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UPPER POTOMAC CHAPTER

Recipient of the 2018 MOAA 5 Star Level of Excellence Award

March 23, 2020

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...from the President



We are experiencing an historic global medical emergency. The COVID-19 disease is real, dangerous

and spreading rapidly. Our group is at very high risk because of our age so every one of us must stay calm and abide by the guidelines published by medical authority.

We have included important and reliable information in this newsletter, and I encourage you to read it, read the guidelines in the web sites listed and stay safe.

It is essential that we understand what is happening and how we can contribute to defeating the COVID-19 virus. To do that we must know and understand the facts and reject sensationalism, rumor and scams. Social media is not where we go to get the

facts. Use the web sites we have included to do that.

We have cancelled all our events through June. We will continue to monitor the COVID-19 crisis and extend cancellations for as long as required. The Board of Directors and Officers will continue to hold board meetings using web-based software.

This is a real emergency. We must employ the leadership skills we learned on active duty to support our local, state and federal government programs that are fighting this disease. We know how to lead and get things done. We should use our experience to help others understand and help them stay calm as we fight COVID-19.

Use social distancing. That means stay away from other humans. Wash your hands frequently and don't touch your face.

The chapter stands ready to support our membership. If you become distressed because of this crisis, or if you

know of a veteran in distress due to the COVID-19 emergency, please contact one of the chapter officers or directors. We may be able to help.

Stay safe, know the facts and stay informed.
Never Stop Serving

HMCI

April and June Meetings/Luncheons are Cancelled

Due to the federal and state government restrictions in place to combat the Corona virus pandemic, the membership meetings/luncheons scheduled for April 18 and June 27 are cancelled. We will keep you informed regarding future events.

MOAA Legislative Action Center

Make sure you visit the MOAA Legislative Action Center at the MOAA web site (www.moaa.org) to keep abreast of important issues. Contact your representative or send an email from the Take Action Center to have your voice heard.



April

- 5-Bill Stubblefield
- 7-Frank Brown
- 11-Vonnie Bullock
- 18-Mary Albertson
- 18-Sue Thornton
- 21-Cinda Quail
- 22-David Denton
- 23-Emma Thornton
- 28-Kathy Lettofsky
- 29-Ned Taylor
- 29-Brance McCune

May

- 1-Jay Allen
- 1-Katie Carr
- 3-Charles Gover
- 3-Ro Brown
- 4-Carol Benson
- 11-Lydia Hutchinson
- 12-Dean Dahms
- 18-Peggy Richards
- 22-Bob Murray
- 24-Guy Everhart
- 25-Ira Click
- 29-Geri Maher

**Recruit a new Member
In 2020**



April

- 1
Bill & Carol Benson
- 12
David & Carol Baker
- 23
Stephanie & James Vaughn

May

- 8
Roger & Elizabeth Bennett
- 12
David & Janet Fish
- 15
Joe & Susan Konzelman
- 31
Erin & Jeff Misner

Departments of Veterans Affairs Links

Here are the links to the State Veterans Affairs Departments. If interested, you can sign up for their newsletters and announcements.

<https://veterans.maryland.gov/>

<https://www.dmva.pa.gov>

<https://veterans.wv.gov/>

Taps



CDR
William
(Bill)
Ballweber,
USN, Ret.,
70,
passed

away on January 14, 2020. He was in Charlotte Hall Veteran's home when he passed. Bill was elected to the office of Chapter Treasurer in 2002 and served in that position for several years. As some of you know, Bill and his wife, Hettie, ran the Fast Friends Greyhound Rescue, Inc. organization for many years. Hettie recently established a charitable fund in his honor as he loved the greyhounds they rescued from the racetracks. It is the William and Hettie Ballweber Fund in the Community Foundation of Frederick County Maryland.

STAY HEALTHY



The United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration



National Vietnam War Veterans Day will be commemorated on March 29 to thank and honor veterans of the Vietnam War, including personnel who were held as prisoners of war (POW), or listed as missing in action (MIA), for their service and sacrifice on behalf of the United States and to thank and honor the families of these veterans. The Commemoration uses the term "Vietnam veteran" to describe those who served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces at any time during the period of November 1, 1955 to May 15, 1975, regardless of duty location

It was on March 29, 1973, when combat and combat support units withdrew from South Vietnam. U.S. Sens. Pat Toomey, R-Pa., and Joe

Donnelly, D-Ind., introduced legislation in 2017 to honor Vietnam Veterans with a day on the anniversary of the withdrawal of military units from South Vietnam. President Donald Trump signed the War Veterans Day Act on March 28, 2017, calling for U.S. flags to be flown on March 29 for those who served.

