

Missouri Women Veterans Newsletter

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Fall 2018

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

UPDATE FROM THE WOMEN VETERAN COORDINATOR

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

ASK TONI	2
EDUCATION	2
THINGS TO DO	3
HOME LOANS	3
RAMP	4
RECIPE	4
WOMEN IN UNIFORM	5
BUDDY CHECK	5

Update from Toni, your Women Veteran's Coordinator



It has been enjoyable becoming the Women Veterans Coordinator. The past few months I have met some delightful women and incredible organizations. Last November, I attended the Rose Petal Ceremony in Branson (I would highly recommend attending). While I was there, the Commander of the Women American Legion Post 1214 approached me. I had been thinking about joining a service organization, but just never got around to it. She convinced me to join and I am glad I did because I have to say Post 1214 has a great group of women.

In March, I attended a Women Veteran History event in Columbia VAMC. During that event, I met the organizations Team RWB and Combat boots and High Heels. Both of those organizations are doing an amazing job in helping local veterans. In addition, I went to Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis to attend a luncheon in honor of all Women Vietnam Veterans.

On April 21, 2018, I attended the Mid-West Women Veterans Association Annual Event in Columbia, MO. The free event for Women Veterans offered a Yoga class, mastering relaxation with Hypnotherapist and an intro to VA wellness program. The focus was to remind women the importance of taking care of themselves.

The Columbia Vet Center had an "Open House" on May 11, 2018. Vet Centers are community-based counseling centers that provide a wide range of social and psychological services including professional readjustment counseling to Veterans and families, military sexual trauma counseling, and bereavement counseling for families who experience an active duty death.

May 18, 2018, the VFW Post 2591 in Sedalia opened up their facility to A Women Veterans Event. The Missouri Veterans Commission teamed up with the VFW Post 2513 and The Missouri Job Center to bring the local resources such as Veterans Upward Bound, United Way, Job Point, Recovery Lighthouse, Citizens Against Spouse Abuse (CASA), Catholic Charities, Ability KC, Missouri National Guard Family Assistance Center, Defeat, Capricorn Insurance Agency, and the VA Women Coordinator from Columbia. We want to help make sure women veterans know what benefits and resources are available to them. Prior to the event, the Mayor of Sedalia signed the Proclamation Women Veteran Affairs to Care Day. We are hoping to make this an annual event.

The end of June, I headed to Washington, DC, to attend the 19th Annual National Association of State Women Veteran Coordinators (NASWVC). This training event gave me the opportunity to meet with other Women Veterans Coordinators from other states to see what they are doing.

If you would like to know about different events going on, like us on Facebook.

Missouri Women Veterans: <https://www.facebook.com/MissouriWomensVeterans/>

Missouri Veterans Commission: <https://www.facebook.com/MissouriVeteransCommission/>

Lastly, I would like to say thank you! The responses I have received from the last newsletter in January were phenomenal. It is gratifying to see how much you like them. If you have any questions you would like me to answer or a topic you would like to get more information about, just let me know. Toni.Swizdor@mvc.dps.mo.gov

Missouri Veterans Commission 3 Key Messages:



If you have ever served in the military have you:

Visited with a Veterans Service Officer?

Signed up for VA Health Care?

Joined a Veterans Service Organization?

Ask Toni



Q. What is an Intent to file a claim, and do I need it?

A. An Intent to file a claim is a form that is submitted to the VA to inform them of your intent to file a claim for service connected compensation or non-service connected pension. It is important to file an intent even if you are not sure you are ready to file a claim, because the intent will preserve your effective date. For example, if you file an Intent on Feb 5, 2018, your effective date for your claim will be March 1, 2018; even if you don't file the formal claim itself until October 2018. Once an Intent is filed, you have up to one year to file the claim. It allows you time to obtain any medical records or statements needed to support your claim.

Q. I separated from the Navy 6 months ago and I have just been diagnosed with Raynaud's Disease. Can I submit a claim for service connection for this disease?

A. Yes, you can file because you were diagnosed within the first year of your discharge. If you had gotten diagnosed a year or more after you have been released from active duty then I would say no. The VA will not consider it service connected.

EDUCATION INFORMATION



Forever GI bill

A new legislation passed the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act (Forever GI Bill) to remove the 15 year time limitation for Veterans who transition after January 1, 2013 and qualifying dependents. There is no longer a deadline to use the GI program. If you want to learn more visit the VA website at benefits.va.gov/gibill/forevergibill.asp or if you would like to read the law go to Congress.gov

Missouri Returning Heroes Act

Missouri Returning Heroes Act was established August 28, 2018. This act was started to help Missouri Veterans that serve in a certain combat zones after September 11, 2001 to present to receive reduced tuition. You had to be a Missouri Resident when you first entered the service; it will reflect on your DD 214. But you do not have to be a Missouri resident at the time you receive the tuition benefit.

The Returning Heroes Act limits the tuition rate charged to qualifying veterans to \$50 per credit hour.

