



RETIREE



TIMES

A publication of the Vandenberg AFB Retiree Activities Office, 30 SW/CVR 747 Nebraska Ave., Suite A200, Vandenberg AFB, CA 93437 Phone : (805) 606-5474

Spring 2004

Vandenberg AFB Calif.

Vol. 4 No. 2

Tallent wins Volunteer Excellence Award

By CAPT. CYRIL BUEHLER, SUPPLY CORPS, USN (Ret.)
Retiree Activities Office Director

Retired Army Staff Sgt. George Tallent of Lompoc, a volunteer at the Retired Activities Office, received the Vandenberg AFB Volunteer Excellence Award. He was cited not only for his time at the RAO but also for his other extensive volunteer services.

Tallent has demonstrated his leadership and management skills in the civilian community by being named the "Elk of the Year" by the Lompoc Elks Lodge. He has served five years on the Lodge Board of Directors and for more than 20 years has managed and worked at the Elks food booth at the annual Lompoc Flower Festival.

In addition he oversees weekend barbeque fund raisers in the community. He chaperones and assists in the trans-

port of military veterans from the Lompoc Convalescent Care Center to the Elks Lodge for free lunches in honor and appreciation of their service to the country.



RAO Photo

Retired Army Staff Sgt. George Tallent shows his award.

For more than 20 years Tallent assisted with the annual Bicycle Ride and Wine Festival for Special Olympics. He is a member of the Lompoc Civil Defense Auxiliary Police and for the Lompoc Fire Department he supervises the work scheduling of 64 volunteers for their Christmas Holiday Fund Drive. He is a member of the men's club and the Board of Directors at his church. In all of these volunteer activities, the benefit organizations have recognized him for his consistency in his endeavors.

AFAF campaign kicks off

By Capt. Mark Shoemaker USAF
2nd Space Launch Squadron

The 2004 Air Force Assistance Fund campaign, "Commitment to Caring," is in full force across the Air Force, running from Feb. 16 through May 7. The Vandenberg AFB AFAF campaign kicked off on March 29

The AFAF supports four official charities: the Air Force Aid Society, the Air Force Enlisted Village, the Air Force Village and the General and Mrs. Curtis E. LeMay Foundation. Contributions to these organizations provide much needed financial assistance through numerous programs to active duty, retirees, reservists, guard members and family members. Although unit project officers and keyworkers only solicit active duty personnel, anyone can contribute.

Last year the AFAF campaign raised \$5.1 million with 26.5 percent of active duty personnel contributing. At Vandenberg, the campaign netted \$42,176 with a 25.4 percent participation rate. The goal for 2004 is \$46,180 with at least 50 percent participation. Although challenging, if the Vandenberg community reaches its goal for

2004, the AFAS will provide \$2,500 to use for a base-wide project or event.

The benefits individuals receive from the AFAF affiliates greatly exceed the donations contributed. Last year, the Vandenberg community contributed \$30,244 to the Air Force Aid Society while receiving \$160,388 in benefits. To put it simply, Vandenberg personnel and their families received more than \$5 for every \$1 contributed. This same return on investment holds for the other three affiliates as well, benefiting retirees and surviving spouses.

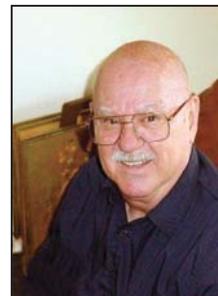
The AFAF is the one time each year the Air Force community gives back to itself and those who have served in the past. The phrase "charity starts at home" is no more appropriate than during the annual campaign. There is no doubt 2004 will be different than years past. Vandenberg AFB will show its "Commitment to Caring" and provide much needed assistance to the Air Force community. Questions about the AFAF can be directed to Capt. Shoemaker at (805) 605-4040 or mark.shoemaker@vandenberg.af.mil.

Davidson is Volunteer of the Quarter

By CAPT. CYRIL BUEHLER, SUPPLY CORPS, USN (Ret.)
Retiree Activities Office Director

Retired Air Force Tech. Sgt Harold Davidson was recently selected as Vandenberg AFB civilian Volunteer of the Quarter for the fourth quarter of 2003. In addition to over 80 hours of volunteer service to the Retired Activities Office, he volunteers his time and talents to the Lompoc Police Department, the Lompoc Chamber of Commerce, and the Cyprus Art Gallery.

In the RAO, he provides hands on computer training, assists retirees with a wide range of retiree issues and compiles

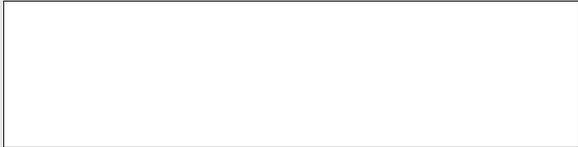


RAO Photo

Retired Air Force Tech. Sgt. Harold Davidson at the RAO.

monthly, quarterly and annual reports. As a volunteer member of the Lompoc Police department, he uploads mug shots and other pertinent information for a national police force. He implemented and maintains the Lompoc Chamber of Commerce Information Catalog of 133 fraternal and social organizations. Monthly at the Cyprus Art Gallery, he offers congenial information of local artist works to visitors and customers.

Davidson can be found at the RAO every Tuesday.



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Director's Corner

By **CAPT. CYRIL BUEHLER,**
SUPPLY CORPS, USN (Ret.)

Retiree Activities Office Director

As military retirees we are very familiar with the words serve and support. In today's world we see them being used over and over by our active duty forces. We no longer are asked to serve on active duty but we can serve in other ways and we continue to support our forces.

