

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. Permanent Change of Station – Ed Sends -It is with mixed emotions that I announce my retirement from Seminole County and the Seminole County Veterans Services Office. My last day will be in June 5th, 2020.

Someone once said that life is about the journey, not about the destination and this has been an exciting journey for me. I like to believe that the accomplishments of the Veterans Services Office have been beneficial to the Veterans, survivors and dependents of the Seminole County.

For most of my eleven years here, the Veteran Service Offices consisted of Cathy Schubert and myself, to Cathy I say thank you for your support and friendship. I have great pride in the accomplishments of this office.

However, I feel my greatest endeavor was in raising the awareness and acknowledgement of the value of Veterans in Seminole County. I have been fortunate that the County Commission and County leadership have always been supportive; thank you Commissioners and County Manager for supporting our Veterans. To our Community Partners, you stepped up when asked and made my job easy, thank you. It was a pleasure to work with the Orlando VA Medical Center. I've taken great pride in working with Seminole County's cities to extend outreach into our communities. And finally, to the Veteran community, you are a voice that is heard in Seminole County; I am honored to have served you.

I have said it before and still believe it today, we have the most Veteran friendly county in the State of Florida, and it is because of you and your leadership. My successor has been named, he will begin work shortly and will be announced to the community upon reporting to work. I am sure he will take the Seminole County Veteran Services Office to the next level and you will be pleased.

Lastly, thank you for the support you have shown me. For one last time I leave you with, *My Name is Ed, I am a Veteran and Proud of it!*

2. Virtual Memorial Day Remembrance Ceremony - Ed Sends - Seminole County will conduct a Virtual Memorial Day Remembrance Ceremony on Friday May 22nd, at 0900 hours. It is our privileged to honor the memories of the members of our Armed Forces and First Responders who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. In order to ensure the safety of all, this event will not be open to the public; those who would like to view the ceremony Live are encouraged to watch along online at www.facebook.com/seminolecounty. The event will feature honor guard presentations and a formal rendering of honors from personnel of the Seminole County Fire Department and Seminole County Sheriff's Office, as well as speakers from Seminole County officials and Veterans. I hope you can join me.

3. Florida Department of Veterans Affairs – Ed sends – The FDVA Benefits Handbook for 2020 is now available online, hard copies have not yet been printed. I encourage you to review it and take a look at the section by Attorney General Ashley Moody, page 4, as it discussed the *Military and Veterans Assistance Program* and the efforts to combat scams targeting Military and Veterans. Read the Handbook online [here](#).

4. How to Request a TRICARE Fee Waiver for COVID-19 Tests, Related Office Visits, MOAA, April 22, 2020, Some TRICARE beneficiaries who've made copayments related to receiving a COVID-19 test, or to an office visit connected to that test, can

request their money back under new program guidance. The refunds apply to tests and visits on or after March 18, according to an April 15 [TRICARE benefit update](#). If you've made a copayment connected to a test or a test-related visit, click [here](#) for details on filing a reimbursement claim. [Read more.](#)

5. Megadestroyer Zumwalt Delivered to the Navy after Years of Setbacks, Military.com, 24 Apr 2020, The [Navy](#) has accepted delivery of a next-generation stealth destroyer more than three years after its commissioning, and the service announced Friday. The destroyer Zumwalt has a working combat system and will move onto a new phase of developmental and sea testing, according to a news release from Naval Sea Systems Command. The ship was commissioned in 2016 and broke down a month later while passing through the Panama Canal. [Read more.](#)

6. Military Money Help during the Coronavirus Pandemic, Military.com, April 3, 2020, while military retirees may qualify for assistance from the aid societies, many veterans do not. The Independence Fund announced that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is providing help to catastrophically disabled veterans, caregivers and families with covering costs like mortgage and rent; utilities; child care; transportation services; home WiFi services; household cleaning and upkeep; grocery and medical product delivery; and streaming services for work and learning. Many of these families live day-to-day on very thin margins, and the pulling back of the support systems they've had in place hit them especially hard. Veterans can [apply on the Independence Fund website](#). [Read more.](#)

