

# IOWA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS



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## November/December – 2008

### Director's Message

As we approach the end of another year and take a moment to reflect on our progress at the Department of Veterans Affairs, we find that great strides have been made for veterans in the State of Iowa. The end of the year also signals a new legislative session. In spite of an unstable economic climate and the subsequent budget issues that face our state, we are hopeful that we can continue our journey of expanding and improving the services and benefits provided to our deserving Iowa veterans.

Our hope for this year is that we all realize that it takes team work to successfully deliver services to better serve our veterans and their families. A partnership with both the state and county veterans offices can be a strong voice for our veterans.

Several successful veterans events were held over the past several months. It is always our hope that these occasions draw not only a large audience, but also find those veterans who are in need of services and benefits.

All of us involved with veterans issues are watching and waiting for the announcement of the new Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Whoever it may be will face many urgent issues – from the health care of our returning troops – to the implementation of the new G.I. Bill. We look forward to the rededication of purpose and honor for our veterans.

I wish all of you and your loved ones a very happy, safe, and joyous holiday season.

Sincerely,  
Patrick J. Palmersheim, Executive Director  
Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs

### Happy Holidays

With Thanksgiving behind us, we now head into the extremely busy month of December. IDVA hopes that this holiday seasons will find you safe and healthy and that you have every opportunity to spend time with family and friends.

Please remember to take time this month to thank a veteran for our freedom and to pay tribute to the men and women who gave the ultimate sacrifice.



*Headstone of an unknown WWII Veteran interred at the Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial.*

We at the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs thank you all for the privilege of serving our brave soldiers!

### Vietnam Bonus Update

As of November 30th, IDVA has received and processed 1,632 applications for the second Vietnam Bonus Program. The average bonus amount awarded is \$179.39, with 1,090 (66.78%) applications awarded a bonus. To date IDVA has distributed \$195,540.50. ~

## Iowa Veterans Cemetery

The Iowa Veterans Cemetery has been very active honoring those who have served since its dedication on July 3<sup>rd</sup>. At the end of November, over 2,000 eligibility applications have been processed. The cemetery has interred 162 veterans and dependents over this same period (10 are without remains in the "In Memory of" section along the Memorial Walk). Families who have contacted the cemetery staff following a burial have expressed great appreciation for customs and courtesies provided to their loved one. Other significant events have occurred since the dedication.

Staff completed a project on the Interstate 80 wall. It is now illuminated at night and is a prominent landmark seen by cross-county travelers.



*View of the Cemetery Wall from Interstate 80.*

During the day, visitors from across the country stop in, visit with staff, and tour the grounds. These guests regularly comment that the cemetery feels less like a traditional private cemetery and more like a place of honor, which is patriotic, comforting, and welcoming. This might account for families frequently visiting after the service and taking photographs during services.

The Military Order of the Purple Heart (Iowa Department) installed and dedicated its monument along the Memorial Walk on November 8<sup>th</sup>. The ceremony was well attended. This is the first of many monuments that will line the walkway to the National Flagpole.

On the weekend prior to Veterans Day, the Avenue of Flags was installed and before the close of business on November 10<sup>th</sup>, a miniature flag was placed at each veteran's grave site. The same was done on September 19<sup>th</sup> in recognition of POW/MIA Remembrance Day. Visit the cemetery's website (What's New? link) to see the Avenue of Flags set along with the flags placed at the Columbaria Plaza.



*Veteran's Day at the IVC.*

The Iowa Veterans Cemetery was honored with a visit from Congressional Medal of Honor recipient, and Sioux City native, George E. "Bud" Day. He visited on October 26, 2008, and was hosted by AmVets Post #2. Col. Day was shot down over North Vietnam on August 26, 1967. As a POW, he offered maximum resistance and endured extreme torture. He is also a veteran of World War II, the Korea War, and is the most decorated living veteran with 70 medals. Col. Day was awarded the Medal of Honor on March 4, 1976, by President Ford.