One way we can show this support is through the Air Force Assistance Fund and the agencies they support. AFAP is currently conducting a fund drive on Vandenberg Air Force Base – see the accompanying article in this issue.

You can contribute through the Retiree Activities Office if you have not been contacted. Other U.S. military services conduct their own similar drives and will contact their retirees directly. Even though you may have retired from another service, the AFAP is accepting donations from anyone.



Cy Buehler

RAO Photo

And as for serving, you can do this in other ways. There are many local community organizations looking for volunteer help. It has been said that men and women benefit from social activity at older ages. Those who continue to interact with others tend to be healthier, both physically and mentally, than those who become socially isolated.

We can use additional volunteers at our Retiree Activities Center. If you can spare 4 hours a week as a volunteer on your shopping days at the Exchange or Commissary or any other times, stop in and see us at the center. We are located directly across from the Base Exchange Home and Garden Shop. Or give us a call at 606-5474.

RETIREE TIMES

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Publication deadlines are the 15th of March, June, September and December. The Retiree Activities Office reserves the right to edit all submissions for style and space. Send submissions to 30SW/CVR, 747 Nebraska Ave., Suite A200, Vandenberg AFB, CA 93437-1461 or via facsimile to (805) 606-0437. The phone number is (805) 606-5474. Email may be addressed to retirees.office@vandenberg.af.mil.

Your opinion counts

By **Capt Teresa Starks USAF**

30th Medical Group

To help the 30th Medical Group provide the best possible service to their patients, the medical clinic is asking their customers to take a short survey regarding the care and service they receive.

Using an Opinionmeter device, patients are asked their opinions regarding their health care, interactions with the medical staff, and specific issues regarding the Vandenberg Medical Clinic.

The Opinionmeter is located at the Pharmacy/

Primary Care Clinic lobby. It will only take a few minutes to complete the survey. The Medical Group will use the survey responses to improve target areas and to recognize outstanding service.

Your opinion counts, so patients are asked to take those few minutes each time they have an appointment in the facility to provide feedback.

Please contact the Medical Clinic Customer Service Representative at 606-3308 for further information.

Top 3 group scrambles to support AFEP

By **Master Sgt. Steve Hrkach USAF**

532nd Training Squadron

One thing I have grown to appreciate about the United States Marine Corps, and there are many, is their motto "Semper Fidelis" or Always Faithful. These are great words to live by even if you are not a Marine.

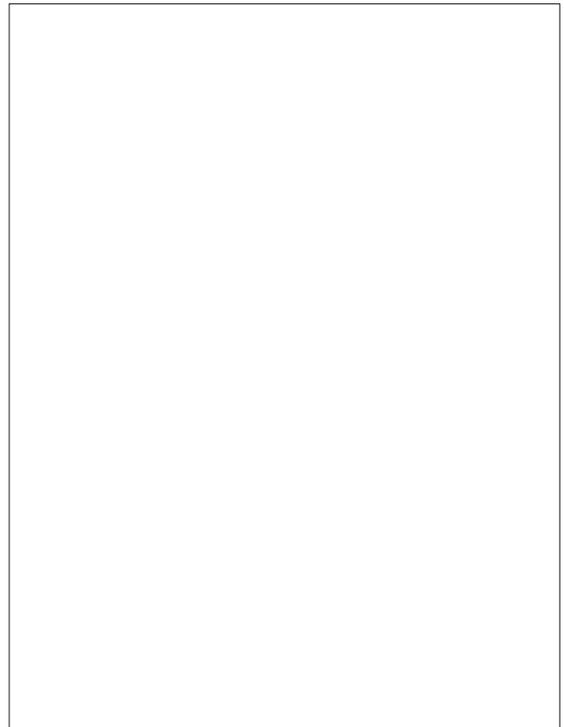
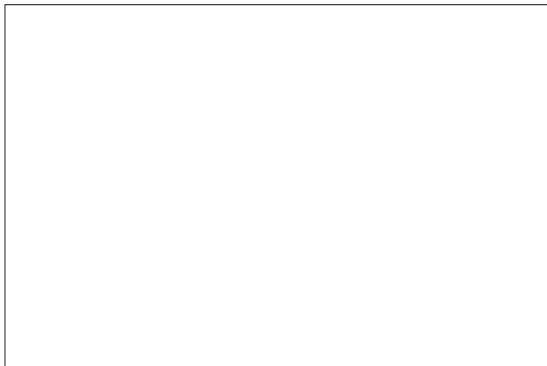
Semper Fi means no one gets left behind. I truly believe this virtue is the greatest difference between professional soldiers and ordinary citizens. This attitude does not change after we stop wearing the uniform, either. The government can take away every benefit it ever promised to veterans, but they can never remove our desire to take care of each other. In 1967, a group of active duty and retired noncommissioned officers founded the Air Force Enlisted Foundation. It was created to meet the greatest need a military member will ever have: preserving the independence and dignity of their spouse after they are gone.

The AFEP currently has two villages with 370 independent living units. They are hoping to break ground on a top-of-the-line 64-bed assisted living facility.

The Training Group Top 3 Association here at Vandenberg AFB is going to help them accomplish this goal. We are sponsoring a 4-person scramble golf tournament at Marshalla Ranch on

May 21.

Our goal is to raise \$1,000 to send to the AFEP. Any funds raised above the goal will be used for local enlisted programs with the Training Group. If you would like to be a part of this effort, please call Ron Forsythe at (805) 606-1655 to get the rules and registration forms. Semper Fi!



DoD eliminates TRICARE Standard non-availability statements

MILITARY HEALTH SYSTEM—Under the 2002 National Defense Authorization Act, the Department of Defense military health system eliminated the requirement for TRICARE Standard beneficiaries to obtain a Non-Availability Statement on Dec. 28, 2003.

