

Department of the Air Force

Lackland AFB Retiree Activities Office Newsletter September 2009



COMMANDER'S CORNER

Colonel William H. Mott V
37th Training Wing Commander

This is my first time writing for the Lackland retiree newsletter and I am honored. Lackland is an amazing base with a diverse mission, and the support of our community of retirees is obvious and appreciated. Thank you for your service and your continued close association with our great Air Force!

We have planned 17 Oct 09 as our Annual Retiree Appreciation day, and I know it will be a great event, Mr. Zaske has put a great deal of effort into the planning for it. I look forward to being a part of it.

I am an F-22 pilot, so It has been fascinating for me to step into the 37th Training Wing and attempt to make a difference here. I see Lackland as an airbase supporting missions from ISR to 24 AF to WHMC to Basic Military Training. The 37th Training Wing is "shaping the Air Force with warrior Airmen of character"... that's my vision for the wing. And if you want to know more about the wing's mission, or have a suggestion or comment about this installation's services or support, drop me a line at: william.mott@lackland.af.mil

We've started planning for the holiday season already and I hope you can enjoy the many events on Lackland during the upcoming months. Thanksgiving, golf tournaments, tree lighting and holiday parties-the next few months promise to be filled with special occasions!

I hope your holiday season is filled with cheer, and time spent with loved ones. There are also many opportunities to volunteer during this busy season! Be sure to get out and see all that Lackland Air Force Base has to offer.

DIRECTORS COMMENTS

Robert C. Zaske,
37th Training Wing RAO MSS/TRW
The Retiree Activities Office still needs YOU! We are manned by all volunteer retirees to answer the phones, find answers and help find needed help for our retired personnel. It's enjoyable work and you get excellent training on what to do and when. Much of the time you are able to refer the caller to the right agency or connect him or her to an on line link that will solve their problem. It's very rewarding to know that you were able to help a retired person. It's also very enjoyable to again visit with fellow retirees who are working all for a common cause.

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.

UP COMING EVENTS. :

Lackland's Annual Retiree Appreciation Day is now in the planning stages, when more information is available it will be published in the base newspaper, flyers, postcards and etc. The date is 17 October 2009 at Mitchell Hall. Mark your calendars.

COLA 2010 Update 06: The Bureau of Labor Statistics just announced the monthly consumer price index for July. The CPI is the measure used to make adjustments to military retired pay, survivor benefits, Social Security and other federal pensions. The CPI-W for July is 210.526 which is down 0.2% from the June figure of 210.972. The CPI-W July value of 210.526 is now down 2.3% from the 2008 COLA Base of 215.5. The July value will be averaged with the August and September values to determine the 2010 COLA. For retirees and survivors to see any COLA for 2010 inflation would have to rise more than 2.4% each month

for August and September. That's just not going to happen, barring some kind of disaster that nobody wants to see. As a reminder the law doesn't allow a negative COLA. If inflation is negative for the year, as seems almost certain, there just won't be a COLA.

[Source: MOAA Leg Up 21 Aug 09]

Air Force now has a 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 and navigate. 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

Good News for Air Force Retirees

After having suspended publication in hard copy for three years, the Air Force Retiree newsletter “The Afterburner” has made a return for its September 2009 edition. However, the Co-Chairman of the Air Force Retiree Council, LtGen. Steven R. Polk, says that efforts are still needed to do everything possible to hold down costs.

In order to help with cost savings all on-line subscribers to the *e-Afterburner* are asked to give up receiving the hard copy versions by allowing

their names to be removed from the postal mailing list.

To be removed from the hard-copy mailing list, people who receive the *e-Afterburner* should email their full name, U.S. Postal Service mailing address, and the last four digits of their Social Security number to afpc.retiree@randolph.af.mil.

SSAN Removal

DoD announced this week, in response to an increasing awareness of the growing need to protect the safety of Service members and their families identity information, it plans to remove Social Security Account Numbers (SSAN) from all military identification cards by the end of 2010. Instead, the cards will display only the last four digits of the SSAN.

Changes to cards will be made upon ID card renewal. Phase One: Remove Dependent SSANs: To begin by end of calendar year 2008.

Phase Two: Remove all printed SSANs: To begin by end of calendar year 2009.

Phase Three: Remove SSANs embedded in barcodes: calendar year 2012

VET RESOURCE: The American Veterans & Service members Survival Guide is available on line at www.veteransforamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/12/survival-guide.pdf. The new publication, provided by the Veterans for America organization, is a follow-up to the 1985 The Viet Vet Survival Guide. It is a downloadable no cost resource for veterans of all periods. The guide will help a veteran understand what's going on, it is not a substitute for a good lawyer or other advocate. And it isn't the only source of information. The book gives particular emphasis to service members and veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, while providing adequate information for vets of all other eras. It describes in depth:

- The problems of the military community,
- The benefits and services available to present and former service members, and
- Issues that will be decided in the next several years.

