



STILL SERVING

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ANDREWS RETIREE OFFICE RELOCATING

Volunteers manning 11th Wing Retiree Activities Offices (RAO) at Joint Base Andrews (JBA) and Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling (JBAB) face new challenges in the new year. However, according to Col. John Moser, RAO director, “like our credo, we remain Still Serving.” The new William A. Jones III headquarters building at Andrews opened last year. Demolition of the former “head shed,” dating back to the old Air Force Systems Command in the “50s, began last month. The Andrews RAO was a tenant in the building since the ‘80s. The 11th Wing designated new space for the RAO in the former base credit union building, in the Andrews shopping complex (Building 1682) near the base theater. However, required alterations will not make it available until mid-year. For a time, the RAO volunteers faced homelessness. But again, the active force saved the day. A “temporary modular building,” commonly called a trailer, ensures uninterrupted service to area military retirees until the new office is ready. At press time plans called for the trailer to be placed at Colorado Ave and D Street, west of the shopping complex. Equally important were efforts to retain the same telephone number – 301 981-2726. If you’re planning to stop by, you might want to call ahead. Unchanged is an important outlet for military retiree information and assistance. On the internet, the JBA website’s link to “Retirees” is an unlimited source of data for the retiree community. Progress on the new office space is the newest entry. Also, the 11th Wing’s other RAO at Bolling remains open in Room 112, JBAB headquarters. The office number is 202 767-5244. Recorders at both offices make them accessible 24/7.

COUNCIL CHAIRS REPORT TO CHIEF

The co-chairs of the Air Force Retiree Council, Lt. Gen. Steven Polk and CMSAF Rod McKinley, have scheduled the council’s annual meeting for May 8-11 at the Air Force Personnel Center, Randolph AFB, Tex. Topping the agenda will be a debriefing of a meeting with Gen. Nathan Schwartz, Air Force Chief of Staff, to discuss issues affecting



Lt Gen Polk

retired military members. Primary concern continues to be health care. The council supports: reasonable Tricare fee increases, not exceeding cost-of-living increases; full funding of the Defense Health Plan; and legislation to provide adequate reimbursement for Tricare and Medicare providers. “We received positive feedback from General Schwartz and Doctor (Lt. Gen. Charles B.) Green, Air Force Surgeon General,” said General Polk. Also, of interest to council members is the future of the Air Force retiree program in the face of severe budget cuts. The Retiree Services staff at Randolph AFB has been cut to two people, serving the council’s 18 representatives, 680,000 retirees, 113,000 survivors and the Survivor Benefit



CMSAF McKinley

Program. “Our volunteers staff 102 Retiree Activities Offices around the world,” said Chief McKinley. “They are the epitome of our ‘Still Serving’ motto, and we can always use more.” The council is seeking nominations to replace two

upcoming vacancies. Col. William Graham of Area X (Florida, Puerto Rico, Panama) and Col. Sanford Rader of Area XIII (New England, N. J., N. Y., Pa.) complete their terms this year. CMSgt. Danny G. Holwerda, Grand Forks AFB, N.D., will begin a four-year term, replacing the late Lt. Col. Larry Phillips, Area V representative (Ia., Minn., Neb., the Dakotas and Wis.). CMSgt. Chuck Lucas, Springfield, Va., is the Area XII representative (Del., D.C., Md., N.Va.). His term ends next year. He can be reached at the Retiree Activities Office, Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling.

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

By Col. (Ret.) John Moser, Director, Retiree Activities Office



Colonel Moser

When I accepted the task of handling RAOs at JBAB and JBA I assumed it would be easy — certainly not time consuming — and fun. I was wrong on all counts. One surprise was the move of the Andrews RAO, due to demolition of its parent structure. And to compound the issue, the move — and all it entailed — was scheduled during the Christmas holiday period. We are now in temporary space. To the best of my calculations, we shall stay there until mid-year when we move into a portion of the old Credit Union Building. AND....furthermore, we are facing one of the worst funding crises that the USAF has ever experienced. Elsewhere in *Still Serving*, you will read how the Air Force Retiree Program has been hit by budget cuts at the Personnel Center at Randolph AFB, Tex. As a former planner, I am convinced that all cuts are going to dribble downward and that the RAOs will suffer from this non-availability of funding, primarily in FY 2013 (starting this October). Many RAOs have cut back on mailing their newsletters, switching to electronic access. My take — worst case scenario — *Still Serving* could be discontinued because of funding. This would save tens of thousands of dollars, primarily in mailing costs. We would continue availability on the net, with efforts to add outlets. This would permit us to apprise you of happenings as they affect us. That must be a fallback position. Another economy move would be the amalgamation of our Retiree Days, currently held separately. Several Andrews locations are under consideration for a joint gathering. I hope to be able to give you more specific information in the June *Still Serving*. I wish I had better news for you. There is some optimism. Your RAOs remain alive and thriving. However, volunteers are always welcome, particularly at a time when the Air Force needs all the help it can get to survive the current crunch. Our phone numbers are: JBAB, 202 767-5244; JBA, 301 981-2726. We are available Monday through Friday, 1000 to 1500 hours, and we'd love to have you join us.

