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# Serving Those Who Served

The Official Newsletter of the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs



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## Commissioner's Corner



### Commissioner's Corner

Greetings teammates,

We're heading into a month with big KDVA events. Our Women Veterans State Conference on June 6th and our Veterans Experience Action Center from June 27th to 29th. June also holds many historically significant days including D-Day, Juneteenth and is additionally the PTSD Awareness Month.

I want veterans to know we're here for them, whether to talk to us about their benefits, or to seek help and be connected to the right people to best help our vets. That's what we're all about is our Commonwealth's veterans.

Very respectfully,

***Commissioner Whitney P. Allen, Jr.***

*Kentucky Department of Veteran Affairs*

## Latest VA News



### How VA Women's heaRT training helped me navigate VA health care

May 2, 2023

By VA Office of Women's Health

Elizabeth Kent first became interested in military service in 2009 after connecting with a Naval Academy recruiter at her high school. One year later, on July 1, 2010, she attended Induction Day, launching her 12-year military career journey. Due to her strong interest in the Asian geopolitical climate, she was excited for her first position in Japan, where she spent most of her military service. After her time in Japan, she returned to the United States and took a role as the administration chief for the Naval Information Warfare Training Group in San Diego, California, before separating from the Navy in September 2022.

## Veterans Affairs (VA) Women's Health Reengagement Training (heaRT)

VA Women's heaRT informs women Veterans about available health care services at VA and aims to create a safe space for women Veterans to connect with other women Veterans to share their stories and experience. VA also offers the Women's Health Transition Training Program (WHTT) as part of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) for women Veterans that are transitioning from the military.

Kent first heard about VA Women's heaRT from her female leader, who was in the process of her own military separation. Her leader emphasized the importance of knowing what women-centric VA health care options are available when transitioning. Prior to attending VA Women's heaRT, her leader "had no idea that VA offered all these health care services to women Veterans." She told Kent that "When the time comes for your separation, you should really attend this training, too." This advice stuck with her, so shortly after making the decision to separate, she proactively signed up for VA Women's heaRT.

"It helps me feel supported to know that there are programs out there to make sure that diversity and inclusion is part of the VA health care system," Kent said.

When the day of the virtual training came, Kent conveniently joined from the comfort of her own home. In the span of only a few hours, she learned about the various women's health care services offered by VA. Most notable, though, was the possibility of having women-

only medical providers and the increasing number of VA medical facilities with women-only waiting rooms.

“I can tell that VA is making a concerted effort [to increase health care services] for women Veterans, the Women’s heaRT being one example. I am very glad I attended the training, and I also recommended it to my friends and other women Veterans,” she said.

Kent described the Women’s heaRT atmosphere as very supportive, in large part due to the two training facilitators who were both very receptive and compassionate toward their stories and situations. She explained that there was dedicated time after the training session to speak with the training facilitators about personal questions. She also explained how the training facilitators “were super helpful and knowledgeable about the health care services available at VA as well as VA policies and practices.”

## **Enrollment and utilization of VA health care services**

During VA Women’s heaRT program, Kent learned about the Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) program, which allows service members to submit a claim for VA disability compensation between 180 and 90 days prior to separation. This program rapidly sped up her enrollment process, getting her a decision within six weeks post-separation. Since attending VA Women’s heaRT, she has successfully enrolled in VA health care.

To date, Kent has utilized her VA health care benefits for annual physical, dentist and ENT (ear, nose and throat) appointments in Wisconsin. On her first visit to a VA medical facility for her annual physical, she was positively surprised by the numerous parking spaces and the building’s elegant brick façade. Once inside the facility, she was impressed by the quality of care, a timely intake, and the medical provider taking the time to answer all her most pertinent questions.

“When I went to get my annual physical, I was 2 or 3 minutes behind and the staff at the front desk told me ‘No problem for your first day, but we value patients being on time here’. I was used to waiting 20 to 30 min, so that was a total mental shift for me,” she said. Kent also had a good experience when it came time for her dental appointment. Although the dental cleaning appointments at her VA medical facility were booked out several months in advance, she was placed on the waitlist in case an appointment time became available sooner. She received an appointment only four days later. While at her appointment, her dental hygienist prescribed her prescription toothpaste, which was mailed directly to her home only two days later.

Overall, Kent recommends other women Veterans make use of their VA health care benefits. “This is something we earned and deserve,” she added. “The only way to ensure that things keep getting better for women Veterans is to be part of it. There has been an effort to ensure women Veterans receive great care and if we want to keep that going, we need to participate in it.”

Are you interested in attending VA Women’s heaRT to find out more about health care services for women Veterans available at VA?