For more information and to find out if you're eligible go to:

<https://dhe.mo.gov/ppc/returningheroesact.php>

<https://dhe.mo.gov/ppc/veteransed.php>

Things you should do:

1. Take time for yourself
2. See a Veterans Service Officer
3. Enroll in VA Health Care/Schedule your annual women exams
4. Develop an exercise routine you enjoy
5. Join a service organization; American Legion, VFW, DAV etc.

Don't forget to like the Missouri Veterans Commission and Missouri Women Veterans pages on Facebook.



Looking to buy a home?

You can visit your Veteran Service Officer with your DD 214 to submit the paperwork to receive your Certificate of Eligibility for a VA loan, or your bank may be able to get it as well.

Also the Missouri Housing Development Commission has information for first-time home buyers and veterans.

The First Place loan program provides qualified veterans assistance with purchasing a home. An affordable, below market interest rate allows prospective veterans to obtain mortgage financing.

A qualified Veteran is any Veteran who served on active duty and applied for financing within 25 years after the date on which he or she left active duty. The veteran's status must be documented by a DD Form 214 - Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty. All active duty veterans must obtain a Statement of Service signed by, or by the direction of the adjutant, personnel officer, unit commander or higher headquarters, indicating the Active Duty Service Date.

To qualify, you must be income-eligible with qualifying credit.

Any FHA, VA, USDA/Rural Development or Fannie Mae MyCommunityMortgage® 30-year conventional mortgage may be used under the rules of the program.

The Types of First Place Loans are:

Cash Assistance Loan (CAL) provides cash assistance to first-time homebuyers for down payment and closing costs.

Non Cash Assistance Loan (Non CAL) provides a lower interest rate to first-time homebuyers who do not need down payment or closing cost assistance. For more information you can visit <http://www.mhdc.com/homes/first-placeloans/index.htm>



Brown together ground beef, onion, and celery, drain. Place beef mixture into oven safe bowl, or crock-pot. Add remaining ingredients. Bake at 350 for 1 hour, or in crock-pot on low for 3-4 hours.



Saluting Our Women In Uniform

Marjorie (Margie) Soffer Wood



Marjorie had a couple of stumbling blocks in her way when she decided to join the military. Number one was on the home front. "I remember the first thing my mother said was that nice girls don't join the Army". This despite the fact that her father as a Merchant Marine had spent part of WWII teaching Morse code to other Merchant Marines at Scott AFB, which Marjorie credits with instilling a sense of patriotism in her. Number two was a seizure disorder that led to rejection in Kansas City, so she tried again and was accepted in St. Louis. (And she has been seizure free for decades.) So, in 1973, 22 year old Margie joined the Army in search of "travel and benefits." She was off to basic in Anniston, Alabama.

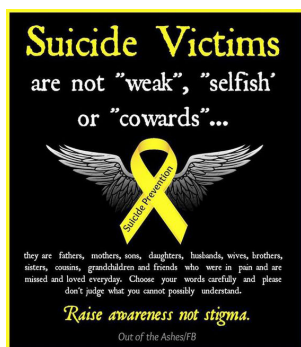
Margie joined as a journalist and was sent to Fort Benjamin Harrison for Army Journalist Training at the Defense Information School. That was approximately 3 months of compressed training followed by her first duty assignment to the Pentagon which required a top secret clearance. The Pentagon was exciting and interesting. However, she was not doing anything related to her Military Occupational Specialty. It was mostly passing out press releases and filing. She requested and was granted a transfer to the Defense Language Institute East Coast in the Washington Navy Yard. She became editor of their paper, The Forum. When Defense Language was moved to the Presidio in Monterey, Margie went along with them to the West Coast. She loved being the Public Affairs Officer there.

When Margie's father passed away she asked for a compassionate transfer and ended up at the Records Center in the St. Louis. She was finally put into the Public Affairs Office and ended up being the editor of their newspaper. Margie left the Army after 4 years, ended up in TRANSCOM as a civil servant where she did "too much typing," but eventually ended back at the Records Center until she left Civil Service.

When asked to describe her favorite thing about her Army years, Margie didn't hesitate to describe how she loved interviewing interesting people and writing articles about them. She still has the desire to be a freelance writer and jokes about papering a wall with her rejection slips. When asked to describe her least favorite things she sums it all up with the military basics, inspections, rules, regulations, and being called by her last name. She described herself as "sort of a Jewish American Princess" who was shocked at some of the lack of privacy she experienced during basic training. When asked if she would recommend joining the military to a young person today, she puts a positive spin on it. "It's a great way to travel and get your education...it's still a good experience."



Thank you to Post 404 for sharing Marjorie's story with the Missouri Veterans Commission!



Buddy Check 22

22 Veterans commit suicide every day. Check on a veteran on the 22nd day of each month to help get 22 to 0. Just ask them "Are you okay"?

Check out our Facebook Page:
<https://www.facebook.com/MissouriWomenVeterans/>



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