TO DECAL OR NOT TO DECAL

Department of Defense vehicle registration and accompanying windshield decals continue to challenge local base commanders. Several years ago the Air Force announced it was discontinuing the practice. It was explained that since entry to Air Force installations require presentation of a valid DoD identification card, a decal is redundant and an unnecessary security cost. The logic made sense at such sites as Malmstrom AFB, Mont., Minot AFB, N.Dak., and Ellsworth AFB, S. Dak. But it resulted in much static in cities with multi-service installations such as Washington, Norfolk, Va., San Antonio and Denver, among others. Prior to joint basing, a vehicle without a decal was turned around at the Navy's Anacostia gate, only to enter less than a mile away at Bolling's Arnold gate. With the establishment of Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling, hosted by the Navy, decals are a must at all entry points. Likewise, DoD decals eased entries at other military sites in the area. Without a decal, a visitor's permit was required. The Army has authorized base commanders to eliminate base registration and decals if they view the security measures as redundant. It estimates that eliminating decals at all bases would save \$256,000 annually. The military ID card remains your key to success. Don't leave home without it.

Quote of Note

"I reject the comparison of military to civilian retirement and I am adamantly opposed to changing the retirement benefits for those who are currently on active duty. We will undoubtedly have to change our retirement system in the future to make it affordable, but we have made a commitment to those currently serving, and I aim to keep it."

Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

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DBIBS SECURITY IN USE AT ANDREWS

Joint Base Andrews Naval has joined many Department of Defense installations using the Defense Biometric Identification System (DBIDS) as a force protection enhancement tool. DBIDS is a force protection and identity management program to manage personnel, property and installation access. It is designed to verify access authorization of personnel entering military installations by use of machine-based authentication technologies and fingerprint identification. This program registers personnel entitled to recurring and unescorted access to military installations. Andrews controls base access through a centralized database of biometric details including a photograph, identifying information such as height and weight and fingerprints. Every DoD ID Card holder desiring access to Andrews needs to be personally registered. This includes military, retirees, DoD contractors, dependents, and civilians. To register, visit the Visitor Control Center in front of the Main Gate. It's open Monday - Friday 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Registration takes less than 10 minutes. You need only to bring your DoD ID card. For more information, call the Visitors Center, 301 981-0689.

CHARTER SCHOOL AT ANDREWS - Civic and military leaders, students, teachers and parents attended the grand opening of the Imagine Andrews Public Charter School at Joint Base Andrews. Its mission is to create a challenging learning environment for students in the Andrews community while addressing the specific needs of the child. More than 260 students will acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to become successful scholars and responsible citizens through effective classroom instruction. "This day has been a long time coming," said Col. Ken Rizer, JBA commander. "This beautiful building and the amazing teachers, administrators, and students who occupy it are testament to a collaborative labor of love." With more than 500 service members continuously deployed, Andrews was in need of a school that could provide more than just an exceptional academic environment, he added. Imagine Andrews also welcomes non-military families, and offers student enrollment based on a lottery system in which parents apply and applicants are chosen, based on space availability, at random. For more information on the school, visit www.imagineandrews.org.

PANETTA CUTS RIBBON - Defense Secretary Leon Panetta cut the ribbon of the new Walter Reed National Military Medical Center at Bethesda, Md.. The hospital merges the now-closed Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington and the Bethesda National Naval Medical Center. The new Walter Reed is a place of healing and miracles, Panetta said. It will serve more than 1 million patients from those severely wounded in the nation's wars, to military families to retirees. Walter Reed has the latest equipment and some of the most-innovative treatments, he said. The 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Act mandated the merger. The tri-service facility, staffed by Army, Navy and Air Force personnel, is commanded by Dr. (Rear Adm.) Alton L. Stocks.



Secretary Panetta

EXPANSION AT ARLINGTON NC - Arlington National Cemetery's first major construction project in eight years is a 20,000-niche columbarium, which will extend the life of the cemetery to 2024. Construction on the ninth columbarium at ANC begins this month with a completion date in 2013. The new columbarium will be almost the length of two football fields. The cemetery also plans to expand its grounds on two sides by another 70 acres. That will further extend the cemetery's ability to handle inurnments, burials and possibly mausoleums out to the 2050s. Officials also noted two other expansion opportunities. One project is a 30-acre combination of land acquired from Fort Myer and the National Park Service and existing ANC land that will increase in-ground and niche burial capability. A second expansion includes a 40-acre plot presently occupied by the Navy Annex on the south side of the cemetery.

TAX ASSISTANCE OFFICES OPEN - Military members in need of assistance in filing their 2011 federal income tax returns have several options at area military bases. Included are legal offices at Joint Base Andrews and Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling. Assistance is available through April 16. Appointments are required. At Andrews, the tax center is located in the legal office's temporary location, Building 1602, 1602 Brookley Drive. Call 301 981-2042 for more information. The Navy legal office at JBAB offers a self-service center in Room 340 of Building P-20, just inside the main gate. Supervisors are on hand to assist members in completing their forms. For more information, call 202 767-5297.

TEAMS WORK ‘UNTIL THEY ARE HOME’

Teams from Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, work around the clock to provide the fullest possible accounting of America’s missing military members, and living up to their command’s motto, “Until they are home.” Teams are currently on missions in South Korea, Laos, China, Vietnam and



Germany. JPAC’s seeks the fullest possible accounting for about 84,000 U.S. service members from the nation’s wars. The vast majority of these – 74,184 – are from World War II. Others include 1,680 from Vietnam, 7,979 from Korea, and 127 from the Cold War. Despite the challenges, JPAC has had a solid track record of success. Since 2003, its 400 military and civilian specialists have identified more than 750 missing Americans. Combined with efforts of its predecessor units dating back to the 1970s, it has identified close to 2,000 service members. Once remains or other personal artifacts such as dog tags are repatriated to JPAC, experts at the Central Identification Laboratory – the world’s largest forensic anthropology lab – use the most advanced science available to match them to a specific missing service member. Among

tools used is mitochondrial DNA, which includes unique signatures from the maternal line and helps the JPAC staff make identifications. It works with the Armed Forces DNA identification Laboratory in Rockville, Md., which runs DNA sequences and provides a system of double-checks for findings. The Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office in Washington provides policy guidance and oversight for its missions. Each service has an office that works directly with families of the missing throughout the accounting process.

