2778

Veterans Health Administration Toll-Free Hotline (medical care) - 1-877-222-8387

VA Health Revenue Service (information on amounts owed to VA Medical Centers) 1-866-793-4591

VA Insurance Center, Philadelphia (VA Insurance) - PO Box 42954, Philadelphia, PA 19101 1-800-669-8477

VA Health Administration Center (CHAMPVA and Spina Bifida health care) -
CHAMPVA inquiries: PO Box 65023, Denver, CO 80206-5023
CHAMPVA claims: PO Box 65024, Denver, CO 80206-5024
Spina Bifida inquiries and claims: PO Box 65025, Denver, CO 80206-5025 1-800-733-8387

Foreign Medical Program Office (medical treatment abroad) -
PO Box 65021, Denver, CO 80206-5021 303-331-7590

National Cemeteries

10,000 Bay Pines Blvd N, Bay Pines FL 727-398-9426
6502 SW 102nd Ave, Bushnell FL 33513 352-793-7740
6501 S State Rd 7, Lake Worth, FL 33467 561-649-6489
4083 Lannie Rd, Jacksonville FL 32218 904-358-3510
Naval Air Station, Pensacola FL 850-453-4108/4846
9810 State Hwy 72, Sarasota FL 877-861-9840

National Cemetery Administration Office of Memorial Programs (headstones and markers) - 5109 Russell Rd Quantico VA 22134-3903 1-800-697-6947

Loan Guaranty Eligibility Center (certificates of eligibility) PO Box 20729, Winston-Salem, NC 27120 1-888-244-6711

Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) Unit - Chicago VA Regional Office 1-800-829-4833

INTERNET SITES OF INTEREST:

VA Web Site: www.va.gov

VA Web Automated Reference Materials System (WARMS) www.warms.vba.va.gov

St. Petersburg VA Regional Office: www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete

Property Management (sale of VA-repossessed homes): www.ocwen.com

Florida Dept of Veterans Affairs: www.floridavets.org
"Florida Vets First:" www.FloridaVetsFirst.com