

# VETERANS ADVOCATE

## Special points of interest:

- Importance of a DD-214
- Volunteer Drivers Needed
- History of the Veterans Offices
- Medals and Awards

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## What's so important about a Veteran's DD-214?

The Veteran's Report of Separation From Active Duty, often times referred to as a DD-214, is the document upon which all entitlements through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs are based.

Two instances come to mind where the DD-214 should be immediately at hand. The first being when the Veteran is considering applying for benefits through the Social Security Administration; and the second comes when the veteran, his/her spouse, or

dependant child, passes away and interment at the Ft. Snelling National Cemetery is desired. In the first instance when an individual is seeking to secure benefits through the Social Security Administration, often times earning credits will be afforded that individual for his/her Period of military service. That service must be documented through providing the original DD-214 or certified copy thereof, which can be issued by the County Recorder where that



Just why, after years away from having been released from active military service, does this particular document maintain such importance

record is filed.

The second instance, involving the National Cemetery system, is where a DD-214 will be required. This is perhaps the best example where the

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## MN Department of Veterans Affairs

The department of Veterans Affairs assists Minnesota's 500,000 veterans and their dependents to obtain the benefits and services provided by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, formerly called the Veterans Administration.

The primary source of contact for all veteran benefits and services is the County Veterans Service Officer. County Veterans Service Officers are located in each of Minnesota's counties and can be contacted through the Government Section of a telephone book.



## History of the Veterans Office of Anoka County

As World War II drew to a close, the federal government, and state local governments throughout the nation, began to prepare for the task of assimilating 16 million service men and women back into civilian life. For its part, the Minnesota Legislature enacted a number of laws, Minnesota Statute 197.60 stated: "the county board of any county may appoint a veterans service officer ..." The Act further provided, "it shall be the duty of the veterans service officer to aid all residents...in securing benefits provided by law on account of the service of any person in the Army, Navy, or Marine Corps..."

Anoka County's first Veterans

Service Officer was a WWI veteran by the name of Laurence N. LaPlant. He served the veterans and their dependents of Anoka County until the time of his death in April of 1959.

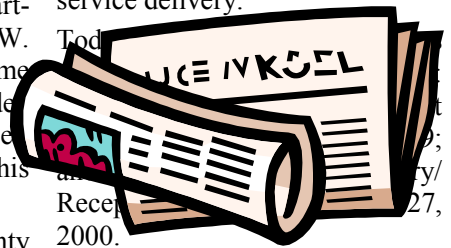
Following the passing of Mr. LaPlant, the V.S.O. position was filled on a part-time basis until 1965 when Donald W. Smith, was appointed to the full-time position of V.S.O. Mr. Smith concluded his longstanding and dedicated service to Anoka County with his retirement on August 1, 1982.

On August 10, 1982, the Anoka County Board of Commissioners unanimously appointed Duane R. Krueger to fill the position of Veterans Service Officer. Mr. Krueger has served as Assistant

V.S.O. from March 18, 1974 until his appointment to V.S.O.

Over the years, the staff of the Veterans Service Office has built a reputation of stability in its personnel, and competency in its service delivery.

Today, the Veterans Service Office is a busy/27, 2000.



Caption describing picture or graphic.

### Senate Approves Wellstone Amendment To Fully Fund Veterans Health Care

The United States Senate passed an amendment of Senator Paul Wellstone to increase by \$1.7 billion the budget for veterans' health care, bringing the total increase to \$2.6 billion. The successful Wellstone provision further takes \$17 billion from the Bush tax cut over the next ten years and directs it to health care for America's veterans.

Wellstone had said the Administration's proposed funding level for the Department of Veterans Affairs would be inadequate to address veterans' health care needs, breaking the commitment to our nation's veterans. The Independent Budget produced by major veterans' organizations demonstrates that the VA next year will face a \$2.6 billion shortfall in health care alone. The Wellstone

measure covers that shortfall entirely.

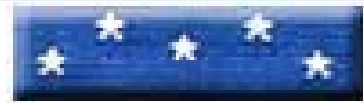
"It is a simple question of priorities: the country can honor its commitment to our citizen-soldiers who carried the battle over there, or we can institute a tax cut that mostly benefits the very wealthiest people who least need one. Today the Senate said to America's veterans that you are America's priority, and we promise to put the resources in place to make sure veterans have high quality health care and decent services. We said that we will not walk away from our promise, and we will not forget your sacrifices. And it lives up to the words that all of us frequently have spoken as Senators. Veterans and their families will, and must, hold all of us accountable every day for the quality of care in VA facilities," Wellstone said.

While the President's budget lacks full details, the Budget Blueprint submitted to Congress provides for a net increase for veterans health care of only \$900 million compared to the FY 2001 level. Without the \$1.7 billion Wellstone amendment, which increases veterans health care funding overall to \$2.6 billion above last year, the VA would likely be unable to adequately address increased costs due to medical inflation, treatment of Hepatitis C, emergency medical services, and long-term care initiatives.

VA health care has felt the impact of several years of flat-line budgets, experiencing deep cuts in real terms over the past decade. The Wellstone amendment passed today seeks to correct that situation.

*If you have not applied for your Veterans Benefits, you are missing an opportunity to save yourself, and your family, from confusion regarding your entitlements when you may really need them!*

# Military Medals and Awards



The Badge of Military Merit, established by General George Washington on August 7, 1782, was the first authorized U.S. Military decoration. A piece of cloth in the form of a heart, this decoration was intended to recognize servicemen who displayed unusual gallantry or extraordinary fidelity. Only three are known to have been awarded, and the award fell into disuse after the Revolutionary War. General Douglas MacArthur revived it as the Purple Heart in 1932.

