

# NEWS AND NOTES FOR FLORIDA VETERANS

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

July 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](http://www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete).

**SARASOTA VA NATIONAL CEMETERY DEDICATED** (VA News Release) WASHINGTON – Ground was broken in Sarasota, Fla., in a ceremony dedicating the new Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Cemetery. The ceremony included remarks by VA's Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs William F. Tuerk and local officials. The dedication plaque was unveiled and military honors were performed by a joint service firing detail. The ceremony ended with the playing of "Taps."

Located on a 295-acre site in Sarasota County along State Route 72, the new cemetery will begin burials late this year. It will be available for nearly 400,000 veterans and their family members who live in southwestern Florida. VA selected Sandra M. Beckley as the cemetery's first director. Most recently, she served as director at VA's Georgia National Cemetery near Atlanta.

VA will begin construction this summer on a 15-acre section. The section will be comprised of 2,000 pre-placed concrete vaults and 2,000 sites for in-ground cremated remains. The cemetery staff will work initially from a temporary office, a committal service shelter and an equipment facility until construction is completed. The cemetery's remaining 60-acre 10-year construction plan will contain 18,200 casket gravesites, including 15,200 pre-placed concrete vaults; a 7,000-unit columbarium for cremation remains; 7,500 graves for in-ground cremated remains; and a scattering garden.

When completed, the new cemetery will include an administration and public information complex with an electronic gravesite locator and public restrooms; a maintenance facility; entrance and flag assembly areas; a memorial walkway; and two committal shelters. Other infrastructure elements include roadways, landscaping, utilities and irrigation.

For information on the Sarasota VA National Cemetery, call the cemetery office at (941) 861-9840 or, toll-free, at (877) 861-9840. To make burial arrangements at the time of need, call the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at (800) 535-1117.

**SANFORD COMMUNITY BASED OUTPATIENT CLINIC (CBOC) MOVED TO ORANGE CITY** The Sanford CBOC has been relocated to a new leased space in Orange City, Florida to accommodate a larger program and provide additional services to veterans closer to where they live. Veteran population concentration maps show a higher concentration of veterans in the southwest Volusia County area.

The new site, with 6,000 square feet, has 10 exam rooms, 2 mental health rooms and 1 treatment room plus additional support space for providers, pharmacy staff, laboratory collection and has a conference room for group medical visits. It is approximately 2,000 square feet larger than the Sanford site, has better visibility from the street and will allow for on-site registration for enrollment.

The number of primary care providers is expanding from 2 to 5. Mental health is expanding from a part time service to 2 full time providers. Telemedicine capability is being added which will allow veterans access to specialty consultations such as diabetes, renal disease and substance abuse without having to travel to Orlando or Tampa.

The address is 2583 South Volusia Avenue (Rt.17-92) Suite 300 Orange City Florida 32763. The telephone number is 386-456-2080.

**ADDITIONAL HERBICIDE PRESUMPTIVE CONDITION – PRIMARY AL AMYLOIDOSIS** On July 27, 2007, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) Institute of Medicine issued its most recent report on its formal review of the scientific and medical literature on health effects potentially related to exposure to herbicides and related materials used during the Vietnam War.

A task force was formed to review the findings of the report and to make recommendations with respect to adding any additional diseases to the list of diseases currently recognized as being associated with herbicide exposure in Vietnam.

Based on the recommendations of the task force, the Secretary of VA announced his decision that the evidence warrants establishment of a presumption of service connection based on service in the Republic of Vietnam for primary AL Amyloidosis. As required by law, a notice will be published in the *Federal Register* announcing this addition and the Code of Federal Regulations (38 CFR 3.309(e)) will be amended to include this disease.

Additionally, the Secretary has determined there is no evidence at this time to support the establishment of presumption of service connection for any other condition reviewed in the NAS report, including hypertension. Based on this decision, claims for service connection of hypertension as due to exposure to herbicides during service in the Republic of Vietnam are to be resolved based on the evidence of record.

#### **VA REACHING OUT TO VETS WITH MORTGAGE**

**PROBLEMS** (VA News Release) WASHINGTON – Many home owners have found it difficult recently to pay their mortgages, but quick intervention by loan counselors at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has actually reduced the number of veterans defaulting on their home loans.

Accounting for much of this success are VA counselors at nine regional loan centers who assist people with VA-guaranteed loans avoid foreclosure through counseling and special financing arrangements. The counselors also can assist other veterans with financial problems. VA counselors have helped about 74,000 veterans, active-duty members and survivors keep their homes since 2000, a savings to the government of nearly \$1.5 billion.

Depending on a veteran's circumstances, VA can intercede with the borrower on the veteran's behalf to pursue options - such as repayment plans, forbearance, and loan modifications -- that would allow a veteran to keep a home. To obtain help from a VA financial counselor, veterans can call VA toll-free at 1-877-827-3702. Information about VA's home loan guaranty program can be obtained at [www.homeloans.va.gov](http://www.homeloans.va.gov).

About 2.3 million home loans still in effect were purchased through VA's home-loan guaranty program. April data shows that foreclosures are down more than 50 percent from the same months in 2003. VA attributes this to prudent credit underwriting standards, its robust supplemental loan servicing program and VA financial loan counselors.

#### **IMPORTANT DATES IN JULY**

**July 1** payments for June due

**July 4** Federal holiday – Independence Day

**July 10** last day to input change of address or establish direct deposit on compensation and pension awards in time for the 08-01-2008 payments

**July 23** last day to change or cancel direct deposit on compensation and pension awards in time for the 08-01-2008 payments

#### **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](http://www.va.gov)

**VA Web Automated Reference Materials System (WARMS)** [www.warms.vba.va.gov](http://www.warms.vba.va.gov)

**St. Petersburg VA Regional Office:** [www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete](http://www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete)

**Property Management (sale of VA-repossessed homes):** [www.ocwen.com](http://www.ocwen.com)

**Florida Dept of Veterans Affairs:** [www.floridavets.org](http://www.floridavets.org)  
"Florida Vets First:" [www.FloridaVetsFirst.com](http://www.FloridaVetsFirst.com)

**Library of Congress (information on pending legislation)** [thomas.loc.gov](http://thomas.loc.gov)