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The Navigator

Waukesha County Veterans' Services

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FEDERAL, STATE & LOCAL BENEFITS UPDATE

NEWS UPDATE FOR FEDERAL BENEFITS



Secretary Nicholson: VA Reaches Out to Veterans and Spouses "Aid and Attendance" an Under-Used Benefit

The following information was found on the internet <http://www.va.gov/pressrel/>

WASHINGTON (Dec. 19, 2006) - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is reaching out to inform wartime veterans and surviving spouses of deceased wartime veterans about an under-used, special monthly pension benefit called Aid and Attendance.

"Veterans have earned this benefit by their service to our nation," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson. "We want to ensure that every veteran or surviving spouse who qualifies has the chance to apply."

Although this is not a new program, not everyone is aware of his or her potential eligibility. The Aid and Attendance pension benefit may be available to wartime veterans and surviving spouses who have in-home care or who live in nursing-homes or assisted-living facilities.

Many elderly veterans and surviving spouses whose incomes are above the congressionally mandated legal limit for a VA pension may still be eligible for the special monthly Aid and Attendance benefit if they have large medical expenses, including nursing home expenses, for which they do not receive reimbursement.

To qualify, claimants must be incapable of self support and in need of regular personal assistance.

The basic criteria for the Aid and Attendance benefit include the inability to feed oneself, to dress and undress without assistance, or to take care of one's own bodily needs. People who are bedridden or need help to adjust special prosthetic or orthopedic devices may also be eligible, as well as those who have a physical or mental injury or illness that requires regular assistance to protect them from hazards or dangers in their daily environment.

For a wartime veteran or surviving spouse to qualify for this special monthly pension, the veteran must have served at least 90 days of active military service, one day of which was during a period of war, and be discharged under conditions other than dishonorable.

Wartime veterans who entered active duty on or after September 8, 1980, (October 16, 1981, for officers) must have completed at least 24 continuous months of military service or the period for which they were ordered to active duty.

If all requirements are met, VA determines eligibility for the Aid and Attendance benefit by adjusting for un-reimbursed medical expenses from the veteran's or surviving spouse's total household income. If the remaining income amount falls below the annual income threshold for the Aid and Attendance benefit, VA pays the difference between the claimant's household income and the Aid and Attendance threshold.

The Aid and Attendance income threshold for a veteran without dependents is now \$18,234 annually. The threshold increases to \$21,615 if a veteran has one dependent, and by \$1,866 for each additional dependent. The annual Aid and Attendance threshold for a surviving spouse alone is \$11,715. This threshold increases to \$13,976 if there is one dependent child, and by \$1,866 for each additional child.

Additional information and assistance in applying for the Aid and Attendance benefit may be obtained by calling 1-800-827-1000. Applications may be submitted on-line at www.vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/main.asp. Information is also available on the Internet at www.va.gov or from any local veterans service organization.

COMMENTARY CORNER **By: John L. Margowski, Director**

There are three commissions and several task forces that are currently evaluating various aspects of benefits for veterans and the delivery system that provides those benefits to veterans and returning service members.

One commission is the Veterans Disability Benefits Commission. I have discussed this commission in my December 27, 2006 Newsletter. The Commission has a website: www.vetscommission.org. You can view all documents, reference materials, meetings and minutes and follow the Commission as it prepares for its final report and recommendations due later this year.

The second commission is the Commission on the Future for American Veterans. This is an independent commission that is seeking long-term solutions for veterans' needs. They are looking at innovative, long-term strategies to ensure that veterans of the Iraq War, and other 21st century conflicts, receive medical care and other benefits without all the obstacles and bureaucratic impedance to receiving benefits in a cost effective efficient manner. Former WDVA Secretary Ray Boland serves on that commission. They too have a website at: www.future4vets.org.

Another commission is the President's Commission on Care for American's

Returning Wounded Warriors. Its job is to recommend ways to improve the transition from deployment to other military service or civilian life. It is also to ensure high quality services for returning wounded service members and to increase access to benefits and services. That commission will consult with Foundations, Veterans Service Organizations, Non-Profit Groups, Faith-Based, Organizations and others as appropriate. The co-chairs of this commission are former Senator Bob Dole and former U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Schalala.

There is a task force on returning Global War on Terror Heroes. This task force will bring together top level officials from a variety of federal agencies to identify and examine existing Federal services provided to returning Global War on Terror service members, identify gaps in these services and seek recommendations from appropriate federal agencies to fill those gaps quickly.

The Department of Defense has established a task force on the future of military health care. The Veterans Administration has some internal task forces running to look at various aspects of how it is doing business.

The point of the above comments is to advise the veteran community that there are many commissions and task forces looking at military and veterans issues, and I believe we will see potentially major changes in VA benefits, and in the service delivery systems for the Department of Defense and for the Department of Veterans Affairs. Hopefully all these changes will be positive, streamlining benefits and the delivery systems. I have given

you either the web sites or the names of the commissions and task forces that will enable you to monitor their progress and the reports that they will provide. Should you see something developing that you would consider a detriment to service members or veterans, you then should be contacting your congressional representatives who are the individuals who will act on the various reports and studies.



Our cover article is about a benefit that many eligible veterans and widow/widowers are not aware of. If eligible to receive a non-service connected disability pension, the claimant will be eligible for a higher benefit amount if they are found to be medically housebound or in need of aid and attendance of another person. Our office has attempted to promote these additional benefits by sending a letter to all Waukesha County Nursing Homes and Assisted Living facilities. The clients we are missing are those who are still in their own homes or even some independent living facilities and are receiving some form of supportive care. If medically qualified, the individual can even be receiving supportive care from a family member. Please spread the word among your members.

There is also a small article on a Supermarket of Veterans Benefits to be held here in Waukesha County in November. Please start spreading the word to your membership. Many of you have never inquired about benefits to which you might have entitlement or have questions that you have never asked. This will be your opportunity. More information will be forthcoming.

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If you have any questions or comments about the contents of the newsletter, please contact Waukesha County Veterans’ Service Office at 262-548-7732.