Before the change in NAS policy, it was necessary for TRICARE Standard beneficiaries to first obtain an NAS from their Military Treatment Facility. ANAS indicates that care is not available from the military facility and authorizes care at a civilian facility.

This change in policy allows these Standard beneficiaries to receive inpatient care at civilian hospitals without obtaining prior approval from their MTF. An exception in the law continues the requirement for an NAS for non-emergency inpatient mental healthcare services.

The need for an NAS for non-emergency inpatient mental healthcare applies only to beneficiaries who use TRICARE Standard or Extra, who are not Medicare eligible and who have no other

health insurance that is primary to TRICARE. DoD does not require pre-authorization for TRICARE beneficiary inpatient mental healthcare when Medicare is the primary payer.

Under the 2002 law, an MTF may request a Departmental waiver of the elimination policy requirement in certain specific, but limited, circumstances. However, such limited MTF waiver requests do not apply to maternity services, unless the affected beneficiary began her first prenatal visit before the Dec. 28 NAS elimination date. Maternity patients should check with their local MTF to compare maternity services there with those available in civilian facilities.

Should an MTF be granted a NAS waiver under the new law, a notice must be published in the Federal Register to inform beneficiaries that a NAS is required for a certain procedure. The MTF, Services and TRICARE Management Activity will notify the affected beneficiaries if this occurs. Beneficiaries should check the TRICARE Web site at www.tricare.osd.mil if they

are seeking an inpatient service and want to know if their nearby MTF applied for a NAS waiver. They also may contact the beneficiary counseling and assistance coordinator/health benefits advisor at their nearby MTF for more information.

The Military Health System recently implemented a Family-Centered Care program that offers enhanced services and recognizes the unique needs of military families in today's climate of increasing deployments and high operations tempo. Beneficiaries are encouraged to review the enhanced MTF maternity services at www.tricare.osd.mil/familycare/default.cfm and with their military medical provider.

Before seeking care at a civilian facility, the Military Health System urges beneficiaries to check with their nearby MTF to compare services and answer any questions. Even if the MTF could not provide needed services in the past, the facility's staffing levels or capabilities may have changed, and they might now be available at the MTF.

Hepatitis C website launched

VETERANS AFFAIRS – A new comprehensive web site on hepatitis C was formally launched Feb. 25 through collaboration between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the University of California at San Francisco's Center for HIV Information.

Hepatitis C is the most common blood borne infection in the United States, affecting 2 percent of the population. VA cares for more hepatitis C patients than any other medical system, with more than 200,000 patients since 1996. The department has the largest screening, testing and care program for hepatitis C in the nation.

The new hepatitis C web site -- <http://www.hepatitis.va.gov/> -- has a section for veterans and non-medical employees that includes general information and links to other web sites. It also offers information for health care providers that is searchable by topic and includes best practices, guidelines and slides.

Certificate of Creditable Coverage Automatically Issued

MILITARY HEALTH SYSTEM – Starting Feb. 1, 2004, the Department of Defense Military Health System began automatically issuing a Certificate of Creditable Coverage to any former uniformed services sponsor or family member who loses eligibility for health care benefits under TRICARE.

Eligibility for TRICARE may end as a result of a sponsor's separation from active duty status, divorce, demobilization if the sponsor is a member of the National Guard or Reserves, or a dependent child reaching age 21 [23 for full-time students].

For persons no longer eligible for TRICARE, the certificate serves as proof of previous health care coverage and limits the time another health care plan may exclude them from participating in a health care plan due to a preexisting medical condition.

The Defense Manpower Data Center Support Office, as custodian of the Defense Enroll-

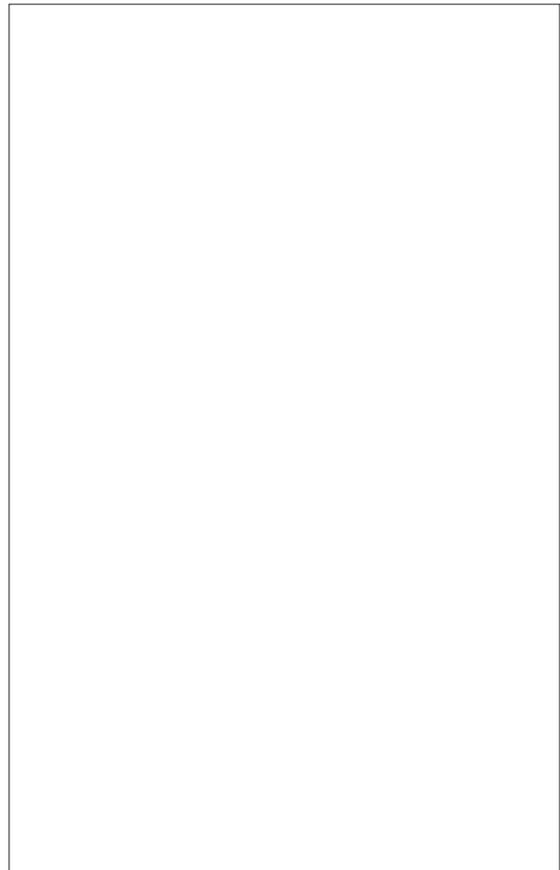
ment Eligibility Reporting System, will mail a certificate for the sponsor or family member within 5 to 10 days after eligibility has been lost. As long as a current address is on file in DEERS, members may expect to receive the certificate within 30 days.

Sponsors or family members needing to expedite receipt of a certificate may mail or fax a request to the DSO. The request should include the sponsor's name and Social Security number, name of family member[s] for whom the certificate is needed, reason for the urgent request, name and address of the person or organization where the

certificate should be sent, and finally, signature of the requester.