The Medal of Honor was the next decoration to be specifically designed and authorized for U.S. service members. It was

established on December 21, 1861, by President Abraham Lincoln for enlisted men of the Navy and Marine Corps. Its use was later expanded to include enlisted men and officers of all services.

Since that time, many decorations have evolved. Changes in eligibility criteria have been made over the years, and, in some cases, decorations have fallen into disuse. However, the basic hierarchy remains unchanged. The medal of Honor remains the highest military decoration that this nation can bestow upon a service member, and lesser degrees of recognition are acknowledged by other

decorations in descending order.

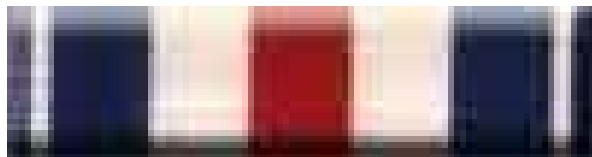
There is a very good web site that shows these medals of honor. It is [www.defenselink.mil/specials/ribbons](http://www.defenselink.mil/specials/ribbons).

It does not matter in which branch of the military a veteran may have served, nor whether he or she served during a wartime period, many veterans are entitled to medals and awards provided by the United States government to honor their accomplishments.

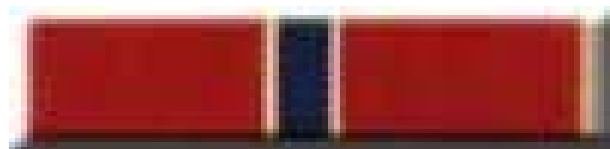
Anoka County Veterans Services office can provide assistance to the veteran, or if the veteran is deceased, to his/her

closest living relative in obtaining these awards through application to the National Personnel Records Center. This process can take many months, but our office also provides follow up to make sure that the awards and medals that the veteran has earned are delivered.

If at all possible, bring the veteran's Report of Separation From Active Duty sometimes referred to as the DD-214, to our office or any other information regarding the veteran's military service and we will be more than happy to assist you with this process.



**Silver Star**



**Bronze Star**

# National Cemetery Administration

The National Cemetery Administration honors veterans with a final resting place and lasting memorials that commemorate their service to our Nation.

To order a headstone for a deceased Veteran interred in a private cemetery, please stop by your nearest County Veterans Service Office.



### Anoka County Veterans Service Office

Government Center  
2100 3rd Avenue, Room 233  
Anoka, MN 55303  
763/323-5290

Duane Krueger, Director  
763/323-5294

Phil O'Donnell, Assistant Director  
763/323-5295

Kellie Anderson, Secretary  
763/323-5290

### Continued from front page Veteran's DD-214

urgency to locate this document can be shown.

When a veteran, his/her spouse, or dependent child passes away and interment is desired at the National Cemetery (in Minnesota this would be Ft. Snelling) access to the DD-214 is essential. The actual arrangements for a interment at the National Cemetery (with few exceptions) are made by the funeral home. In order that the veteran's casket flag can be secured, arrangements for services, interment, headstone, etc., the DD-214 (Report of Separation From Active Duty) should be physically available. This document establishes eligibility for this particular entitlement and without it, delays which might arise, will create unnecessary hardship to the family.

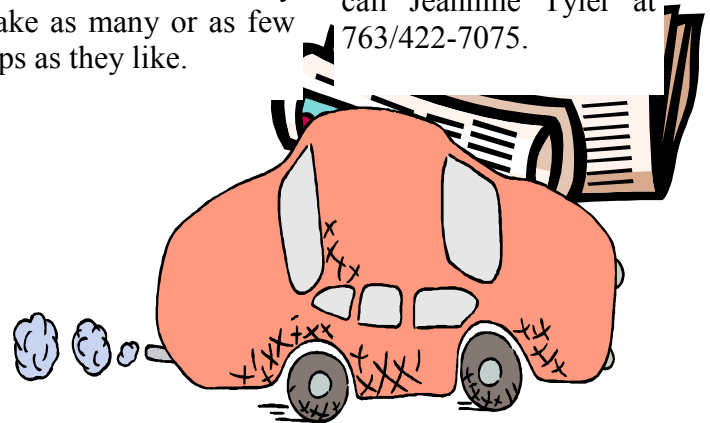
It's always best to plan ahead and have all important documents

## VOLUNTEER DRIVERS NEEDED!

Anoka County Volunteer Transportation is in need of more volunteer drivers to transport Veterans of the county to medical appointments at the Minneapolis and St. Cloud V.A. Medical Centers. Drivers may make as many or as few trips as they like.

Mileage reimbursement is 34.5 cents per mile.

If you would like to find out more about how you can be a volunteer driver and help your fellow Veterans, please call Jeannine Tyler at 763/422-7075.



## URGENT! DRIVERS NEEDED!

available, whether it be for yourself, or your survivor(s). The DD-214 is one of those "important documents", and without it sometimes long delays will be experienced.

Unfortunately, due to the limited available space, it would be impossible to list every instance where you will/may be required to produce this document. However, there should be no doubt that the two specific instances referred to in this article, along with the many, which have gone unmentioned, proves the importance of immediate access to a veteran's DD-214.

You should have your originals recorded with the County Records Office. You need to file a copy that shows the character of your discharge; i.e.; honorable, etc. The character of service is not shown on member copy 1, it is shown on copies 2-6.

If you do not know where this document is, please take the time to stop by our office for assistance in securing a duplicate/replacement. Our staff will be more than happy to assist you and answer any questions which you may have regarding potential veteran/dependent entitlements. There is no fee charged for any services provided by the County Veterans Service Office.

Please call us at 763/323-5290.