Syracuse University—The Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities (EBV)

The following information is from Jeff Johnson www.dva.state.wi.us



I am pleased to announce an exciting new initiative offered through the Whitman School of Management at Syracuse University. This program is called 'The Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities' (EBV), and is designed as an intensive training program positioned to offer cutting edge, experiential training in entrepreneurship and small business management to veterans with disabilities resulting from their service in Iraq and Afghanistan. The goal of the EBV program is to open the door to entrepreneurship and small business ownership to our veterans, developing their competencies in the many steps and activities associated with creating and sustaining an entrepreneurial venture, and also in coordinating with programs and services unique to veterans and others with disabilities. Put simply, we represent entrepreneurship as a means through which veterans with disabilities can engage the economic engine of their community, and ultimately our nation.

The inaugural bootcamp will be offered during the summer of 2007. We anticipate enrolling approximately 20 veterans in this first bootcamp - individuals who have expressed an interest in entrepreneurship, and demonstrate both the ability and motivation necessary to successfully complete the program and subsequently start their own business. Importantly, we are offering this program entirely without cost to the veteran. It is our position that these men and women have already earned the price of admission, and we have assumed the responsibility to raise the necessary funds to cover all costs associated with this initiative. Following the first offering of the program this summer, we see the program growing to 30-35 attendees at each EBV, with the residency lasting two full weeks. It is our hope to offer 2-3 EBV programs per year beginning in 2008. The program will involve two phases.

First, delegates in the EBV will participate in a self-study curriculum, facilitated by an online discussion and assessment module, which will be moderated by entrepreneurship faculty and graduate students from the Whitman School of Management. This module will begin the 15th of July, and run through early August.

Phase two will take place from August 11th through August 19th, and involves delegates traveling to Syracuse University to participate in an onsite program modeled after an existing, and very successful entrepreneurship training program, already established at Syracuse

University. Key topical areas addressed in the program will include opportunity recognition, business concept development, profit models, resource acquisition strategies, business plan development, venture launch methods, guerrilla marketing approaches, deal structuring and negotiation, valuation, entrepreneurial finance and unique funding opportunities for veterans with disabilities, operations and operating models, service delivery, risk management, human resource management, and legal and regulatory challenges.

The Whitman School of Management is home to one of the most respected and comprehensive entrepreneurship programs in the world. Recently ranked by Entrepreneurship Magazine and the Princeton Review as the #1 entrepreneurship program in the United States, the expertise and training of the entrepreneurship faculty at Whitman is unmatched. The Entrepreneurship and Emerging Enterprises (EEE) Program at Syracuse University includes 18 faculty members and twenty-five course offerings. Currently serving over 1200 students a year, the program includes an undergraduate major, undergraduate minor, MBA concentration and a Ph.D. in entrepreneurship.

Collaborating with the Whitman School of Management, and infusing the core disability-related content, is the Burton Blatt Institute. The Burton Blatt Institute (BBI), located at Syracuse University, is building the premier organization to advance civic, economic, and social participation of persons with disabilities in a global society.

More information about this program, eligibility requirements, and application procedures can be found at: <http://whitman.syr.edu/eee/veterans> We ask that you share this information within the community of veterans with disabilities that you serve, and specifically highlight this initiative to those individuals who you feel are likely candidates. Importantly, the application deadline for our first bootcamp is June 5, 2007.

Questions about the program application procedures and eligibility requirements can be directed to: EBVinfo@syr.edu I can be reached at 315-443-3392, and at jmhaynie@syr.edu.

Thank you in advance for your support.

J. Michael Haynie, PhD
Assistant Professor of Entrepreneurship
Whitman School of Management
Syracuse University

VA Improves Services for Blinded and Low-Vision Veterans

The following information was found on the internet <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/>

WASHINGTON (January 25, 2007) - More than a million visually impaired veterans will receive enhanced health care services from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) under a reorganization of VA's vision rehabilitation services, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson announced today.

"These veterans, many of whom had their vision damaged by their military service, have earned the best health care America can provide," Nicholson said. "Under this new plan, we can provide all eligible visually impaired veterans with world-class health care closer to their homes."

VA will make approximately \$40 million available during the next three years to establish a comprehensive nationwide rehabilitation system for veterans and active duty personnel with visual impairments. The system will enhance inpatient services and expand outpatient services throughout the 1,400 locations where VA provides health care.

Under the reorganization plan, each of VA's 21 regional networks -- called Veterans Integrated Service Networks, or VISNs -- will implement a plan to provide eye care to veterans with visual impairments ranging from 20/70 to total blindness. Basic low-vision services will be available at all VA eye clinics, and every network will offer intermediate and

advanced low-vision services, including a full spectrum of optical devices and electronic visual aids.

VA's 10 existing inpatient blind rehabilitation centers will continue to provide the Department's most intensive eye care programs, but each VISN now will also provide outpatient-based blind rehabilitation care.

"We intend to ensure that our visually impaired patients receive appropriate care and the latest technological devices at the right time and in the best setting to meet their needs," said Dr. Michael J. Kussman, VA's Acting Under Secretary for Health. "Our goal will be early intervention, so that we can maximize the independence of these veterans and substantially reduce their dependence on their families and communities."

VA estimates there are more than 1 million visually impaired veterans over the age of 45 in the United States. Within this group, approximately 157,000 are legally blind, and 1,026,000 have low vision. About 80 percent of all visually impaired veterans have a progressive disability caused by age-related macular degeneration, glaucoma, or diabetic retinopathy.

Technology Identifies Veterans at Risk for Diabetic Eye Disease

The following information was found on the internet <http://www.va.opa/pressrel/>

WASHINGTON (Feb. 15, 2007) - Many veterans with diabetes are getting initial screening for possible eye disease during their Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) primary care appointments, thanks to a national tele-retinal imaging program now in place at the majority of VA hospitals and clinics.

"This leading-edge technology will make a difference for our nation's veterans. One out of every five VA patients has diabetes," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson. "Early detection of retinal abnormalities is essential in preventing vision loss from diabetes. This is another example of VA's commitment to provide world-class care to our nation's veterans."

This new procedure, which screens patients for diabetic retinopathy, does not take the place of a dilated eye exam. Veterans with known retinopathy or laser treatment will be seen in eye clinics, along with high risk patients such as those with pregnancy or renal disease. The new procedure is a good initial way, however, to identify patients at risk for visual loss from diabetes.