*Col. Day signed the visitor's log and noted, "Thanks for remembering!"*

## Cemetery Cont'd

The cemetery staff is working with donor groups along several fronts. The Committal Service Shelter flies the military service flags 24-7 and donor groups have purchased sets of flags to replace deteriorating flags. These donors are recognized for their gift in the kiosk found in the vestibule of the Administration Building. IVC is also working on replacing the USA, POW, and Iowa flags. Contact the cemetery if you or your organization is interested in this type of donation with appropriate recognition.

The cemetery is experiencing a more common occurrence lately, with families opting to disinter the remains of a loved one and have them reinterred at IVC. Two caskets have already been reinterred (both coming from private cemeteries). Several cremated remains have also been reinterred and other families are moving forward with the same action.

Four volunteers have been of great assistance. Two are retired military, another is a Korean War veteran, and the other is a spouse of a veteran. They greet our visitors, answer questions about the cemetery and provide tours when needed. They also help process the many applications that come in the mail. The small staff at IVC welcomes their assistance, which gives them time to focus on the details associated with all of the paperwork and computer entries into a federal burial data base hosted out of Quantico, VA.



*Bob Allen (Lt Col, USAF Retired)*



*Orville Barbee (Korean War Veteran, USA)*



*Susan Smith (Spouse of USN Veteran)*



*Agnes Flynn (MSgt, USA Retired)*

The staff at the Iowa Veterans Cemetery wishes everyone well. Please visit if you are passing by. ~

**Don't Forget!!!!**

**FY 2009 County Grant Program for Veterans  
Applications are being accepted  
Call Missy Miller 515-242-0027**

## Military Women's Event

November 22 marked the occasion of the first "Military Women and Women Veterans: Past, Present, & Future" event - held on the grounds of Fort Des Moines. It was declared a great success! We met with old friends and made many new ones as well, and forged new relationships with organizations focused on helping women veterans.

The audience was honored to have both Representatives Jody Tymeson and Helen Miller on hand. The color guard was from North High School's ROTC, followed by a rousing medley of patriot songs performed by the Hoover High School Brass.



*North High ROTC Color Guard*

The star of the event, however, was Elizabeth "Betty" Wall - WWII aviator, author, inductee in the Minnesota Aviation Hall of Fame, and speaker extraordinaire. Everyone in attendance was captivated by her energy, humor, and grace. Most amazing of all was that she was celebrating her 89<sup>th</sup> birthday!



*Betty Wall with Director Palmersheim at the first annual Military Women and Women Veterans Event.*

The Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs used this event as a kickoff for the "Iowa Women Veterans Registry," a state project in conjunction with the *Women in Military Service for America* Memorial in Washington D.C. A form to register will soon be found on IDVA's website, as well as links to the Memorial in Washington D.C. ~

## Gold Dome Award

Patrick Palmersheim was awarded the Governor's Excellence Award at the Iowa Gold Dome Awards Ceremony on November 13, 2008.

In order to receive this award, an individual must be nominated by a peer. This award is given based on the state employee's substantial contribution to their department. Director Palmersheim was nominated for completing the five-year long effort to establish the Iowa Veterans Cemetery and for his efforts to ensure the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs is an accredited organization by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

Director Palmersheim was honored along with 121 other state employees or teams. Other Gold Dome awards include an award for heroism above and beyond the employee's duties and for after-office-hours volunteerism. State employees who died throughout the year are also recognized. ~



*Director Palmersheim receiving the Governor's Excellence Award from Lieutenant Governor Patty Judge.*

## \$1 million for Veterans

September marked the end of first quarter sales for the Iowa Lottery tickets specifically benefiting the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund.



Since July, ticket sales have been very strong and in early October, the Iowa Lottery transferred \$992,772.81 to the Veterans Trust Fund. Although this is a tremendous amount, the Trust Fund cannot count on this amount each quarter because sales of new tickets are always the strongest. However, even with the possibility of declining sales, it is evident that the public is supporting this cause and the goal of nearly \$3 million annually is attainable.

Remember Iowa Lottery tickets make GREAT stocking stuffers! Pick out a few veteran tickets for your loved ones. ~

## Veterans Day 2008

Veterans Day 2008 was a rainy dreary day in Des Moines that put a damper on many of the outdoor events. However, the ceremony at Veterans Memorial Auditorium was well attended, as was the Veterans job fair that was held at the same time.

