

Missouri Women Veterans Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 1

January - March, 2018

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

NEW WOMEN VETERAN COORDINATOR

RESOURCES 5

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

HOMELESS VETERANS 2

SHOPPING THE EXCHANGE 2

ASK TONI 3

VETERAN IDENTIFICATION CARD (VIC) 3

ABOUT THE MISSOURI VETERANS COMMISSION 4

WOMEN IN UNIFORM 5

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?

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



Your New Missouri Women Veterans Coordinator



I would like to say that I am proud that I am the new Women Veterans Coordinator for Missouri. As the new coordinator I have a lot to learn but I am excited for this opportunity, in this new adventure. I entered the Navy in March 1995. My first duty station was NAS Whidbey Island where I worked as administrative personnel for most of my time, but then moved to supply. I then reenlisted for orders to VP-9 out of Hawaii. At the age of 22, I was excited the Navy was going to pay me to live in Hawaii. I didn't get to go straight to Hawaii because my squadron was on deployment. So I traveled across the world to meet them in Diego Garcia (an island in the middle of the Indian Ocean). During my tour in Hawaii I also was fortunate to deploy to Kadena and Misawa Japan.

While in Hawaii I met my husband, whom is also in the Navy. He is currently in the Navy Reserve and drills out of Springfield. As a female it was a difficult decision whether or not to stay in the service or get out to care for my family. After my tour in Hawaii was done, I decided to get out because I just had my son and I didn't want to leave him. Then a year and half later I had my daughter. I never regret getting out of the Navy, but I think going in was the one best decisions I made. It had opened doors and opportunities I never knew about. Not to mention the family and friends you meet along the way.

In February 2015, I started working for the Missouri Veterans Commission as a Veteran Service Officer. I have to say it is the best job I have ever had. It is very rewarding to help fellow Veterans receive benefits they are entitled to.



**WE ARE PROUD
WOMEN VETERANS**

This Newsletter is provided to you by Missouri Veterans Commission
Veterans Service Program Director, Douglas Meyer
Senior Editor and Women Veteran Coordinator, Toni Swizdor
Editorial Assistant, Design, and Layout, Pamela Luyk

www.mvc.dps.mo.gov



HOMELESS VETERANS

VA understands that many women Veterans face challenges when returning to civilian life, including raising children on their own or dealing with the aftereffects of military sexual trauma. Without intervention, these and other issues can put women Veterans at greater risk of homelessness. VA also strives to address the individualized needs of women throughout its specialized programs for homeless Veterans. Every VA Medical Center and regional benefits office also has a dedicated advocate to make sure women Veterans get the health care and benefits they've earned through service.

If you will be Homeless or at risk to be Homeless

The VA has a National Call Center for Homeless Veterans to ensure that homeless Veterans or Veterans at risk of being homeless have free, Confidential 24/7 access to trained counselors and helpful programs.

In Missouri, you can also contact Homeless Veteran Coordinators at the four Missouri VA Medical centers:

Columbia, MO 573-814-6648
Fayetteville, AR 479/443-4301
Kansas City, MO 816-861-4700
Poplar Bluff, MO 573-778-4476
St. Louis, MO 314-652-4100

Other Resources for Homeless Veterans:

1-877-4AID VET (877-424-3838)

National Coalition for Homeless Veterans Provides services to homeless Veterans around the nation. 1-800-VET-HELP www.nchv.org

*This will
 remain the
 land of the free
 only so long as
 it is the home
 of the brave. -*

Elmer Davis

SHOPPING THE EXCHANGE

Starting November 11, 2017 honorably discharged Veterans will be able to shop the online exchange. Veterans will need to go to VetVerify.org to register.