It will help readers understand how various agencies work not just in theory but in practice and how they can cut through the bureaucracy and confusion and get the benefits and services to which they are entitled. Topics included in its 599 pages, among others, address frequent call-ups from the Guard and Reserve, getting out of the military, the Department of Veterans Affairs,

disability compensation, pensions, medical care, educational benefits, housing benefits, claims and appeals, discharge upgrading, the criminal justice system, employment, reemployment rights, benefits for family members, the special problems of women service members and veterans and domestic relations issues. While it focuses on programs run by the VA it also deals with programs administered by other federal agencies and the states. [Source: www.veteransforamerica.org Feb 08 ++]

TRICARE Mail Order Pharmacy

If you take medications on a regular basis for chronic conditions and haven't already taken advantage of the TRICARE mail order pharmacy (TMOP), perhaps this is a good time to look at this option.

q It's Cost-Effective. A 90-day supply carries the same co-pay as a 30-day supply at retail pharmacies, with no shipping charges.

q It's Safe. For those who take multiple medications, there is an extensive system of checks and balances to ensure the proper medications are dispensed.

q It's Convenient. You can fill your prescriptions 24/7, and never need to drive to the pharmacy.

q It's Easy To Transfer. For relocation, vacations or temporary assignments, your prescriptions can follow you with a quick change of address with the contractor.

You can learn more about or enroll in TMOP by visiting the My Benefit portal (<http://tricare.mil/mybenefit>) on the TRICARE Web site. You can also complete the registration form (<http://www.express-scripts.com/TRICARE>) online or call the Member Choice Center at (877) 363-1433 to switch to TMOP.

TRICARE Reserve Select Provides Continuity for Reserve Components New, lower rates will help provide continuity of coverage to Reserve Component members and their families. Army Maj. Gen. Elder Granger, deputy director of TRICARE Management Activity, and Chief of Army Reserves Lt. Gen. Jack Stultz discussed their thoughts on the evolution of TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS) during recent interviews. You can view those by clicking here (<http://www.health.mil/mediaroom/default.aspx?id=385¤tPg=1>). As of Jan. 1, 2009 TRS rates changed from \$81 to \$47.51 for single members and from \$253 to \$180.17 for member-and-family coverage. Click TRS (<http://www.tricare.mil/trs>) for more information about the program.

Are You at Risk for Colorectal Cancer?

As we grow older there are more and more ailments, which might affect us. One of the easiest to detect and treat, when caught early is colorectal cancer. Go here (<http://www.health.mil/Press/Release.aspx?ID=592>) to learn more.

JOKE OF THE DAY

Did you hear about the person whose computer needed a new password and couldn't get into his computer.. The help desk people were called to get a new password. The help desk response was we'll assign you a new password and have it e-mailed .. So how was this going to help when the computer was down

Veterans News

Recovery Payment for Disabled Vets
One element of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, recently signed by President Obama, provides a one-time payment of \$250 to individuals who get Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security benefits and to disabled veterans that are in receipt of VA Compensation and Pension. Disabled veterans recovery payments will be deposited to the same account you

on file with VA and are expected to begin arriving sometime this summer. No action is required on your part. For more information, contact the VA at 800-827-1000.

- **VA END OF LIFE BOOKLET:** U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter (D-PA) called on the Department of Veterans Affairs to consider suspending its use of an end-of-life planning document that critics have dubbed the 'death book for veterans.' "There is an issue as to whether the VA document inappropriately pressures disabled veterans who forgo critical care by subtly urging them on end-of-life decisions," the lawmaker "wrote in a letter to U.S. Sen. Daniel K. Akaka (D-HI), chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, requesting that the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee hold a hearing on the matter. Early indications are Specter's request is being strongly considered. Specter said in an interview that he had not read the booklet but was disturbed by what he had gleaned thus far.
- Concern about the document was raised 18 AUG when Jim Towey, the former director of the White House Office of Faith-Based Initiatives under President George W. Bush, railed against it in the Wall Street Journal. The booklet, Towey noted, includes a worksheet titled "What makes your life worth living" that presents various scenarios, such as being confined to a wheelchair, relying on a feeding tube or being unable to shake the blues. Towey compared the wording of the worksheet to a political push poll meant to steer readers to a predetermined conclusion. "This hurry-up-and-die message is clear and unconscionable," wrote Towey, who noted that the Bush administration had suspended use of the document but that it

has been resuscitated by the Obama White House.

VA officials, however, said that the document has been misrepresented by critics and that the decade-old publication, titled 'Your Life, Your Choices,' is an educational resource meant to help veterans direct in advance the medical care they want in the event they are incapacitated. VA is not suggesting that injured or sick veterans consider ending their lives and if this is the impression or implication derived from any VA materials, then that is wrong. The document is actually a 52-page, optional guidebook for veterans. It is about living wills and end-of-life care. The Bush Administration had the VA issue a directive in 2007 to list the book as an example of the type of document doctors should give to their patients if requested. The directive was updated in July by the Obama Administration. The document was developed under a federally funded research grant and published in 1997. VA spokeswoman Katie Roberts said. "The booklet is designed to help veterans deal with excruciating questions about what kind of health care they would like to receive if they are unable to make decisions for themselves." It is not an advance directive or living will, Roberts said. It has been restored to the VA Web site because it was produced with federal money. The document is being revised, according to VA officials. VA Assistant VA Secretary Tammy Duckworth in a discussion on Fox News said the VA provides its booklet it at no charge. There are many other no charge booklets that are out there. If veterans want to go and spend \$5 apiece and buy Mr. Towey's book on end-of-life discussions, they are welcome to do that." [Source: The Washington Post Steve Vogel article 25 Aug 09 ++]

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This site contains a lot of good info: http://post_119_gulfport_ms.tripod.com/rao1.html on the 2nd and 16th of each month to read/download the Bulletin.

DISCLAIMER:

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