

# VETERANS BENEFITS & BEYOND

## VA Partners with Richmond International Raceway to Increase Veterans' Access to Benefits

**T**he Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced a partnership with the Richmond International Raceway (RIR) to promote greater access and awareness to VA benefits and services at the upcoming NASCAR races on Sept. 11 and 12 in Richmond. The partnership with RIR is part of VA's "Summer of Service" initiative designed to encourage and grow the number of individuals and organizations serving Veterans in their communities.

As part of a series of activities beginning this summer to reach Veterans, Servicemembers and their families, VA will honor past and present military members during the Pole Qualifying and Federated Auto Parts 400 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series. VA's Mobile Vet Center will be onsite with a team of health and benefits experts who can answer Veterans' questions, share information and help Veterans and family members access VA benefits and services. As part of the collaboration, RIR will offer Veterans and their families a 70-percent discount on tickets for the Sept. 11 race, as well as their traditional military discount on tickets for the Sept. 12 race.

"The best way to reach Veterans is to involve partners that engage Veterans in the communities where they live," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert A. McDonald. "Through innovative partnerships like this and our Summer of Service initiative, we have the opportunity to reach Veterans and their families who may not realize they are entitled to VA benefits and services or who may not know where to go for assistance," said McDonald.

Prior to the Richmond race, VA and RIR will hold a "Driving VA Benefits and Services Home" event Sept. 10 at the Richmond VA Medical Center featuring NASCAR drivers, RIR representatives, VA

benefits and services outreach staff, and a NASCAR pace car. These outreach events are part of the larger MyVA initiative, which is dedicated to improving the Veteran experience and increasing customer-service access points in communities where Veterans live.

"Richmond International Raceway is proud to partner with such an important organization as the Department of Veterans Affairs," said RIR President, Dennis Bickmeier. "NASCAR is a very patriotic sport, and we pride ourselves on supporting the men and women who have served and are currently serving our country. There's no better way to do that than by partnering with VA to set the field for the Federated Auto Parts 400 'Last Race to Make the Chase.'"

These outreach activities at NASCAR events expands VA's community footprint and increases awareness of benefits and services available to Veterans, Servicemembers and their families. As the number one spectator sport in the country, NASCAR has more than 75 million race fans, one third of which are active duty Servicemembers or Veterans.

In addition to the upcoming RIR activities, VA participated in six other NASCAR events and will conduct outreach at three more during the remaining 2015 race season. VA's health and benefits experts will be onsite to bring VA benefits and services directly into the community. Look for VA at Michigan International Speedway (Aug. 15-16), Darlington Raceway (Sept. 5-6) and Chicagoland Speedway (Sept. 18-20).

For more information about tickets and to learn more about the September RIR event, visit [www.benefits.va.gov/benefits/nascar-outreach](http://www.benefits.va.gov/benefits/nascar-outreach).

Source: [www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2712](http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2712)

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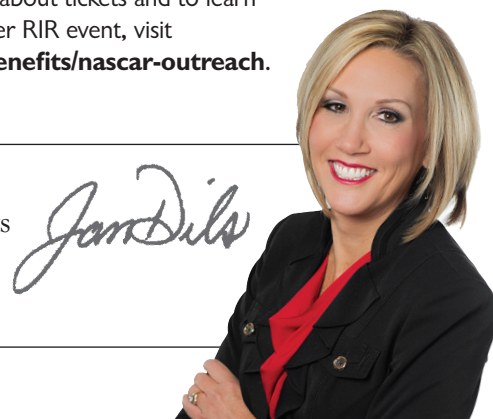
To Help Raise PTSD Awareness

#### OFFICE INBOX

Office News And Events

#### WHAT'S COOKING!

Mountain Dew Cake



# JAN'S LETTER

Ladies and Gentlemen, start your engines—and your benefits! As I welcome you to our latest newsletter for Veterans benefits, I am particularly excited to share an article about VA partnering with the Richmond International Raceway during the upcoming NASCAR races on Sept. 11 and 12 in Richmond. Be sure to read about all of the great things planned for the race, and find out how Veterans and their families can get their tickets to the September 11th race at an incredible discount!

We have also included an article with a lot of facts about PTSD and VA's resources for treatment of this often under-reported disability. The "learn, connect, and share" campaign to raise PTSD awareness demonstrates how anyone can "learn" how PTSD treatment can help, "connect" by reaching out to someone, and "share" what they learn by spreading the word.

And I'm always happy to report when eligibility requirements are expanded, enabling more Veterans to qualify for the benefits they

deserve—so be sure to read our article about expanded eligibility for some benefits for a group of Air Force Veterans and Air Force Reserve personnel who were exposed to Agent Orange through regular and repeated contact with contaminated C-123 aircraft used in Vietnam as part of Operation Ranch Hand (ORH).

Of course, we have included a few items of news from our team members, along with a delicious new recipe and a couple of extras to hopefully make you smile. I hope you enjoy the information we have put together for you, and I want to invite you as always to please give us a call with any questions you may have about Veterans benefits. We are always glad to help, and happy to hear from you!