FLYING TIGERS MEET - A Flying Tigers reunion at MacDill AFB, Fla., brought together pilots who have flown attack and rescue aircraft bearing the infamous shark’s teeth for the past 70 years. Five of only a handful of the remaining original American Volunteer Group pilots who defended China in World War II, met with pilots who have flown in conflicts from Vietnam to Afghanistan. Aircraft have evolved from the P-40 Warhawk, which lacked gun sights or bomb racks, to today’s A-10C Thunderbolt II. Lt. Gen. Claire Lee Chennault formed and led the legendary Flying Tigers. Many predicted they would not last three weeks in combat. In seven months over Burma, China, Thailand, and French Indo-China, they destroyed 299 Japanese planes with another 153 probables. They lost 12 P-40s in combat and 61 on the ground. A guest speaker was retired Chinese air force Maj. Gen. Fred Wu-O Chiao, who trained and flew with Chennault. Like most of the other remaining Tigers, he is in his mid-90s. Last year, a group of 75th FS members from Moody AFB, Ga., attended the funeral of Maj. Gen. John Alison at Arlington National Cemetery. A World War II ace, General Alison demonstrated the P-40’s abilities to Chennault and Chinese officials. He later commanded the 75th FS and helped establish Air Force Special Operations.

RETIREE SERVED 46 YEARS - The Air Force retiree rolls grow each month. However, a newcomer last November warranted some attention. Maj. Gen Alfred K. Flowers, 63, stepped down as the military’s longest active-duty member – 46 years. His last assignment was deputy assistant secretary for budget, responsible for more than \$119 billion. General Flowers began his career as a supply warehouseman in 1965 at Grand Forks AFB, N.D. After seven years in accounting assignments and his selection as a master sergeant in 1978, he completed Officer Training School as a distinguished graduate. Fiscal assignments dominated the next 32 years. Looking back to his childhood in Trenton, N.C., General Flowers said “I came in because I had to. I stayed because I wanted to...and if I had to do it all over again, I’d do it the same way.” General Flowers and his wife, Ida, have moved to San Antonio. Among other things, he wants to help build an enlisted heritage museum at Lackland AFB.



MGen Flowers

DEEP FREEZE ENDS - Air Force concludes Operation Deep Freeze this month, airlifting personnel and supplies from Christchurch, New Zealand, to McMurdo Station, Antarctica. This is the 55th year for Deep Freeze, which was originally led by the Navy, the 23rd year for the New York National Guard’s support and the 11th year that the Air Force has flown C-17s to McMurdo. In addition to Air Force missions, the Defense Department’s support for the Antarctic program includes Coast Guard icebreakers and the Navy Cargo Handling Battalion One, along with the military’s Surface Deployment and Distribution Command.

DFAS HAS NEW MONTHLY STATEMENTS



Military retirees can receive a monthly electronic summary of their pay, deductions and benefits using myPay. The eRAS statement includes information about allotments, income tax withholdings, direct deposit information and a Survivor Benefit Plan counter that shows how much longer they have to pay premiums. Previously, the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) issued an annual RAS each December or when a retiree's pay, benefits or other account information changed. The new eRAS was created in response to customer requests. To view your eRAS, log into myPay at <https://mypay.dfas.mil>, the online account management system for military members and DoD employees. If you do not have current user IDs or passwords for myPay, you can resolve that at www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary. Link to "myPay Login Instructions." Retirees may register e-mail addresses with myPay and receive e-mail notification every month when their eRAS is available. It also allows DFAS to email temporary passwords when one is forgotten or if the retiree suspects his password has been compromised. myPay is available 24/7 and changes take effect in 3-5 business days. Nearly 1 million military retirees are currently enrolled.

DIVORCE REPORTS NEEDED - Retirees who divorce need to update their marital status in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) within 30 days of the effective date. A divorce may be reported to any Department of Defense identification card issuing facility by presenting the final decree of divorce or dissolution. Delayed reporting and incorrect DEERS information can affect a retiree's or former spouse's ability to access services at base facilities, or lead to denied medical care or unpaid medical claims. Also, if former spouses continue to use benefits and privileges to which they are no longer entitled, the retiree can incur a debt for Tricare medical and pharmacy benefits. The Total Force Service Center (TFSC) at Randolph AFB, Tex., determines eligibility for former spouses who might qualify for continued benefits under the Uniformed Services Former Spouse Protection Act. Either the former spouse or retiree may contact the TFSC at 1 800 525-0102 about eligibility for former spouse ID card benefits and privileges.

NEW NOTIFICATION FORM - Survivors can now use a DFAS "fast form" (9221) to report the death of a retiree on the Internet rather than by phone. The form can be processed quicker than faxed or mailed forms and they save paper and postage costs. If a survivor doesn't receive confirmation of receipt from DFAS within 48 hours of submitting the form, they should call 1 800 321-1080. The form can be completed by a surviving family member or with the help of a casualty assistance representative. Submitting the form initiates the same actions a DFAS customer care center representative provides. The retiree's account will be suspended to avoid release of monthly payments; a claim form will be sent to the retiree's arrears-of-pay beneficiary; those enrolled in the Survivor Benefit Plan or the Retired Serviceman's Family Protection Plan will receive an annuitant care package. The notification-of-death form may only be used for reporting the death of a military retiree. Annuitant deaths must be reported to DFAS at 1 800 321-1080.

