



Ohio Department of Veterans Services

★ *Monthly Update* ★

August 2012



Photo courtesy Sgt Rachael K. A. Moore

Marines and family members who served at Camp Lejeune between 1957 and 1987 can now be treated for certain diseases caused by contaminated water found at the base, thanks to recent federal legislation. Read more on page 5.

Questions about veterans benefits?

Call 1-877-OHIOVET
(1-877-644-6838)

Welcome to the seventeenth edition of the Ohio Department of Veterans Services e-newsletter! The newsletter is a key source of information about issues of interest to our community of veterans in Ohio.

We thank you for your service to our country. Because you're a veteran, you've earned a number of benefits that you may not be aware of. Most of these benefits originate at the federal level with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Based on the time you served, you may be eligible for compensation for injuries, health care, educational assistance, home loans or many other benefits. There are also a number of state benefits available to Ohio veterans, to include the Ohio Veterans Bonus as well as direct financial assistance from the county to veterans in need.

The place to find out what you've earned and to apply is your county veterans service office. You can locate yours in the interactive map on our department home page, www.ohiovet.gov, or by calling 1-877-OHIO-VET (1-877-644-6838).

We will continue to provide you this newsletter each month. We hope it's of value to you and your family.

Get a Job...

The new mission for many veterans transitioning to the next phase of their lives is getting a job to take care of themselves and their family.

And make no mistake, it's a mission and needs to be treated as such. You will always find notices of job fairs in the Ohio Department of Veterans Services social media, news update listserv, and in these pages. And yes, some of the information is repeated, but it bears repeating.

But before you attend any of these events, remember these common tips:

- Have a current resume;
- Have a cover letter that's geared to the type of job being sought;
- Present a professional appearance, e.g., suit and tie, or dress/skirt or pantsuit.



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Part and parcel of preparing a resume, of course, is translating military experience to civilian experience. The Army and the Navy have developed online “cool” web sites that help veterans translate their military skills into terms civilian employers can understand. The sites, which stand for “credentialing opportunities online,” allow a veteran to select their military skill code and then see the types of jobs their training and experience translates to, as well as any certifications that are needed. There is no Air Force, Marine, or Coast Guard “cool” site. However, the Air Force does offer similar resources on its Community College of the Air Force site, at the Credentialing and Education Research Tool (CERT) page; Marine skills are similar to those found in the Army and Air Force; and Coast Guard skills are similar to those found in the Navy.

The “cool” sites are below:

<https://www.cool.army.mil/index.htm>

<https://www.cool.navy.mil/overview.htm>

<https://augateway.maxwell.af.mil/ccaf/certifications/programs/>

When looking for a job, it’s best to live by the Boy Scout motto: Be prepared.

See below for more veteran employment info.

More Companies Hiring...

This month, Goodyear announced that they want to hire 1,000 veterans nationwide. General Electric also stepped up its recruitment of veterans. Both companies have a large presence in Ohio.

Goodyear plans to hire 1,000 veterans over a three-year period. The tire maker said the jobs can be at any location and any level of the company, whether retail or manufacturing. Veterans seeking more information should check out Goodyear’s careers page at:

<http://www.goodyear.com/careers/>





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General Electric is also actively recruiting veterans. In addition, the multi-division company has implemented a new apprenticeship program in a partnership with Cincinnati State to train employees for positions in GE Aviation. Find out more at:

<https://www.facebook.com/notes/ohio-higher-ed/cincinnati-state-ge-aviation-join-to-offer-apprentice-training-program/10150994624086945>

To learn more about veteran employment at GE, go to:

<http://www.ge.com/careers/veterans/index.html>



Ohio Job Resources for Veterans...

The best tool for veteran employment in Ohio is sitting right on your computer.

Just one mouse click away is “Ohio Means Jobs,” the state’s job web site which has a real advantage for veterans by getting them to the front of the line for available jobs. The site is the result of a partnership between Ohio and Monster.com, and is on the web at OhioMeansJobs.com.

Once on the site – at <https://ohioMeansJobs.com/omj/> – veterans should go to the “Job Seekers” area, and that’s where the opportunities open up.

First, veterans need to post their resume and indicate that they *are* a veteran. What this does is present veterans’ resumes first for any job that matches the qualifications they’ve posted in their resume. The resume should be reviewed every month and electronically “updated” – whether any additional information is added or not – to keep it refreshed and at the front of the line for jobs.

