



# Missouri Women Veterans News



Volume 2010, Issue 18, January - March 2010

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**Editors Note:** I received many thank you's and words of encouragement after the release of my October Woman Veterans Newsletter. Many man-hours, or I should say woman-hours, go into each issue I write, edit, review, review, and review before publication. However I could not produce the outstanding quality this newsletter has become known for without the talent of our Senior Office Support Assistant Pamela S. Robbins. Mrs. Robbins selection of colors, design and layout just gets better and better with each issue we publish. Her creative ideas and attention to detail truly are a superior work of art. We have come a long way, especially when we go back and review our first issues. This is our 18<sup>th</sup> issue, and we have been a team from day one. For Pam and myself, it has always been a passion for us to develop this newsletter and we are honored to serve the Women Veterans of Missouri. We are currently reaching hundreds and hundreds of readers not only in Missouri, but across the nation. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support of this newsletter and the Woman Veterans Program.



## VA MEDICAL CENTERS OPENING DOORS FOR WOMEN VETERANS



In a quest to see what is available for our Women Veterans in the VA health care system here in Missouri, I contacted Sherril Sego, the lead program manager for VISN 15. The VA health care is divided into 23 Veteran Integrated Service Networks (VISN)'s and VISN 15 covers most of Missouri. Ms. Sego stated "VISN 15 has had a busy year! Early in the year we added 4 new full time Women Veteran Program Managers (WVPM's) to join our existing 3 full time program managers. They certainly hit the ground running, because we became immediately involved in a very detailed process of long range planning for the future health care needs of our Women Veterans. By the end of August, we had submitted to Washington a comprehensive plan that detailed not only the staff and equipment we will need, but space and support staff as well. The information was actually requested by Congress, so they are hearing us! The standard of care that the VA is seeking to establish for all Women Veterans is called 'comprehensive primary care', or 'one-stop-shopping'. In other words, all women should have the choice to see a primary care provider that will not only take care of things like blood pressure and diabetes, but also do basic women's health care screening, such as pap smears and breast exams. As a VISN we are aggressively pursuing this goal. Several sites already offer this type of care and the other sites are in the process of putting together their comprehensive care team. Fiscal year 2010 is already off and running. Several large training events for Women Veteran Program Managers and care providers are already planned, and we welcome input from all of you to help make our facilities everything you need them to be." Some examples of improvements have been obtained from several WVPM's. Jennifer Cunningham, the WVPM at the St. Louis VA Medical Center (VAMC) reported that the Women's clinic has moved into a new facility off-campus at 3615 Olive Street which expands the exam rooms available from 3 to 8, with future efforts to provide lab & EKG support within the clinic. Kathy Zima-Sauer the WVPM at Leavenworth reports that they have Women's Comprehensive Primary Care at 4 of their Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC)'s, which includes the St. Joseph CBOC. WVPM Katrena Bentley reported that the KC VAMC now has a full time gynecologist on staff and a new MD for the Women's clinic is scheduled to start in December 2009. WVPM Marsha Shivley at the Poplar Bluff VAMC also reported gender specific care is now available in the primary care setting. Columbia's WVPM Amanda Barnes reported several outreach activities along with an active Women Veterans Advisory Committee.

As a Veteran myself, I have used the VA Health Care system and find that although the VA has a long way to go to accommodate Women Veterans, they are more aware of the needs of Women Veterans than they ever have been in the past. I find that they are diligently working towards taking corrective actions to resolve barriers Women Veterans have faced in the past. So if you tried to use VA health care before and were not satisfied, I highly encourage you to give them another chance. I think you will be pleased with the improvements that are being implemented.



## Women in Uniform PAST

### Marjorie J. Daugherty



My best friend and I joined the USMC, in 1968, while still in High School at Cocoa Beach, FL (Cape Canaveral). We joined on the "Buddy" program and a week after High school graduation we were on our way to Parris Island, SC. Not a great time in the summer heat and bugs!! My MOS was Communications and it ended up being the most interesting work. I went to school at San Diego MCB, then to Camp Pendleton. At the Comm Center, we were the relay station between Vietnam and Washington, D.C. Because of my Top Secret/Crypto clearance we processed high profile messages for our General on base and to the White House. With all our men overseas, we worked 12 hour shifts, the midnite shift was a somber one because the death notices came in then. I left the Marines in 1970 and what I learned during my service, helped me after I got out. I am a disabled veteran, but I never let that stop me from working or having my children. After a 37 year marriage to my sergeant ended, I stayed in Missouri. I recently got reacquainted with my best friend, and two other women Marines whom I met 41 years ago in boot camp. We are scattered all over the US but next year we hope to have a reunion. We all married Marines, but are all single now. We have that common bond one gets from serving their country, and of course the Marines; Semper Fidelis. A career I wish never ended. God Bless our people in uniform today.



