

August 2018 Monthly Veterans' Newsletter

This Veterans Newsletter is compiled and provided by the Seminole County Veteran's Services Office. Its intent is to keep Seminole County Veterans informed about their rights, benefits, and news of interest. It is non-political and, except where noted, all articles are excerpted from outside sources. Local events honoring/supporting Veterans will be included as made available. You are encouraged to provide feedback and recommendations, as this is your Newsletter. Together with my small Team, I hope you find it both valuable and interesting.

Ed Burford, Seminole County Veterans Services Officer

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- 1. Veteran of the Month, August 2018**, was presented to Sergeant Bobby J. Draughon on August 14th at the Board of County Mission meeting beginning at 9:30 am. Sergeant Draughon entered the United States Army on June 21, 2004, and was discharged on October 23, 2008, during that time he served as a forward observer for the 1st Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, making over 40 Parachute Jumps with a deployment to Afghanistan and an additional deployment to Iraq combined for over 25 months. Sergeant Draughon after the military became a Seminole County Probation Officer and subsequently a Police Officer at the Oviedo Police Department. His military awards include 3 Army Commendation Medals, Iraq Campaign Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, NATO Medal, Combat Infantry Badge, US Army Jump Wings, and numerous other awards and decorations, his Oviedo Police Department awards include 6 Unit Citations, Humanitarian Award, Chief's Special Award and the Lifesaving Award. Sergeant Draughon hearing that an acquaintance, Seminole County Sheriff's Deputy Blayne Badura, was in desperate need of a kidney, he unselfishly offered to donate his own kidney, when it was not a match he volunteered for a program which traded kidneys nationwide ultimately saving four lives including Deputy Badura and another Seminole County resident living in Winter Springs. Sergeant Draughon has brought great credit and distinction upon himself, the United States Army, his country, and Seminole County. Sergeant Bobby J. Draughon, we honor you.
- 2. VA Town Hall coming to Sanford, Ed sends** - It's your VA, tell them what you think! When? – Thursday September 27, 2018, from 10:00 am – 1:00 pm; Where? – Westside Community Center Boys and Girls Center, 919 Persimmon Avenue, Sanford, FL 32771. Currently scheduled to speak are the Director of the Orlando VA Medical Center, Manager of the Veterans Benefits Administration, Director of the National Cemetery Administration; there will be time for questions and answers and a Vietnam Pinning Ceremony. For claims assistance you must RSVP via Eventbrite at <https://945careplusveterantownhallmeeting.eventbrite.com>, or call Annie Arits, 407-646-5037. Additionally, your Seminole County Vet Staff will be there to assist.
- 3. Altamonte Springs designated as a Purple Heart City – Ed sends** – On August 7th, 2018, I was honored to be in attendance when Altamonte Springs Mayor Pat Bates read a proclamation designating Altamonte Springs as a Purple Heart City. Representatives of the Central Florida Chapter of the Military Order of the Purple Heart was there to accept the Proclamation and to present to the city a plaque recognizing Altamont Springs as its newest Purple Heart City. An audience numbering over 100, including nine Purple Heart recipients and three active duty witnessed this event. This designation is given by the state Military Order of the Purple Heart as a thank you to Veterans and a reminder to the community of the sacrifices servicemen and women have made. A Purple Heart is awarded to any armed forces member wounded or killed in combat. Other Seminole County cities, and the Seminole County School Board, are working toward this designation. Well done and thank you Altamonte Springs, you honor our Combat Wounded and you respect our Veterans. Seminole County was previously designated a

Purple Heart County on August 7, 2017. August 7th has been designated Purple Heart Day in the United States.