Patients are scheduled for the imaging via the computerized patient record system (CPRS). The images taken of the retina at the clinics are sent to an image reading center, where an eye

care specialist determines the need for further care.

Diabetic retinopathy causes 12,000 to 24,000 new cases of blindness each year in the United States, making diabetes the leading cause of new cases of blindness in adults 20-74 years of age.

The tele-retinal imaging program is just one year old this month and expected to expand significantly in the coming year. VA collaborated with the Department of Defense and the Joslin Diabetes Center in Boston to implement the technology involving digital retinal imaging and remote image interpretations to assess for levels of diabetic retinopathy. This is another example of how VA has achieved efficiency and quality of care for its patients with diabetes that exceeds that in the private sector.

Diabetes is one target of a major VA program designed to reduce the high rates of illness caused by obesity. Called MOVE -- for "Managing Overweight Veterans Everywhere" -- it encourages veterans to increase their physical activity and improve their nutrition. Further information is available at www.move.va.gov.



VA and DoD to Pursue Joint Electronic Health Record

The following information was found on the internet <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/>

WASHINGTON (January 24, 2007) -- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DoD) today agreed to make joint inpatient electronic health records a reality -- a move that will transform the way both departments deliver health care and that can be a model for the health care industry nationwide.

"This groundbreaking agreement will help us provide better care to veterans and to members of the armed forces, all of whom have earned the right to world-class health care," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson.

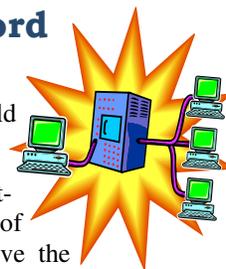
Both VA and DoD believe that a joint system will make inpatient medical records instantly accessible to clinicians in both departments. VA clinicians will have immediate access to their patients' military health records, allowing doctors and others to make faster and better treatment decisions.

"DoD and VA manage two of the largest health care systems in the world," said Dr. William Winkenwerder, Jr., Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs. "By working together, we can share medical data sooner and

more seamlessly than we could on our separate paths."

In recent years, the two departments have developed a string of pioneering initiatives to improve the way they care for men and women transitioning from military to civilian life. VA's current electronic health records system, known as Vista, received the prestigious "Innovations in American Government Award" from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government in 2006.

In testimony yesterday before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, VA Deputy Secretary Gordon H. Mansfield said, "Our two departments understand that we are responsible for the same people, only at different times in their lives. Our greatest challenge, and our greatest opportunity, is to build systems that meet the needs of veterans and DoD beneficiaries for today and tomorrow. We will continue to persevere toward that goal."



VA Weight Control Campaign Ramps Up Obesity, Diabetes Major Health Threats: Secretary Nicholson

The following information was found on the internet <http://www.va.opa/pressrel/>

WASHINGTON (January 23, 2007) - By the start of Healthy Weight Week (Jan. 21-27), more than 41,000 veterans were participating in a weight management program designed by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to reduce the high rates of illness among VA's patients caused by obesity.

"There is a growing epidemic of obesity and diabetes in the nation, especially among veterans," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson. "Seventy percent of the veterans VA cares for are overweight and one in five has diabetes, both of which increase the risk of many diseases."

The MOVE! program - "Managing Overweight Veterans Everywhere" - not only encourages veterans enrolled in VA care to get in shape but also offers information to family members

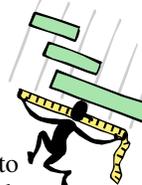
and anyone trying to lose weight through an Internet link.

VA started MOVE! to encourage veterans to increase their physical activity and improve their nutrition. Through individual and group counseling, physicians, nurses, dieticians and recreational therapists help enrollees change their eating behavior and increase their exercise. Primary care teams at all VA medical centers stay in touch with participants to track their progress. Increasing numbers of VA community-based clinics also are enrolling veterans.

Among activities they promote are competitions in fitness challenges, joining community exercise programs that partner with VA medical facilities, and leading families and friends into movement and nutrition routines.

Anyone can log onto www.move.va.gov, where a questionnaire helps identify personal barriers to weight control. The questions link to about 100 informational materials on the site. People not enrolled in VA health care can take the information about themselves to their personal health care providers.

Hall of Fame quarterback John Elway is promoting the VA campaign. He began appearing in television public service announcements (PSAs) nationwide in early January. In the 15-, 30- and 60-second PSAs, Elway is seen at the playing field of the Denver Broncos, encouraging veterans to become more active and improve their nutrition habits. The Elway PSAs can be viewed at www.healthierUSveterans.va.gov.



Echo Taps Goes "Worldwide" on Armed Forces Day VA Promotes Bugling at Veterans' Burials



The following information was found on the internet <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/>

WASHINGTON (May 19, 2007) - More than 2,000 volunteer brass players will perform the 24 notes of "Taps" on Saturday, May 19, Armed Forces Day, at 11 a.m. local time, at veterans cemeteries and certain U.S. military cemeteries overseas.

"EchoTaps honors the sacrifices of the American military and helps to preserve the tradition of a live bugler playing Taps for the final military honor," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson. "We also hope this event will raise awareness of veterans cemeteries and volunteer opportunities."

Organized by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Bugles Across America, "EchoTaps Worldwide" will honor veterans at almost all VA national cemeteries and state veterans cemeteries, National Park Service cemeteries and four American Battle Monuments Commission overseas cemeteries. Organizers hope the event will interest brass players in volunteering to perform Taps at military funerals of veterans year-round.

Musicians will form lines through the cemeteries and perform a cascading version of Taps. Brass players from ages 9 to 101 have registered to play. They come from school groups, pipe bands, veterans organizations, military installations and professional orchestras, and include people who signed up on a Bugles Across America Web site <http://www.echotaps.org/>.

The first "EchoTaps" was held in May 2005, when 674 brass players from 30 states lined 42 miles of road between the

Woodlawn and Bath national cemeteries in Elmira and Bath, N.Y. Cascading "Taps" lasted nearly three hours from the first note at Woodlawn to the last at Bath. On Veterans Day 2006, players performed "EchoTaps" at 52 national and state veterans cemeteries. VA has since expanded EchoTaps nationally and internationally.

Musicians interested in volunteering to perform Taps at veterans' burial services in VA national cemeteries should contact the director of any national cemetery.