### Nancy M. Nelson



I come from a military family, so I grew up thinking that military service was very prestigious and honorable. I joined the Navy halfway through my senior year, delaying my entry until the following winter. I left for boot camp in Orlando as an E-1 and have to admit I did not enjoy it at all. I next graduated from Quartermaster A school, which is ship navigation. Making one of the rare smart decision of youth, I choose shipboard orders instead of comfy shore duty and spent 2 ½ years on the USS San Jose AFS-7, home ported in Guam. We pulled into ports all over the SW and SE Asia, including the Persian Gulf, Indonesia, and Malaysia. My next duty station was the USS Flint AE-32, out of Concord, CA and then a year on Treasure Island before it was closed down. That was enough active duty for me, so I have been in the Navy Reserves since then. I have about 18 years in and I am a Chief Petty Officer. Making Chief was one of the proudest days of my life. In 2007 I was deployed on the ground to Balad, Iraq. Everything I have today comes directly or indirectly from my service to the country. Not the least of which is my education and my work as a Marine Analyst at the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA). In 2000, I joined my local VFW and have been their first female commander, as well as the first District Senior Vice Commander and have served on state and national chairmanships. That brought me to my current volunteer position as a Missouri Veterans Commissioner. Incidentally I was one of the first females on my first ship and I have some pretty interesting sea stories. My service to the Navy, to the country, and to my fellow veterans has been so rewarding and has given me such a full life.



### Kathleen (Kay) Whitney

I enlisted in the SPARS in Cleveland, Ohio in March 1944. I went to yeoman training to learn how to do secretarial work the coast guard way. During my first duty assignment an old line officer came up to me at 4:30 in the afternoon and stated that he needed 20 letters typed right away. I stayed and typed them for him. He had left out a critical clause and stated he needed them redone again. I was upset at having to do them over again. He told me to type them his way and I said I will even if you have cuss words in them. He stomped off to personnel and I was immediately reassigned to mess duty for a month. It was the best thing that could have happened to me. While stationed at Palm Beach FL, a Chief Petty officer, myself and two others took a converted ambulance and toured across Idaho, Oregon and Washington selling war bonds. We sold over 3 million in 1945. I met a man in the service and we became engaged. I even typed out both of our discharge papers in Mar 1946. We married later that year in September. We lived in Boston for 5 years and attended the university there. Then we moved to Maryville, MO, where I taught school as an art teacher and guidance counselor for 23 years. I enjoyed my service and I think that you mature a lot when you join. You learn a lot of things you are never exposed to as a civilian. I loved the camaraderie of my sister veterans.



### Mary L. Weeks



I volunteered for the Army Nurse Corp in early 1945, and only ended up serving 8-9 months of active duty. I enlisted at Jefferson Barracks in MO and was sent to Camp Carson for basic training. While I was at Camp Carson, I was surprised to be looked up by Max, an old acquaintance that I grew up with and knew as a teenager, but we never really dated. We kept in touch, but I went on to train into psychiatric nursing and was sent to Winter General Hospital in Topeka KS. At that time it was an Army hospital but today it is a VA Medical Center. I was in charge of 6 wards of psychiatric units. All of our patients were service men who had mental problems coping with their wounds they received in combat or mental breakdowns from just being in combat. The War was winding down and Max proposed. I asked my Commander for a weekend off to get married. She told me I was on shipping orders and if I really wanted to get married now would be a good time to get out, so I choose to do that. We both went back to school to finish our degrees. We traveled all over the country due to my husband's work and I was a stay at home mom until the youngest of our 3 children was in first grade. Then I resumed my career as a nurse for the next 30 years always having to start at the bottom with each new move we made. Max and I have shared 64 years of marriage and now we share a room together at the Missouri Veterans Home in Cameron. If I were young today I would definitely join again. There are many opportunities and I would go where they sent me (although I wouldn't want to go to Afghanistan). I really enjoyed my service to my country.





