

Department of the Air Force Lackland AFB Retiree Activities Office Newsletter

April 2008



COMMANDER'S CORNER

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Brig Gen Leonard A. Patrick
37th Training Wing Commander

I am grateful for the warm welcome I received upon my arrival at Lackland in early 2008, and feel privileged to be a part of the AF's largest and best training wing! Lackland's greatness can not be solely attributed to its four primary training functions; but also the surrounding community, including our growing retiree population. You may be here to receive top-of-the line medical care at Wilford Hall, or to volunteer your time to one of Lackland's many organizations. Whatever brings you here, we are proud to have you at Lackland AFB!

One member of the Air Force's retiree community, Patricia Ann Rahe visited Lackland Air Force History and Traditions Museum on March 3rd as part of a Women's History Month event. Ms. Rahe, now 81, made history when she became one of the first 100 women to be a member of the Women's Air Force. She attended BMT at Kelly Air Force Base (now Kelly Field Annex) decades ago. We are proud to be part of the same Air Force as trailblazers like Ms. Rahe; and all of you!

As retired members of the Lackland community, we want you to understand the importance of your contributions and involvement here at team Lackland. We value your continued dedication and service to our nation, and strive to provide outstanding services to you and your family while keeping you informed about everything Lackland has to offer.

It is no secret that the services here on base are phenomenal. Whether it's an afternoon on the green at the Gateway Hills golf club, a trip down memory lane at the AF History Museum, a visit to the Arts & Crafts Center, or a meal at the

Gateway Club...there is certainly something for everyone!

As you enjoy the many wonderful opportunities at Lackland, we will discover new ways to give back to your retiree community. You are part of the team, and we are lucky to have you help us light the way to Lackland's bright future!

DIRECTORS COMMENTS

Robert C. Zaske,

37th Training Wing RAO MSS/TRW

As the director of the Retiree Activity Office, I would like to say it is my pleasure to be able to serve the Retired Community. This is my third year as your director of the Retiree Activity Office and it has been my pleasure to serve our retired community. My staff and I are willing to help and serve you.

Your RAO office is your main link to the Air Force and there are 16,000 AF retirees in the area that we serve. We now work 3 hour shifts three days a week due to the loss of the base decals which were helping our retired people.

Our work hours Tuesday, Thursday from 0900 to 1500 hours Wednesday from 0900 hours to 1400 hrs.

We have tried to incorporate your comments and suggestions as much as possible in the newsletter. We have chosen articles that we think are of interest and benefit to you, our readers. I hope that you find the newsletter informative. Let us know if you like what we have done so far.

Thank you for all your support. My staff and I will do our best to continue to assist you.

AFTERBURNER Info

The Afterburner published from Randolph AFB is available from their web site listed under "Retirees Services". Their Web Site is as follows:

<http://ask.afpc.randolph.af.mil>

TRICARE UNIFORM FORMULARY UPDATE

Additional Uniform Formulary Changes Coming

Users of medications designed to treat prostate problems (Flomax), Cardura); certain types of arthritis (Enbrel, Kineret); high blood pressure (Exforge); attention deficit/ hyperactivity disorder (Vyvanse); and the contraceptive Lybrel need to be aware of impending changes pertaining to the DOD Uniform Formulary. Recently the DOD Pharmacy & Therapeutics (P&T) Committee recommended these medications be designated as non formulary, meaning out-of-pocket costs to their users would rise to \$22. A final decision is expected within the next 60 days.

The P&T Committee also reviewed a series of medications commonly used to treat hypertension and acute myocardial infarction and recommended all 18 substances remain on DoD's Uniform Formulary. By law the committee is required to monitor changes in the clinical information, current costs, and utilization trends of medications previously designated as non-formulary. The prescription drug Norvasc and its generic equivalent Amlodipine were re-evaluated due to a significant decrease in cost to DoD, and the panel recommended that it be reclassified as a formulary medication.

