

# IOWA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS



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## Summer 2010

*"My promise to these soldiers is,  
you take care of your duties, you focus.  
We'll keep the porch light on.  
And a year from now we'll be here for  
a more important event: to welcome you home."*

*— Iowa National Guard Brig. Gen Timothy Orr*



Members of the Iowa National Guard prepare to leave for Afghanistan.  
(Photo: John Gaps, III, *Des Moines Register*)

## Upcoming Events

### ...from the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs

A big thanks to Lt. Col. Todd Jacobus, National Guard representative to the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs, for diligently compiling a list of upcoming events to "ensure that each of the Commissioners and the organizations they represent, and the State Leadership, have situational awareness of veteran events in Iowa." To submit information for future events, please send details to Todd at: [todd.jacobus@us.army.mil](mailto:todd.jacobus@us.army.mil). For an electronic copy of the most recent list, please contact Todd or Jill Joseph at [Jill.Joseph@iowa.gov](mailto:Jill.Joseph@iowa.gov).

## Thank You to VFW Post 738

Another big thank you goes to Des Moines VFW Post 738 for going beyond the call by providing Honor Guards for services at the Iowa Veterans Cemetery. Post 738 is always willing to volunteer in any way they can. Our gratitude for their service to fellow veterans is enormous. Visit their website: <http://www.vfwpost738.com/index.htm>.

◆◆◆ Iowa Veterans Cemetery is also in a need of several teams that could volunteer from time to time for gun volleys. This is another volunteer service that is frequently provided by VFW Post 738, but obviously there are times they unable to do so. The Marine Corps League and other veteran organizations are welcome to volunteer.

## Iowa Veterans Cemetery Update

The Iowa Veterans Cemetery reports that through August 2010 they have:

Applications on file:	4,300	<i>In Memory of</i> markers:	22
Interments thru August 23:	619	States represented:	25
Dependents interred:	86		

There are many more internments scheduled throughout the late summer and early fall months.

## Veterans Mental Health Task Force Report 2010

The Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs and the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs convened the Iowa Veterans Mental Health Task Force 2009-2010 to identify critical issues and barriers within the veterans' mental health and substance abuse systems, and to develop recommendations to improve behavioral health services to Iowa veterans. It is the Task Force's intent to not only address the behavioral health challenges that are specific to Iowa veterans, but to also strongly urge the federally-elected officials and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs leadership to be aware of issues and strategies to improve behavioral health care access and services to veterans across the country.

The resulting report has been provided to Iowa's state and federal elected officials, to the leadership of the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs, the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. In addition, this report will be disseminated electronically to a broad group of veterans stakeholders, including other state departments of veterans affairs, state agency staff in Iowa, Iowa county boards of supervisors, county veterans service officers, veterans service organization leadership, behavioral health organizations, primary care organizations, trade associations, members of Iowa's judicial and legal systems, and other interested stakeholders.

To request an electronic copy, please email your request to: [Jill.Joseph@iowa.gov](mailto:Jill.Joseph@iowa.gov).

## News Briefs

### Diabetic Peripheral Neuropathy and Vietnam Veterans

Veterans who suffered in the jungles of South Vietnam are generally aware of the many disorders that are presumptive to Agent Orange exposure. "Boots on ground" Vietnam veterans who develop Type II Diabetes, Ischemic Heart Disease, Parkinson's disease, or myeloma, for example, should apply immediately for a service connected disability due to exposure to Agent Orange.

One of the most common presumptive conditions associated with Agent Orange exposure is Type II Diabetes. If you are diagnosed with this disease, please consult with the Veterans Service Officer in your county and apply for your deserved benefits. A service connection will provide you with medical care at a VA facility and a monthly stipend.

Unfortunately, many Vietnam veterans stop there – not realizing that the tingling and pain in their legs, feet and arms are conditions directly related to their diabetes. Diabetic Peripheral Neuropathy (DPN) is a serious condition that damages nerve fibers due to prolonged exposure to high amounts of glucose in

the bloodstream. DPN often causes intense pain, frequently described as aching, tingling, burning; it also causes numbness of the feet, a condition that results in serious foot problems due to nerve damage.

A diagnosis of Peripheral Neuropathy, when coupled with Type II Diabetes, can lead to additional compensation from the VA. Again, if you believe you have this disorder, you should visit a physician and seek treatment, followed by a visit to your county VA office to apply for additional benefits.

Recently, Governor Chet Culver issued a proclamation declaring August 12, 2010 as Iowa Diabetic Peripheral Neuropathy Awareness and Action Day. The proclamation also recognized the efforts of the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs, the Iowa Association of County Commissions of Veterans Affairs and the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs for their efforts to highlight the effects of DPN and the availability of treatment and compensation for this secondary disorder.



## Final Honor Flights

This month, more than 600 World War II veterans from Iowa made their way to Washington D.C. Two groups of Iowa veterans were flown to the nation's capital this month to see the World War II Memorial.

Hy-Vee Food Stores and Casey's General Stores jointly sponsored an Honor Flight that carried about 350 World War II veterans from Des Moines to Washington, D.C. on August 17<sup>th</sup>.