The request may be faxed to the DSO at [831] 655-8317 or mailed to Defense Manpower Data Center Support Office, Attn: Certificate of Creditable Coverage, 400 Gigling Road, Seaside, CA 93955-6771.

Sponsors or family members who have questions regarding the certificate may contact the DSO at [800] 538-9552, or TTY/TDD at [866] 363-2883. Additional information is also available on the TRICARE Web site at www.tricare.osd.mil/certificate/index.cfm.



VA recognizes diseases linked to Agent Orange

VETERANS AFFAIRS – Prior to the recent addition of lymphocytic leukemia to the list, the VA had established similar presumptions of service connection for ten categories of disease found to have been associated with exposure to an herbicide agent. They are: adult-onset [Type 2] diabetes, Hodgkin's disease, multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, acute and subacute peripheral neuropathy, porphyria cutanea tarda, chloracne, prostate cancer, respiratory cancers [cancer of the lung, bronchus, larynx, or trachea], and soft-tissue sarcoma [other than osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or mesothelioma].

To qualify for this presumption, chloracne and porphyria cutanea tarda must be evident to a degree of disability of ten percent or more within one year after the date of last exposure. The other conditions are presumed service connected if they are evident to a degree of disability of ten percent or more at any time after exposure. The percentages refer to degree of severity based on medical findings that are outlined in VA regulations.

Disabled veterans given priority

VETERANS AFFAIRS -- All veterans with service-connected medical problems will receive priority access to health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs under a new directive issued Jan. 2, 2004.

The new directive provides that all veterans requiring care for a service-connected disability—regardless of the extent of their injury—must be scheduled for a primary care evaluation within 30 days of their request for care. If a VA facility is unable to schedule an appointment within 30 days, it must arrange for care at another VA facility, at a contract facility or through a sharing agreement.

The directive covers hospitalization and outpatient care. It does not apply to care for medical problems not related to a service-connected disability. However, veterans needing emergency care will be treated immediately.

The new provision is an extension of rules that took effect in October 2002 for severely disabled veterans. Under the earlier rule, priority access to health care went to veterans with disabilities rated at 50 percent or more. For the severely disabled, the priority includes care for non-service-connected medical problems.

The number of veterans using VA's health care system has risen dramatically in recent years, increasing from 2.9 million in 1995 to nearly 5 million in 2003. Although VA operates more than 1,300 sites of care, including 162 hospitals and more than 800 outpatient clinics, the increase in veterans seeking care outstrips VA's capacity to treat them.

Faxing mail order prescriptions

According to TRICARE officials, many prescription pads used by providers contain embedded watermarks to prevent fraud and forgery. Extra care is needed by providers who fax prescriptions to the TRICARE Mail Order Pharmacy. When prescriptions written on watermarked pads are faxed to TMOP, the watermarked area of the copy received at TMOP is black and unreadable or totally blank.

TRICARE is spreading the word among its customers to encourage providers to fax a cover sheet containing the provider's name and telephone number along with every prescription. This will allow

TMOP to contact a provider when an unreadable watermarked prescription is received.

Officials noted that TMOP receives thousands of faxes daily and will make every attempt to track down providers as long as they have contact information. The cover sheet is the best possible way to provide the needed contact information and, as a result, prevent unnecessary delays in providing services to TMOP beneficiaries. TMOP related information is available online at <http://www.tricare.osd.mil/pharmacy/tmop.cfm>. (TRICARE Management Agency)

Stateside Space-A Travel Extended

The one-year test to expand space-available travel privileges to family members of active-duty and retired service members traveling within the continental United States has been extended until further notice. This does not apply to "grey-area retirees" who are retired by not yet eligible for retired pay and benefits. The family members are able to travel space-A aboard military flights when accompanied by their sponsors. Space-A travel information is available at <http://public.amc.af.mil/SPACEA/spacea.htm>. (Air Mobility Command)

Counting calories is best diet

NAVY NEWS SERVICE—During National Nutrition Month in March, experts at the National Naval Medical Center reminded us that eating healthy is vital to staying fit.

"Nutrition is a lot more complicated than you think," said Lauren Thomas, a registered dietitian and weight management specialist in the Health Promotions/Physical Fitness Assessment department at the NNMCC. Losing or managing weight has become a hot topic for Americans. Almost two-thirds of Americans are overweight.

Thomas said that weight management is about counting calories. "Carbohydrates don't make you fat. Eating too many calories makes you fat," said Thomas.

Calories in our diet come from carbohydrates, proteins and fats. Sixty percent of your diet should come from complex—not simple—carbohydrates. There are four calories in each gram of carbohydrate.

Complex carbohydrates include breads, pasta, rice, potatoes, cereals, fruits, vegetables and

beans. Simple carbohydrates include sugars such as table sugar, honey and corn syrup. These are the sugars found in cookies, cakes and candy.

Proteins provide the body with amino acids. Amino acids help build, repair and maintain your body tissues. Fifteen percent of your calorie intake should come from proteins. There are four calories in each gram of protein. Proteins include lean meats, such as sirloin, also fish, poultry and eggs.

"Although protein is associated with building muscle, eating more protein than your body needs doesn't mean you will gain

more muscle. It turns those extra calories into fat," said Thomas.

Many people don't like fat, but it is an essential element that your body needs. Fat also provides your body with energy, and 25 percent of your calories should come from fat. Fat is a concentrated form of calories and contains nine calories for every gram of fat. The right combination of carbohydrates, proteins and fats provide balanced nutrition.