DIRECT DEPOSIT QUICKER, SAFER - Having a paycheck electronically deposited into a bank account is the quickest and safest way to be paid. Nevertheless, every month more than 20,000 military retirees paid by the Defense Finance and Accounting Service receive a paper check in the mail at a cost of about \$2.2 million. Delivery is a week sooner if enrolled in direct deposit. It can take six weeks to replace a lost or stolen check. Starting direct deposit is easy using myPay, the online account management system for military retirees and annuitants. It is available 24/7. Go to <https://mypay.dfas.mil> and click on "Forgot or Need a Password" to get started. Members unable to use myPay should submit requests for direct deposit by mail or fax. Changes take approximately 30 days to process. The Direct Deposit Enrollment Form (SF 1199A) is available at www.dfas.mil/dfas/retiredmilitary/forms.html). Mail to: DFAS U.S. Military Retired Pay, P.O. Box 7130, London, KY 40742-7130 or fax to 1 800 469-6559.

CURRENT BENEFICIARY VITAL - The money earned but not paid in the final month of a retiree's life goes to whoever is listed as the arrears-of-pay (AOP) beneficiary. DFAS will contact this person to assist in closing out the retiree's account. Often the retiree has failed to update his designation, creating unnecessary family difficulties. The current AOP beneficiary is listed on the back page of the Retiree Account Statement. Retirees can choose anyone to be their AOP beneficiary and DFAS will respond accordingly. If they do not designate someone, payment of any money that remains in their retirement account can be greatly delayed. It can take many months for DFAS to identify who is legally entitled to the final payment. Changes in designation must be provided on DD Form 2894, available at www.dfas.mil/dfas/retiredmilitary. Complete instructions are included. Those without computers, call 1 800 321-1080 for assistance.

SHORT SERVINGS

COLA Received - For the first time since 2009, Air Force retirees and annuitants this year are among recipients enjoying a 3.6 percent increased cost-of-living adjustment in their monthly checks. The annual adjustment is tied to inflation, measured by the Consumer Price Index.

AFRH Chief Confirmed - Steven G. McManus, acting Chief Operating Officer of the Armed Forces Retirement Home for almost a year, received DoD approval for the position. He is responsible for campuses in Washington and Gulfport, Miss. An Army retiree with 25 years' service, he served in numerous leadership positions at the Washington home since 2002.



Thunderbird Formation

T-Birds in OC - Ocean City, Md., is the nearest location to see the Air Force Thunderbirds this year, June 9-10. Diehard fans of the Air Force Air Demonstration team may also consider a trip to Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., May 12-13. Assigned to the Air Combat Command, the team is in its 59th season, the 30th flying F-16 Fighting Falcon aircraft.

Postage Fees Increased - The cost of mailing a "penny post card" doubled in 1952. Since last month, the same card costs 32 cents to mail. First class stamps cost 45 cents, a one cent bump. Letters to Canada and Mexico jumped 5 cents to 85 cents, while letters to other international destinations soared 7 cents to \$1.05.

British Museum Hits 70 - The American Air Museum in Britain marked the 70th anniversary of the United States' entry into World War II. An "Honor and Educate" initiative at Duxford creates a virtual "Museum without Walls" to educate U. S. students about the role of American airmen in World War II. More than 30,000 American airmen gave their lives flying from British bases.

Back to Daylight - Seems like only yesterday we moved the clocks back to standard time. Actually it was November 6. But, sure 'nuff, come March 11, it's time to advance those same clocks an hour to daylight saving time. Consider this your first warning.

Youngest Chaplain at JBA - Joint Base Andrews' Chaplain (Capt.) Daniel Kamzan, 27, is the youngest Air Force chaplain. "There are only 22 people in the world with my job," he said. "I'm so blessed to be here, I'm not taking this opportunity for granted." Chaplain Kamzan says it "has been an awesome career choice. I'm excited to see where this job takes me in the future."



Chaplain Kamzan

AFAS Charity Ball - The annual Air Force Aid Society Charity Ball will be held March 24 at the Waterford in Springfield, Va. For more information on the black tie event, go to www.airforcecharityball.org.

Private Astronaut - Retired Lt. Col. Keith Colmer, former director of engineering for the Air National Guard, is Richard Branson's choice to test Virgin Galactic's futuristic spaceships. Colmer moves from test flying the propeller-driven AT-6C light attack plane to testing Virgin's spaceships WhiteKnight Two and SpaceshipTwo.

Goodbye BDUs - Air Force has retired the Battle Dress Uniform (BDU). Also gone is the desert camouflage uniform, black T-shirt, black combat boots, and tan boots. The Airman Battle Uniform (ABU) is a wash-and-hang-dry design. Many BDUs were dry-cleaned. The boots do not need to be polished; they are sage green, full-grain leather with rubber heel and toe reinforcements.

Tuskegee Museum Moved - The Tuskegee Airmen Exhibit has moved into the Museum of Aviation at Robins AFB, Ga. Included is a replica of a hangar from Moton Field in Tuskegee, Ala. Organized in 1941 the Tuskegee Airmen were the first black pilots in the U.S. military.

Extra Pay Date May Affect Taxes - The 2011 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) changed pay dates, resulting in 13 pay days in 2011. Previously, when the first of the month fell on a weekend, payment was made on the first following business day. The NDAA changed payments to the last previous business day, December 30, instead of January 3. This could affect 2011 tax liability. Check with your tax advisor. There will be 12 payments this year.

