



February 2014



# Veteran Newsletter



Over 400 veterans and family members attended the Veterans Benefit Resource Fair at the Medina National Guard Armory on February 24. A total of 72 exhibitors provided information on benefits earned by veterans, employment available in the local area and across the state of Ohio, and education and health-care opportunities in and around Medina. See more on pages 1 - 2.

*Welcome to 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](http://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.

## **Medina-Area Veterans Get Information on Benefits, Employments and More... Improve Job Situation for Vets...**

The Ohio Department of Veterans Services joined forces with the Ohio National Guard and the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services to host a Veterans Benefit Resource Fair in Medina on Feb. 24.

More than 400 veterans and family members attended the fair, which was held at the National Guard Armory in Medina. Those who attended were able to speak with representatives of 58 exhibitors. These included the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (the VA) Regional Office in Cleveland, VA health care, the Ohio Department of

**Have questions about veterans benefits? Call 1-877-OHIOVET (1-877-644-6838)**



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Veterans Services (ODVS), Ohio Veterans Bonus and Ohio Veterans Homes, Ohio National Guard, Medina County Veterans Service Commission, Ohio and Medina County Job and Family Services, and numerous local businesses offering services to veterans. Employers at the fair ranged from the Insuring Ohio Futures group from Ohio's insurance industry, Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, Walmart and Starbucks, as well as local employers such as Panther Expedite logistics services and numerous health care providers, including the Cleveland Clinic.



Health care screenings were available from some exhibitors, and a local training academy even offered free haircuts.

Director Tim Gorrell of ODVS and Brigadier General John Harris, Assistant Adjutant General for Army, addressed those on hand in a brief opening ceremony. Then they spent most of the day circulating through the Armory and speaking with veterans and exhibitors alike.

“It’s great to see so many veterans here, and those who serve veterans,” Director Gorrell said during the ceremony. “Every day is Veterans Day and this is just a small indication of that.”

The Medina resource fair coincided with the State of the State address by Governor John Kasich in the city that evening. Photos of the resource fair can be viewed at:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ohioveteransservices/sets/72157641525235655>



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## **African-American Veterans Speak of Struggles and Successes...**

A panel of African-American veterans from World War II to the present spoke of their experiences in military training and service during a panel discussion held in the Statehouse Museum Gallery on Feb. 18. The event was sponsored by the Ohio Department of Veterans Services in celebration of Black History Month.

Panel members were:

- John B. Williams, a cavalryman in World War II with the 28th Cavalry Regiment, continuing the tradition of African-American “Buffalo Soldiers” who served on the Plains in the late 1800’s. Mr. William’s unit was later converted into the 1553rd Engineer Heavy Pontoon Battalion, and he served in France and Germany with the U.S. 7th Army and 3rd Army. The process had begun the award the 28th Cavalry Regiment, the 20th Century “Buffalo Soldiers,” with a Congressional Gold Medal for their defense of southern California in the early days of the war.
- Don Elder, who served as an aircraft ground crew chief with the original Tuskegee Airmen in the Army Air Corps for three years following World War II. He was assigned to the 99th Fighter Squadron, as a crew chief of P-47 fighters, in what was then Lockbourne Field in Columbus. He received a Congressional Gold Medal in 2007 as one of the original Tuskegee Airmen. (Mr. Elder was unable to be present due to attending a memorial service for one of his comrades; his comments were presented via videotape).
- Beauford T. Williams, who served in the Army following the Korean War. He later became a professional entertainer.
- Ron Buchanan, a veteran of the U.S. Army who served in Vietnam from June 1967 to June 1968. He later joined the Army Reserves, and retired in 2001 after 22 years of military service.
- Sephan Andrew Frazier, who is currently a Captain serving in the 16th Engineer Brigade Ohio Army National Guard. He has been a platoon leader and company commander, and served a tour in Afghanistan.

Mr. Williams and Mr. Elder served in a segregated military, while the other panelists did not.

Mr. Williams spoke of mistreatment at the post exchange when a clerk gave a white soldier change in his hand, but threw the change for a black soldier down on the counter, prompting a question from the soldier and a scuffle between the two groups of soldiers present. “We almost had to fight our way out of America,” he said.

Tension could erupt between black and white soldiers in those days. “There was a full-fledged race riot on the parade field,” Mr. Elder said of an incident that occurred just a few days into his basic training.



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Both men said their units were tight-knit groups that were disregarded by other soldiers, leaving them with a feeling of having to be twice as good to prove themselves – and also a feeling of pride because of their units' distinguished records.

The feelings of pride were present in each of the veterans, and although discrimination within the ranks eased over the years, it was still present outside the gates. In some cases, though, it still lingers within. Capt. Frazier said when he told another candidate in Officer Candidate School that he was going to be assigned to the Army's engineer branch, the other person thought that was unusual, saying there was a lot of math involved, and blacks weren't good at math. "I told him I had a degree as a math teacher," Capt. Frazier said.



Despite some negative experiences, each of the veterans was proud and positive about their service. Each said they would recommend the military to a family member, or to anyone....and that they regularly do.