However, a balanced diet is not the only key to successful weight management. Thomas said doing aerobic exercise helps considerably in losing weight and being healthy.

D I C for Remarried Widows

H.R. 2297 (Public Law 108-183), effective Jan. 1, 2004, allows surviving spouses of veterans [and retirees] whose death was determined to have been service-connected and in receipt of dependency and indemnity compensation can retain their DIC payment providing they are age 57 or over at the time of remarriage.

Those who have already remarried (and were age 57 or older when they did so) have until Dec. 16, 2004 to apply for reinstatement of their DIC benefits. Surviving spouses remarrying, and after turning age 57, may also apply for reinstatement of DIC. The effective date of the reinstated DIC and payment date was Jan. 1, 2004 (no retro-active payments will be made).

The Department of Veterans Affairs has designated VA Form 21-686c (Declaration of Status of Dependents) as the form to use for these claims. There are several ways to obtain a copy of the form. Call a VA representative at the toll free number 1-800-827-1000 or download a copy from <http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/21-686c.pdf>. It is also available at the Retiree Activities Office at Vandenberg AFB.

Skilled nursing facility care vs. long- term care

TRICARE MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY – Both skilled nursing facility care and long-term care have the word “care” in their names, but each in itself is a totally unique health care benefit. So what are skilled nursing facility care and long-term care? Are either covered benefits under Medicare or TRICARE? What about TRICARE For Life? Does this mean TRICARE pays all health care expenses for eligible beneficiaries? If you are a retiree, family member, survivor, or provider, you need to know the difference. For the answers to these and many other questions, use the following link: http://www.tricare.osd.mil/frequentlyaskedquestions/long_term.cfm#info25

More retirees returning to Tricare

AIR FORCE PRINT NEWS – Military retirees are returning to Tricare for their health care, and that is a good thing. But it comes at the price of significant cost growth.’

Secretary of the Air Force Dr. James G. Roche met Feb. 26 with members of the House Committee on Armed Services to discuss the Air Force’s portion of the 2005 National Defense Authorization Request.

‘This is a good-news story on one level—it’s validation that we’re caring for our retired service members,’ Secretary Roche said. Retiree enrollment in Tricare has risen 8 percent in the past two years, because of higher premiums and co-pays in the civilian sector. The Department of Defense has reprogrammed about \$600 million this year to pay for that growth and the services are being forced to

absorb increasing amounts.

The secretary told committee members about an idea for a joint venture with Veterans Affairs to help cut costs and maximize usage of military facilities.

‘We have unused capacity in our Air Force hospitals and clinics,’ he said. ‘We’d like to advertise to our retirees what’s available at our Air Force medical facilities and see how many will come back—not to Tricare, which is cash, but come back to our existing facilities to work with our doctors.’

Secretary Roche urged the committee to keep the increased usage and costs in mind as they consider any proposed expansion of benefits. ‘I believe it’s a good thing because it says we’re keeping faith with people, and we gave them our word,’ he said.

Lymphocytic leukemia linked to Agent Orange

VETERANS AFFAIRS – Based upon a recently released review of scientific studies, the Department of Veterans Affairs will extend benefits to Vietnam veterans with chronic lymphocytic leukemia. Compelling evidence has emerged within the scientific community that exposure to herbicides such as Agent Orange is associated with CLL.

One of four major types of leukemia, CLL is a disease that progresses slowly with increasing production of excessive numbers of white blood cells. As the disease worsens, the person first may experience such symptoms as fatigue, shortness of breath, weight loss, or frequent infections.

Based on the normal rate of CLL in adult American men, among the 3.1 million Vietnam veterans who served in southeast Asia, VA would expect there might be 560 new cases every year. The Institute of Medicine [IOM] noted in a report to VA that nearly all cases occur after the age of 50.

The ruling means that veterans with CLL who served in Vietnam

during the Vietnam War do not have to prove that illness is related to their military service to qualify for VA disability compensation.

The decision to provide compensation was based upon a recent report by the Institute of Medicine that found among scientific studies “sufficient evidence of an association” between exposure to herbicides during the Vietnam War and CLL.

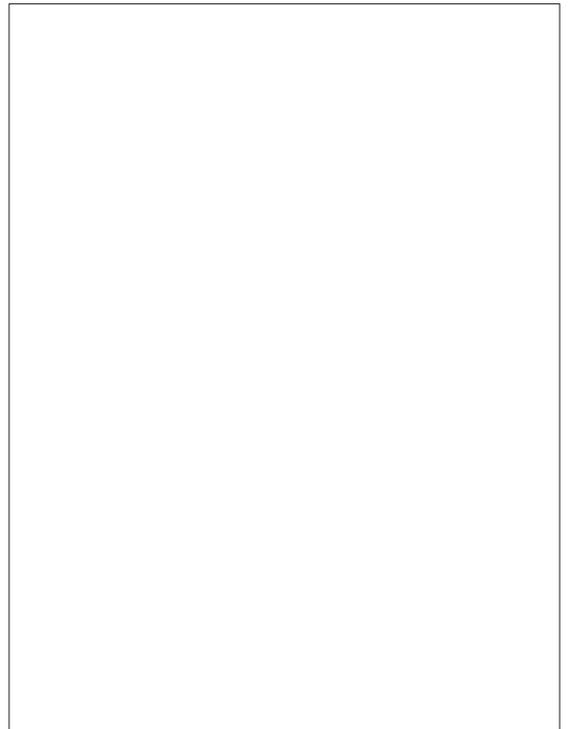
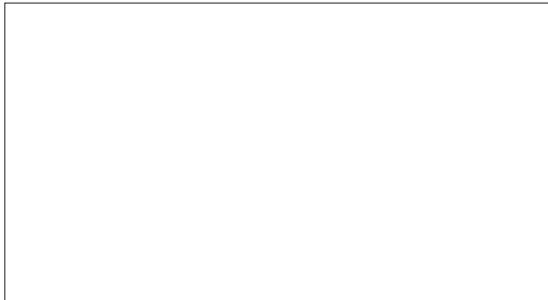
VA requested the IOM panel of experts to focus on CLL in their report because of veterans’ concerns that CLL shares some similarities with non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma, which the IOM had previously connected to Agent Orange exposure.