7. House Bill Would Provide Relief from TRICARE Pharmacy Copays during COVID-19 Crisis, MOAA, May 5, 2020, MOAA continues to make progress toward a possible TRICARE pharmacy copay waiver during the COVID-19 national emergency. Reps. [Lisa Blunt Rochester \(D-Del.\)](#) and [Elaine Luria \(D-Va.\)](#) have introduced [H.R. 6573](#), the Help our Heroes Access Medicine Act, authorizing DoD to waive TRICARE prescription copays during national emergencies. [Read more.](#)

8. Tricare Limits Some Prescription Refills during Pandemic, Military.com, May 4, 2020, The Defense Health Agency and its [Tricare](#) pharmacy benefits manager, Express Scripts, are limiting prescriptions for several medications used by hospitals to treat patients with the novel coronavirus. Pentagon officials said last week they have limited prescriptions containing albuterol and levalbuterol, also known by the brand names ProAir, Proventil, Ventolin and Xopenex, to one inhaler every 30 days to prevent shortages of these medications, which also are used to help COVID-19 patients breathe. [Read more.](#)

9. Coronavirus Survivors May Be Barred from Joining the US Military, Military.com, May 6, 2020, a diagnosis of the COVID-19 coronavirus may keep prospective recruits out of the U.S. military, according to [a memo from U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command making the rounds on Twitter](#). U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command issued the missive to recruit processing stations saying a history of COVID-19, confirmed by a laboratory test or a clinician diagnosis, is permanently disqualifying. [Read more.](#)

10. What Will Possible Budget Cuts Mean for Your Pay? MOAA, May 12, 2020, first, the good news: Servicemembers can expect a 2021 pay raise close to last year's 3.1% increase despite overwhelming financial uncertainty, a top House lawmaker [recently told reporters](#). But while Rep. Mac Thornberry (R-Texas), ranking member on the House Armed Services Committee and a former committee chair, said he expects the 3.0% raise included in the White House's February budget proposal to stay put, there are no guarantees – this year, or especially in the coming years. [Read more.](#)

11. Where to Find Emergency Cash for Coronavirus Hardships, MOAA, May 13, 2020, everyone is facing new financial challenges because of the coronavirus. Even if you have stable employment with the military, you may have a spouse who lost a job, a side business that is struggling, or rental property with tenants who can't pay their bills. *If you've retired from the military*, you may have lost a second job or worry about your volatile investments. And military families face some unique challenges, such as extra expenses if you were about to move and sold your house, then abruptly faced a [stop-move order](#) delaying your PCS. [Read more.](#)

12. Here's the VA's 3-Part Plan to Resume Full Services for Veterans, Military.com, 9 May 2020, As the number of active COVID-19 cases among its patients declined slightly this week, the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) announced a three-part plan for resuming operations at its facilities in the coming months. The effort will largely depend on local COVID-19 conditions, including a declining number of patients with symptoms, a reduction in those testing positive and widespread availability of testing. [Read more.](#)

13. VA Partners with Treasury Department to Deliver Economic Impact Payments to Veterans and Survivors, News Release April 17, 2020, **WASHINGTON** — The [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](#) (VA) announced today it is working directly with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and U.S. Treasury Department to ensure delivery of 'Economic Impact Payments' to Veterans and survivors who receive Compensation and Pension (C&P) benefit payments from VA without additional paperwork or IRS filings. [Read more.](#)