## Ask Karen



**Q.** I am not a veteran but am a woman who served in the Army from 1953-1955 as a personnel clerk. My husband is not a veteran either as he had a disability that prevented him going into the military. We married in 1958. Currently we are having a hard time, keeping up with all our bills and forget being able to pay for prescriptions! Often we have to choose between eating and buying our medications. I was just wondering if there is anything that we could apply for to assist us through the VA.

Martha Z.

**A.** Martha- You are wrong in your statement that you are not a veteran- in fact not only are you a veteran but you are considered a wartime veteran based on the TIME-FRAME that you so proudly stepped up and served your country. Since you served during the Korean War time frame you are a wartime veteran. Accordingly, you are potentially eligible for pension benefits (money) through the VA. The fact is there are many women (and some men too) who think that because they did not go off to fight in a war that they are not wartime veterans. Pension is an income based program for wartime veteran's that is determined by your income, net worth, age or permanent disability, and military service. Your medical expenses also factor into the equation. Since you are a veteran, (don't ever think that you are not a veteran again) you can apply for health care benefits, which include prescription through our VA Medical Centers so that will ease the burden of having to choose between food and medical care. When and if the time comes for nursing home care, Missouri has 7 Veterans homes. MVC also has 5 cemeteries when that time comes too. And Martha, in case no one has ever said to you, "thank you for your service to our country" let me be the first! Contact your nearest service officer to apply for all your VA benefits. Contact 866-VET-INFO for a referral if you do not know how to find your service officer.

**Q.** My husband and I are both veterans. Since he had the highest rank, should he apply for benefits in lieu of me?

**A.** No- VA benefits are not based on rank. For Compensation benefits, (service connected injuries/diseases) both of you are entitled to benefits on your own behalf. Both would be eligible to draw the extra dependent rate as well, if each is rated at least 30% or greater. For pension benefits (as described in the answer above) there is a special rate for veteran-married-to-veteran.

## Did You Know?

■ That in addition to the 800-273-TALK suicide prevention number, there is now available an on line chat room for those who would prefer to talk on line. It can be accessed by going to [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org) There is a Veterans tab on the left side of the web page, click on that and then click on Veterans Chat tab located in the middle right hand side. Veterans retain anonymity by entering whatever name they choose once they enter the one-on-one chat.

■ That there is a web site for your daughter to help her build her best bones. Your daughter will love the fun and interactive web site [www.bestbonesforever.gov](http://www.bestbonesforever.gov) which includes quizzes, recipes and activities. There is also a web site for you at [www.bestbonesforever.gov/parents](http://www.bestbonesforever.gov/parents).

■ That there are three new illnesses that may be related to exposure to agent orange. They are B Cell leukemias, such as hairy cell leukemia; Parkinson's disease; and ischemic heart disease. If you are an in-country Vietnam Veteran or the survivor of a Vietnam Veteran who has one of these illnesses or died from one of the illnesses, you or your survivor may be eligible for VA benefits. Contact your nearest Veteran Service Officer or call 866-VET-INFO.

■ That anyone who served on active duty from 1940 to 2001 may be eligible for increased social security benefits. It is not just for military retirees, but for anyone who served on active duty prior to January 2002. You must ask for this benefit and bring your DD214 when applying. For further information go to <http://www.ssa.gov/retire2/military.htm> or contact your local social security office.

■ That there is free yard care to include snow removal/care during the winter months for families of deployed soldiers. To register for yard care or for more information contact <http://www.projectevergreen.com/gcft> or call toll free 877-758-4835.

■ That there is a memorial located at the gateway to Arlington National Cemetery that is dedicated to military women, past and present. The Women In Military Service For America Memorial president, retired USAF Brig Gen. Wilma Vaught, is on a never ending quest to find and record the service of all military women (past and present, living or deceased) so that our stories will live on. The memorial's mission is to record our servicewomen's memories and experiences so that America's military history is saved for generations to come. For more information about your memorial or to register with your memorial, go to [www.womensmemorial.org](http://www.womensmemorial.org) or call 800-I-SALUTE.