[Find out more.](#)

[Register here.](#)

## What's New at KDVA?

### Carl M. Brashear Veteran Center Staff Recognition and Service Awards Luncheon



On May 9, 2023, the Veteran Center in Radcliff, KY held an awards luncheon for the staff for recognition of services they've done to support and care for the veterans in the home. Commissioner Whitney Allen and Deputy Commissioner Juan Renaud presented certificates of appreciation and pins for members of the staff that reached one and five years with KDVA.



## Operation Spit Shine

Adopting a Section at Kentucky Veterans Cemetery, AKA “Operation Spit Shine”

Three years ago, the members of Disabled American Veterans Chapter 003 and the Auxiliary Unit 003 located in Elizabethtown Kentucky came up with a plan to help with beautification at KVCC. Many of our members have family and friends buried in that Cemetery and we are proud of all that work the Cemetery Staff does with the upkeep, said Bob Casher Commander for the Chapter. Bob also said that when the idea came up for discussion at a meeting on how the DAV and the members of the Auxiliary might be able to volunteer time and resources to help with the workload. And that is how we came up with Adopt a Section, Like Adopt a Highway we sat down with the Cemetery and presented our idea of how we could help with the beautification. And that is how it all started. Our Chapter and Auxiliary gave it program a Nick Name titled “Operation Spit Shine” We have adopted Section three and go to scrub the headstones and remove any trash or dead flowers. Our members gather twice a year, once before Memorial Day and



again in the Fall prior to Veterans Day. Jane Casher Commander of the Auxiliary Unit stated that the Motto for the DAV Auxiliary is "Making A Difference" and by doing this project this is just one way our members are living by that Motto. Not only does this project make a difference at the Cemetery, but it is also making a difference in the lives of the living friends and Family members of the Veteran that is laid to rest, by knowing someone cares. It doesn't matter to us if we knew the Veteran, but it does make a difference knowing that our Auxiliary and Chapter do our very best "Making A Difference" stated Jane.

If your organization would be interested in adopting a section at KVCC just stop by the office and talk with one of the Staff Members. I am sure they would appreciate having more organizations assisting in keeping the grounds looking beautiful, said Bob Casher.



## Memorial Day

Memorial Day weekend is a time when so many Americans across the nation gather with families, grill out, socialize, and relax. This is important but I want you all to keep the families and friends of our honorable military men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice while serving our Nation in your hearts and prayers. This is the purpose behind Memorial Day....to honor those who died for the freedoms we have in our great country.



*(Picture from Kentucky Veteran Cemetery South East)*

The sacrifices of our men and women can never be repaid but I hope we can give them the respect and honor they so rightly deserve.

To our veterans, let us not forget why we served our Nation, why we should continue serving our communities, and why we must continue carrying the torch in honoring the legacy and spirit of our fallen brothers and sisters.

May God continue to bless our fallen brothers' and sisters' spirits, and the Gold Star Family members they left behind. And for him to give us the resolve and strength to ensure their legacy of service will always be honored by generations of Americans to come.

I would like to personally thank all of you, our great Commonwealth veterans/veteran service organizations, and the entire Commonwealth of Kentucky family for your continued support to our veterans and their families.

*Very respectfully,*

*KDVA Commissioner Whitney Allen*

*(Picture from Kentucky Veteran Cemetery South East)*



**Kentucky Veteran Cemetery West**



**Kentucky Veteran Cemetery North**





## **Kentucky Veteran Cemetery Central**

Memorial Day started with hundreds of guests arriving to honor their loved ones with flowers, prayers, salutes and some tears. Fort Knox hosted the event with over 450 people in attendance.

The Commanding General from Ft Knox made a short, moving speech about Memorial Day and remembering our fallen Soldiers, Airmen, Marines and Sailors. After the event, most people stayed and visited their fallen loved ones. By 4 p.m. we still had over 100 people present.--Shane LaGrone, Kentucky Veterans Cemetery Central manager.



**KDVA Women Veterans Conference**

# ATTENTION!

## Calling All Kentucky Women Veterans



Hear from Lt. Gov. Jacqueline Coleman, Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Benefits Michael Frueh, Deputy Assistant Secretary Zaneta Adams, and Executive Director Lourdes Tiglao about Benefits and Services for the Commonwealth's Women Veterans--  
AND MUCH MORE...