Be sure to monitor future Weekly Updates or the TRICARE section in the Uniformed Services Journal for the final outcome on the P&T Committee's recommendations. For a complete list of medications, their formulary status and where they are available, go to

www.tricareformularysearch.org/dod/medicationcenter/default.aspx
<<http://www.tricareformularysearch.org/dod/medicationcenter/default.aspx>

MILITARY TAX RELIEF: In the last month, the House and Senate have each twice passed HR 3997, the Defenders of Freedom Tax Relief Act of 2007 unanimously. The problem is that every time it passed, it was a slightly different version, and the House and Senate never passed the same one before Congress adjourned for the year. It's sad to say that Senate-vs.-House quibbling over a few final details derailed the whole bill, virtually on Christmas Eve. Hopefully they can reconcile their differences and pass the bill in the second session of the 110th Congress

which convenes in late JAN. The bill calls for a range of tax relief for military members, their families and some small business employers of mobilized reservists. Among other things, it allows:

- Disabled retirees who suffer delays in the VA claims process file for refunds of up to five years of back taxes (vs. three under current law).
 - Military widows to put their death gratuity amounts (now up to \$100,000) into tax-deferred IRA, and
 - Employers to make deposits in 401(k) s for employees who are deployed to combat zones.
- [Source: MOAA Leg Up 21 Dec 07 ++]

RAO Volunteers

We are greatly indebted to the people who take the time out from otherwise busy lives to devote some of their time for the operation of the Military Retiree Activities Office at Lackland AFB. We are here to serve our Military Retiree's

Retiree Appreciation Day

We are working on a date for around the last Friday of October 2008. When we finally set a date it will be announced in our web site and the base paper

Higher TRICARE Fees Endorsed

The Pentagon-appointed Task Force on the Future of Military Health will endorse higher TRICARE fees, deductibles and co-payments for – 65 retirees and their families in an interim report to be sent to Congress May 31. It also will back other features of **the TRICARE “reform” package first proposed last year by the Department of Defense.**

These include: Raising beneficiary co-payments or prescriptions filled in TRICARE retail pharmacy network. Indexing TRICARE fees and deductibles so the automatic annual adjustments keep them in step with rising healthcare costs. Establishing tiers for the new TRICARE fee structure, probably based on rank at retirement, so that retirees with bigger annuities pay more for their health care coverage and retirees with smaller annuities pay less. To learn more, read the article at Military .com.

<http://.military.com/features/0,15240,136837,00.html>

VETERANS NEWS Clarification of New IU Rules

Previously we reported that those who are being paid VA Disability Pay at the 100 percent level due to Individual Unemployables would start to be paid their total Concurrent Receipt when the National Defense

Authorization Act (NDAA) went into effect.

Though the legislation provides full Concurrent Receipt and back-pay to Oct. 1, 2004, for those

affected, it unfortunately does not go into effect until Oct. 1, 2008

VA EYE CARE: Eye-care services are available at the VA Medical Center. The following veterans are eligible to receive eye care and eyeglasses from VA:

- Veterans rated 10% or more service-connected for any condition;
- veterans rated service-connected for an eye condition that requires corrective lenses;
- former prisoners of war;
- veterans enrolled in a VA-approved Vocational Rehabilitation Training Program; and
- veterans in receipt of increased VA no service-connected pension based on need of regular aid.

For more information on VA eye care, call your local VA Medical Center. [Source: Honolulu Star Bulletin Gregg K. Kakesako article 13 Jan 08 ++]

TRICARE EOBS UPDATE 02: Tricare for Life (TFL) beneficiaries can soon print a copy of their Explanation of Benefits (EOB) from the convenience of their own homes. Starting in JAN 08, the only paper EOB's that beneficiaries will receive are monthly summaries. The exception to this is if a claim includes services that are rejected, and those services have appeal rights; or if the EOB is mailed with a payment to the beneficiary. In February, beneficiaries will have the option to receive an electronic notification every time a claim processes. Beneficiaries can then log on to the secure web site at www.TRICARE4U.com, to view and print their EOB. The EOB will be available online and beneficiaries will have the ability to access EOB's for any claim processed during the last 27 months. Once a beneficiary signs up for this option, they will not receive a monthly paper summary. TFL beneficiaries will receive letters notifying them of the changes, either with their current EOB's or any other correspondence. If there are any questions about the registration process beneficiaries can call

1-866-773-0404. Those requiring a Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) can call 1-866-773-0405. [Source: TMA News Release 9 Jan 08 ++]

TRICARE EOBS UPDATE 03: The Defense Department is limiting the amount of Tricare paper it sends to military retirees age 65 and older and their families by sending explanations of benefits forms only once a month. Others covered under Tricare, including active-duty families continue to have the choice of receiving a paper copy of their explanation of benefits (EOB) mailed each time a claim is processed, even if there are multiple claims in a month. An explanation of benefits provides details of what action Tricare has taken on claims by doctors and other health care providers seeking payment for services to a patient. Officials said the monthly statement will allow easier comparison with the quarterly Medicare Summary Notice. There are exceptions to the monthly policy for these retirees and their family members; statements will be sent if the EOB includes a check to the patient, or if a claim is denied and the patient has appeal rights for those services. As in the past, patients can view an EOB online any time a claim is processed. Those who are not already registered for this service can do so at, will