For Your Information

Our newsletter is posted to the MD Council of Chapters web site. I have received a few inquiries in regard to personal information (addresses, phone numbers, emails, etc.) appearing in the directory update section of our newsletter. All that type information is deleted before sending the newsletter for posting to the above site. They receive a redacted copy.

Newsletter Via Email

If you prefer to receive a digital copy of the newsletter, let Jerry Schumeyer know at theschumeyers@comcast.net or 301-696-1191. Make sure that you add his email to your safe senders, so the newsletter doesn't end up in your spam folder. This will also ensure that you receive timely updates on other important matters when they are sent.

Protect Yourself from Fraud

Scammers may use COVID-19 as an opportunity to steal your identity and commit Medicare fraud. In some cases, they might tell you they'll send you a Coronavirus test, masks, or other items in exchange for your Medicare number or personal information. Be wary of unsolicited requests for your Medicare number or other personal information.

It's important to always guard your Medicare card like a credit card and check your Medicare claims summary forms for errors. Only give your Medicare number to participating Medicare pharmacists, primary and specialty care doctors or people you trust to work with Medicare on your behalf. Remember, Medicare will never call you to ask for or check your Medicare number.

Veterans: Call Before Visiting Your VA Facility

Got a fever, cold, cough or flu-like symptoms? Are you worried that you have a viral illness? The last thing you want to do is get out of the house to see the doctor, exposing yourself (and others) to more potential bugs and viruses.

VA can make it easier and safer to get back to health with virtual care through My

HealtheVet and the VA Video Connect app on your smartphone, tablet or computer. Go to <https://www.va.gov/> for more information.

Veterans Recognition and Resource Day

Friday, July 10, 2020
9 am-2pm
Frederick County Senior Services Division/Frederick Senior Center
1440 Taney Ave, Fredrick, MD 21702
www.FrederickCountyMD.gov/v/SeniorServices

In collaboration with the Frederick County Community Veteran Engagement Board

Update: Congress Passes Legislation to Protect GI Bill Benefits During Coronavirus Challenges

The House of Representatives on March 19 passed a Senate measure that will support GI Bill beneficiaries facing financial uncertainty connected to the coronavirus outbreak. A Senate bill S.3503 with these provisions was introduced March 16 by Sens. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) and Jon Tester (D-Mont.). It was passed without amendment by a voice vote and sent to the House, where it passed

without objection the morning of March 19. It now goes to the president for signature.

Chapter Picnic August 15

Our Chapter picnic is scheduled for August 15 at Bert & Emma Thornton's Shoot Proof Farm provided the Coronavirus threat has passed. We will keep you informed. Details will be published in the July newsletter.

2020 Events/Program Schedule

NOTE: VENUE HAS BEEN ADDED TO THE CHAPTER MEETINGS/LUNCHEONS FOR OCTOBER 17

April 18- Membership meeting/luncheon, **CANCELLED**

May 23- UPC Board Meeting, 9:30 a.m., via Internet

June 13 - Maryland Council of Chapters Meeting, via Internet

June 27- Membership meeting/luncheon, **CANCELLED**

July 25- UPC Board Meeting, 9:30 a.m., via Internet

August 15-Annual Picnic, Bert & Emma Thornton's Shoot Proof Farm, Jefferson, MD

September 26- UPC Board Meeting, 9:30 a.m., Ft. Detrick Chapel, Rm 5, Bldg. 1776 Ditto Road, Ft. Detrick

October 17- Membership meeting/luncheon, Monocacy Crossing Restaurant, Frederick, MD

November 21- UPC Board Meeting, 9:30 a.m., Ft. Detrick Chapel, Rm 5, Bldg. 1776 Ditto Road, Ft. Detrick

December 19- Holiday luncheon (Venue to be determined)

Now and Always
We'll be There.

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VA to provide capability for Veterans to access their VA health data on Apple iPhones

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will release new capabilities this summer providing Veterans who receive care at VA with the ability to access their personal medical data using the Health Records on iPhone feature from Apple. Veterans will see an aggregated view of their allergies, conditions, immunizations, lab results, medications, procedures and vitals in the Health app on their iPhone. Health Records on iPhone also brings together hospitals and clinics outside VA with the existing Apple Health app. Veterans can see their available medical data from multiple providers, including VA, whenever they choose.

This new capability has been made possible through the recently announced Veterans Health Application Programming Interface (Veterans Health API). This Veterans Health API allows Veterans to access their health records within innovative applications on their mobile devices or in their web browser.