VA MAILING INSURANCE DIVIDENDS

Some 733,640 veterans who have maintained their government life insurance policies will share \$200.1 million in annual dividends this year. World War II Veterans holding National Service Life Insurance (“V”) policies, the largest group receiving 2012 insurance dividend payments, will receive total payments of \$142.4 million. About 565,000 policyholders with service before 1956 will receive dividends, averaging \$252. No application to the Department of Veterans Affairs is necessary. Mailed payments began January 1 and will continue throughout the year on the policy anniversary date. Dividends vary on age, type and amount of insurance and length of time the policy has been in force. Dividends are linked to returns on investments in securities. More than 23,300 World War II-era veterans with Veterans Reopened Insurance (“J”, “JR” and “JS”) policies will receive dividends totaling \$4.6 million, averaging \$197. Some 142,600 Korean War-era veterans who have maintained Veterans Special Life Insurance (“RS” and “W”) policies will receive dividends totaling \$52.8 million, averaging \$370. Another \$300,000 in total dividends will be paid to 2,740 veterans who served after World War I until 1940 and hold U.S. Government Life Insurance (“K”) policies. Average dividend is \$197. Eligible veterans receive annual statements from VA on the status of their policies. Veterans who have questions about their policies should contact the VA insurance center at 1 800 669-8477; e-mail vainsurance@va.gov; or go to www.insurance.va.gov.



MORTGAGE INSURANCE INCREASED - The amount of Veterans Mortgage Life Insurance (VMLI) has been increased from \$90,000 to \$200,000, under the Veterans’ Benefits Act of 2010. VMLI is issued to those severely disabled veterans and service members who have received grants for specially adapted housing from VA. These grants are issued to those whose movement or vision is substantially impaired because of their disabilities. Policyholders have three options. They may decline the increase and retain their existing level of VMLI coverage and premium, accept the maximum amount of VMLI coverage for which they are eligible, or select a different amount of VMLI coverage. Coverage will increase to the maximum amount for which the policyholder is eligible unless a different level of coverage is elected. Premiums will be deducted from VA compensation checks.

NEW HEADSTONE MEDALLION - New bronze medallions are available from VA to attach to existing, privately purchased headstones or markers for veterans buried in civilian cemeteries. The medallions are furnished in lieu of a government headstone or marker for those veterans whose death occurred after November 1, 1990. Eligible veterans buried in private cemeteries are entitled to a government grave marker or the new medallion, but not both. Each medallion features the image of a folded burial flag adorned with laurels and is inscribed with the word “veteran” at the top and the branch of service at the bottom. Next of kin will receive the medallion with instructions for the cemetery staff to affix it to the headstone. Full information is available at www.cem.va.gov or 1 800 827-1000.

CRISIS LINE AVAILABLE - The Veterans Crisis Line, a toll-free, confidential resource, connects veterans in crisis and their families and friends with Veterans Affairs caregivers. Call 1 800 273-8255 and “press 1” or chat online at www.VeteransCrisisLine.net to receive free, confidential support 24/7. The Veterans Crisis Line staff are specially trained and experienced in helping veterans of all ages and circumstances. Since its launch in 2007, the Veterans Crisis Line has answered more than 400,000 calls and is credited with more than 14,000 life-saving rescues.

HOUSING UNITS PLANNED - Maryland’s Fort Howard Medical Center is one of 25 national VA campuses selected to provide 5,300 permanent and transitional housing units for veterans. Fort Howard is located near Sparrows Point, south of Baltimore. Proposed opportunities include housing for homeless, senior and disabled veterans and their families. VA is identifying unused land and buildings in support of its goal to end veteran homelessness. Co-location of these projects at VAMCs ensures that veterans have ready access to care and treatment. More than 1,400 units are planned at Fort Howard.

MILITARY FUNERAL HONORS - Federal law mandates the rendering of military funeral honors for eligible veterans, if requested by the family. At least two representatives, one from the parent service of the decedent will perform flag folding and presentation to the next of kin and the playing of Taps. Arrangements for funeral honors must be arranged for by the funeral director upon request of the family. A Department of Defense information kit contains a military service directory for each state.

RX REFILLS A SNAP WITH HOME DELIVERY

Beneficiaries who use Tricare pharmacy home delivery get prescription medications shipped conveniently to their residence. Home delivery also gives beneficiaries the option of automatic prescription refills when their medication supply is running low. Automatic refills lower the chances of unsafe breaks in medication therapy, which can lead to emergency room visits, hospitalizations and other health care setbacks. Auto refills or reminders are especially helpful for anyone being treated for chronic, long term conditions. It also cuts down on last minute dashes to a retail pharmacy. Tricare beneficiaries can include prescriptions in the automatic refill program when they first sign up for Home Delivery, or they can go back later on to select that feature. Then, seven days before an automatic refill is scheduled for shipping, beneficiaries are reminded by email or phone that their medication supply may be running low. Unless they contact Express Scripts Inc., the Tricare pharmacy contractor, the prescription will be automatically refilled. Beneficiaries using home delivery rather than civilian retail pharmacies also save money. Copayments at retail pharmacies are three times higher for a 90 day supply of the same medication – up to \$176 more per year for a brand name prescription. Beneficiaries switching from retail to home delivery also helped the Department of Defense save \$30 million in 2010. For more information, visit www.tricare.mil/homedelivery. To sign up for home delivery, or to enroll existing home delivery prescriptions in the automatic prescription refill program, go to www.express-scripts.com/tricare or call the Tricare Member Choice Center at 877 363-1433.