A second group of more than 300 veterans left Thursday, August 19<sup>th</sup>. Their flight was sponsored by developer and World War II veteran Bill Knapp. Knapp himself had not yet seen the World War II monument.

Both groups participated in a parade and dinner the afternoon and evening before their one-day visit to

the National Mall, Arlington Cemetery, and other sites.

A parade carried the Hy-Vee/Casey's group from the Holiday Inn on Fleur Drive through the Iowa State Fairgrounds and on to Prairie Meadows in Altoona for dinner. A similar parade was held on Wednesday afternoon to honor veterans on Knapp's Honor Flight.

The August 19<sup>th</sup> flight is the last Honor Flight that will take WW II veterans to Washington. Over 2,000 veterans from central and western Iowa have been brought to Washington as part of the Honor Flight program.

The World War II Memorial was erected in Washington, D.C. in 2004. The monument honors the 400,000 Americans killed in the war and the 16 million who served.

## Iowa's Fallen Heroes

Spc. Christopher W. Opat, 29, of Lime Springs, Iowa, died June 15, 2010 while serving duty in Baqubah, Iraq. His death stemmed from injuries suffered in a noncombat incident.



Opat was the son of Leslie Opat Sr. of Lime Springs, and Mary Opat of Cresco. He is survived by three brothers and two sisters.

Chris graduated from Crestwood High School in 2000, then earned an Associate degree from Iowa Lakes Community College in Emmetsburg. He was presently assigned to Troop D, 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron, 14<sup>th</sup> Calvary regiment, 3<sup>rd</sup> Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA.

Christopher loved the Army and was serving his third tour of duty for Iraqi Freedom at the time of his death.

Burial was in Our Lady of Lourdes Cemetery in Elma. Military services were conducted by members of the Iowa Military Funeral Honors Unit.



Capt. David Wisniewski, age 31, died on July 2, 2010, of wounds sustained on June 9 while piloting a U.S. Air Force Black Hawk helicopter near Forward Operating Base Jackson, Afghanistan.

Wisniewski, formerly of Moville, is the son of Chet and Beverly Wisniewski, and brother of Craig and Matt.

Wisniewski graduated from Woodbury Central Community School District in Moville before entering the United States Air Force Academy and flight school. He graduated in 2002 with a Bachelor of Science degree in civil engineering. During his eight-year Air Force career, Wisniewski logged more than 1,500 flight hours and deployed seven times, four to Iraq and three to Afghanistan. He flew 289 combat hours and saved 240 lives.

"In one day, Dave was key in saving 40 people during the largest single mass casualty mission in Regional Command South," said Lt. Col. Thomas Dorl, commander of the 66<sup>th</sup> RQS. "This was no small feat, as he braved enemy action and flew into a hot landing zone three times to save people."



His awards and decorations include the Purple Heart for his service June 23, the Air Medal with two oak leaf clusters, and the Air Force Commendation Medal with one oak leaf cluster. Capt. David Wisniewski was buried with military honors in Arlington National Cemetery on August 23, 2010.

## Spotlight on Iowa Veterans Partners: MacKenzie Highlanders Pipes & Drums of Des Moines



The MacKenzie Highlanders Pipes and Drums state on their webpage that, [our] "mission... is to acknowledge and support Iowa's active and reserve military units, law enforcement agencies, and fire departments. The MacKenzie Highlanders gratefully acknowledge the service and sacrifice of these dedicated men and women." We at the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs and the Iowa Veterans Cemetery know this to be a very humble understatement! Rarely is there a military event or patriotic observance that does not include at least one of the MacKenzie bagpipers or drummers, and never do they fail to stir our emotions and heighten our sense of patriotism.

"Tom Coulson was the first Pipe Major of the MacKenzie Highlanders Pipes & Drums. He was a piping student of the "legendary Pipe Major, William Collie Ross, M.V.O., M.B.E. (1878-1958). Beginning in 1975, Coulson instructed members of the MacKenzie Highlanders in the art of Highland Piping and Scottish Regimental Parade Protocol."

Current members of the Highlanders include: Jim Jorgenson, Steve Layton, pipes; Bobby Mohr, Steve Moeckly, and Duff McFadden, drums. Duff has been in Iraq since November of 2009, and we look forward to his return. To view a video performance go to: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pf7USOIG-es>. Visit their homepage: <http://clanpiper.com/MacKenzie.html>. See the following page for another inspirational glimpse about the role bagpipers have held as soldiers and patriots.

**"...using music to honor those people who protect us."  
— Steve Layton**



## In Memory of Bill Millin, World War II Scottish Bagpiper

On August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2010, the *New York Times* reported that Bill Millin, “a Scottish bagpiper who played high-land tunes as his fellow commandos landed on a Normandy beach on D-Day,” died on Wednesday, August 18, 2010. He was 88.