4. **Sanford to proclaim as a Purple Heart City on September 10th** – *Ed sends* – On Monday September 10th, the city of Sanford will offer a Proclamation to declare itself a Purple Heart City. The event will happen at the September Sanford City Commission meeting beginning at 7:00 pm with the Proclamation being accepted by members of the Central Florida Military Order of the Purple Heart. A meet and greet will begin at 6:30pm precluding the ceremony. This designation is given by the state Military Order of the Purple Heart as a thank you to Veterans and a reminder to the community of the sacrifices servicemen and women have made. A Purple Heart is awarded to any armed forces member wounded or killed in combat. The public is invited to attend. Thank you Sanford for honoring our Combat Wounded and showing great respect to our Veterans.
5. **R.E.D Shirt Fridays** – *Ed Sends I wear Red on Fridays, do you?* - from Marine Parents.com Beginning in 2005, military supporters across America started wearing red on Fridays to show support for the service members who protect our freedoms and way of life around the world. In the decade since, thousands of individuals, organizations, and businesses have taken up this cause and joined in observing "Red Fridays," as they've come to be known, to show their support for our men and women in uniform. This act of solidarity is intended to let American service members know that their sacrifices are recognized and appreciated, and that a grateful nation hasn't forgotten what those service members do for us on a daily basis. [Read more.](#)
6. **17,000 MOAA Members Rallied Together to Prevent TRICARE Fee Increases** MOAA, July 26, 2018, It was a heavy lift to ensure Congress did not raise TRICARE fees - and the MOAA membership was utterly amazing. It was an all-hands-on-deck effort, and it paid off. The House and Senate came out July 23 with combined FY 2019 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which they negotiated during the last several weeks. MOAA was hyper-focused on a Senate-backed provision to significantly raise TRICARE fees for retired beneficiaries under age 65. We were pleasantly surprised to see the provision to end grandfathering and raise TRICARE fees did not make it in the final bill. [Read more.](#)
7. **Things to Know About the New Retiree Dental Plan**, Military.com Week of July 30, 2018, TRICARE's retiree dental program will shutter Dec. 31; users be shifted into the Federal Employee Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) marketplace. That means retirees will have more choice over what their plan covers and how much they pay — but it also means they'll need to navigate a new system and new set of rules. There are 6 things you need to know about this benefits change. [Read more.](#)
8. **Commissary and Exchange May Open to Disabled Vets** Military.com Week of July 30, 2018, The final version of the 2019 Defense Authorization Act (2019 NDAA) would allow disabled veterans, Purple Heart recipients and caregivers of veterans severely injured in war to shop on military bases, paying slightly more at checkout than current patrons. They also will be able use base recreational facilities. [Read more.](#)
9. **President Trump Approves Pay Raise For Troops, No TRICARE Fee Increases** MOAA, August 16, 2018, President Donald Trump on Monday afternoon approved H.R. 515, [the](#)

[John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act](#) for Fiscal Year 2019. The President signed the legislation in front of huge crowd at Fort Drum, N.Y. [Read more.](#)

10. **How Does the 2019 Defense Act Impact You?** Military.com Week of August 20, 2018, Now that the 2019 defense budget and the 2.6 percent pay raise have been locked down, you may find there are hidden elements and overlooked parts of the law that will affect you, in ways you may not have expected. [Read more.](#)
11. **What Is Hidden Deep in the 2019 Defense Bill That Affects You?** Military.com 15 Aug 2018, Now that all the hubbub about the 2019 defense budget and the 2.6 percent pay raise has died down, let's check out some of the overlooked parts of the law that will affect you. [Read more.](#)
12. **Where's the Money?** MOAA, August 9, 2018, Now that the FY 2019 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) has been sent to the White House for President Donald Trump's signature, one might be inclined to ask, "Where's the money to pay for the \$717 billion legislation touted to rebuild and modernize our military force?" [Read more.](#)
13. **Lt. Col. Robert Wilkie Confirmed As New Head of VA,** MOAA July 26, 2018, Robert Wilkie, a lieutenant colonel in the Air Force Reserve, is set to lead the massive Department of Veterans Affairs healthcare system that includes 9 million people across 1,700 centers. The Senate voted on Monday 86 to 9 to confirm President Donald Trump's pick Wilkie as the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. [Read more.](#)
14. **Board Makes Record Number of Appeals Decisions,** Military.com Week of July 23, 2018, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently issued a record number of decisions for Veterans appealing their disability benefits claims. As of July 11, VA's Board of Veterans' Appeals has issued more than 64,025 decisions for fiscal year 2018, a record high tied to several efficiency innovations, including a new interactive decision template and a specialty case team, which have allowed the Board to serve more Veterans. [Read more.](#)
15. **Avoiding VA Benefit Overpayments** Military.com Week of July 23, 2018, There are any number of life events that can result in an overpayment to the VA, and these can result in changes in the amount of benefits you are entitled to receive. It is important to let VA know whenever there is a change that could impact your benefits. Overpaid funds will be owed to VA, and those can often result in a deduction of the monthly benefit amount until the debt is repaid. [Read more.](#)
16. **VA Says New 'Forever GI Bill' Finally Ready for Launch Aug. 1 ... Mostly,** Military.com via MOAA, July 26, 2018 The benefits under the new "Forever GI Bill" will be ready to go into effect Aug. 1, with the exception of a few IT glitches on housing allowances, [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) officials said Wednesday. [Related: Big Changes to Post 9/11 G.I. Bill: What You Need To Know](#) "We hit the ground running and we haven't slowed down" on implementing the bill, but the technology was not quite ready to handle two provisions in the complicated formula for housing allowances, said retired [Air Force](#) Maj. Gen. Robert Worley, director of education services at the VA. [Read more.](#)