VA will publish further details,

when available, on its Web site at <http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/benefits/herbicide/>. In the meantime, veterans with questions about health-care, compensation and survivor benefits may call a toll-free help line at 1-800-749-8387 for information. VA also encourages Vietnam veterans who have not done so to request a subscription to Agent Orange Review, VA’s free newsletter that will keep them abreast of developments on this issue and other policies and scientific findings in the future. Newsletter information is available from the help line number above. Back issues and additional information about Agent Orange are available at another VA Web site at <http://www.va.gov/agentorange/>.

Correction

One of the numbers for the pharmacy automated refill system listed in the Winter edition of the *Retiree Times* was incorrect. The correct numbers when calling from a touch-tone phone are (805) 605-0200 or toll free (877) 826-3979. The (805) 606-7440 number is for pharmacy assistance. We apologize for any inconvenience.



TRICARE Dental Program enhanced

TRICARE MANAGEMENT AGENCY -- The Fiscal Year 2000 National Defense Authorization Act provided for enhanced dental benefits for uniformed services retirees and their families. The enhanced benefits allow for additional diagnostic, restorative (e.g., cast crowns), and preventive services (a second cleaning per year), and adds coverage for prosthodontic (dentures, etc.) and orthodontic services.

The program was further enhanced with the new TRICARE Retiree Dental Program contract, which came into effect 1 May 2003. The new contract includes the following enhancements:

- An increase of over 40,000 new provider locations in the TRDP network
- A cap on the annual deductible of \$150 for families
- A decrease to only 12 months enrollment to receive crowns,

bridges, and full and partial dentures at 50 percent of the allowable

- A decrease to only 12 months initial enrollment obligation
- An increase in the lifetime orthodontic maximum for each person to \$1,500
- An increase in the annual maximum for each person to \$1,200

Uniformed services retirees and their family members are offered dental benefits through voluntary enrollment in the TRDP. They do not have dental benefits under the TDP for active duty family members and eligible Reserve component personnel, which was implemented February 1, 2001.

For more on this benefit, visit the dental section of the handbook at <http://www.tricare.osd.mil/tricarehandbook/results.cfm?tn=1&cn=18>.

Korean Defense Service Medal announced

The Defense Department has announced the creation of the Korean Defense Service Medal.

Members of the armed forces authorized the KDSM must have served in support of the defense of the Republic of Korea. The area of eligibility encompasses all land area of the Republic of Korea, and the contiguous water out to 12 nautical miles, and all air spaces above the land and water areas. The KDSM period of eligibility is July 28, 1954, to a future date to be determined by the secretary of defense.

Service members must have been assigned, attached, or mobilized to units operating in the area of eligibility and have been physically deployed in the area of eligibility for 30 consecutive or 60 non-consecutive days or meet one of the following criteria:

- Be engaged in actual combat during an armed engagement, regardless of the time in the area of eligibility.
- Is wounded or injured in the line of duty and requires medical evacuation from the area of eligibility.
- While participating as a regularly assigned air crewmember flying sorties into, out of, within, or over the area of eligibility in support of military operations. Each day that one or more sorties are flown in accordance with these criteria shall count as one day toward the 30 or 60-day requirement.

See Medal Page 7

TRICARE Vision Benefits

TRICARE MANAGEMENT AGENCY -- TRICARE vision benefits vary depending on beneficiary status (i.e., active duty service member, active duty family member, retired service member or retired family member) and enrollment in TRICARE Prime.

TRICARE Prime Clinical Preventive Services:

TRICARE Prime enrollees age three and older are authorized comprehensive eye examinations once every two years. TRICARE Prime enrollees may receive the services from any TRICARE network provider without a referral or authorization from the primary care manager, health care finder or any other authority. If the eye examination is not available from a network provider, enrollees may receive services from a non-network provider if they have a referral from the PCM and authorization from the HCF. If services are received from a non-network provider without the proper referral and authorization, payment is made under the TRICARE Prime point-of-service option. Pediatric vision screening is available at birth and approximately six months of age. Diabetic patients, at any age, are allowed annual comprehensive eye examinations.

TRICARE Extra and Standard Clinical Preventive Services:

Vision screening is excluded from the TRICARE Extra and TRICARE Standard plans except for one comprehensive ophthalmological routine eye examination per calendar year for active duty family members and vision screening under the well-child benefit. The well-child

benefit is available from birth to age six and includes eye and vision screening by a PCM during a routine examination at birth and at approximately six months of age. Comprehensive eye examinations are authorized once every two years between ages three and six. Retirees and their family members who use TRICARE Standard, TRICARE Extra and TRICARE For Life are not eligible for routine eye examinations.

Lenses (lenses implanted within the eye or contacts) and Eye Glasses:

Except for active duty members, lenses or eye glasses are only cost shared for treatment of the following conditions: infantile glaucoma, keratoconus, dry eyes, irregularities in the shape of the eye and loss of human lens function resulting from eye surgery or congenital absence. Benefits are limited to only one set of implantable lenses required to restore vision. A set may include a combination of both implantable lenses and eyeglasses when the combination is necessary to restore vision. If there is a prescription change related to the qualifying eye condition, a new set may be cost shared. Replacement lenses for those that are lost, have deteriorated, or have become unusable due to physical growth are not covered. Adjustments, cleaning and repairs of eyeglasses are also not covered.