This site has a searchable data base of thousands of jobs across Ohio, with private business, federal, state and local government, and schools. While it’s still advisable to check local ads in the places in Ohio you’d like to be, the Monster.com system will capture the great majority of employment ads from throughout the state.



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There's also a military widget on Ohiomeansjobs.com that will automatically links to additional information for veterans. This includes resources to help build a resume by translating military experience to civilian terms. It also includes links to veteran-friendly employers – companies that have made a commitment to hire veterans – as well as other resources:

<http://my.ohiomeansjobs.monster.com/VetCenter/InfoCenter.aspx>



And personal help is never far from home – the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (JFS) is in an active partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor to operate Job Centers in each county, usually centrally located in the county seat; contact information is easily accessible by searching online or in the phone book. The Job Centers are open to all residents, but are also staffed with counselors who specifically assist veterans. Periodically, the Job Centers work with local partners to host regional job fairs across the state, which we'll tell you about here.

The success rate of the Job Centers in finding veterans employment is definitely worthy of note. For example, 1,000 veterans enrolled at JFS Job Centers throughout Ohio in the month of July. Out of this 1,000, 700 are now employed, a 70 percent success rate that JFS is committed to making higher.

The Ohio Guard is Involved, Too...

The Ohio National Guard believes that a crucial aspect of maintain their force is finding full-time jobs for their part-time soldiers. In fact, the Guard is working with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (JFS) to survey soldiers in deploying units before they return to determine how many need employment. JFS is then contacting these soldiers when they return home to work with them and help them find work.

The Guard has partnered with the veterans service organization AMVETS to create the web site below, which features job postings for veterans:

<http://ohiovetscan.com/>



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Sign up Fast for VRAP...

Thousands of veterans nationwide are signing up for the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP), a new VA program aimed at helping unemployed veterans aged 35-60 get re-trained and re-employed in high-demand occupations nationwide.

VRAP is part of the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, passed by Congress last year. The program offers up to 12 months of job training assistance under the Montgomery G.I. Bill at the rate of \$1,473 per month. Applications for the first phase of the program will be accepted until September 30. The first phase is open to 45,000 eligible veterans.



The VA will continue to take applications, however, and a second phase begins with the new federal fiscal year on October 1. This phase is open to 54,000 eligible veterans. For eligible veterans whose applications are approved after the limit is reached for the first phase, benefits will begin after the new fiscal year begins.

Please note that applications must be made online through the VA's eBenefits program. A web tool will assist veterans in working through this.

For more information, see: <http://benefits.va.gov/vow/education.htm>

Federal Legislation Helps Ohio Military Families...

An important piece of legislation affecting thousands of Ohio veterans became federal law earlier this month.

On August 6, President Obama signed into law "The Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012" (referred to below as "the Act").



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The Act was a combination of several bills that had bipartisan support in both the House and Senate. The text of the bill is too lengthy to reproduce here. However, the major provisions are summarized below.

The Act provides for treatment of service members and families who were exposed to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune:



- It allows Marine veterans and family members who lived or served at Marines Base Camp Lejeune, N.C. for at least 30 days between 1957 and 1987 to be eligible for health care coverage for the following illnesses connected to the contaminants: esophageal cancer, lung cancer, breast cancer, bladder cancer, kidney cancer, leukemia, multiple myeloma, myelodysplastic syndromes, renal toxicity, hepatic steatosis, female infertility, miscarriage, scleroderma, neurobehavioral effects and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

- The Department of Veterans Affairs (the VA) is permitted to question individual applicants to prevent fraud, but the health benefits do not require patients to prove a connection between their dis-

eases and the contaminated water. County veteran service officers are receiving training on how to process the claims for VA healthcare. Any veteran or family member who believes they were exposed at Camp Lejeune should contact their county veterans service office – find the contact information on the map at www.ohiovet.gov.

The Act provides increased protections for privacy at military funerals:

- It curbs protests at military funerals by increasing the buffer around the funerals from 300 feet to 500 feet, and increasing the buffer around access routes to a funeral service from 150 feet to 300 feet. The “quiet time” when no protests are permitted is increased to two hours before and after the service, up from one hour. The law also creates harsher penalties for violators, who will now face unspecified fines and up to two years in prison, instead of a maximum of one year.