Born in Glasgow, Millin’s actions were later immortalized in the film, “The Longest Day.” Mr. Millin was a 21-year-old private in Britain’s First Special Service Brigade when his unit landed on the strip of coast the allies code-named “Sword Beach,” at the eastern end of the invasion front chosen by the Allies for the landings on June 6, 1944. “I shall never forget hearing the skirl of Bill Millin’s pipes,” one of the commandos, Tom Duncan, said years later. “As well as the pride we felt, it reminded us of home, and why we were fighting there for our lives and those of our loved ones.”

Pipers had traditionally been used in battle by Scottish and Irish soldiers; however, the British Army had restricted the use of bagpipes by the time of the Second World War. Nevertheless, on D-Day Millin was ordered to play.

Millin said he found out later, after meeting Germans who had manned guns above the beach, that they didn’t shoot him “because they thought I was crazy.”

One estimate holds that about 4,400 Allied troops died in the first 24 hours of the landings on Normandy, about two-thirds of them Americans.

For more information on Bill Millin, read the *NY Times* article:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/20/world/europe/20millin.html>

There is also a moving audio piece found here:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-devon-11011884>

And, of course, what would an article be without a Youtube video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B4WZwz2C72M&feature=related>



*Landing on Sword Beach. Piper Bill Millin is in the foreground;  
Lord Lovat, on the right of the column, wades through the water*



SEPTEMBER 8-12, 2008  
Iowa City, Iowa

The TEE Tournament is hosted annually by the Iowa City VA Medical Center with support from more than 250 VA and community volunteers. Nearly 200 veterans have registered to participate this year, making the 2010 Tournament the largest ever in the event's history. Those participating come from across the United States, and include veterans from WW II to Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

This is the 17<sup>th</sup> year of the tournament, and this year the event will be held at the Riverside Casino and Golf Resort in Riverside, Iowa, along with four other area golf courses.

The National Veterans TEE Tournament came to life as the brainchild of several employees of the Iowa City Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center and two visually impaired veterans from Iowa who were attending the 1993 National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic. This tournament is to provide legally blind and eligible disabled veterans an opportunity to develop new skills and strengthen their self esteem through adaptive golf and bowling events. Each year, the TEE Tournament uses a therapeutic format to promote rehabilitation, fellowship and camaraderie among participants. New activities this year include kayaking and horseshoes.

Participation is open to male and female military veterans who are legally blind or have orthopedic amputations, use wheelchairs for mobility, or who have been through the GIVE (Golf for Injured Veterans Everywhere) Program. Participants must register and complete the necessary forms to participate in the games.

All participants and their companions **must submit a completed registration form**. The applications must be complete and include all fees to be considered. There is a \$75 registration fee per veteran participant. Please make check or money order payable to Iowa City VAMC/TEE Tournament. **Please do not send cash**. If you need additional information or have questions, please contact Kirt Sickels, VA Medical Center, 601 Highway 6 West, Iowa City at (319) 339-7104 or (319) 338-2618, or Susan Varcie, Public Affairs Coordinator, VA Medical Center, at (734) 845-3706 or (734) 417-6260, [susan.varcie@va.gov](mailto:susan.varcie@va.gov).

[http://www.iowacity.va.gov/National\\_Veterans\\_TEE\\_Tournament.asp](http://www.iowacity.va.gov/National_Veterans_TEE_Tournament.asp)



## Stand Down 2010 FOR HOMELESS VETERANS

For Men & Women Who Served In The Armed Forces

**When:**

**September 16, 17 & 18, 2010**

Veterans Status Verified At Check-In



**Registration Required:**

Thursday 4:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Friday 7:00 am - 12:00 Noon

**Where:**

**Q.C.C.A. Expo Center**

2621 - 4th Avenue

Rock Island, Illinois 61201

**What:**

**SERVICES:** Food, Clothing, Haircuts, Showers, Medical, Eye Testing, Human Services, Legal Aid, VA, Employment Assistance, Hearing Van, Social Security, VAC's, Salvation Army, Goodwill, Employment Services, Vet Center, Housing Authority & More! Participants welcome overnight.

**To:** *Donate:* 309-269-2012 Mike Malmstrom  
*Volunteer:* 309-738-7958 Betty Dickinson  
*Support:* 563-320-9887 Sherri Koob

# Homeless Veterans Stand Down

*for veterans who are homeless or at risk of being homeless*



Friday,  
September 10  
2010

*beginning September 10<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m.  
ending Sunday, September 12<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 p.m.*



Iowa State Capitol Grounds at East 13<sup>th</sup> & East Walnut  
Des Moines, Iowa

**Free services** include meals, haircuts, clothing, showers, medical screening, job assistance, legal services, and sleeping quarters. A Veterans Claims Officer will be present to answer questions.

**Need a Ride?** During Stand Down operating hours, you may contact the VA Central Iowa Health Care System: (515) 669-3732

**Sponsored by:** AMVETS, American Legion, VFW

**Participants:** Central Iowa Shelter Services, VA Central Iowa Health Care System, Primary Health Care, Des Moines Vet Center, YMCA, 180 Degrees, Iowa WorkForce Development, VA Regional Office, Social Security Administration, Wells Fargo, US Cellular, Iowa Coalition for Housing and Homeless, IRS, TAS, DAV, Wal-Mart, Park Avenue Christian Church, Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs.

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