Once you receive notification of acceptance you can go to the NEX website to shop.

shopmyexchange.com
shoppcgx.com
mymcx.com
mynavyexchange.com





ASK TONI



Q. I currently have VA Healthcare and am about to turn 65 years old. Do I need to sign up for Medicare Part B?

A. I would recommend signing up. You have a certain amount of time to sign up, if you sign up after, you will have to pay a penalty. The reason I recommend it, is if you have an emergency not all VA emergency rooms are close by. You can call the VA to try to get an authorization number but they will tell you if it is an emergency you need to go to the closest hospital. This is not authorization that they will be paying that bill.

Q. Do I need to go see a Veteran Service Officer?

A. I would recommend sitting down with a Veterans Service Officer (VSO) to see what benefits you may be entitled to. Often Veterans get out and don't think they are eligible for any benefits, or know what is available to them.

Please submit any questions you may have to me at Toni.Swizdor@mvc.dps.mo.gov or call me at (573) 265-3271 Ext. 245

Veteran Identification Card (VIC)



On July 20, 2015, the president signed into law the "Veterans Identification Card Act of 2015". This Act allows eligible Veterans to be issued an identification card from the VA. The Veteran Identification Card (VIC) will serve as proof of service in the Armed Forces and can be used to receive Veteran's discounts on goods and services at locations that offer the discount. In order to qualify for the VIC, Veterans must have served in the active military, naval, or air service and have a character of discharge of other than dishonorable.

If you already have a VA healthcare card or retirement card issued by DOD, or a driver's license with the Veteran designation you do not need to apply for the VIC. The VIC does not qualify you for additional benefits administered by the department of Veterans Affairs and does not serve as proof for any benefits to which you may be entitled.

To apply for the VIC or get more information, go to: <https://www.Vets.gov/#>

There is not charge for the VIC card.

What is the Missouri Veterans Commission (MVC)?

The Missouri Veterans Commission as established by RSMo Chapter 42, is tasked with the sacred honor and duty to “aid and assist all Veterans and their dependents and legal representatives, who are legal Missouri residents or who live in the state of Missouri, in all matters relating to the rights of Veterans under the laws of the United States and under the rules and regulations of federal agencies, boards, commissions and other authorities which are in any manner concerned with the interest and welfare of Veterans and their dependents.”

VISION

Support our Veterans: past, present and future.

Past:

Missouri has a rich history of supporting its Veterans. In the 1890's two Soldier's Homes were opened for Union and Confederate Veterans with each home having a Veterans cemetery. In 1931, legislation was passed establishing the first State Service Officer to oversee benefits provision to Veterans. Even though World War I, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam have ended, we are still paying the cost for those wars. Veterans, spouses, and dependents from those eras are still receiving benefits that are owed to them. In fact, according to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, spouses and dependents from the Spanish-American War are still receiving benefits, 109 years after that conflict officially ended.

Present:

Today the commission supports Veterans through seven Veterans Homes, six Veterans Cemeteries, and 44 Veterans Service Officers. We also enjoy a great relationship with Missouri's Veterans Service Organizations who have an additional 38 Service Officers assisting Veterans. Our partnerships and connections with these organizations as well as the VA, our elected officials, and other interested parties further insure that Veterans are receiving the support they deserve. As we continue to enroll Veterans, their spouses, and their dependents, we are seeing a change in the types of benefits and services needed by our more recent Veterans. We are aware of the shift in needed benefits and we remain committed to properly guide Veterans to the most appropriate source of services.



VA Healthcare Missouri

VA Medical Centers Women Program Managers:

Columbia, MO 573/814-6000
Fayetteville, AR 479/443-4301
Kansas City, MO 816/861-4700
Poplar Bluff, MO 573/686-4151
St. Louis-Jefferson Barracks 314/652-4100
St. Louis-John Cochran 314/652-4100

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Other State Resources

Missouri Department of Mental Health
Prevention, treatment, and promotion of public understanding of mental illnesses, developmental disabilities and addictions. Don't suffer in silence
573/751-4054, www.dmh.mo.gov

Missouri Statewide Independent Living Council
All the centers in the state of Missouri are listed at:
<http://www.mosilc.org/CIL.htm>

Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services
573/751-6400, www.dhss.mo.gov
*Adult Head Injury Program 800/451-0669

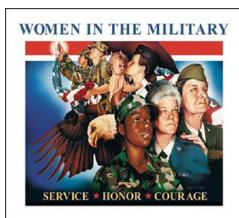
Local Public Health Agencies
573/751-6170, www.dhss.mo.gov/LPHA

Missouri Division of Workforce Development
573/751-9578, <http://workforce.mo.gov>
*SHOWME Heroes
*Missouri Career Center
*LVER (Local Veteran Employment Rep)
*DVOP (Disabled Veteran Outreach Program)

Missouri Department of Economic Development
573/751-4962, <http://www.ded.mo.gov>

Missouri Department of Elementary And Secondary Education
573/751-3251, 877/222-8963,
www.dese.mo.gov
*OJT – On the Job Training
*Troops to Teachers

The Brain Injury Association of MO (BIA-MO)
800/377-6442, www.biamo.org



Saluting Our Women In Uniform

Yolanda Redington



I tried to follow in my older brother's footsteps and join the United States Air Force. However, I was told I was too short, so, I walked across the hall to the Navy recruiter and the rest is my history. It was the Vietnam era. I was 19 and was required to have my mother's permission to join the military. Although Mom was "a little distraught", she signed those papers

knowing her daughter was going to gain experience and travel beyond the fields where she worked as a migrant worker. She wanted me to have a different life.

I travelled to Bainbridge, Maryland for boot camp, but opted to return to my home state after initial training. I was sent to Corpus Christi. My friends teased me saying, "She joined the Navy to see the world and she comes back to Texas!" I did the right thing because I would be close enough to check on my mom who was having health issues.

I have lots of memories from my Navy days. I had to learn to swim and recall instructors with poles pushing them away if they got too close to the side of the pools. And, of course, there were inspections, buffing floors, marching in reviews, chow hall, classes, and cleaning their hand guns (which they never got to fire, by the way). I became a Seaman after boot camp and was assigned to office and personnel work, using teletype machines to send and receive messages, and processing paperwork for men who were being recruited for Vietnam.

My military experience taught me self-respect, pride, and lasting friendships. As well as that special young man I met and became engaged to at Mt. Hope Pier in Corpus Christi. We have celebrated over 50 years together. I am now a member of St. Louis Service Women's Post 404 and continue to serve my family and my country.



Mary Kay Weerts



I chose the Navy over the Air Force when I enlisted during the Vietnam era because the Navy was more "traditional". My formative years were spent on the West Coast, especially in the Portland area. Most of my friends followed the marriage and family path and were not focused

on careers. I was looking for independence and job training.

My very first plane ride was to Bainbridge, Maryland for basic training. That was a big "Whoa". My strict upbringing in a home that was "run like a ship" helped me succeed at boot camp. The only scary moment was jumping from the tower into the pool.

Specialty training went from being a Corps WAVE in the Great Lakes to learning to be a Yeoman in Pensacola. My administrative duties included learning the Master Flight Log System and keeping track of flight hours of all of the pilots. I also spent time as a flight orderly and really enjoyed that duty. It was the equivalent of being a flight attendant today.

I served proudly for 2 years, but had to leave the Navy when they found out I was five and a half months pregnant. I went on to serve as a military wife for 23 years.

I think the Navy was one of the smartest things I ever did, and advise young women who are thinking about enlisting to find out beforehand what will be required because there is no "begging off the responsibility". My Navy experience offered me the opportunity to travel and meet all kinds of people. It led to an open-mindedness I passed along to my children. I am now a member of the St. Louis Service Women's Post 404.



If you would like to be featured in our quarterly Newsletter, please submit your request to Toni Swizdor at Toni.Swizdor@mvc.dps.mo.gov. She will need a short bio, a photo from your military service, as well as a current photo. If you do not have email, you may contact her at (573) 265-3271, Ext. 245. Thank you ALL for your service!!