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The Act corrects a situation that impeded states' care of veterans with 70 percent or greater disabilities:

- It allows for differential per diem rates for skilled nursing care for veterans with varying degrees of disability who reside within State Veteran Homes.
- Prior to 2006, there were no cost differential per diem rates for veterans with varying degrees of disability, though varying levels of care were required. An initial legislative fix was sought to allow a higher per diem for any veteran with a disability rating of 70 percent or higher and language was adopted in the 2006 Veterans Benefits Act (Pub. L/ No 109-461, enacted December 22, 2006).
- Unfortunately, when this law was implemented the higher per diem rate actually resulted in significantly lower total amounts being paid to at least 30 states with Medicare-certified State Veteran Homes.
- Ohio had spent additional funds each month to provide the skilled care needed by the veterans who are 70 percent or greater service-connected disabled. While Ohio has always met these needs, some State Veteran Homes were forced to turn away veterans for admittance with 70 percent or greater disabilities simply to remain solvent.

The Act also contains language addressing veteran sexual assault prevention and a pilot program for veterans diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Don't Delay on the Ohio Veterans Bonus...

We want to remind all Persian Gulf War era veterans that the deadline for applications for the Ohio Veterans Bonus is December 31, 2013. No deadline has yet been set for veterans of the era of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars.

We also know what you Persian Gulf era veterans are thinking – December 31, 2013 is a long time away, and you've got plenty of time to worry about this. But you also know how time flies when you're having fun, and that deadline will creep up on you before you know it.

So our message is simple. If you're a veteran of the Persian Gulf War era, take the time right now to apply. If you served during the current conflicts, it's always better to have money now than wait till later, so take the time to apply, too.





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If you're a veteran of another era but know someone who qualifies, or a family member or friend of someone who does, talk to them about the Bonus and ask them to take the time to apply.

The Ohio Veterans Bonus is available to veterans who served more than 90 days active duty, not for training, during the periods of the Persian Gulf War and the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. For the Persian Gulf, the eligible period is from August 2, 1990 through March 3, 1991; for Afghanistan, from October 7, 2001 through a date to be determined by the President, and for Iraq, from March 19, 2003 and also through a to-be-determined date. Payment can be received for active duty service anywhere in the world during these periods, but is higher for veterans who served in the Persian Gulf or in Afghanistan or Iraq. Eligible veterans must have been Ohio residents at the time of their entry into the service, and must be Ohio residents currently.

The bonus pays \$100 a month to veterans who served in the Persian Gulf theater, or in the countries of Afghanistan or Iraq, up to a maximum of \$1,000. For veterans who served elsewhere, the payment is \$50 a month up to a \$500 maximum. Veterans medically discharged due to injuries sustained in combat can receive \$1,000, plus up to \$500 for months of service elsewhere. Family members of those killed in action or who died from disease as a result of their in-theater service can receive a bonus of \$5,000 plus whatever the service member was eligible for, up to a total of \$6,500.

As of August 15, nearly \$49.2 million in Bonus payments had been made to more than 58,000 Ohio veterans, serving military, and eligible family members.

Anyone needing more information or who want to apply can call toll-free to 1-877-OHIO VET (1-877-644-6838) option 2, visit:

https://veteransbonus.ohio.gov/odvs_web/, or visit any county veterans service office (see www.ohiovet.gov for an interactive map of the county offices).

Foreclosure Assistance Available...

One of the toughest things that any family, military or civilian, can face is foreclosure on their home. But if anyone in Ohio finds themselves in that situation, the state has tools to help through the "Save the Dream" program's "Restoring Stability" initiative.



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This initiative is aimed at Ohio homeowners who are struggling to make their monthly house payments or those who have already fallen behind on their mortgage. The key part of this program is the participation of the Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA), which administers \$570.4 million in federal foreclosure prevention funding to help families dealing with a permanent or temporary loss of income avoid foreclosure. Among the ways homeowners can receive help are temporary loans to reinstate their mortgages or bring them current on payments.