Photos of the event are available at:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ohioveteransservices/sets/72157641315446043/>;

a video can be viewed at: <http://www.ohiochannel.org/MediaLibrary/Media.aspx?fileId=142384>

## Jobs for Veterans Update...

Veterans in Ohio can take advantage of many national and local companies who are in the market to hire veterans. Below is the latest information on job-seeking strategies for veterans. Please read and share.



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## Companies Looking to Hire Veterans:

Many well-known national companies with Ohio operations are in the market to hire veterans in many different areas of their businesses. These companies include AEP, AT&T, Chase Bank, GE, General Motors, Home Depot, Scotts Miracle Gro, Starbucks, Walmart, Verizon, and Xerox. Information on current jobs is available on the individual company web sites; go to [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) to search by company name and then click on their "employment" or "careers" links.

The Ohio insurance industry has 17,000 new jobs to fill in many different areas.

These jobs are available in insurance companies all around the state.

For more information, see: <http://insurancecareers.org/veterans>

The U.S. Postal Service is also seeking veterans for positions in Ohio. Job vacancies and more

Information is available at: [https://wp1-ext.usps.gov/sap/bc/webdynpro/sap/hrrcf\\_a\\_unreg\\_job\\_search?sap-ep-themeroot=/SAP/PUBLIC/BC/UR/nw5/themes/usps\\_SMALL](https://wp1-ext.usps.gov/sap/bc/webdynpro/sap/hrrcf_a_unreg_job_search?sap-ep-themeroot=/SAP/PUBLIC/BC/UR/nw5/themes/usps_SMALL)



Several state agencies are also currently seeking veterans. Open state jobs can be viewed and applied for at: <http://careers.ohio.gov/>

Please note that Ohio Department of Job and Family Services offices in each county will have information on local jobs that are available. The Ohio Department of Veterans Services' Facebook and Twitter pages will also post frequent announcements of multiple job openings across the state, so be sure to check them out.

## Schools and Companies Offering Job Training:

Job training that could lead to employment in the emerging shale industry and in manufacturing is available throughout Ohio. For example, Stark State College and Eastern Gateway Community College offer training targeted to shale jobs. Cincinnati State College offers training aimed at industrial jobs. Siemens Corporation offers training geared to engineering manufacturing jobs. Find out more at the schools' and company's web sites; conduct your search using [www.google.com](http://www.google.com).

Veteran-specific information on higher education is available through the Ohio Board of Regents at: <https://www.ohiohighered.org/veterans>



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## **Finding Jobs Online:**

Veterans can also look for jobs online. “Ohio Means Jobs” is the state’s primary job web site, listing the vast majority of both private sector and public jobs which are open in Ohio. The site is at <https://ohiomeansjobs.com/omj/>, or simply type in “Ohiomeansjobs.com.” The available jobs are posted in the “Job Seekers” area.

Be sure to register and post your resume on the site – and don’t forget to indicate that you *are* a veteran. The site automatically posts veterans’ resumes first for any job that matches the qualifications they’ve stated in their resume – so employers who go to the site will see veterans’ resumes before they see anyone else’s. 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 head of the line for jobs.

This web site also has an area with other resources for veterans, to include translation of military to civilian skills and frequently asked questions about the process.

The link is: <http://www.ohiomeansveteranjobs.com/infocenter>

## **Finding Jobs In-Person:**

If you want to start a face-to-face job search, there’s in-person assistance available throughout Ohio that knows where the local jobs are. 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 regionally around the state. Contact information can be found online at:

<http://jfs.ohio.gov/owd/wia/wiamap.stm>



While the Job Centers are open to all residents, but are also staffed with counselors who specifically assist veterans. Their primary clients are veterans with barriers to employment, of which long-term unemployment definitely qualifies. Counselors can also assist with skills translation and resume preparation – and they know where the jobs are locally. The Job Centers also have resources to assist disabled veterans with qualifying for, finding and keeping meaningful employment.



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## **For a Job Fair, or any Employment Event, Be Prepared for Interviews, and Know Your Skills:**

Before you attend any job fair or visit any employer, 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.

To prepare an effective resume, you have to be able to translate 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 in 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/>

## **Help for Employers to Hire Veterans:**

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is tackling the mission of helping veterans find employment by reaching out to employers. The agency has developed a Veterans Hiring Guide that provides a central location for information about tools to hire veterans and the business incentives that are available for doing so. The VA's goal is to help employers find job-seeking veterans or to assist employers with their own ongoing efforts at veteran hiring programs. The guide also includes resources for employers seeking to attract military spouses. Development of the guide was a joint effort between the VA, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the Departments of Defense, Labor and Education.

The Veterans Hiring Guide is available at:

<https://www.vetsuccess.va.gov/public/employers.html>



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## Ohio Veterans Bonus Enters in Final Year for Iraq War Veterans...

So far, the Ohio Veterans Bonus has paid out more than \$62.2 million dollars to over 76,400 veterans and eligible family members. Although the Bonus deadline for Persian Gulf War veterans has passed, it is still open for veterans of the two most recent wars.