17. **VA Adds 15 'Forever GI Bill' Benefits** Military.com Week of August 13, 2018, On Aug. 1, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) implemented 15 more provisions of the 'Forever GI Bill'. [Read more.](#)
18. **VA Rips 'Blue Water' Agent Orange Bill**, Military.com Week of August 06, 2018. VA officials strongly oppose the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act (HR 299), which would extend Agent Orange disability benefits and health care to between 70,000 and 90,000 veterans who served aboard ships in territorial waters off Vietnam during the war. [Read more.](#)
19. **Blue Water Veteran Testimony** Military.com Week of August 13, 2018, American Legion Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Division Director Chanin Nuntavong recently testified before the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. During his testimony, Nuntavong highlighted the importance of providing Blue Water Vietnam veterans with the same benefits provided to those who served on land and in Vietnam's inland waterways by the Agent Orange Act of 1991. [Read more.](#)
20. **Get a Glimpse Inside VA's Major Overhaul** MOAA August 6, 2018, Do you remember the VA MISSION Act- the massive, most comprehensive health care reform bill passed out of Congress in over 25 years and signed into law by President Donald Trump on June 6? VA has quietly begun working on implementing these major changes but recognizes it can't do so without veterans' help. VA wants to know what questions veterans have about the VA MISSION Act as VA moves forward in rolling out these huge health system changes. [Read more.](#)
21. **Update Your VA Data Online** Military.com Week of August 20, 2018, Veterans can now update online their contact information with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). To update your information in some of the VA databases: (1) login to Vets.gov; (2) click on your name at the top right; (3) select profile; (4) click on edit for anything you wish to change; and (5) make your edits, and click update. However, these procedures will not work yet with all VA databases. To update: (1) education benefits, call 1-888-GIBILL-1 (1-888-442-4551); (2) home loan benefits, call 1-877-827-3702; (3) Veterans' Mortgage Life Insurance, call 1-800-669-8477; (4) prescriptions, call your health care team or your nearest VA medical center. [Read more.](#)
22. **VA Launches VEText**, Military.com Week of July 23, 2018, The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently launched VEText, a text messaging appointment-reminder system. 138 VA facilities are currently using the automated interactive text message system, which reminds Veterans of upcoming health care appointments, allowing them easily to confirm or cancel the event. Veterans can update their phone numbers during the check-in or check-out process for an appointment, at any kiosk. [Read more.](#)
23. **Veterans' Expedited Recovery Commission**, Military.com Week of July 30, 2018, President Donald J. Trump has selected former VA White House Senior Advisor Thomas 'Jake' Leinenkugel to lead a key commission focused on the department's mental health care programs. The Creating Options for Veterans' Expedited Recovery (COVER) commission will examine VA's evidence-based therapy model for treating mental health conditions, as well as the department's complementary and integrated mental health approaches. [Read more.](#)