Launched in 2010, VA Blue Button, a feature of My HealtheVet, opened the door for Veterans to download a copy of their VA health records online. The new capability using VA's Health API and Apple's Health app furthers VA's commitment to make it easy for Veterans to securely access their own health data. Veterans with Apple iPhones will be able to access the app on their device. After a visit to a VA health care facility, the participating Veteran's Apple device will automatically receive updated health record information within 24 hours from the visit using the built-in Health app from Apple on their iPhone. © MOAA 2020

Beware of Scams Connected to the Coronavirus Crisis

In a time of uncertainty, there is a heightened risk of falling victim to scams concocted by those with ill intent. For cybercriminals and scammers, the coronavirus crisis creates an attentive audience who may be willing to accept false information in order to protect themselves from perceived risks. Arm yourself not only against the virus, but against other threats, by learning how to detect them first.

Know How Officials Operate

Knowing how legitimate organizations conduct business can give you a leg up on anyone who attempts to pull the wool over your eyes. Health officials you've never contacted will not email you or come to your door. If this happens, contact your local police department immediately. Legitimate health organizations will not intimidate you with repercussions if you do not do what is asked. If you are threatened with arrest, prosecution, or confinement, you can safely know that the representative you are dealing with is not working on behalf of a real agency. Similarly, hospitals will not contact you seeking money to provide an urgent service for a loved one. If there is any question, contact your local hospital or the family member for further confirmation. Your bank will not call you to offer investment alternatives or to move around funds during market uncertainty. Be especially suspicious if the contact comes from a financial organization that you do not have a relationship with.

Spot a Cyber-Threat

Some scammers are claiming your computer can be infected by a coronavirus; at present, there is not a digital version of the threat. This is a variation on a common scam where a caller claims to be a computer-support technician and offers to repair your device, then requests sensitive personal data to access it. As always, follow good practices online and don't open or click on links from unsolicited emails. These links or emails could contain malware. Never give away personal or financial information about yourself or others online without first verifying the source.

Common Scams

Other common scams can come in the form of phone calls and text messages. The White House is warning the public to ignore rumors of a national quarantine that have been circulating via text. By phone, criminals have been posing as friends or family members needing money to cover a “virus prevention fee” that must be paid to return from overseas. Most scams include messaging that require immediate action. No matter how urgent it sounds, if something doesn’t sound quite right, it probably isn’t, and you can always contact an organization you know and trust for confirmation. Legitimate organizations can verify their information and will not pressure you into taking an action that you are uncomfortable with.

Know Your Sources

Seeking information from trusted sources can also help you steer clear of scams. MOAA has links to these organizations, as well as links for recent news updates, at www.MOAA.org/coronavirus. You can also contact your state, county, or city health department, your local hospital, your primary care physician, local medical clinics, or other locations where you receive medical services. © MOAA 2020

Military Hospitals to Cancel Appointments, Shift to Telehealth in COVID-19 Response

Military treatment facility patients will likely see some of their scheduled appointments canceled and moved to telehealth instead as Defense Health Agency (DHA) officials look to "scrub" the schedule and clear the way for coronavirus patients. "What we have asked the military treatment facilities [MTF] to do ... is to go in and what we call 'scrub the templates,'" Regina Julian, who oversees coordination between the DHA and the military services, said during a Facebook-based town hall with Pentagon health officials. "That means look out forward at our scheduled appointments and see what can be done virtually."

Patients whose MTF appointments are canceled will receive a notice and a phone call, she said. "If that happens, you may get a cancellation notice, but soon after that you should have someone from the MTF trying to reach out to you at the numbers that you have given us to schedule a virtual phone visit with your provider in lieu of that face-to-face visit, where that's feasible," she said. Other patients may be notified of new precautions for visits that can be done only in person, she said. "Some visits are only feasible face-to-face, and so if the military treatment facility wants to limit people coming in because of potential exposure, they will give you processes and procedures for dealing with that," she said.

Officials are also looking to offer telehealth appointments to active-duty patients. "If you're active duty, you're expected to receive care from [the] direct-care system so we're able to set you up with a virtual visit from your own provider or another primary-care provider in your military treatment facility," she said. "If you need to go to urgent care in the [civilian] network, you will need a referral first because this is tied to your own medical readiness. You can receive a referral through the nurse advice line, or you can obtain it, preferably, through your own provider." © MOAA 2020

MOAA Urges TRICARE to Waive Early Medication Refill Limits

With the COVID-19 situation rapidly evolving, MOAA members are understandably concerned about TRICARE coverage related to the virus. MOAA has reached out to TRICARE officials urging them to enhance communication with beneficiaries and reconsider TRICARE's prescription refill policy in light of guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and policy updates by Medicare and commercial plans allowing early prescription refills. To sign up for TRICARE coronavirus email updates, please visit the TRICARE website (<https://www.tricare.mil/coronavirus>).