14. Stuck inside? Get free e-books at Project Gutenberg, Vantage Point, April 23, 2020, Veterans stuck inside can turn to reading a catalog of more than 61,000 classic, free e-books and audio books at [Project Gutenberg](#). People can read books online or download them for reading offline, including popular e-readers. In addition to reading, there's a selection of audio books available on the site. The site also offers books in dozens of languages, including hundreds in Spanish. The books are mainly older literary works whose copyright expired. Mark Twain, Charles Dickens, Edgar Allen Poe, Robert Louis Stevenson, Oscar Wilde, Jack London and Jane Austen are some of the celebrated authors. People can read about characters such as Moby Dick, Frankenstein, Peter Pan, Tiny Tim and Alice in Wonderland. [Read more.](#)

15. VA Makes Health Apps Available for Android Phones, Military.com, 28 Apr 2020, The [Department of Veterans Affairs \(VA\)](#) has recently updated several of their health apps and made them available for those who use mobile devices which are manufactured by companies other than Apple. [Read more.](#)

16. Impact of the COVID-19 Outbreak on Individuals and Communities, VA Website, The COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak has the potential to increase stress and anxiety, both because of the fear of catching the virus and also because of uncertainty about how the outbreak will affect us socially and economically. There are practical steps you can take to improve your wellbeing. [Read more.](#)

17. New Free COVID App available, VET Resources, The COVID Coach app was created for everyone, including Veterans and Servicemembers, to support self-care and overall mental health during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. [Read more.](#)

18. Veterans Benefits Newsletter, May 7, 2020, *Ed sends* – Read the May edition of the Veterans Benefits Newsletter, published by the Department of Veterans Affairs. You can even sign up to receive it directly. [Read it here.](#)

19. VA Education Services, Ed Sends - The Department of Veterans Affairs' Education Service is pleased to announce that it now has a dedicated phone line for GI Bill beneficiaries who are a surviving spouse and child of an active duty service member who died in the line of duty and need assistance with their education benefits. Starting on May 11, 2020, a child or surviving spouse can contact the Education Call Center at 1-888-442-4551 and select Option 5. A highly trained agent with specialized training in survivor benefits will be ready to assist the caller with their education benefits or survivor-related resources. Agents will be available Monday – Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. CST.

20. VA Gets COVID Relief Money to Combat Homelessness, Military.com, May 6, 2020, The [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) announced Wednesday that it has received an extra \$300 million to provide help to veterans who are at increased risk of [homelessness](#) as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The extra money is part of the \$17.2 billion provided to the VA by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which also included direct payments to citizens and small-business relief programs. [Read more.](#)

21. Veterans on Burn Pit Registry May Be at Greater Risk for COVID-19, Lawmakers Say, MOAA, April 23, 2020, *this article by Patricia Kime first appeared on [Military.com](#), the premier resource for the military and veteran community.* Veterans' advocates and lawmakers are stepping up pressure on the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) to increase outreach and services for thousands of veterans thought to be at-risk for life-threatening cases of coronavirus: former troops exposed to burn pits in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. Sens. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minnesota, and Mike Rounds, R-South Dakota, [sent a letter to VA Secretary Robert Wilkie on Tuesday](#) urging his department to be more proactive in caring for veterans with compromised respiratory systems as a result of exposure to burn pits used to dispose of waste at more than 250 overseas locations. [Read more.](#)

22. New Agreement will make it Easier for Doctors to Access Military, Veteran Health Records, Military.com, April 21, 2020, the Defense Department has joined the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) on an agreement that increases their ability to share patient medical information and access data from more than 54,000 civilian hospitals, clinics pharmacies and laboratories. The VA announced Monday that a health

information exchange, run jointly by both departments, became operable April 18. It will give military and VA physician's access to electronic health records information for patients seen by both government doctors and private providers who have entered into file-sharing agreements. The system also provides participating private-sector doctors and health systems an efficient way to request or access a patient's DoD or VA electronic health records, according to a VA release. [Read more.](#)

23. Will Tricare Pay for a COVID-19 Antibody Test? It Depends. Military.com, April 27, 2020, you may know that eligible [Tricare](#) beneficiaries can get the [COVID-19 test](#), which determines if they have the virus which causes the illness. You may have also heard about a COVID-19 antibody test which can determine if you have had the disease, or if your immune system has developed antibodies to the virus as a result of being exposed to it. [Read more.](#)