Veterans with a discharge other than dishonorable, their spouses and dependent children can be buried in a national cemetery. Other burial benefits available for all eligible veterans, regardless of whether they are buried in a national cemetery or a private cemetery, include a burial flag, a Presidential Memorial Certificate, and a government headstone or marker.

In the midst of the largest cemetery expansion since the Civil War, VA operates 125 national cemeteries in 39 states and Puerto Rico, and 33 soldiers' lots and monument sites. More than three million Americans, including veterans of every war and conflict, are buried in VA national cemeteries, on more than 17,000 acres of land.

Information on VA burial benefits can be obtained from national cemetery offices, from the Internet at <http://www.cem.va.gov> or by calling VA regional offices toll-free at 1-800-827-1000.

Small Business Administration (SBA) Unveiled "Patriot Express" to Assist Veterans in Setting-up or Expanding Their Own Small Business

The following information was found on the internet <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/>

WASHINGTON (June 13, 2007) -- With nearly a quarter of newly discharged veterans considering starting their own businesses, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson praised a new Small Business Administration venture to make business ownership easier for all veterans.

The Small Business Administration (SBA) has unveiled a program called "Patriot Express" that offers a wide variety of assistance to veterans interested in setting up or expanding their own small businesses.

"America's veterans are a great resource for the private sector," Nicholson said. "I commend Administrator Steve Preston of the Small Business Administration for his initiative in helping veterans transition back into the private sector."

Assistance under the new SBA program for veterans ranges from help writing a business plan and managing a business, to obtaining financing and learning how to export

goods. Participants may also qualify for loans between 2.25 percent and 4.75 percent over the prime interest rate.

Patriot Express is open to veterans, reservists and National Guard members, current spouses of eligible personnel, the surviving spouses of service members who die on active duty, or spouses of veterans who die from a service-connected disability.

Expanding veterans' eligibility to SBA's Patriot Express program was a key recommendation of a presidential task force on the needs of returning veterans that Nicholson chaired. Nicholson delivered the panel's report to the White House on April 23.

More information about the SBA program is available at <http://www.sba.gov/patriotexpress>.



Military Service & Social Security 2007

The following information was found on the internet www.socialsecurity.gov

Earnings for active duty military service or active duty training have been covered under Social Security since 1957.

Social Security has covered inactive duty service in the armed forces reserves (such as weekend drills) since 1988.

If you served in the military before 1957, you did not pay Social Security taxes, but we gave you special credit for some of your service.

Social Security and Medicare taxes

While you are in military service, you pay Social Security taxes just as civilian employees do. In 2007, the tax rate is 7.65 percent, up to a maximum of \$97,500. If you earn more, you continue to pay the Medicare portion of the tax (1.45 percent) on the rest of your earnings.

How your work qualifies you for Social Security

To qualify for benefits, you must have worked and paid Social Security taxes for a certain length of time. In 2007, you will receive four credits if you earn at least \$4,000. The amount needed to get credit for your work goes up each year. The number of credits you need to qualify for Social Security benefits depends on your age and the type of benefit for which you are eligible. No one needs more than 10 years of work.

Extra earnings

Your Social Security benefit depends on your earnings, averaged over your working lifetime. Generally, the higher your earnings, the higher your Social Security benefit. Under certain circumstances, special earnings can be credited to your military pay record for Social Security purposes. The extra earnings are for periods of active duty or active duty for training. These extra earnings may help you qualify for Social Security or increase the amount of your Social Security benefit. Social Security will add these extra earnings to your earnings record when you file for benefits.

If you served in the military from 1940 through 1956, including attendance at a service academy, you did not pay Social Security taxes. However, we will credit you with \$160 a month in earnings for military service from September 16, 1940, through December 31, 1956, if:

- ◆ You were honorably discharged after 90 or more days of service, or you were released because of a disability or injury received in the line of duty; or
- ◆ You are applying for survivors benefits based on a veteran's work and the veteran died while on active duty.

You cannot receive these special credits if you are receiving a federal benefit based on the same years of service, unless you were on active duty after 1956. If you were on active duty after 1956, you can get the special credit for 1951 through 1956, even if you are receiving a military retirement based on service during that period.

If you served in the military from 1957 through 1977, you are credited with \$300 in additional earnings for each calendar quarter in which you received active duty basic pay.

If you served in the military from 1978 through 2001, you are

credited with an additional \$100 in earnings, up to a maximum of \$1,200 a year, for every \$300 in active duty basic pay. After 2001, additional earnings are no longer credited.

If you began your service after September 7, 1980, and did not complete at least 24 months of active duty or your full tour, you may not be able to receive the additional earnings. Check with us for more information.

NOTE: In all cases, the additional earnings are credited to the earnings that we average over your working lifetime, not directly to your monthly benefit amount.

Your benefits

In addition to retirement benefits, Social Security pays survivors benefits to your family when you die. You also can get Social Security benefits for you and your family if you become disabled. For more information about these benefits, ask us for *Understanding The Benefits* (Publication No. 05-10024).

When you apply for Social Security benefits, you will be asked for proof of your military service (DD Form 214) or information about your reserve or National Guard service.

When you are eligible for Medicare

If you have health care insurance from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) or under the TRICARE or CHAMPVA program, your health benefits may change or end when you become eligible for Medicare. You should contact the VA, the Department of Defense or a military health benefits advisor for more information.

You can work and get retirement benefits

You can retire as early as age 62. But, if you do, your Social Security benefits will be reduced permanently. If you decide to apply for benefits before your full retirement age, you can work and still get some Social Security benefits. There are limits on how much you can earn without losing some or all of your retirement benefits. These limits change each year. When you apply for benefits, we will tell you what the limits are at that time and whether work will affect your monthly benefits.

When you reach your full retirement age, you can earn as much as you are able and still get all of your Social Security benefits.

The full retirement age in 2007 is 65 and 10 months, but it will gradually increase until it reaches age 67 for people born in 1960 and later. To help you decide the best time to retire, contact us for *Retirement Benefits* (Publication No. 05-10035).

Contacting Social Security

For more information and to find copies of our publications, visit our website at www.socialsecurity.gov or call toll-free, 1-800-772-1213 (for the deaf or hard of hearing, call our TTY number, 1-800-325-0778). We can answer specific questions from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. We can provide information by automated phone service 24 hours a day.