If you're at risk of losing your home, contact them toll-free at: (888) 404-4674,

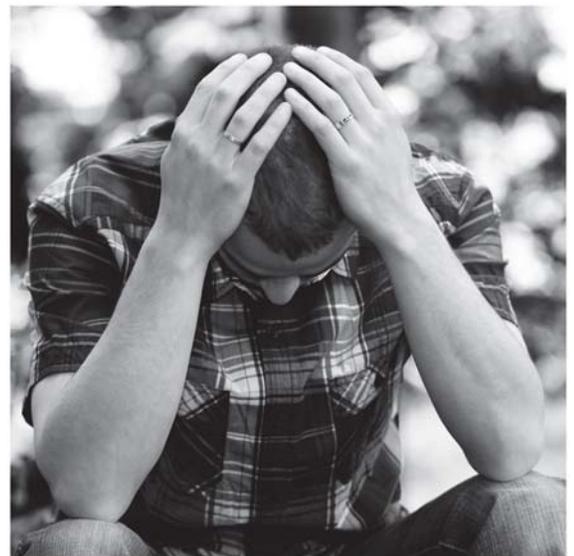
Or: <http://www.ohiohome.org/restoringstability/>

If You're in a Tough Spot...

Military life is tough at the best of times, and the challenge of serving during more than a decade of war can put near-unbelievable stress on service members and strain even the strongest of family bonds. Sadly, these conditions to lead some to seek an end to their own lives.

The military chains of command, the National Guard, Reserves and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (the VA) want to take every step possible to not see our military and veterans pushed into those kinds of corners.

One very visible and important step the VA has taken is to implement the Veterans Crisis Line. Available 24/7 and open to veterans of any age, this toll-free number or online chat service is staffed by a group of trained professionals, many of them veterans themselves, who understand the challenges that veterans face and are experienced in helping veterans of any age group or circumstance.





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The crisis line was launched in 2007. In that time, it's taken over 600,000 calls and is credited with more than 21,000 life-saving rescues. The online chat line, launched in 2009, has helped more than 50,000 people.

If you're a veteran in crisis – or are close to one who is – don't suffer in silence, reach out to a friendly voice who can help you.

The number to call is (800) 273-8255, and press 1.

To read more about the Veterans Crisis Line, see:

<http://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>

The VA also has seven Vet Centers throughout Ohio, specifically designed to offer mental health counseling for veterans and families. To find out more, contact your county veterans service office.

You can find your local office on the map at: <http://dvs.ohio.gov/>



Reaching Out to Families...

The military has long recognized how important family support is. Every active unit has a family support group, and bases worldwide have numerous resources to help.

Family support is especially crucial to members of the National Guard and Reserve, who since 9/11 have been deployed at levels not seen since World War II, and often for multiple tours.

Guard and Reserve units have their own family support groups, but there's also a larger organization, headed by the Ohio National Guard, that ties them all together and provides an even greater degree of support.



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Called the Inter Service Family Assistance Council (ISFAC), this statewide umbrella covers units in the Ohio National Guard and the Reserves of all services, as well as the active military components serving in Ohio, such as Wright-Patterson Air Force Base and the Coast Guard on Lake Erie as well as Recruiting and MEPS. Six Regional councils serve different areas of the state.

The ISFAC ties together the activities of all the different family support groups, provides information and resources, and when needed, a higher level of assistance with the many family issues inherent with military service. It also sponsors annual activities for military families statewide.

To find out more about ISFAC and family support programs in Ohio, call toll-free (800) 589-9914, or visit:

http://www.ong.ohio.gov/frg/FRG_index.html

We've Got a New Web Site...

If it's been awhile since you've visited the Ohio Department of Veterans Services web site, take the time to get reacquainted – it's been revamped and re-designed to be a more effective resource for veterans and their families. The site is at: <http://dvs.ohio.gov/>

Right away, you'll notice the improved graphics and enhanced photographic links at the top of the home page to important resources and information. In general, everything on the home page is easier to read and access, including helpful links to more news releases, back issues of this newsletter, registration for news updates, and our annual reports.

Of particular note is a revamped Veterans Benefits section (http://dvs.ohio.gov/home/veterans_benefits.aspx) that points the site visitor to a new page of general information tabs that break down the specific types of benefits available.

There's also a link to the brand-new Benefits Resource Guide, that lists federal and state benefits available to Ohio veterans. The Guide is at: http://dvs.ohio.gov/home/veterans_benefits_guide.aspx

If you'd like to get a hard-copy of the Guide – or better yet, would like more information or to apply for the benefits listed there – be sure to visit the veterans service office in your county. They're easy to find... just see the map on our site's home page!