But another important deadline is looming this year – **the deadline for applications for veterans of the Iraq War era is December 31, 2014.**



The Ohio Veterans Bonus is available to veterans who served anywhere in the world during the time of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Service must have been for more than 90 days active duty, not for training. 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 countries of Afghanistan or Iraq, up to a maximum of \$1,000.

For veterans who served anywhere

else in the world during the eligible periods, the payment is \$50 a month up to a \$500 maximum. The maximum individual award for all eligible periods of service is \$1,500.

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.

Eligibility periods and deadlines are as follows:

- Iraq: eligible period is from March 19, 2003 to December 31, 2011 (**deadline to apply is December 31, 2014**); and
- Afghanistan: eligible period is, from October 7, 2001 through a date to be determined by the President.



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

[https://veteransbonus.ohio.gov/odvs\\_web/](https://veteransbonus.ohio.gov/odvs_web/)

Veterans can also apply for the Bonus at their local Veterans Service Office in their home county. To find the location of your county office, see the Ohio map and select the appropriate county at:

<http://dvs.ohio.gov/>

Your County Veterans Service Office can also help you determine what other federal and state benefits you're eligible for and help you apply for them.

## **Disabled Veterans Get Faster Processing for Social Security Claims...**

Certain disabled veterans will now have a faster path to receiving Social Security disability benefits.

The Social Security Administration has announced that it will give expedited processing for Social Security disability benefits claims to veterans who are rated as 100% disabled by the VA. Officials say this will cut months off the approval time for these claims. The process is expected to launch in mid-March.

Read more about it in the Social Security Administration news release at:

<http://www.ssa.gov/news.htm>

## **VA Is Issuing New ID's...**

The VA is in the process of rolling out a redesigned, and more technologically secure, healthcare ID card.





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Veterans newly-enrolled in VA healthcare will receive them first, followed by a three-month rollout to already-enrolled veterans.

The new cards will be personalized to display the veteran's branch of service emblem. The cards will also incorporate features to make them easier to use, such as adding the letters in "VA" in Braille to help visually impaired veterans. Important VA phone numbers and emergency care instructions will also be printed on the cards.



Veterans who enroll in VA healthcare beginning in February will receive the new cards. Beginning in April, the VA will begin a three-month effort to issue the cards to those already enrolled in the system. Veterans holding one of the current cards, which were issued beginning in 2004, are encouraged to obtain a new card when they are available.

For more information, see the VA news release at:  
<http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2524>

## It's a Taxing Time of Year...

Just about everyone hates to see April 15 roll around, that time every year when Americans file and pay their federal, state and local taxes. It's a safe bet that our Ohio veteran and military community is no different.

But for military service members and military retirees who are Ohio residents, there are some very important tax benefits:

- Military income for those stationed outside of Ohio for 30 days or more is not taxable by Ohio.
- Military retiree and survivor benefits income is not taxable by Ohio.
- Ohio resident federal retirees who are military veterans and have a part of their federal pension attributable to military service can exclude that part of their pension from Ohio taxes.

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More information on these is available on the Ohio Department of Taxation's website at:  
[http://www.tax.ohio.gov/ohio\\_individual/individual/military\\_tax\\_provisions.aspx](http://www.tax.ohio.gov/ohio_individual/individual/military_tax_provisions.aspx)

The tax department website also contains detailed information on filing Ohio taxes.



For military service members, retirees and veterans who need tax assistance, free help is available.

Ohio-resident military service members who are deployed anywhere outside Ohio can get free tax preparation help from the Ohio Society of Certified Public Accountants (CPAs). To take advantage of this service, the eligible military service member, their spouse or a family member can call the Ohio Society of CPAs toll-free at 1-888-959-1212 or e-mail [cpanswers@ohio-cpa.com](mailto:cpanswers@ohio-cpa.com).

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has a network of volunteers who provide free tax preparation service to the elderly, veterans and all who meet the income guidelines. The volunteers work under two primary services, the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE), which is operated in coordination with the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). Each program provides free tax assistance at a number of sites across Ohio.

To qualify for either program, taxpayers seeking assistance must have an income of \$52,000 or less. Qualified taxpayers can find the site nearest them, and find out what to bring for the tax preparation session, by calling:

- VITA: 1-800-906-9887
- TCE (for elderly taxpayers): 1-888-227-7669

To locate these free tax preparation sites by zip code, and for details on what to bring to the tax preparation session, see the information beginning at "Self-Help Tax Preparation" at:  
<http://www.irs.gov/Individuals/Free-Tax-Return-Preparation-for-You-by-Volunteers>



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Limited assistance is also available for federal taxes through the IRS's "free file" program. Taxpayers with income below \$58,000 can receive free tax preparation software; those with incomes above \$58,000 can receive free electronic fill-in forms. More information is at:

<http://www.irs.gov/uac/Free-File:-Do-Your-Federal-Taxes-for-Free>

It may not be everyone's favorite time of year, but taking advantage of the services available can make it less painful for many taxpayers.