We treat all calls confidentially. We also want to make sure you receive accurate and courteous service. That is why we have a second Social Security representative monitor some telephone calls.

VA Boosts Services & Research in Spinal Cord Injury Nicholson Breaks Ground at State-of-Art Milwaukee Facility

The following information is from va.media.relations@VA.GOV

MILWAUKEE (June 19, 2007) - During a ground-breaking ceremony today for a world-class facility for spinal cord injuries, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson committed the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to expand programs and open new facilities for seriously disabled veterans with spinal cord injuries.

"VA's health care facilities provide world-class health care for America's veterans," said Nicholson. "Especially for our most seriously disabled veterans, VA is committed to continuing its role as a world leader in treatment and research."

The new spinal cord injury center at the Milwaukee VA Medical Center is a \$32.5 million building and will open by 2010 to replace an existing converted ward in the hospital. It comes on the heels of another ground-breaking by Nicholson just a month ago for a new \$20 million spinal cord injury center attached to the VA medical center in Minneapolis.

"VA is the only -- and best -- resource for a veteran with a spinal cord injury," said Randy L. Pleva Sr., national president of Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA). "We are proud of the accomplishments of the VA in health care."

This week, PVA is co-sponsoring with the Milwaukee VA Medical Center the 27th National Veterans Wheelchair Games, an athletic showcase open to veterans with spinal cord injuries and other mobility impairments that celebrates the value of sports in rehabilitation therapy and fosters better health through sports competition.

VA is a leader in spinal cord injury health care research and rehabilitation, providing a coordinated lifelong continuum of services for eligible veterans with spinal cord injuries of all ages. VA's expertise in this area ranges from emergency care and surgical stabilization to rehabilitation, preventive care, and long-term care.

The department's investment in spinal cord

injury research is yielding practical medical applications such as reducing pressure ulcers and increasing the use of annual influenza and pneumococcal vaccinations.

VA research on spinal cord injuries is exploring new frontiers such as nerve regeneration, activity-based therapies that target recovery of standing and walking skills and developing prosthetics that have a direct connection to the nervous system. Last year, VA spent nearly \$19 million on 186 research projects relating to central nervous system injury and associated disorders.

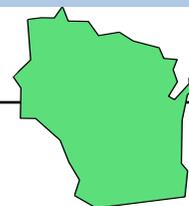
Responding to the needs of the latest generation of combat veterans, VA has developed a network of polytrauma rehabilitation centers that bring together specialists in spinal cord injury and other experts into multidisciplinary teams that aid injured troops with other severe disabilities such as traumatic brain injury, amputation, blindness, and complex orthopedic injuries, auditory disorders and mental health concerns.

About 80 percent of veterans with spinal cord injuries and disorders are at least 50 years of age. However, many of the approximately 450 newly injured veterans and active-duty members who received rehabilitation at VA's spinal cord injury centers last year are young adults.

Treatment and technology have improved so that veterans with spinal cord injuries have increasingly longer life expectancies. Maintaining health, preventive medicine and early treatment of new conditions are important parts of VA's lifelong care.

Last year, VA provided a full range of care to nearly 26,000 veterans with spinal cord injuries and diseases. VA's specialized services are delivered through 135 primary care teams or support clinics for spinal cord injuries at VA medical centers and through 23 regional spinal cord injury centers.

NEWS UPDATE FOR STATE BENEFITS



Supermarket of Veterans Benefits Nov 6th & 7th 2007

The following information <http://dva.state.wi.us>

A Supermarket of Veterans Benefits will be held on:
 Tuesday Nov 6th and Wednesday Nov 7th, 2007
 Waukesha County Expo Center
 1000 Northview Road
 Waukesha, WI
 (Time to be determined later)

- ◆ Apply for state and federal benefits.
- ◆ Receive information about loans, education benefits and employment opportunities.
- ◆ Get assistance in obtaining military medals and records.
- ◆ Obtain information about nursing home care.
- ◆ Pre-register for burial in state veterans' cemeteries.

At this **FREE, "one-stop-shop"** for benefits, veterans can learn about the wide range of benefits available including health care, loans, compensation and pension, education, job training, aging services, funeral honors, and more!

- ◆ Establish eligibility for state veterans benefits (bring your DD form 214).

For more information, call the Waukesha County Veterans Service Office at 262-584-7732, or Department of Veterans Affairs at 1-800-WIS-VETS (1-800-947-8387) www.dva.state.wi.us

Women Veterans Conference—Saturday, Sept. 29, 2007

The following information <http://dva.state.wi.us>

Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs will be hosting a "Women Veterans Conference". Registration will start at 8:00 A.M.

More information will be posted at www.dva.state.wi.us/womenvets



WHEN: Saturday, Sept. 29, 2007

TIME: 9:00 A.M.—4:00 P.M.

WHERE: Wisconsin Military Academy
 Fort McCoy, WI

RECEPTION: Friday Evening
 Sept. 28, 2007

VISIT THE WISCONSIN VETERANS MUSEUM

30 W. MIFFLIN ST
 MADISON WI 53703
 (Across from the Capitol)

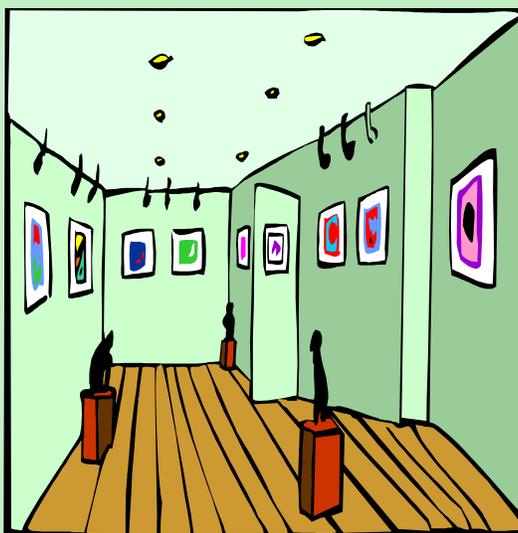
SERVICES:

Gallery & Gift Shop Hours:

Monday—Saturday (year-round)
 9 a.m.—4:30 p.m.
 Sunday (April—September)
 Noon—4:00 p.m.