<https://www.tricare4u.com/apps-portal/tricareapps-app/unauth/tricarehome.jsp>. Beginning 14 FEB patients will have the option of receiving an e-mail notification when a claim is processed. They can then log on to the website to view and print their EOB's. Once patients sign up for this option, however, they will not receive a mailed monthly summary of explanations of benefits. Patients will be able to view the EOBs for any claim processed within the last 27 months. Beneficiaries with questions about the registration process can call (866) 773-0404. [Source: MRGRG Karen Jowers article 15 Jan 08 ++]

ATTENTION FAMILIES OF WARTIME VETERANS AND SURVIVING SPOUSES

You are cordially invited to an informative seminar regarding
“Veterans Benefits for Assisted Living”
At this seminar you will learn from
about the
“Aid and Attendance Benefit”

Every Tuesday Night at 6:30
2334 Kerrybrook Ct

San Antonio, TX 78230

Seating is limited. Call today to RSVP
(210) 641-5000

**Brookdale Senior Living
Communities are
PROUD TO BE VETERAN'S FIRST
COMMUNITIES. The American Association
for**

**Wartime Veterans works exclusively with
senior
living communities committed to fair
housing practices for veterans and their
surviving spouses.**

**Air Force has new Web site for
retirees**

RANDOLPH AFB, Texas (AFRNS) – The Air Force has a new Web site just for its retiree community that is full of news and information, plus it is easy to access and navigate.

The Air Force Retiree Services site is located at www.retirees.af.mil.

This public Web site offers the retirees family community in-depth information on the Survivor Benefit Plan, plus a list of Air Force Retiree Activities Offices worldwide and various other resources. There are also sections dedicated to the Afterburner and Air Force Retiree News Service.

Visitors can access the sections by using the top navigation bar on the home page. The home page also features the latest Air Force headline news and video clips. There is even a special icon for quick access to the Combat-Related Special Compensation information page.

Managing electronic subscriptions to the electronic version of the Afterburner and AFRNS is now much easier: just click on the word "Subscribe" found on the top navigation bar and unsubscribe an old address and then add a new one when a change is needed.

SPECIAL REMINDER

This is just a reminder to all retirees and their dependents the Retiree Activities Office is still open, although we no longer issue base decals. Our hours are Tuesday and Thursday (0900 – 1500) and Wednesday (0900 – 1400). We have several items of interest for you to browse or take with you as well as various forms (such as passport applications, CRCS applications , new booklets for seniors and retirees.



At its inception in the 60s, Air Force Village Foundation's core mission was to provide a warm, comfortable life with dignity for Air Force officer widows who found themselves unable to meet the

expenses of retirement, often through tragic circumstances. Since our doors opened in 1970, almost 500 widows have been provided for.

Over the last 38 years, \$11 million has been given in financial assistance, with more than \$3 million just the past four years. Approximately 50% of this \$3 million has been assistance for health care needs.

Here are a couple examples of how Air Force Villages (AFV) helps Widows-in-need:

"She saw her family savings dwindle to nothing when she and her husband, a WWII bomber pilot, waged an expensive battle against the cancer that finally took his life. AFV assisted her with her entrance fee and a small monthly subsistence; then she developed congestive heart failure and needed extensive home health assistance. She became totally indigent and the Widows-in-need Fund cared for her until her death."

"A Viet Nam veteran widow came to AFV with adequate resources to live independently — but then a stroke forced her to go into nursing care, which significantly increased her monthly expenses. She used her savings until they were depleted, at which point the Widows-in-need Fund stepped in and took care of her monthly health care expenses — in excess of \$4,000 per month."

This program is strictly confidential; no one other than a handful of people knows who these widows are. They enjoy the same quality of life as other AFV residents.

We know there are more AF officer widows or widowers in need of financial assistance who may best be served by making Air Force Villages their home. Help us spread the word about this message of mission supported by available assistance to those who may need us. In case you are asked, the simple eligibility criteria are:

- Air Force officer widow or widower
- Assets less than \$10,000
- Insufficient income to cover monthly expenses

There is no “one size fits all” when it comes to assistance as financial needs vary in each situation. Some need help as they are moving in and some need help after they have moved in. One thing is an absolute; support increases as health needs increase.

If you know of a widow-in-need of financial assistance or would like more information about Air Force Villages, please call (800) 762-1122 or visit our website, www.airforcevillages.com.

Thank you for your support in the past and we ask that you help us continue our core mission: “*Taking Care of Our Own.*”

GOD BLESS AMERICA

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