The Veterans Memorial Auditorium ceremony attendees were addressed by Lt. Matthew Smith, Commanding Officer of the Naval Operational Support Center at Fort Des Moines. His motivational speech provided the crowd with a greater understanding of current naval activities and addressed his gratitude for the veterans who went before him.



*Lt. Matthew Smith at the Veterans Day event in downtown Des Moines.*



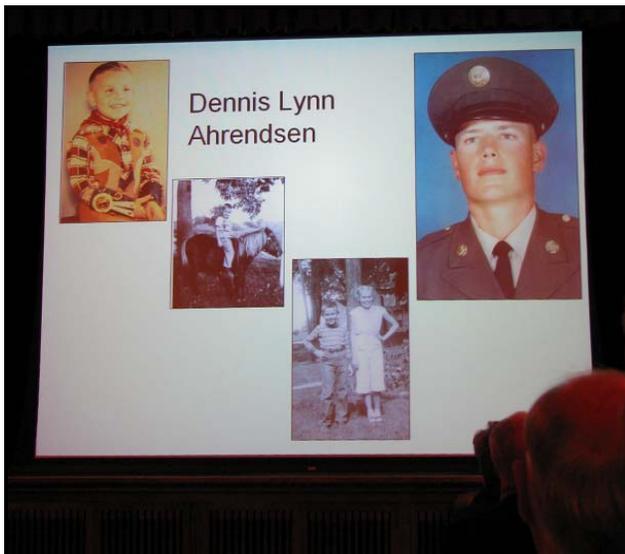
*Despite the inclement weather, many veterans attended the Veterans Job Fair at Veterans Memorial Auditorium on November 11, 2008.*

A separate event was held at Iowa State University in Ames on Veterans Day. This ceremony honored newly discovered veterans who attended Iowa State at some point and were killed in action. ISU honors student who were killed in action by engraving their name in the Gold Star Hall at the Memorial Union. This hall is the main entry way for students entering the Union.

This year there were a total of 20 veterans identified from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and Somalia. The ceremony presented detailed information regarding each veteran and many were represented by family members and members of their unit.

## Veterans Day 2008 Cont'd

In attendance was the Blaney - Miner - Ahrendsen American Legion Post 412 from Olin, Iowa. This post was partially named after Dennis Ahrendsen. Dennis, a Vietnam veteran in the Army, was among the 20 newly honored. His sister Cheryl presented a very emotional tribute to her brother and a fellow member of his unit flew in from California to be present at the ceremony. ~



*A view of the screen while Dennis Ahrendsen was being honored.*



*Gold Star Hall at Iowa State University.*

## County Office Hours and Accreditation

In less than 6 months, counties will be required to meet a minimum number of hours for their Veterans Affairs Executive Director or Administrator who is engaged in VA business as follows:

- Counties with a population of 30,000 or less - 20 hours per week
- Counties with a population of 30,001 to 60,000 - 30 hours per week
- Counties with a population of 60,001 or greater - 40 hours per week

These employees will be required to become accredited by the National Association of County Veteran Service Officers (NACVSO) by June 30, 2010, or within one year of being hired.

IDVA has been in contact with NACVSO and there will be an accreditation school held in Des Moines during the upcoming fiscal year. There will also be an opportunity in June of 2010 at the NACVSO School in Minneapolis. If you have questions regarding the new law, please call Kent Hartwig at IDVA. ~

## Memo of Understanding

On Veteran's Day, Governor Culver signed a Memorandum of Understanding that will help Iowa's soldiers' transition back into civilian life after completion of their commitments to the military. This MOU will ensure that members of the Guard and Reserve will receive the same assistance in transitioning to civilian life as their active military counterparts. The MOU establishes mutually agreed upon expectations and will foster a good working relationship between those who signed the document.

This MOU, along with Governor Culver, was signed by IDVA, the Iowa National Guard, Iowa Workforce Development, Veterans Employment Training Services, VA Medical Centers, VA Regional Office, the Iowa Association of County Veteran Affairs, and Employer Support of Guard Reserve. ~

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