For more information about TRICARE vision benefits, beneficiaries may contact their local beneficiary counseling and assistance coordinator or health benefits adviser. Special programs may exist at local military treatment facilities. Please contact your local MTF for more specific information.

Medal from Page 6

The KDSM may be awarded posthumously, and only one award of the KDSM is authorized for any individual. It is directly above the Armed Forces Service Medal in precedence.

More than 40,000 members of the U.S. armed forces have served in the Republic of Korea or the waters adjacent thereto each year since the signing of the cease-fire agreement in July 1953, which established the Demilitarized Zone. For more than 50 years, U.S. Armed Forces' efforts to defend the Korean Peninsula have helped maintain democracy and preserve the indomitable spirit of freedom.

Each military department will prescribe appropriate regulations for administrative processing, awarding and wearing of the KDSM and ribbon for their service members, to include application procedures for veterans, retirees, and next-of-kin. A picture of the medal design can be viewed at <http://www.imjinscout.com/KDSM.html> and other web sites.

Veterans and retirees -- Veterans, retirees or their next of kin may claim entitlement by writing to the National Personnel Records Center, 9700 Page Avenue, St. Louis MO 63132-5100. Requests should include documents clearly proving service and dates in Korea such as orders, performance reports, DD214, flight records, decorations citation, or other official documents. Veterans and retirees should address questions to the NPRC customer service center, (314) 801-0800.

Air Force Reserve and Guard veterans and retirees -- Air Force Reserve and Guard veterans, retirees and next of kin may submit their request with supporting documentation to Headquarters Air Reserve Personnel Center, 6760 Irvington Place 4000, Denver CO 80280-4000. Reserve and guard veterans and retirees under the age of 60 should address questions to HQ ARPC, (303) 679-6134.

Reserve and Guard veterans and retirees over 60 years old -- Requests from Reserve and Guard veterans and retirees over the age of 60 and next-of-kin of deceased reserve and guard veterans and retirees must be sent to the NPRC with supporting documentation.

Once entitlement has been verified, NPRC will update the KDSM to the DD form 214, certificate of release or discharge from active duty and then authorize issuance of a medal. Because of the expected large number of individuals applying, this may take awhile. The KDSM should also be available for purchase at Army and Air Force Exchange Service Clothing Sales facilities in three to six months.

(Department of Defense)

Medicare Part B enrollment update

One of the provisions of the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003 allows uniformed services beneficiaries who would be eligible for TRICARE For Life but are not enrolled in Medicare Part B to enroll without penalty during a special enrollment period through Dec. 31, 2004.

TRICARE Management Activity will announce when the special enrollment period will begin.

Beneficiaries had the option of enrolling in Part B during the general enrollment period that ended March 31 and receiving a rebate of any premium surcharges paid in 2004. Their enrollment will be effective July 1, but the rebate of premium surcharges will not begin until Medicare performs a sweep of its database later in the year.

TRICARE Management Activity is working with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and Social Security Administration to send uniformed services beneficiaries targeted information on Medicare Part B enrollment and where they need to go to process their Part B enrollment form (which they will receive in a CMS mailing scheduled for the summer).

The Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003 also includes a provision for beneficiaries who enrolled in Medicare Part B between January 2001 and December 2004 and are subject to a penalty for late enrollment. Beginning January 2004, these beneficiaries will have the penalty waived. TRICARE Management Activity is working with the CMS to determine the action eligible beneficiaries need to take to make use of this opportunity. *(TRICARE Management Agency)*

Service Organization Directory

Air Force Sergeants Association

2nd Tuesday of each month at 3:30 p.m., Vandenberg Services Center, Tech.Sgt. Scott Astrosky (805) 606-9308, scott.astrosky@vandenberg.af.mil

Society of Military Widows

Central Coast Chapter 44
2nd Wednesday of each month at 1 p.m. usually, followed by a guest speaker at 2 p.m., Vandenberg Retiree Activities Office, Juanita Anderson, (805) 937-0940, spartlerjia@aol.com

Military Officers Association of America

Santa Maria-Lompoc Chapter
Call for location and time, Norman Enoch (805) 938-9999, njenoch@earthlink.net
Central Calif. Coast Chapter -- San Luis Obispo
2nd weekend of each month, call for location and time, John Mirolla, (805) 528-8269, pjmirolla@msn.com
Santa Barbara Chapter
2nd Tuesday of each month, Harry's Café, call for time, Steve Keller, (805) 965-0359, keller103@cox.net

Tickets, Tours, Cruises

Vandenberg Leisure Tours is in Building 10122, the Services Center, located near the corner of California Boulevard and Washington Avenue. It offers a wide variety of excursions to suit every taste. In addition, the tour office lists favorable rates at hotels and motels in the vicinity of Southern California theme parks and Los Angeles Airport. Active duty, retired military, civil service personnel,

government contractors, families, and guests are eligible to participate. The address is P.O. Box 5459, Vandenberg AFB, CA 93437-0459. You might also visit their website at <http://www.30svs.com/index2.html>. Click on Downloads and then Upcoming Tours. For complete information on the following upcoming trips, contact the tour office at (805) 606-7976.