24. **VA Mental Health Benefits**, Military.com Week of July 30, 2018, Veterans enrolled in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care have access to mental health services, including inpatient and outpatient care for PTSD, depression, readjustment, substance use disorders, military sexual trauma and more. If you or a veteran you know is in crisis or having thoughts of suicide, call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 and press 1. [Read more.](#)
25. **VA Whole Health Approach**, Military.com Week of July 30, 2018, The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) Whole Health approach aims to let veterans take charge of their health based on their priorities with the support of Whole Health peer facilitators on their health team. [Read more.](#)
26. **Here's what the VA Mission Act means for Veterans**, ConnectingVets.com, June 7, 2018, Its official, President Donald Trump signed a bill into law Wednesday that will greatly expand veterans' access to private healthcare, even as funding for the package remains uncertain. The \$52 billion VA Mission Act paves the way for a major overhaul of how the Department of Veterans Affairs provides access for veterans to receive care in the private sector, and to have the VA pick up the bill. The VA Mission Act is a three-way compromise between the Trump Administration, Congress, and vets themselves. It could take up to a year for all the regulations and funding to be sorted out, but it does a few things that veterans will start noticing immediately. [Read more.](#)
27. **Fight Brews as the VA Mission Act Remains Unfunded**, Military.com 20 Jun 2018, more than 30 Veterans Service Organizations have backed Senate proposals to fund the recently passed VA Mission Act, which expands private health care options. The proposals, which are opposed by the White House, would give up to \$55 billion in funding over five years. The bill, signed into law by President Donald Trump earlier this month, provided \$5.2 billion in funding to keep the current Veterans Choice and Accountability Act running through next May while the Department of Veterans Affairs puts in place the VA Mission Act. [Read more.](#)
28. **VA Assistance for Long Term Care**, Military.com Week of August 06, 2018, finding the best long-term care approach can be a challenge. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care offers sick and disabled veterans options regarding the setting of their care and the types of care they receive. Long-term care services include: (1) nursing and medical care; (2) physical therapy; (3) help with daily tasks, like bathing, dressing and making meals; (4) comfort care and help with managing pain and (5) support for caregivers. To access these services, Veterans must be enrolled in VA health care, and VA must determine a specific service is necessary. [Read more.](#)
29. **How TRICARE Works With Other Health Insurance**, Military.com Week of August 20, 2018, Do you have employer-sponsored health insurance? Any health insurance you have in addition to TRICARE is known as 'other health insurance' (OHI). If you have OHI, it becomes your primary insurance and pays any claims before TRICARE does. Typically, having OHI can affect you if you are a retired TRICARE beneficiary who also uses Medicare, or if you are a spouse of an active duty beneficiary who also gains coverage through their employer. [Read more.](#)
30. **Senate Has 'Serious Concerns' With Blue Water Navy Bill After Recent Hearing**, MOAA, August 9, 2018, When the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee held a hearing last week

regarding the blue-water Navy bill that passed the House in late June by a vote of 382-0, it did not seem as convinced as the House was about the bill. Two primary opposition points were discussed during the hearing: the “science” behind proving blue-water Navy veterans were exposed to Agent Orange and the way an expansion of benefits will be paid for. [Read more.](#)

31. **Burn Pit Accountability Act Gains Momentum With MOAA Support** MOAA, August 9, 2018, MOAA and fellow veteran service organizations are building momentum as we continue to call on federal lawmakers to approve a measure tracking troops' exposure to burn pits during time in service. Since its introduction in May, the Burn Pit Accountability Act has boosted its co-sponsors in the House and gained a complementary bill in the Senate. VSOs, including the Military Officers Association of America, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Reserve Officers of America, Vietnam Veterans of America and Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, are calling on lawmakers to pass the bill this fall. [Read more.](#)
32. **VA Streamline Refinance Loans** Military.com Week of July 23, 2018, An Interest Rate Reduction Refinance Loan (IRRRL) can be used to refinance a property on which you have already used your Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) loan eligibility. With these loans, you can skip the appraisal and underwriting packages. You may also be able to roll fees into the loan, allowing for no out-of-pocket costs. [Read more.](#)
33. **What Can You Buy With a VA Loan?** Military.com, July 26, 2018 A two-story home in the suburbs, a condo in the city, a modular home in the countryside. For many servicemembers and their families, buying a home and laying down roots is a powerful step to reentering civilian life. No matter what a Veteran’s ideal home, a VA home loan can help. [Read more.](#)
34. **Veterans: Beware of Bogus Charities**, Military.com Week of July 30, 2018, The Federal Trade Commission (FTC), along with law enforcement officials and from around the country, has announced a crackdown on fraudulent charities that con consumers by falsely promising donations will help veterans and service members. The FTC has also announced that two charities will face federal charges. [Read more.](#)
35. **Operation Donate With Honor Fighting Against, Scam Charities** Military.com Week of August 06, 2018, In relation to last week’s article about bogus charities, Operation Donate with Honor, a federal-state education and enforcement initiative to combat fraudulent and deceptive charitable solicitations claiming to help veterans and military, was launched recently by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). [Read more.](#)
36. **How the Media’s Narrow Portrayal of Service Members Does the Military a Disservice**, MOAA via Task & Purpose, August 9, 2018, As the American military becomes more isolated from society and society more disconnected from war, public understanding of its military will continue to impact the interest among young people to serve and the burden of war on military members and families. The familiarity gap between the military and society exacerbates contradictory attitudes towards the military community: the military as an institution enjoys incredible public support, but the emergence of 'generations of war' given high service rates among children of service members are met with shrinking familial connections to the military. Similarly, public views label veterans as community assets and leaders, but also assume veterans