INCREASED TRICARE FEES - Health care premiums for military retirees enrolling since October 1 have been increased for the first time since 1994. Annual premiums for new enrollees are \$260, up from \$230. For family coverage, the annual premium is \$520, up from \$460. Annual fees for retirees enrolled in Tricare Prime prior to last October will remain at \$230 and \$460 until October 1. Retirees in Tricare Prime have a catastrophic cap of \$3,000, and Prime co-pays are not changing. Survivors of active duty deceased sponsors and medically retired services members and their dependents are exempt from an annual increase, effective from the time they renew their enrollment or first enroll in Prime. All service members, military retirees and their eligible family members have Tricare benefits regardless of prior health conditions. Tricare provides health coverage to some 10 million active-duty personnel, retirees, reservists and their families. Its costs have jumped from \$19 billion in 2001 to \$53 billion. Attempts were made to raise premiums in recent years, but Congress bowed to resistance from veterans' groups. The nation's budget crisis changed that.

HEALTH CARE CHOICES - Military retirees who are not eligible for Medicare may be eligible for Tricare Prime, or choose Tricare Standard or Extra for their health care. If space is available, retirees can continue care in a military treatment facility (MTF) with a primary care manager, through Prime. This requires re-enrolling and paying annual fees of \$260 for an individual and \$520 for a family. Tricare Standard or Extra may be the best option if a retiree moves to a location that is not near an MTF, or where Prime is not offered. Standard is a flexible, affordable plan that gives retirees and their eligible family members a greater choice of providers, no enrollment fees, waiver of cost shares for most preventive health care services and the same catastrophic cap as Prime. Extra offers lower out-of-pocket expense if retirees use network providers. Although there is no enrollment fee for Standard and Extra, a deductible of \$150 for individuals and \$300 for a family must be met before cost-sharing begins. Under Standard and Extra, retirees retain access to pharmacy benefits through MTFs or Tricare Pharmacy Home Delivery. To learn more about home delivery, go to www.tricare.mil/homedelivery. Retirees also have the option to use the Tricare retail pharmacy network and can purchase dental coverage through the Tricare Retiree Dental Program. More information on dental coverage can be found at www.trdp.org. Certain medical and pharmacy benefits may be available to retirees from the VA.

TRICARE PROVIDERS GROWING - The Department of Defense reports a growing number of medical professionals signing up to accept Tricare, the health care plan for members of the uniformed services, retirees and their families. For 9.6 million beneficiaries worldwide, Tricare relies heavily on civilian providers to supplement the health care provided by military treatment facilities. More than 325,000 providers across the United States are in the Tricare network, with some 1 million providers accepting beneficiaries. A Defense survey shows that in Fiscal Year 2007, almost 93 percent of responding physicians in 53 areas were aware of Tricare Standard. Almost 85 percent of those physicians accepted new Standard patients. More than 2 million beneficiaries use Tricare Standard, the fee-for-service option that provides the most flexibility for patients to see any Tricare authorized provider.

MANY FAIL MEDICATION ADHERENCE

Nearly three out of four Americans do not take their medications as directed, a problem known as medication non-adherence. Tricare joins the National Consumer League (NCL) and other partners in supporting the Script Your Future campaign to encourage patients to take their medications as directed. According to the NCL, one in three Americans never fill their prescriptions and a third of hospital admissions are linked to poor adherence. This is especially true for people with chronic health conditions that can worsen quickly without proper medication use. In addition, the NCL reports that up to \$290 billion a year in medical costs can be attributed to poor medication adherence. The Script Your Health campaign's primary goal is patient education and awareness, focused on patients with three serious chronic conditions — diabetes, respiratory disease and cardiovascular disease. Messages for patients include: proper use of medication and medical devices, like asthma inhalers; strategies for making it easier to remember to take medications; communication with their doctor and pharmacist about all their over-the-counter and prescription medications; and negative health effects of poor medication adherence. The Script Your Future campaign is online at www.scriptyourfuture.org.

HELP FOR SMOKERS - The Department of Defense (DoD) encourages its military personnel — both active duty and retired — and their families to turn their backs on tobacco. DoD's tobacco cessation campaign website (www.ucanquit2.org) provides comprehensive tools and support needed to assist individuals who are ready to quit smoking. One of the featured tools on the website is Train2Quit, a support system that uses interactive components such as self-assessment questionnaires, quizzes and other activities. Individuals can create a customizable quit plan with a calendar to track progress and learn how to beat cravings, overcome weight gain and cope with the effects of nicotine withdrawal. Personal quit coaches are available on the website 24/7 to answer questions about quitting smoking and how to stay tobacco-free. A savings calculator provides motivation by showing how much extra cash is accumulated over time.

NEW BILLING PROCESS - There is a new billing process for charging third party insurers for outpatient prescription medications provided to veterans for conditions unrelated to their military service. It does not affect veterans' co-payments for prescriptions. Third party insurers of veterans are charged for the full costs of prescription medications plus an administrative fee of \$11.40, rather than the previous flat fee of \$51. Veterans, who receive prescriptions through VA for illnesses that are not related to their disabilities resulting from military service, pay a maximum of \$9 co-pay per 30-day prescription. There is no co-pay for many veterans. For information about health care benefits, call 1 877 222-8387.