## Upcoming Events

**Missouri Association of Veteran Organization (MAVO)** announces it's upcoming Legislative Days at the Capital February 1-2, 2010. The following is a schedule of their events:

- **Feb. 1** - 10:00 am The Missouri Veteran Commission Meeting (MVC).
  - 1:30 PM the Missouri Association of Veterans Organization (MAVO) Meeting.
- Both meetings are being held in Room 400, Truman Office Building, Jefferson City, MO.
- 6:00 PM the Legislative Reception will be held at the American Legion Post 5, 1423 Tanner Bridge Road, Jefferson City, MO 65101-(573-636-7442).
  - **Feb 2**- 8:00 am, coffee, juice and donuts at the Missouri State Capital Rotunda, Jefferson City, MO.
  - 5:00 PM - Testimony before Joint Session Senate and House Veterans Committees, Missouri Capital, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Senate Lounge.

You are invited to visit your Senator and State Representative during the times between scheduled events.

**Mark your calendars!** A date and location has been secured for the 4th Annual State Women Veterans Conference. The 2010 conference will be held in Maryland Heights, MO at the Community Center, 2344 McKelvey Road on May 6th, from 10:00 am - 2:00 PM. More detailed information will follow in the April 2010 issue of this newsletter. If you have information for our Women Veterans and would like to participate in the conference or would like to set up a display, contact Karen Etzler, Missouri Women Veteran Outreach Coordinator at [Karen.Etzler@mvc.dps.mo.gov](mailto:Karen.Etzler@mvc.dps.mo.gov) or (816)387-2841.

**Valentine for Veterans Concert** is being held on February 14, 2010 at the Fabulous Fox 527 North Grand Blvd., St. Louis, MO at 2:00 PM. The concert is a Temptations Review featuring Dennis Edwards. To reserve your FREE tickets call 314-894-6125.

**FREE Snowsports Camp in Sun Valley, ID** - This camp is completely free (including airfare) for female OEF/OIF wounded warriors with TBI, physical injuries, or severe PTSD that occurred in combat or in training. The date is March 22-27, 2010 and there are 6 spots available on a first-come-first-served basis. Contact 208 726-9298 ext. 117 or [bert@svasp.org](mailto:bert@svasp.org). Note: more camps may be available so please contact if interested.

**National Wear Red Day** is February 5, 2010 – Start planning now to join others across the country by wearing red on this day and throughout American Heart Month to show your support for women and heart disease awareness. Visit the [National Wear Red Day® online toolkit](#) for free resources and materials to help you celebrate.

## Why a VSO?

All of us who served in the military were trained into a specialty after basic training. Some became cooks, some aircraft/tank mechanics, personnel, medics or whatever field you chose. Veteran Service Officer's (VSO)'s are a specialty for VA benefits and should be the first step in reaching your VA benefits. They are high trained dedicated Veterans who know what forms and documents are needed for whatever benefit you are applying for. Statistically, claims filed by a VSO are processed in a more timely fashion, simply because when they are sent it, they are correct, completed applications. VSO's are there from the beginning to the end of the claim, assisting in whatever letters or responses are needed by the VA Regional Offices. The Missouri Veterans Commission (MVC) has 42 highly trained dedicated accredited service officers through our state to serve our Veteran population. (DAV, VFW, The American Legion and several other organizations also have service officers.) VSO's must have annual training to maintain their accreditation and MVC just completed their VSO training in St. Charles on December 1-2, 2009. VSO's received updated training in Chapter 33 and educational benefits, pension benefits, how claims are rated, notice of disagreements/appeals, hospital changes/ special benefits and an update on our National Call centers. Best of all VSO's services are total free of cost, why wouldn't you want to use a VSO? To contact a VSO call 866-VET-INFO or go to [www.mvc.dps.mo.gov](http://www.mvc.dps.mo.gov).



## VSO Success Story

I had an opportunity to work with a female service member who had undergone terrible treatment in the military which included military sexual assault (MST). We applied for a service connection for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). She was very apprehensive about applying, but after talking with her several times for quite a while, she agreed. She was unable to make the Compensation & Pension (C&P) appointment, therefore the request for service connection was denied. I spoke with her about the denial, but she was not interested in appealing the decision. She had been receiving PTSD counseling at the VA Medical Center, and was content with the treatment.