Current CDC guidance recommends people at high risk for COVID-19 complications — older adults, those with underlying medical conditions — prepare for an extended stay at home to avoid getting sick if an outbreak happens in their community. Recommended preparations include having a supply of medications on hand or switching to mail order prescription delivery.

MOAA has talked to the Defense Health Agency (DHA), and officials there are encouraging beneficiaries to use TRICARE's Express Scripts mail order program. While we agree home delivery is a good option for many, it is not enough to address all beneficiary concerns. DHA must also ensure refill limits for 30-day maintenance medications filled at retail pharmacies, such as Walgreens, allow beneficiaries who must or prefer to use retail pharmacies to maintain an adequate supply of prescription drugs given the circumstances.

If you currently fill 30-day supplies of your medication at a local pharmacy and would like a longer-term supply, you have two options:

- Ask your physician to write your prescription for a 90-day supply and fill it using Express Scripts Home Delivery. Standard TRICARE mail order refill policies allow you to refill or renew a prescription medication after two-thirds of the timeframe for your prescription has passed. This means you can refill a 90-day prescription after 60 days (when you have a 30-day supply remaining.)
- Fill three 30-day supplies at a retail pharmacy at one time (three copays will apply). We are still trying to verify refill timing policy if you use this option.

We have also asked for clarification on TRICARE referral and authorization requirements and cost shares for diagnostic tests related to COVID-19 as well as guidance on military treatment pharmacy refill policies.

Please keep in mind, the Military Health System Nurse Advice Line is available 24/7 by phone (1-800-TRICARE, option 1), web chat, and video chat to all TRICARE beneficiaries except those enrolled in the U.S. Family Health Plan (USFHP). USFHP beneficiaries should check their plan website for nurse chat and telehealth options.

Because the Nurse Advice Line is currently experiencing high call volumes, beneficiaries who get care from civilian providers in the community should contact their provider first if they have any questions or concerns.

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Adjustments to Fort Detrick Commissary Hours Due to Corona Virus

On March 18, all stores will begin 100% ID Card checks at the entrance of the store and will revoke the visitor policy. This will reduce the number of people in the stores and help with social distancing and crowd control. Only authorized shoppers are allowed into the store. The only exception to the policy change is for visitors who are providing active and necessary assistance to an At-Risk* Patron; an example of this would be a grandchild assisting a grandparent in a wheelchair. "Early bird" shopping hours will be eliminated to allow more time for cleaning and restocking of the stores.

Special hours set aside for at risk populations and Active Duty and their dependents are:

At Risk Authorized Patron Hours:

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Sunday
9:30-11 am At-Risk Authorized Patrons Only

Saturday

8:30 a.m. - 11 a.m. - At Risk Authorized Patrons Only

Active Duty/Dependents Patron Hours

Tuesday: 11 am-1:30 pm Active Duty/Dependents Only

"Early bird" shopping hours will be eliminated to allow more time for cleaning and restocking of the stores.

***What is the definition of an "At Risk" individual?**

The CDC defines at risk as over 65 years of age, those with compromised immune systems, or with other health complications such as diabetes, heart disease, etc. The CDC's definition is located here:
<https://www.cdc.gov/.../specific.../high-risk-complications.html>.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Resources and Updates

Below, you'll find links to the latest government guidance regarding COVID-19.

If you believe you may be suffering from the virus and you are:

- *A TRICARE beneficiary:* Call the Military Health System Nurse Advice Line at 1-800-TRICARE (874-2273), option 1, to receive guidance. You can also connect with a nurse via web or video chat at www.mhsnurseadvice.com.
- *A VA beneficiary:* Contact your local VA facility prior to visiting. You can also send a secure message via the MyHealthVet portal to receive guidance. As of March 19, Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Regional Offices no longer will offer in-person services, including scheduled appointments.
- *Outside the VA and TRICARE networks:* Call your health provider.

Coronavirus Resources

- [Coronavirus.gov](https://www.coronavirus.gov/) <https://www.coronavirus.gov/>
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Coronavirus Website](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html) <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- [CDC Advice for Higher-Risk Individuals](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/) <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>
- [VA Coronavirus Website](https://www.publichealth.va.gov/n-coronavirus/TRICARE-Coronavirus-Information) [https://www.publichealth.va.gov/n-coronavirus/TRICARE Coronavirus Information](https://www.publichealth.va.gov/n-coronavirus/TRICARE-Coronavirus-Information) <https://www.tricare.mil/coronavirus>