PHARMACY SEARCH TOOL - Beneficiaries and providers can use the new Tricare formulary search tool to find the most up to date information about prescription medications. Once a user has identified if a drug is available, they can use the search tool to get information such as restriction on use and which tier the drug is in. As an added benefit, this tool has integrated the Prior Authorization and Medical Necessity Forms and criteria into a search engine. The search tool is available at http://pec.ha.osd.mil/formulary_search.php.

WALGREENS LETTER - Walgreens has ended its participation in the Express Scripts network for Tricare beneficiaries. Those who have a prescription on file with Walgreens may want to switch to another network pharmacy. The Walgreens charge for reimbursement was higher than Express Scripts has negotiated with all others. For assistance in transferring prescriptions, go to www.express-scripts.com/Tricare/pharmacy or call 1 877 885-6313.

TRICARE EXPANDS VACCINES – The number of preventive vaccines covered at Tricare retail network pharmacies has been expanded. Previously, most vaccines were covered only when obtained through a physician's office. Tricare covers age-appropriate vaccines recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, including the high-demand shingles vaccine, Zostavax. The expanded program covers immunizations for measles, mumps, shingles and many other preventable diseases. Beneficiaries should check ahead with the pharmacy to make sure it's part of the Tricare network and authorized to offer the vaccines without a copayment. Vaccines received through their physicians do not pay copayments for preventive care such as immunizations and recommended screenings, but usual cost shares and copayments for office visits may apply.

DECA STORES ENTER THIRD DECADE

To improve efficiency and increase taxpayer savings, Congress and the Department of Defense created the Defense Commissary Agency in 1991 by consolidating the military services' retail grocery operations into one organization. "With annual sales of nearly \$6 billion, our agency continues to save taxpayer dollars while delivering a vital military benefit," said DeCA Director Joseph H. Jeu. The commissary benefit itself is nearly 145 years old. While officers could



buy food from military storehouses as early as 1825, the modern commissary benefit dates to July 1, 1867. That's when Congress authorized the Army to sell food items, at cost, to enlisted men as well as officers. Sales initially took place at a table or counter in a warehouse. The official stock list was 82 items. As time passed, commissary facilities gradually improved. By the early 20th century, they began to resemble civilian grocery outlets both in layout and in the number of items offered for sale. Facilities have been further upgraded, more people have become eligible to enjoy the benefit, and customer savings have increased. In 1991, commissaries provided average customer savings of 20

percent when compared with local grocery chains; today, average savings are more than 30 percent. A Congressionally mandated surcharge has remained at 5 percent since 1983. DeCA has opened 94 new stores, and remodeled, renovated, upgraded and modernized 150 more. Four more new stores, replacing older facilities, are scheduled to open by the end of the year. National Guard and Reserve personnel were granted full-time commissary benefits in 2004.

FOOD STAMPS INCREASE - Food stamp purchases at military commissaries nearly tripled during the last four years, according to Defense Commissary Agency figures. The agency reported that nearly \$88 million worth of food stamps were used at commissaries in 2011, up from \$31 million in 2008. Joyce Raezer, executive director of the National Military Family Association, suspects that the majority of food stamp users are veterans who separated before retirement and members of the National Guard or reserve forces. The military started the Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance in 2001 to remove military families from the food stamp program. The program provides service members up to \$1,100 monthly, depending on household income and family size. The majority who receive the allowance are junior enlisted service members with large families. Some 500 service members qualified for the program in 2010, receiving \$1.3 million in aid. There are more than 1.4 million service members.

DIP IN SHOPLIFTING - An abundance of shoplifting prevention measures, such as closed circuit televisions, resulted in a 8.5 percent decrease in theft at Army & Air Force Exchange Service facilities last year. Reported thefts fell from 5,950 incidents to 5,444. Costs of products involved in detected cases dropped from \$655,169 to \$534,525. The Exchange, which has contributed more than \$2.4 billion to Air Force Services and Army Family & MWR programs in the past 10 years, continues to focus its efforts on reducing theft. In addition to possible disciplinary action and/or criminal prosecution, the Federal Claims Collection Act allows the Exchange to enact an administrative cost (Civil Recovery) of \$200. Further fees are dependent on the condition of recovered stolen merchandise.



BANK ON THE EXCHANGE - The Base Exchange offers free check cashing and cash back on debit transactions. Authorized shoppers can cash personal checks up to \$300 per day, per customer at no charge. Checks also are accepted up to the exact amount of any purchase. Customers are able to use their debit cards to receive up to \$50 cash back at the registers. The exchange cashes a wide variety of other checks and instruments at no charge. These include Army Emergency Relief, Air Force Aid Society and Naval Relief Society checks, U.S. insurance checks, U.S. money orders, traveler's checks, Western Union checks as well as payroll checks issued by authorized government contractors and other non-appropriated fund agencies.

STAR CARD BENEFITS - Exchange shoppers probably give little thought as to which credit card to use at checkout. Use of bank-issued cards at the exchange ultimately costs the military community millions. Last year, processing expenses for bank-issued cards used at Army & Air Force Exchange Service facilities were up 12 percent, sapping more than \$89 million from the exchange. This reduced funds annually contributed by the exchange to military services for morale, welfare and recreation programs. One way to help reduce these exchange costs is to use its Military Star card. Unlike bank cards, profits generated from use of Military Star cards are shared with military communities through contributions to quality-of-life funds. The Military Star card is accepted at all Army and Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard Exchange activities, as well as the Exchange Catalog and the Exchange Online store at www.shopmyexchange.com.