24. Some Veterans Need to Fill out This Form ASAP to Get Their Stimulus Payment Military.com, 22 Apr 2020, if you receive [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) disability or pension payments and didn't file taxes for the last two years, you may want to hurry over to the IRS website and fill out a form to get your stimulus payment. [Read more.](#)

25. Free Legal Advice for Veterans, Seminole County Bar Association, Legal Aid Society Flyer, *Ed Sends* – The Veterans Legal Advice Clinic usually held at the Seminole County Library in Casselberry the second Thursday of every month is closed until further notice due to the current health crisis. Seminole County Legal Aid Society still offers free legal advice by telephone to Veterans who have question regarding Family Law and Housing matters. For assistance please call (863) 272-9731 or email dgarza@scbalas.com to schedule a time to speak with an attorney.

26. Veterans' Memorial Day 'Rolling to Remember' Motorcycle Tradition Is Going Virtual Military.com, 30 Apr 2020, AMVETS has scrapped plans to carry on the Rolling Thunder tradition in Washington, D.C. this [Memorial Day](#) because of the coronavirus restrictions on large gatherings, but pledged to hold similar events next year. "Legally, it's not possible and it just would not be responsible" for safety reasons this Memorial Day, Joe Chenelly, national executive director of the AMVETS veterans service organization, said in a video statement on the group's website. [Read more.](#)

27. Honors on hold: Cemeteries postpone full military honors for veterans during pandemic Task & Purpose via Tampa Bay Times, May 18, 2020, Owin Chance had his funeral all planned out. The retired U.S. Navy chief petty officer — a Korean and Vietnam war veteran from Wildwood — wanted the full military honors he had earned. The bugle playing Taps, the rifle team, the ceremonial presentation of the flag and the words of gratitude for his service of 23 years and four days as he was buried at Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell. "Everything was planned," said his wife, Dora Chance, 88. Everything except a global pandemic. The National Cemetery Administration, part of the Department of Veterans Affairs, decided on March 23 to postpone traditional military funeral honors as a safety measure against the spread of COVID-19. The directive applies to all veterans whose families request the honors, not just those who died from the virus. [Read more.](#)

28. 1-Year Free Premium LinkedIn Subscription for VA Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers and Fry Scholarship recipients, VAantage Point, April 23, 2020, The Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Experience Office, is excited to be partnering with [LinkedIn's Military and Veterans Program](#) to offer Fry Scholarship recipients and family caregivers currently participating in VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers cutting edge resources and tools at no cost through a 1-year free premium subscription to LinkedIn with networking, employment, and learning opportunities. [Read more.](#)

29. New Law Protects Student Veterans during COVID-19 Crisis, Military.com, April 29, 2020, On April 28, president Trump signed into law the Student Veteran Coronavirus Response Act of 2020 into law. The new law affects VA Work Study students and those students impacted by schools that close or suspend classes as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. [Read more.](#)

30. CARES Act Extends VA Home Loan Pre-Foreclosure Options, VAantage Point, May 12, 2020, On March 27, the President signed the [Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act](#), or CARES Act, into law to help Americans economically impacted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic to help homeowners avoid home foreclosure. As the country rallies together to prevent further spread of the coronavirus, VA's [Loan Guaranty Service](#) is working to assist Veterans. The service is specifically focused on ensuring our Veterans and their families facing temporary or more long-term difficulty paying their monthly mortgage understand their options. [Read more.](#)

Are you a Veteran in crisis or concerned about one?

Did you know that VA offers same day services in Primary Care and Mental Health at 172 VA Medical Centers across the country? [Make the Connection Resource Locator](#) Contact the [Veterans Crisis Line](#) ([1-800-273-8255](tel:1-800-273-8255) and press 1, [Chat](#), or Text 838255.)