Sincerely,  
Jan Dils



JAN DILS brings her expertise to issues that affect you and millions of other Americans every day. Her knowledge across vital areas – including Veterans' benefits, disability benefits and related appeals and claims – and a practice that focuses on the people, ensures you get answers and the right results.

## VA Expands Disability Benefits for Air Force Personnel Exposed to Contaminated C-123 Aircraft

**T**he Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently published a new regulation that expands eligibility for some benefits for a select group of Air Force Veterans and Air Force Reserve personnel who were exposed to the herbicide Agent Orange through regular and repeated contact with contaminated C-123 aircraft that had been used in Vietnam as part of Operation Ranch Hand (ORH).

VA published this regulation as an interim final rule so that it could immediately begin providing benefits to eligible Air Force veterans and Air Force Reserve personnel who submit a disability compensation claim for any of the 14 medical conditions that have been determined by VA to be related to exposure to Agent Orange.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert A. McDonald made the decision to expand benefits following receipt of a 2015 report by the National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine (IOM) on Post-Vietnam Dioxin Exposure in Agent Orange-Contaminated C-123 Aircraft. This VA-requested report found evidence that as many as 1,500 to 2,100 Air Force and Air Force Reserve personnel who served as flight, medical and ground maintenance crew members on ORH C-123 aircraft previously used to spray Agent Orange in Vietnam were exposed to the herbicide.

Under this new rule, Air Force and Air Force Reserve flight, medical and ground maintenance crewmembers who served on the contaminated ORH C-123s are presumed to have been exposed to herbicides during their service, thus making it easier for them to establish entitlement for some VA benefits if they develop an Agent Orange-related presumptive condition. In addition, for affected Air Force Reserve crew members, VA will presume that their Agent Orange-related condition had its onset during their Reserve training. This change ensures that these reservists are eligible for VA disability compensation and medical care for any Agent Orange-related presumptive condition, and that their

surviving dependents are eligible for dependency and indemnity compensation and burial benefits. VA will immediately begin processing claims and issuing benefits to eligible Air Force crew members. VA encourages reservists who were assigned to flight, ground or medical crew duties at Lockbourne/Rickenbacker Air Force Base in Ohio (906th and 907th Tactical Air Groups or 355th and 356th Tactical Airlift Squadron), Westover Air Force Base in Massachusetts (731st Tactical Air Squadron and 74th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron) or Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, International Airport (758th Airlift Squadron) during the period 1969 to 1986, and developed an Agent Orange-related disability to file a disability compensation claim online through the joint VA-Department of Defense web portal, [www.ebenefits.va.gov/](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov/).

VA also has identified several active duty locations where ORH C-123 aircraft may have been used following their service in Vietnam. Active duty personnel who served in a regular USAF unit location where a contaminated C-123 was assigned and who had regular and repeated contact with the aircraft through flight, ground or medical duties during the period 1969 to 1986, and who develop an Agent Orange-related disability, also are encouraged to apply for benefits. For more information on applying for these benefits, including the affected units, Air Force Specialty Codes and dates of service for affected crew members, and a listing of Agent Orange-related conditions, visit [www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/agentorange-c123.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/agentorange-c123.asp).

Individuals with specific benefit questions related to herbicide exposure on C-123s may call VA's special C-123 Hotline at 1-800-749-8387 (available 8 a.m. – 9 p.m. EST) or e-mail [VSCC123.VAVBASPL@va.gov](mailto:VSCC123.VAVBASPL@va.gov).



### SPOTLIGHT EMPLOYEE

#### Kasey Eaton

Kasey Eaton enjoys her role as a VA Appeals Specialist as much as her clients enjoy working with her! Her positive attitude and focus on always putting our clients first make her an incredible asset to our VA team.

“Working with veterans has been the most rewarding and interesting job that I have ever had,” explains Kasey. “The things you learn and the countless stories you hear are all unique and amazing. I appreciate every one of our clients, but I would have to admit that my favorite part is speaking with our older clients – hearing their voices, listening to their stories, and speaking with their spouses are just a few of the things that make this job so enjoyable.”

When Kasey isn’t busy filing appeals for our clients, she enjoys spending her spare time enjoying the company of good friends and family. Please join the Jan Dils team in acknowledging and thanking Kasey for her hard work and for always putting our Veterans first!

## BRAIN GAME

A wuzzle is a saying/phrase that is made up of a display of words, in an interesting way. The object is to try to figure out the well-known saying, person, place, or thing that each wuzzle is meant to represent.


ANSWERS: 1. Lying on the job 2. Space Program 3. Double Agent 4. Any Questions

## OFFICE INBOX

### STAY PLUGGED INTO THE PRACTICE

*Want the scoop on what’s new with our business and the team? You can find it right here, so stay plugged into the practice.*

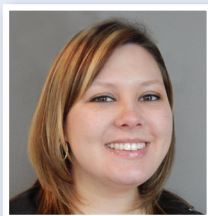
On the move in the office: **Amanda Richard** is transitioning from our Intake Department to Case Management to better assist our clients.