ADMISSION:

Free for museum and programs unless otherwise specified.



GUIDED TOURS:

Available for groups of 10 or more.
 (Advance reservations required)

Research Center

Tuesday & Thursday (Year-round)
 9 a.m.—3:30 p.m.
 or call for an appointment

FOR INFORMATION CALL:

608-267-1790—Museum
 608-267-1799—Museum Store
 WEB PAGE

<http://museum.dva.state.wi.us>

WisconsinCare to Replace "SeniorCare" Program Starting January 1, 2008

The following information was found on the internet <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/>



WisconsinCare

In April, the Bush Administration denied Governor Jim Doyle's request to continue SeniorCare, Wisconsin's successful prescription drug program for seniors. Now all Wisconsin seniors will have to enroll in Medicare Part D for prescription drug coverage.

Starting January 1, 2008, Governor Doyle is launching a new program to help Wisconsin seniors and people with disabilities afford the medicine they need. WisconsinCare, a new affordable prescription drug program for seniors and people with disabilities, will provide affordable prescription drugs without all the complications of Part-D and without the dreaded donut hole.

Who will be eligible for WisconsinCare?

- ◆ All Wisconsin seniors who are: 1) enrolled in Medicare; 2) have an annual income of less than \$24,504 (\$32,856 for a married couple); and 3) are not getting Medicaid, will be eligible for WisconsinCare.
- ◆ All other Wisconsin residents under the age of 65 who are: 1) enrolled in Medicare; 2) have an income of less than \$16,336 (\$21,904 for a married couple); and 3) are not getting Medicaid, will be eligible for WisconsinCare.

How do you enroll in WisconsinCare?

- ◆ Everyone currently in SeniorCare, whose income is less than \$24,504 (\$32,856 for a married couple), will be signed up for WisconsinCare automatically.
- ◆ Everyone else can apply using a one-page form similar to the current SeniorCare application.
- ◆ There is no annual enrollment fee. Enrollees will need to renew each year using a one-page form.

All WisconsinCare participants will still need to choose a Medicare Part D prescription drug plan.

Benefit specialists across the state will help find a plan that's right for each individual. All current SeniorCare participants who have not selected a Part D plan will be automatically enrolled in a Part D plan, but will be able to change plans if they need to.

What benefits will you receive under WisconsinCare?

WisconsinCare - Level 1

For people with gross annual income of less than \$14,294 (\$19,166 for a married couple), WisconsinCare will pay all Medicare Part B premium (currently \$93.50 per month), deductibles and co-insurance, along with Medicare Part D premiums, deductibles, and drug costs in the "donut hole".

Individuals enrolled in Level 1 will have co-payments of \$2 for each generic prescription drug and \$5 for each brand name prescription drug.

WisconsinCare - Level 2

For people with gross annual income between \$14,295 and \$16,337 (between \$19,166 and \$21,904 for a married couple), WisconsinCare will pay all Medicare Part B premiums currently \$93.50 per month), along with Medicare Part D premiums, deductibles, and drug costs in the "donut hole".

Individuals enrolled in Level 2 will have co-payments of \$2 for each generic prescription drug or \$5 for each brand name prescription drug.

WisconsinCare - Level 3

For people with gross annual income between \$16,337 and \$20,420 (between \$21,905 and \$27,380 for a married couple), WisconsinCare will help pay Medicare Part D premiums up to \$53 per month.

Note: A limited number of Level 3 participants who are currently enrolled in SeniorCare will receive Level 2 benefits dependent on the availability of federal funds.

WisconsinCare - Level 4

For people with gross annual income between \$20,421 and \$24,504 (between \$27,381 and \$32,856 for a married couple), WisconsinCare will help pay Medicare Part D premiums up to \$22 per month

Note: Current SeniorCare participants not eligible for Medicare will be eligible for a special statefunded drug program. SeniorCare participants with incomes greater than \$24,504 (\$32,856 couple) will be assisted in the enrollment in Part D.

What should Wisconsin seniors do now?

- ◆ All current SeniorCare participants should remain in SeniorCare. They will receive more information in the next few months about enrolling in WisconsinCare.
- ◆ Seniors who get a SeniorCare renewal form in the mail, should complete the renewal form and send it to SeniorCare with the \$30 enrollment fee.
- ◆ Seniors who are not currently enrolled in SeniorCare, can still sign up through December 2007.
- ◆ Seniors who are not enrolled in SeniorCare as of December 2007 will still be able to apply for WisconsinCare starting in January 2008.

How can seniors learn more?

Seniors can learn more about WisconsinCare at <http://WisconsinCare.wi.gov> call the hotline at 1-800-657-2038 or contact a local aging agency.

Anyone who wants to find out more about the Medicare drug plans in their area can visit the Medicare Part D website at <http://www.medicare.gov/pdphome.asp>

Anheuser-Busch Extends Military Tribute "Here's to the Heroes" Provides Free Admission to Company's Theme Parks for Military Members and Direct Dependents - St. Louis MO

The following information was found on the internet http://dva.state.wi.us/News_Releases/



January 10, 2007— A tribute program that so far has provided free admission to Anheuser-Busch theme parks to more than 1.7 million members of U.S. and coalition armed forces and their families has been extended through 2007. Anheuser-Busch launched "Here's to the Heroes" in February 2005 to acknowledge the service of military men and women and the sacrifices made by their families.

"It is gratifying to all of us at Anheuser-Busch that so many members of our armed forces took advantage of this program and honored us with a visit," said Keith M. Kasen, chairman and president of Busch Entertainment Corporation, the family entertainment division of Anheuser-Busch. "This is a difficult time for our men and women in uniform and we are honored to give them something back."

Here's to the Heroes provides a single day's free admission to any one SeaWorld or Busch Gardens park, Sesame Place, Adventure Island or Water Country USA for the service member and as many as three of his or her direct dependents.

Any active duty, active reserve, ready reserve service member or National Guardsman is entitled to free admission under the program. He or she need only register, either online at www.herosalute.com or in the entrance plaza of a participating park, and show a Department of Defense photo ID. Also included in the offer are members of foreign military forces serving in the coalitions in Iraq or Afghanistan or attached to American units in the U.S. for training.