I marked my calendar for eleven months after the Decision Letter as a claimant has 1 year to appeal from the date of denial without any additional evidence. I contacted her at that time and just asked her if she wanted to pursue the service connection, I could file the necessary paperwork, and request another C&P exam. She agreed and I filed everything necessary. Another exam was scheduled that she was able to attend.

Several months later, I received a call from her explaining she received a check from the US Treasury for more than \$25,000.00 and was wondering what it was for because she had not yet received any correspondence. I did some checking and found out she was in fact awarded 50% service connection. The last time I saw her, she looked completely different, happy, smiling, confident, about as well adjusted as she could be.

The moral of the story is: we are the veteran's representatives. It is our job to pick up the torch and run for them when they no longer feel they have the ability to do so. Thinking about them and what is best for them, taking the torch for them and carrying it for eleven months demonstrates the commitment, loyalty, pride, and dedication we have as Missouri Veterans Commission Service Officers.

*Submitted by Eugene O'Loughlin, Veterans Service Supervisor*

## Vet Centers

**Vet Centers** recognize the unique needs of our female veterans. We provide individual, group, and family counseling for veterans with readjustment issues as a result of combat duty, and/or sexual trauma or harassment experienced while in active duty service. Readjustment counseling includes a wide range of additional services such as housing assistance, medical referrals, assistance in applying for VA Benefits, employment counseling and referral, alcohol/drug assessments and referral, and referrals to a wide variety of other community resources. All services are provided in a family-friendly atmosphere; family members of eligible veterans have been welcomed at Vet Centers for readjustment counseling services for military related issues since the inception of the Vet Centers in 1979. Missouri-eligible veterans can find Vet Centers located in St. Louis; Kansas City; Springfield; East St. Louis, IL, and coming soon to Columbia, Missouri. Each Vet Center is staffed with a Women's Coordinator to ensure our female veterans get the specialized help they may need. You can find contact information at [www.va.gov/rcs](http://www.va.gov/rcs) or call 314-531-5355. Services are free for eligible veterans.

*Submitted by Linda M. Housman, PhD, St. Louis Vet Center*

### Attention NavyWomen Veterans:

Researcher writing a history of women on Navy ships seeking women hospital corpsmen who served on Navy transport ships 1953-1966, enlisted women (any rating) who served on USS Sanctuary (AH 17) 1973-74, and women helicopter pilots who made deployments on Navy logistics ships in the 1980s. Please contact: CDR Catherine Leahey, USN (Ret), 202 E. Houston St. #301, San Antonio, TX 78205, 210-223-1301 [caleahey@earthlink.net](mailto:caleahey@earthlink.net)

### WASPS HONORED

Two WASPS who reside in Missouri were honored on Sep. 28, 2009 in Congressman Luetkemeyer's Columbia office. Mary L. Nirmaier (Left) and Rose Ross (Right) were presented the Congressional Gold Medal for their service to our country. The Congressional Gold Medal is the highest and most distinguished award that the U.S. Congress can award to a civilian.



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[www.mvc.dps.mo.gov](http://www.mvc.dps.mo.gov)





## State of Missouri Women Veterans

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name you served under (if different from above) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Birth date: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_  
Day Month Year

Place of Birth \_\_\_\_\_  
City/State

Service (Circle one) USA USMC USN USAF OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

Service dates: From \_\_\_\_\_ To \_\_\_\_\_  
From \_\_\_\_\_ To \_\_\_\_\_

Receiving VA or Medical Benefits: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, what benefit: \_\_\_\_\_ (i.e. pension, comp., medical, etc.)

Have received benefits in the past: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, what benefit: \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like contact information and a schedule for a Veteran's Service Officer in your local area to explain your potential benefits? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Do you wish to share this information with WIMSA (Women in Military Service for America Memorial) in Arlington VA? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

To receive your free Woman Veteran State Sticker

Return this to: Missouri Veterans Commission/Karen Etzler

Women Veterans Coordinator/VSO

525 Jules, Room 320

St. Joseph, MO 64501

816/387-2841

or send a request via email to: [Karen.Etzler@mvc.dps.mo.gov](mailto:Karen.Etzler@mvc.dps.mo.gov)