**Kelly Fritz** is becoming a Social Security Case Reviewer.

**Natalie Wagner** is transitioning to Case Management as an Appeals Specialist.

And Attorney **Lindsay Bailey** is transitioning from Social Security hearings to VA hearings, and looking forward to helping Veterans get the benefits they deserve.

On the move outside the office: **Missy Parsons** participated in the “Run for the Colors 5K Stroke Awareness Fun Run” on August 8th. She helped her fiancé Ron organize and run the event in memory of his mother.



This month’s recipe is so tasty, no one will suspect how easy it is to make. (We won’t tell if you won’t!)

Whether you are a soda drinker, a cake lover, or a little of both, VA Case Manager Tiffany Rummer’s delicious Mountain Dew Cake always hits the spot!

#### INGREDIENTS:

1 box lemon cake mix	1/4 cup oil
1 (3 1/2 ounce) package instant lemon pudding mix	2 eggs
	1 cup Mountain Dew soda



**Directions:** Mix all ingredients together. Pour into a greased and floured bunt pan and bake at 350 degrees for 35 to 40 minutes. Cool in pan for about 10 minutes, then remove. Sprinkle with powdered sugar before serving. (Helpful hint: If you are making this for a group, be prepared for lots of requests for the recipe!)

## IT’S TIME TO...

- ...Nominate someone for the Jan Dils Golden Apple Award. **September 4th is Teacher’s Day**
- ...Don’t rush. **September 5th is Be Late for Something Day.**
- ...Take it easy—you’ve earned it. **September 7th is Labor Day.**
- ...Honor the victims of the 9/11 attacks. **September 11th is Patriot Day.**
- ...Fight a dragon or save a princess. **September 12th is Video Game Day.**
- ...Remember the soldiers and families who gave so much for our freedom. **September 19th is POW/MIA Recognition Day.**
- ...Have a salad for lunch. And dinner, too. **October 1st is Vegetarian Day.**
- ...Be thankful that he got lost. **October 12th is Columbus Day.**
- ...Leave your hat at home. **October 14th is Be Bald and Be Free Day.**
- ...Accept an apology. **October 24th is International Forgiveness Day**
- ...Trick or Treat! **October 31st is Halloween.**



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## IMPORTANT VETERANS BENEFITS NEWS FOR EVERYONE

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## VA Campaign Encourages Public to Help Raise PTSD Awareness

**A**s the country recently recognized Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Month in June, the VA National Center for PTSD (NCPTSD) is looking to help more Veterans, their families, caregivers and community members understand what PTSD is and know that there are specific treatments that can help improve and save lives.

"Raising PTSD awareness is essential to overcoming the myth, misinformation and stigma that too often prevents Veterans from seeking help," said VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald. "VA is one of the largest integrated mental health systems in the United States that provides specialized treatment for PTSD, so we know that care works. We encourage everyone to join us in this important effort to share important information about PTSD and help Veterans receive care they need."

This year's campaign focuses on online materials and encourages the general public to "learn, connect, and share" to raise PTSD awareness. Anyone can "learn" how PTSD treatment can help, "connect" by reaching out to someone, and "share" what they learn by spreading the word.

June 27 was designated by VA as PTSD Awareness Day for the fourth consecutive year. For more information on PTSD and the ways to raise awareness throughout the rest of the year, professionals and members of the public can visit the National Center for PTSD website, [www.ptsd.va.gov/about/PTSD-awareness/](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/about/PTSD-awareness/). This site offers resources such as:

- PTSD Coach Online and the award-winning PTSD Coach mobile app, which provide symptom-management strategies. The app is always with you when you need it.
- Continuing Education (CE) and continuing medical education (CME) opportunities for providers, including PTSD 101 Courses, on the best practices in PTSD treatment (CEs/CMEs offered).

- AboutFace: An online video gallery of Veterans talking about PTSD and how treatment can turn your life around.
- Whiteboards: Short animated videos to learn about PTSD and effective treatments.
- Subscribe to the PTSD Monthly Update – Stay up to date on new information about PTSD and trauma year round.

### Facts About VA'S Treatment of PTSD

- VA is one of the largest integrated mental health systems in the United States that provides specialized treatment for PTSD.
- From October 1, 2001, to December 31, 2014, nearly 400,000 Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn Veterans were seen for potential PTSD at VA facilities following their return from these overseas deployments.
- In fiscal year 2014, more than 535,000 of the nearly 6 million Veterans who sought care at VA healthcare facilities received treatment for PTSD.
- As of September 2014, more than 5,900 VA mental health staff members have received training in Prolonged Exposure and/or Cognitive Processing Therapy, the most effective known therapies for PTSD.

### About the National Center for PTSD

The National Center for PTSD is the center of excellence for research and education on the prevention, understanding, and treatment of PTSD. Its seven divisions across the country provide expertise on all types of trauma - from natural disasters, terrorism, violence and abuse, to combat exposure.

Although the Center provides no direct clinical care, its purpose is to improve the well-being and understanding of individuals who have experienced traumatic events, with a focus on American Veterans. The Center conducts cutting edge research and applies the findings to advance the science of traumatic stress and promote its understanding.