"This is one small way we can acknowledge and thank the soldiers, sailors, Marines, airmen and Coast Guardsmen whose service helps to preserve the freedom and safety of every American,"

Kasen said. "It's important to all of us at Anheuser-Busch that we show our gratitude to the men and women of our armed forces and their families for the sacrifices they make on our behalf."

Here's to the Heroes is the fourth tribute to military personnel offered by Anheuser-Busch since Yellow Ribbon Summer welcomed service members home from the Gulf War in 1991. More than 4 million people have visited Anheuser-Busch Adventure Parks free under these programs.

Three Anheuser-Busch parks - SeaWorld Orlando, Busch Gardens Tampa Bay and SeaWorld San Diego - operate year round. The company's remaining parks are seasonal, with varying opening dates this spring. Each park's operating schedule is available online.

Inactive, standby and retired reserve members, military retirees, U.S. Merchant Marine and civilian Department of Defense workers are ineligible for the program.

Anheuser-Busch operates nine U.S. theme parks: Busch Gardens Tampa Bay and Busch Gardens Williamsburg; SeaWorld Orlando, SeaWorld San Diego and SeaWorld San Antonio; Discovery Cove in Orlando; Sesame Place near Philadelphia; Water Country USA in Williamsburg and Adventure Island in Tampa. Anheuser-Busch Adventure Parks play host to more than 20 million guests each year.

Jeff Johnson Veterans Transition Assistance Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs 30 West Mifflin Street Madison, WI 53707-7843 (608) 266-3916



AMERICAN FORCES INFORMATION SERVICE
NEWS ARTICLES

America Supports You: Military Channel's "Operation V-Day" Nears

By Carmen L. Gleason, American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Feb. 7, 2007 – Friends and family back home will have a chance to see their service members in action and hear their personal messages via video thanks to the efforts of a cable network dedicated to the military.

Beginning at 6 a.m. on Feb. 14, Discovery Communications' Military Channel plans to launch "Operation V-Day," a 24-hour commercial-free airing of messages from troops around the world to their loved ones in the states.

The channel also plans to begin airing troop-recorded videos for a new feature showing the personal stories of the men and women stationed overseas.

"The Military Channel is dedicated to all military subjects – and most certainly that means men and women in uniform themselves," said Jill Bondurant, organization publicist.

The media outlet is the first to partner with the Defense Department's America Supports You program in an effort to broaden national awareness of the ways viewers can support U.S. troops.

Bondurant said that the network is reinforcing its commitment to the military by being a voice for troops and opening up the airwaves so they can send messages back home.

In mid-January, the Pentagon Channel asked American Forces Network stations worldwide to begin collecting video clips for airing on Valentine's Day. Their goal was to submit 1,900 messages to the cable network.

The nature of the Pentagon Channel is to push out

news and information to the men and women of the military and their families, said Brian Natick, the station's general manager. "For this reason, making the push to get people to give Valentine's Day messages out to family members is a great project for us to be involved in."

In addition to airing the messages from troops in 177 different countries, the Military Channel will also air public service announcements on how to get involved with the America Supports You program.

The Military Channel will continue to focus on user-generated videos when they begin airing "Voices from the Front" the following day. At the top of each hour, the network will broadcast "unfiltered, real-life" moments filmed by servicemen

"The Military Channel is continuing to increase the amount of airtime related to the war in Iraq, which has doubled since last year, and is planning more direct-from-the-troops programming," said Bondurant.

She said that this is a chance for troops to tell their personal stories to viewers and allow them to see what a day in the life is really like for servicemen and women.

Troops are encouraged to submit raw footage and content from their day-to-day activities for airing on the channel and its Web site. Video can be sent to www.mywardiary.com or can be mailed to Military Videos, c/o Discovery Productions, 8045 Kennett Street, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

**America is #1
Thanks to
Our Veterans**



**NEWS UPDATE FOR
THE LOCAL AREA**



WISCONSIN BADGERS FOOTBALL



2007 ANNUAL

SALUTE TO VETERANS

Wisconsin Badgers Football v. Washington State Cougars

Saturday, September 1, 2007 Pre-Game Veterans' Hospitality Tent (Free): 10 a.m.—2 p.m.
Pre-Game Ceremony & Game Kick-off: 2:30 p.m.

FREE TICKET(S) REQUEST
Random Drawing

In keeping with the long tradition of honoring Wisconsin's military service men and women at Camp Randall, courtesy of the UW-Madison Athletic Department, the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs will distribute several hundred **FREE** tickets to Wisconsin veterans (and a guest) for the Saturday, September 1st, 2007 Wisconsin Badgers Football game versus the Washington State Cougars.

FREE veterans' tickets to this game will be distributed following a **random drawing among all requests received**. Recipients will be notified by mail along with the ticket(s).

WDVA must receive this completed request form by August 7, 2007 at 4:30 p.m.

Mail to: WDVA Public Affairs (Badger Salute) 30 W. Mifflin St., Madison WI 53707
Or fax to WDVA, at 608-264-7616

VETERAN'S NAME & ADDRESS		Last Name:	First Name:
Address:			
City:		State: WI	Zip Code:
Phone #:		Email :	
VETERAN'S INFO:	Branch of Service (Circle): U.S. Army / USAF / USMC / USN / USCG / MM		
Military Service From: ____ To: ____ Are you a veteran of WWII / Korea / Vietnam / Gulf / OEF / OIF			
Are you a Member of: () AMERICAN LEGION () AMVETS () CWV () DAV () Ex-POWs () JWV () MOPH () NABVETS () PLAV () PVA () UWV () VFW () VMW () VVA () WACVO () WVV			
I am requesting Sept. 1st game ticket(s) for: () Myself (1 ticket) - OR - () Myself and a Guest (2 tickets)			
Veteran Signature:			Date Signed

3rd Annual Stars & Stripes Sundays at Miller Park

The following information is from Jeff Johnson, Mission: Welcome Home Coordinator
www.dva.state.wi.us



MILWAUKEE -- For the third consecutive season, the Milwaukee Brewers will honor members of the United States Armed Forces through Stars and Stripes Sundays.

During each Sunday home game in 2007, the Brewers are offering two FREE Terrace Level tickets to active and retired military personnel.