WAKE ISLAND REPORTS ‘RECORD FIND’

A comprehensive effort is being made to preserve nearly 9,000 vintage vinyl records found in a former American Forces Radio Station on Wake Island. They will be shipped to the American Forces Radio and Television Network in Alexandria, Va. Estimated value of the records is \$100,000-\$200,000. The records were cataloged and neatly organized on shelves in a small room on the second floor of the Wake Island Airfield base operations building. The door was stenciled with the name of a radio station, KEAD. A “restricted area warning” sign kept most people out of the room since the 1960s. The station closed in the ‘70s with the advent of satellite radio. Wake Island Airfield is a 1,821-acre atoll located about 2,000 miles west of Hawaii and 2,000 miles east of Japan. The records will be used to fill any gaps in the American Forces Network museum. Others will be offered to the Library of Congress and the National Archives.



RERUN ON MACY’S PARADE - No, you didn’t miss the USAF Band and USAF Honor Guard in the Macy’s Thanksgiving parade. It turns out the invitation to participate in the annual New York City extravaganza is for this year’s parade – November 22. Our notice in the October issue was based on a June announcement that an invitation had been accepted by the Air Force ceremonial groups based at Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling. Overlooked was that the invitation was issued 18 months in advance. And you thought the lines at the commissary were long.

VETERANS RETIREMENT HOMES - For more than 150 years, veteran airmen, marines, sailors and soldiers have been welcome at the Armed Forces Retirement Home’s two campuses. The communities are designed for residents to maintain an independent lifestyle in an environment designed for safety, comfort and personal enrichment. Services at Mississippi’s new Gulfport home and the campus in Washington, D.C., rival amenities found throughout the United States. For those who meet the eligibility requirements, there are no initiation or registration fees. To receive an informational brochure, contact the AFRH Marketing Office at 1 800 422-9988, or write to AFRH, PAO/Marketing, #1305, 3700 N. Capitol Street NW, Washington DC 20011-8400 or visit www.afrh.gov online.

FORT MONROE MONUMENT - Closed as a military facility by the 2005 Base Realignment Alignment Closure Commission, Fort Monroe, Va., has been named a national monument. It is the largest stone fort built in the United States. The moat-circled structure was built in the 1800s at Hampton. Its history includes Robert E. Lee overseeing construction; Edgar Allan Poe writing Annabel Lee there; Harriet Tubman a hospital nurse; and its prison held Jefferson Davis after the Civil War.

F-16 ON DISPLAY - An F-16C that formerly performed with the Air Force’s Thunderbirds flight demonstration squadron sits on permanent display outside the Thunderbirds Museum at Nellis AFB, Nev. The retired aircraft carries the Thunderbirds’ paint scheme as it appeared for the 1992 show season — the F-16’s first season in the squadron. It flew with the unit through 2008. Maintainers at Nellis removed some \$5 million in reusable parts, in addition to restoration and paint work.

HALL OF FAME SELECTIONS - The National Aviation Hall of Fame in Dayton, Ohio, selected four individuals for enshrinement this year: Geraldyn (Jerrie) Cobb, record-setting pilot and only woman to pass all of the Mercury astronaut selection tests; Keith Ferris, founder of the American Society of Aviation Artists and inventor of aircraft paint systems for military camouflage; the late Lt. Gen. Elwood R. Quesada, who helped develop and demonstrate air-to-air refueling in 1929 and first commander of Tactical Air Command; and the late Richard T. Whitcomb, an influential aeronautical researcher for innovations, like winglets, that enable aircraft to fly faster, farther, and with less fuel. Formal enshrinement will take place in the fall.

AAFES VALUABLE EMPLOYER - For the second consecutive year, the Army & Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) has been recognized by CivilianJobs.com as a Most Valuable Employer (MVE) for military members. The MVE list helps military-experienced job seekers identify top employers to target for civilian careers. MVEs are selected annually based on those employers whose recruiting, training and retention plans best serve military service members and veterans. The exchange has the dual mission of providing authorized patrons with merchandise and services and generating non-appropriated fund earnings as a supplemental source of funding for military Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs.

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RETIREE DAYS MOST INFORMATIVE

More than 700 persons attended Retiree Appreciation Day programs at Joint Base Andrews and Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling. It was the first year that the 11th Wing hosted both events. Major speakers were Maj. Gen. Darren W. McDew, commander of the Air Force District of Washington, and Col. Ken Rizer, 11th Wing commander. Col. John Moser, Retiree Activities Office director at JBA and JBAB, emceed the programs. Colonel Rizer noted that the RAO staff at JBA had been lauded in an Inspector General's review of the wing. Flu shots were provided at both events by the 779th Medical Group. Col. Rudolph Cachuela, 779th MG commander, explained ramifications of the BRAC decision to convert the Malcolm Grow Medical Center into an ambulatory medical clinic. He said with few exceptions the clinic continues to provide the same outpatient services. Those requiring inpatient treatment are referred to new area facilities at Fort Belvoir, Va., Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., or the Southern Maryland Medical Center, outside one of the base gates. At Bolling, Navy Capt. Anthony J. Calandra, commander, JBAB, allayed any fears that the hallowed history of Bolling AFB would be diminished by the Navy's lead role in joint base operations. "We aren't going to put an anchor in front of the Club and Arnold Gate will not be renamed Nimitz Gate," he said. General McDew praised the Air Force heritage provided by retiree members and encouraged them to serve as mentors to those who have followed in their footsteps. Special buffet luncheons provided brief respites. Vendors offered advice and brochures on a variety of retiree-related services. Base vehicle registrations and ID card renewals were also available.



JBAB Photo by SrA Steele Britton

Retiree Day visitor has blood pressure checked.