### KDVA Women Veterans Conference June 6

RSVP at [women.veterans@ky.gov](mailto:women.veterans@ky.gov)

## See You There!



Crowne Plaza Hotel  
Louisville, KY

## Veterans Experience Action Center June 27-29



## KENTUCKY VETERANS: JOIN US IN PERSON FOR A VETERANS EXPERIENCE ACTION CENTER (VEAC)

**JUNE 27-29**  
9AM-2PM EST

**NORTON HEALTHCARE SPORTS  
& LEARNING CENTER**  
3029 Muhammad Ali Blvd.  
Louisville, KY 40203

“Together, VA and our ecosystem of partners can work to deliberately and consciously change the way benefits, care, and services are delivered to marginalized and underserved communities.”

-VA Secretary Denis McDonough

Speak directly with VA and community experts!  
Get 1-on-1 assistance on:

VA Health Care 

VA Benefits 

PACT Act 

Community Services 

Peer-to-Peer Connection 

Memorial Affairs 

Crisis Resources 

Registration will be onsite—first come, first serve.  
For more information, visit [www.va.gov/veac](http://www.va.gov/veac).

SUPPORTING PARTNERS:



### Did you know...

Did you know? That on June 13, 1967 Senate appointed Thurgood Marshall as the first US African American to the Supreme Court of justice.

Did you know? June 13, 1865, President Andrew Johnson reorganized the Confederate States. Part of his reorganization was to bring Southern governing areas into account.

<https://www.thefactsite.com/day/june-13/>

## Trivia

### ***(Answers are at the end of the Newsletter)***

Juneteenth Trivia Questions

Let's find out how well you and your friends know about the history of Juneteenth? find out now!

Q.1 What is Juneteenth?

1. A summer festival
2. Women's suffrage in the USA
3. A holiday to commemorate the end of slavery in the U.S.
4. An occasion to celebrate the month of June

Q.2 Juneteenth is a combination of the words "June" and "\_\_\_\_\_".

1. 14
2. 15
3. 19
4. 23

Q.3 What state was Juneteenth first celebrated in?

1. South Dakota
2. Georgia
3. Mississippi
4. Texas

Q.4 Which U.S. president finally brought an end to slavery?

1. George Washington
2. Abraham Lincoln
3. Thomas Jefferson
4. Lyndon

Q.5 What was the name of the executive order that freed slaves in the U.S.?

1. The Emancipation proclamation
2. Bill of Rights
3. The Emancipator's Guidelines

Q.6 Is Juneteenth a federal holiday?

1. Yes
2. No

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## Upcoming Events

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# AUSA GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

*You're Invited!*

**Not a member?  
No problem!**  
Come see what we  
are all about!



Wednesday  
June 14, 2023  
11:30-1:00  
Saber & Quill  
Fort Knox

## Fort Knox Chapter, AUSA

*Join us June 14th for our Ft. Knox Chapter AUSA General Membership Meeting and celebration of the 248th Birthday of the US Army!*

### Featuring Keynote Speaker:



**SMA US Retired  
Kenneth O. Preston, USA Ret.**

Sergeant Major of the Army Kenneth O. Preston served as the 13th Sergeant Major of the Army from January 15, 2004 to March 1, 2011. He retires as the longest serving Sergeant Major of the Army with more than seven years in the position. As Sergeant Major of the Army, Preston served as the Army Chief of Staff's personal adviser on all Soldier and Family related matters, particularly areas affecting Soldier training and quality of life. He devoted the majority of his time in this position to traveling throughout the Army serving as a force provider overseeing Soldier and unit training, manning and equipping challenges, and talking to Soldiers and their Families to understand their personal hardships and challenges.

Throughout his 36-year career, he served in every enlisted leadership position from cavalry scout and tank commander to his final position as Sergeant Major of the Army. Other assignments he held as a command sergeant major were with the 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division; 3rd "Grey Wolf" Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division; 1st Armored Division in Bad Kreuznach, Germany; and V Corps in Heidelberg, Germany.

He and his wife Karen have 3 adult children Valarie, Kenneth Jr., Michael, and 8 grandchildren.

*Seating for this event is limited!  
Get your Tickets before they sell out!*

Tickets \$20 or \$25 at the door

Contact Walter or Gene for tickets (Cash or Check)

Walter Meinshausen  
(270) 307-8897  
meinshaw@twc.com

Gene Gudenkauf  
(270) 352-7797  
genegudenkauf68@gmail.com



*Dress is duty or business casual*





# BE VIGILANT OF PACT ACT SCAMS

**On August 10, President Biden signed the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act (PACT Act) into law. This law helps millions of Veterans and their survivors by:**

- Extending VA health care eligibility for Veterans with toxic exposures and Veterans of the Vietnam, Gulf War, and Post-9/11 (Post-September 11, 2001) eras
- Expanding benefits eligibility for Veterans exposed to toxic substances and their survivors



## Tips to Avoid PACT Act Scams

Scammers are taking advantage of new opportunities to commit fraud. There's been an increase in PACT Act-related [phishing \(email\)](#), vishing (phone), and [social media scams](#) targeting Veterans to access their PACT Act benefits or submit claims on their behalf.