The offer applies to all branches of the military service. Active and retired military personnel must present valid military identification which entitles them to two FREE Terrace Level tickets redeemable at windows 7-12 at Miller Park on the day of game only. This offer is based on ticket availability.

Tickets for Armed Forces Night on Saturday,

May 19 when the Brewers take on the Minnesota Twins at 6:05 p.m. are available through the Armed Forces Committee. Interested parties can contact Anthony Cooling at the United States Coast Guard office at 414-747-7085 for ticket information. Tickets purchased through the Coast Guard office are offered at a reduced price with a portion of the sale benefiting the Armed Forces Committee.

In addition, the Brewers and the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs will recognize returning veterans throughout the 2007 season through the Mission Welcome Home program. On one Sunday of each month, a branch of the military and its representatives for honor at Miller Park beginning on April 22.

Various Tickets Available to All Military Personnel

The following information is from Johnson, Jeffrey - DVA Jeffrey.Johnson@dva.state.wi.us
Courtesy of Rebecca Boehlke WI National Guard Family Assistance Center Liaison SE WI

USO of Wisconsin, Inc now has the following items available to all Military personnel.

Milwaukee Wave Tickets
All Home Games Available

Milwaukee County Zoo
Tickets are half price

The Domes
Free Admission

If you have any questions please contact:

USO of Wisconsin, Inc.
Milwaukee County War Memorial Center
750 N. Lincoln Memorial Drive, Suite 303
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202-4018
Phone - 414-271-3133
Fax - 414-271-9503

Free—Concert at Humboldt Park—August 7th

The following information is from Richard R. Schwartz, Milwaukee American Legion Band
 Web site— www.milwaukeeamericanlegionband.com

MILWAUKEE -- American Legion Band that is affiliated with Alonzo Cudworth Post #23 will be performing **FREE concerts** for the public on the following dates and location.

Tuesday, Aug. 7, 2007 at 6:30 P.M.

Music Chalet in Humboldt Park
3000 S Howell Ave
Milwaukee WI

The Milwaukee American Legion Band is a non-profit organization consisting of talented and dedicated musicians from all over Southeastern Wisconsin. An award-winning group with an over-85-year history,

the Band specializes in traditional and patriotic Concert Band music – music that captures the very heart of American culture.

The Band rehearses weekly throughout the year in preparation for performances during its season. These include concerts, ceremonies, processions and parades of all types, including small groups and the entire symphonic concert ensemble. The repertoire includes popular music, marches and symphonic pieces.

Want our group(s) to perform for your next function? We present an

entire spectrum of musical groups to make your next function a success: full concert bands, ceremonial and parade groups, swing bands, Dixieland bands, jazz combos, and brass or woodwind quintets. Individual musicians are also available for ceremonial performances. Call Band President, Richard Schwartz, at 414-962-4124 or email him at: schwartz@milwpc.com



Military SPOUSES Invest in Your Future NOW!

The following information was received from Cardinal Stritch University

- ◆ 25% Discount for Military Personnel & SPOUSES of Active Duty Members
- ◆ Transfer college credits and/or earn credits for life/work experiences.
- ◆ Learn from instructors who are working professionals.
- ◆ Classes meet one evening a week.
- ◆ Programs designed for working adults.
- ◆ Financial Aid available for those who qualify.

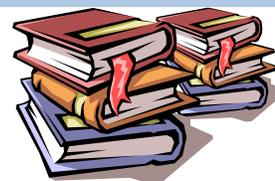
For more information call:

Kristi Treffinger at 262-797-6745 ext 12 or

katreffinger@stritch.edu

Earn your degree at our main campus in Milwaukee

or at the following satellite locations: Brookfield, Kenosha, Appleton, Johnson Creek, Beloit, Wausau or Madison.



Associate, Bachelor and Graduate Business Degree Programs



Disabled Hunters May Apply for Special Deer Hunt Oct 6-7th

The following information was received from kara.motosicky@us.army.mil

FORT McCOY, WI. - Disabled hunters may apply for permits to participate in the special deer hunt to be held at Fort McCoy Oct. 6-7. Weapons for the 2007 hunt are limited to those approved for use during the regular deer season.

All individuals participating in the hunt must possess a Class A or Class C Permit issued by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and a valid State of Wisconsin Deer Gun License.

No one can participate in more than one special gun deer hunt within Wisconsin in the same calendar year. Permits cost \$10.

Participants must use their regular Wisconsin Deer Gun license, backtag, and carcass tag to harvest an antlered deer; however, Fort McCoy bonus tags will

be issued to individuals allowing them to harvest an antlerless deer. With the bonus tag, hunters can take up to 2 deer. Wisconsin bonus tags are not valid on Fort McCoy.

To receive a 2007 Fort McCoy Disabled Hunt Application, call the Fort McCoy Permit Sales Office at (608) 388-3337, email permit-sales@conus.army.mil, or send a self-addressed stamped envelope to the Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security, IMWE-MCY-TMR-B (Permit Sales), 110 East Headquarters Road, Fort McCoy, WI 54656-5226.

Applications will be processed on a first-come, first-served basis. Applications received after Aug. 24 will be returned.

August 11-12, 2007 Iola Vintage Military and Gun Show with Vintage Tractors and Equipment

The following information is from Iola Vintage Military & Gun Show / Old Working Wheels



WHEN: August 11th & 12th 2007

WHERE: Iola Old Car Show Grounds
Iola WI

ADMISSION: Adults—\$5.00
Children 6 to 12—\$3.00
Children Under 6—FREE

PARKING is FREE

Enter the grounds through Gate #6,
located on Highway 161

Historical Vehicles & Memorabilia with Old Working Wheels.

ACTIVITIES

- ◆ Old Working Wheels
- ◆ Blood Drive on Friday
- ◆ Battle Reenactments
- ◆ Radio Control Model Aircraft
- ◆ Parade of Military Vehicles
- ◆ Genuine G.I. Breakfast of S.O.S.
- ◆ Speakers



FOOD SERVICE

11:00 A.M.—9:00 P.M. - (Friday)
7:00 A.M.—9:00 P.M. - (Saturday)
7:00 A.M.—5:00 P.M. - (Sunday)

Sponsored by: Iola American Legion, Iola-Scandinavia VFW, Waupaca VFW, Iola American Legion Auxiliary, Waupaca VFW Auxiliary