- April 21-29** Costa Rica, \$1,895
- May 2-5** Las Vegas Getaway, sharing/single \$135/\$185
- May 20-27** Mid-Atlantic Capitols/Seaports Catalina, \$216/\$300
- June 6-8** Mamma Mia, \$85
- June 10** Reno, \$145/\$190
- June 13-15** Monterey for a Day, \$35
- June 24** Laughlin Holiday, \$125/\$170
- July 2-5**

- July 13-15** Huntington Museum & Mission San Juan Capistrano, \$245/\$300
- July 25- Aug. 4** Alaska Cruise, \$1,636-2,737
- Sept. 9-15** Blue Danube River Cruise
- Nov. 9-16** Costa Del Sol

Mark your calendars!

The next potluck luncheon will be June 17 beginning at noon followed by a program at 1 p.m. The site is Building 10364 – Base Exchange area, across from the Home & Garden Shop where retirees, spouses and widows gather to hear guest speakers, socialize and enjoy cookies and coffee. Scheduled activities are as follows:

- May 12 – Wednesday** -- Society of Military Widows, 1 p.m.
- June 9 – Wednesday** -- Society of Military Widows, 1 p.m.
- June 17 – Thursday** – RAO Potluck 12 noon, Speaker TBA
- July 14 – Wednesday** -- Society of Military Widows
- Aug. 11 – Wednesday** -- Society of Military Widows
- Nov. 13 – Saturday** – Retiree Appreciation Day
Please check the *Space & Missile Times* for details as days come closer. Also, listen to KUHL Tuesdays at 8:20 a.m. for current news on events; and watch for flyers posted at the Retiree Activities Center.

Try KMC for a Hawaiian vacation

AIR FORCE RETIREE NEWS SERVICE – “At 4,000 feet above sea level, the warm Hawaiian temperatures drop and each of our cottages feature a fireplace. Not your typical Hawaiian vacation.”

That’s how Arlene Bali, marketing director, describes the Kilauea Military Camp on the big island of Hawaii. While most folks are familiar with the Hale Koa and even Camp Bells, Kilauea isn’t exactly a household word. This may change, however, as more members of the military retired community, looking for affordable vacations spots, turn to the KMC, a Joint Services Recreation Center that

allows visitors to experience another side Hawaii.

It’s lush and tropical as well as dramatic and stark because of the all the lava activity, said Bali, who described the center as featuring 77 comfortably appointed cottages and apartments right in the heart of Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. “We are near the crater’s edge of the much publicized, active volcano, Kilauea,” she said.

Besides a fireplace in the room, there is cable TV, a mini-refrigerator, microwave, coffee-maker, hair dryer, iron and ironing board as well as an umbrella for the those unexpected showers. Cottages and apart-

ments vary from one-, two-, and three-bedroom units. Selected units include a Jacuzzi and/or kitchen.

KMC also offers an array of activities from tennis, golf, biking, bowling, hiking, guided island tours and more. There is also a café, general store, recreation lodge, meeting rooms, gas station, theater and chapel.

Open to all active duty military, Reserves, National Guard, retirees and Department of Defense civilian employees and their guests, rates range from \$46 to \$120 per night for double occupancy.

Reservations may be made up to a year in advance except during peak season. Call 438-6707 directly from Oahu or call (808) 967-8333 for reservations and information. Write: Kilauea Military Camp, HQ Bldg. 40, Attn: Reservations Office, Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, Hawaii 96718. The email address is reservations@kmc-volcano.com. Also, visit the web site at www.kmc-volcano.com for other information as well as photos.

Burtonwood Reunion

A reunion of all personnel ever stationed at Burtonwood Royal Air Force Station in England will take place Oct. 5-10, 2004 in Santa Maria. For more information phone Darrell Freese at (805) 937-7929 or e-mail at nanstars@msn.com.

Veterans wheelchair games in June

VETERANS AFFAIRS—More than 500 disabled veterans will compete in the largest annual wheelchair sports event in the world, the 24th National Veterans Wheelchair Games, June 15-19 in St. Louis, Mo.

The Wheelchair Games, presented by the Department of Veterans Affairs and Paralyzed Veterans of America, are open to all U.S. military veterans who use wheelchairs for sports competition due to spinal cord injuries, certain neurological conditions, amputations or other mobility impairments.

The St. Louis VA Medical Center, VA’s Heartland Network and the PVA Gateway Chapter are hosting the 2004 games. Sports are important in the therapy used to treat many disabilities. VA is a recognized leader in rehabilitation, with therapy programs available at VA

health care facilities across the nation.

For many injured veterans, the Wheelchair Games provide their first exposure to wheelchair athletics. At the games, veterans will compete in track and field, swimming, basketball, weightlifting, softball, air guns, quad-rugby, 9-ball, bowling, table tennis, archery, hand-cycling, a motorized rally, wheelchair slalom and power soccer. Trap shooting will be an exhibition event this year.

For more information about the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, or to follow events as they happen, visit the Games website at <http://www.wheelchairgames.org/>

Retired Military Golf Classic on tap

AIR FORCE RETIREE NEWS SERVICE—The 21st annual National Retired Military Golf Classic will be held in Myrtle Beach, S.C., June 1-5, 2004. The classic, the largest retired military golf event in the world, will be played on five different courses at Myrtle Beach Nation and Wildwing Golf Clubs.

Only 864 men and 132 women will be accepted for this event, competing for more than \$125,000 in cash and prizes. Applications were mailed in De-

cember 2003 to those on the mailing list. Applications are also available at most military golf courses in the United States. Priority will be given to those who have recently played in the classic.

After Feb. 1 acceptance will be on a first come first served basis. A waiting list will be established once the classic is full. For applications, call (800) 255-4763 or (866) 469-7853 or write to the National Retired Military Golf Classic, PO Box 3608, Myrtle Beach, SC 29578.