experience PTSD and homelessness. The military is easy to love from afar, but the disconnect ultimately threatens national security. [Read more.](#)

37. **Bells of Peace**, Military.com Week of August 13, 2018, More than sixty community participants have already joined the US World War I Centennial Commission's initiative, "Bells of Peace". Americans across the nation will toll bells on November 11, 2018 at 11:00 AM, in honor of the service and sacrifice of the nation's World War I veterans, led by tolling at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC. Joining the national bell tolling is an easy way for you to honor those who fought and died in World War I. [Read more.](#)
38. **Federal Trade Commission Cracks Down on Sham Veteran Charities** MOAA, August 23, 2018, A Florida-based charity promising to help wounded veterans by soliciting \$11 million in donations has been banned from operating, according to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). Regulators found nearly all of the funds received were spent on fundraising, expenses, and the founder's salary and benefits. Help the Vets Inc. and other groups, have been targeted by the FTC and law enforcement as sham charities "that con people by falsely promising donations will help veterans," according to an FTC press release. It's part of a larger FTC crackdown, in which more than 100 actions have been taken against sham charities in every state, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam and Puerto Rico. [Read more.](#)
39. **Apply today for the Veterans Florida Advanced Entrepreneurship Program!** *Ed Sends* -The Veterans Florida Advanced Entrepreneurship Program is now accepting applications for their fall cohort. From September to November 2018, selected participants will attend in-class training held at our of our network partner organizations in the following cities: Pensacola, Orlando, Tampa, Tallahassee, Boca Raton, and Fort Myers. [Read more.](#)
40. **Purple Heart Vets to Get Post 9/11 GI Bill**, Military.com Week of August 06, 2018, If you received a Purple Heart Medal for active duty service on or after Sept. 11, 2001, but did not qualify for full Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits because you did not have enough time in service, you now qualify for the full education benefit. A provision of the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act, known as the 'Forever GI Bill,' extends education benefits to this group of Purple Heart recipients effective Aug. 1. To qualify for the full benefit, you must have received a Purple Heart on or after Sept. 11, 2001, and have been discharged or released honorably. [Read more.](#)
41. **9 new updates to the Forever GI**, Bill ConnectingVets.com, August 6, 2018, There's a change to the monthly housing allowance and family members now have less time to use educational assistance in the Forever GI Bill. Here's what you need to know about the change and how you can access these benefits. [Read more.](#)
42. **Food Distribution Opens in Orlando for Veterans**, *Ed Sends* - Soldiers' Angels hosted the first of what will now be a monthly Veteran Mobile Food Distribution in Orlando, Florida on Friday, June 15 at the Lake Baldwin VA Clinic. The event provided approximately 50 pounds of food to 200 veterans and their families. This will be a monthly event held at the Lake Baldwin VA Clinic. To read more and to sign up - [Read more.](#)

Newsletter from your local Seminole County Veterans' Services Office Staff.

Thank you for your service to our Country!

It Takes the Strength of a Warrior to Ask for Help

The journey after military service can be a difficult one. If you are Veteran in crisis or know of one who is, please call the VA's 24/7 Suicide Prevention Line at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) to speak with a trained counselor, or find a Crisis Center near you.