Veterans should be cautious of anyone who guarantees a lucrative financial benefit or service.

### Do's

- ✓ You may submit your application securely [online](#) via VA.GOV or in person at any Regional Office. You may file your claim directly with VA and then, VA will assist in gathering evidence necessary to support it. There are no costs or hidden fees to apply.
- ✓ Be cautious of companies who advertise VA benefits can only be obtained with their help. These companies may not be recognized by VA and may be attempting to charge illegal fees.
- ✓ Be cautious of aggressive companies who may try to pressure you to sign their contract through frequent communications or by insisting "you must act now or lose your chance for benefits."
- ✓ Be cautious of companies who claim to be contacting you on behalf of VA or to have a special relationship with VA. Contact VA at 1-800-827-1000 if you are unsure about the authenticity of any message received.
- ✓ Validate: If you are interested in working with a Veteran Service Organization (VSO), agent, or attorney, use the Office of General Counsel [Accreditation tool](#) to confirm and validate their credentials.

### Don'ts

- ✗ Do not sign a contract agreeing to pay an unauthorized company a percentage of your benefit payment in exchange for their assistance with your VA claim. If you need help filing a claim, there are representatives of VSOs, agents, and attorneys who have been [accredited by VA](#) to assist you.
- ✗ Do not sign a blank form for someone else to complete later. Always review the completed form before signing and keep a copy for yourself.
- ✗ Do not be fooled by companies who advertise they have special relationships with medical professionals and can guarantee your benefits award. If they are defrauding the Federal government, you could be held responsible for paying those benefits back.
- ✗ Do not provide your social security number, medical records, or other personally identifiable information to anyone offering claims assistance before confirming their credentials using the Office of General Counsel [Accreditation tool](#).
- ✗ Do not sign forms that are not [VA generated](#) or third-party authorization for someone to provide "behind-the-scenes" claims assistance.

**[www.VA.gov/PACT](http://www.VA.gov/PACT) is the official source of PACT Act information.**

We want Veterans and survivors to apply now for their PACT Act-related benefits.

To report suspected scams, please contact the VA Office of Inspector General ([OIG Hotline \(va.gov\)](#)). File a complaint with the [Federal Trade Commission](#). Visit the [Cybercrime Support Network](#) for additional [resources](#) to help Veterans, service members, and their families combat cybercrime.

VA



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

Learn more and sign up at [VA.gov/PACT](http://VA.gov/PACT)  
Download the VA Health and Benefits App  
Call us at 1-800-MyVA411 (1-800-698-2411)  
Find a VA at [VA.gov/find-locations/](http://VA.gov/find-locations/)

## Useful VA Links

- **VA Housing Assistance Page** - Information about home loans, eligibility, interest rates reductions and other related topics: <https://www.va.gov/housing-assistance/>
- **National Center for PTSD** - Provides information and resources to veterans, care providers and organizations relating PTSD: <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/>
- **Covid-19 Vaccine Updates** - Latest updates on Covid-19 guidance and vaccinations: <https://www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/>
- **VA Life Insurance (VALife)** - <https://www.benefits.va.gov/insurance/valife.asp>
- **Veterans Readiness and Employment (VR&E)** - job training, education, employment coaching, etc.: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab/index.asp>

## Upcoming Veterans Dates and Events

- PTSD Awareness Month (**June**)
- D-Day (**June 6**)
- Women Veterans State Conference (**June 6**)
- Women Veterans Day (**June 12**)
- U.S. Army Birthday (**June 14**)
- U.S. Flag Day (**June 14**)
- National Flag Week (**June 11-17**)
- Father's Day (**June 18**)
- Juneteenth (**June 19**)
- U.S. Coast Guard Auxillary Birthday (**June 23**)
- PTSD Awareness Day (**June 27**)

## Trivia Answers

Answer:

- 1 – A holiday to commemorate the end of slavery in the U.S.
- 2 – 19
- 3 – Texas
- 4 – Abraham Lincoln
- 5 – The Emancipation proclamation
- 6 – Yes

## Resources for Veterans



### Flood Relief

Have you been affected by flooding in Eastern Kentucky? The Governor's Office has prepared a list of resources designed to help you make it through this challenging time.

Click here for more information:  
<https://governor.ky.gov/disaster-response/flood-resources>

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