



VETERANS ADVOCATE

NorthStar Corridor Rail would Benefit Veterans

Special points of interest:

- Medal of Honor Recipient
- Commemorative Stamp
- Agent Orange and Diabetes
- Senior Linkage Line

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Many of the 170,000 veterans in a ten county area, from the Twin Cities to St. Cloud use the VA hospitals at Minneapolis and St. Cloud for their medical care.

A serious concern facing our aging Veteran population is the ability to physically access the medical services provided at the VA Medical Centers in Minneapolis and St. Cloud. The needs of the Veterans for transportation to receive required medical care at these facilities is an ever-increasing one.

Many counties currently provide a volunteer transportation program for Veterans. Statistics clearly show that the number of "volunteers" in general is shrinking with each passing year.

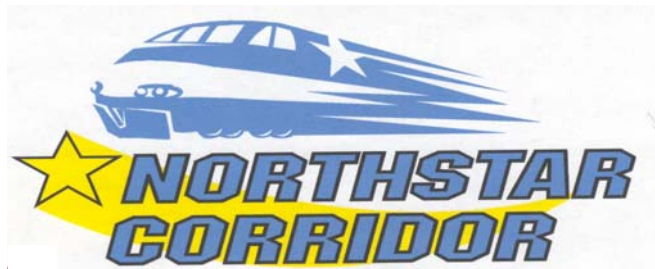
It is easy to predict that in the not to distant future, the demand for volunteer drivers will far exceed the systems ability to meet those needs. Additionally, an underlying factor further complicating matters is energy/fuel shortages.

There is a plan to develop and operate a commuter rail line, known as the NorthStar Corridor, which would help to address the veterans needs.

The NorthStar Corridor rail line has a broad base of support among Local,

State, and Federal elected office holders, as well as citizens and Veterans of Anoka, Benton, Hennepin, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Sherburne, Stearns, and Wright counties who would greatly benefit from this commuter rail service.

A NorthStar Commuter Rail service would provide an economical, and efficient way to reach these medical facilities for the Veteran population in these and surrounding counties.



Commemorative Stamp to Honor Veterans



The Sioux Falls Department of Veterans Affairs and the Sioux Falls Post Office unveiled a commemorative stamp to honor veterans on May 23, 2001.

The stamp honors and celebrates the service of veterans to the United States both in uniform and when they returned to civilian life.

It also honors veterans' service organizations such as the Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America, American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, etc.

The stamp was designed by Carl Herrman of Carlsbad, CA and features a

photograph of the United States flag. The phrase, "Honoring Veterans" appears at the top of the stamp, and the phrase, "Continuing to Serve" appears at the bottom.

Anoka County Medal of Honor Recipient



Richard Edward Kraus received the medal of honor for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving with the 8th Amphibious Tractor Battalion, Fleet Marine Force, in action against enemy Japanese forces on Peleliu, Palau Islands, on October 5, 1944.

Unhesitatingly volunteering for the extremely hazardous mission of evacuating a wounded comrade from the front lines, Pfc. Kraus and 3 companions courageously made their way forward and successfully penetrated the lines for some distance before the enemy opened with an intense, devastating barrage of hand grenades which forced the stretcher party to take cover and subsequently abandon the mission. While returning to the rear, they observed 2 men approaching who appeared to be marines and immediately demanded the password. When, instead of answering, 1 of the 2 Japanese threw a hand grenade into the midst of the group. Pfc. Kraus heroically flung himself upon

the grenade and, covering it with his body, absorbed the full impact of the explosion and was instantly killed.

By his prompt action and great personal valor in the face of almost certain death, he saved the lives of his 3 companions, and his loyal spirit of self-sacrifice reflects the highest credit upon himself and the U.S. Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for his comrades.

Purple Heart celebrates
219th birthday.

August 7, marks the
inception of the country's
oldest military decoration
honoring
combat-wounded veterans.

COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS:

*Men who have
offered their lives
for their country
know that
patriotism is not
the fear of
something; it is the
love of something.*

Adlai Stevenson

- ★ If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof overhead and a place to sleep, you are richer than 75% in this world.
- ★ If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish someplace, you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy people.
- ★ If you woke up this morning with more health than illness, you are more blessed than the million who will not survive this week.
- ★ If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture, or the pangs of starvation, you are ahead of 500 million people in the world.
- ★ If you can attend a church meeting without fear of harassment, arrest, torture, or death, you are more blessed than three billion people in the world.
- ★ If your parents are still alive and still married, you are very rare, even in the United States.
- ★ If you hold up your head with a smile on your face and are truly thankful, you are blessed because the majority can, but most do not.
- ★ If you can hold someone's hand, hug them or even touch them on the shoulder, you are blessed because you can offer healing touch.
- ★ If you can read this message, you just received a double blessing because someone was thinking of you; furthermore, you are more blessed than two billion people in the world who cannot read at all.

VA Links Agent Orange and Diabetes

Vietnam veterans with Type-II diabetes will now be eligible for disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) based on their presumed exposure to Agent Orange, the defoliant sprayed to unmask enemy hiding places in the jungles throughout Vietnam. VA presumes that all military personnel who served honorably in-country in Vietnam were exposed to Agent Orange, and federal law presumes that certain illnesses are a result of the exposure.

Special health care and compensation benefits are available to the 2.6 million men and women who served in Vietnam between January 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975, only 3,300 of whom remain in uniform today. Those discharged during that period are the largest group of veterans receiving VA health care and monthly compensation.

Researchers found "limited/suggestive"

evidence of an association between the chemicals used in herbicides during the Vietnam War and adult-onset (Type-II) diabetes.

Diabetes mellitus is characterized by high blood sugar levels resulting from the body's inability to process the hormone insulin. More than 90 percent of the 16 million diabetics in the United States are categorized as Type-II, which occurs primarily in adults. Approximately 16 percent of veterans receiving care in VA medical facilities have been diagnosed with diabetes. Diabetes is the sixth leading cause of death and the leading cause of blindness in the United States. The number of diseases VA has recognized as being associated with Agent Orange exposure expanded considerably during the 1990's. The following conditions are now considered service-connected for Vietnam veterans: chloracne (a skin disorder), porphyria

cutanea tarda, acute or subacute peripheral neuropathy (a nerve disorder), non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, soft tissue sarcoma, Hodgkin's disease, multiple myeloma, prostate cancer and respiratory cancers (including cancers of the lung, larynx, trachea and bronchus). In addition, monetary benefits, health care and vocational rehabilitation services are provided to Vietnam veterans' children with spina bifida, a congenital birth defect to the spine. VA has recently proposed that certain benefits, including health care be authorized for children with birth defects who were born to women Vietnam veterans.

Veterans who served in Vietnam during the war also are eligible for a complete physical examination. If a physician suspects a disease might be related to Agent Orange, VA will provide free medical care.

Vietnam veterans and their families can contact their closest Veteran Services Office for more information about these and many other benefits available to them.

The Agent Orange Review newsletter, prepared by the VA Environmental Agents Service, provides updated information about Federal government studies and activities related to Agent Orange and the Vietnam experience. You can contact the EAS at the following address to be put on their mailing list.

Environmental Agents
Service
Department of Veterans
Affairs
810 Vermont Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20420

There is also a toll-free help-line Vietnam Veterans can call with questions about Agent Orange: 1-800-749-8387.

*A nation reveals itself not only by the men it produces,
but also by the men it honors, the men it remembers.
President John F. Kennedy*

**Bravery never goes
out of fashion**

Anoka County Veteran Services 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



The Senior Link Age Line® is a free telephone information and assistance service, which makes it easy for older adults and their families to find community services. The Senior Link Age Line® can connect you to services such as transportation, senior housing, adult day centers, in-home help, food and meal delivery, caregiver support, senior centers, health insurance counseling, and more!

Call 1-800-333-2433 *TDD/TTY users, call the Minnesota Relay Service at 1-800-627-3529.

Korean Armistice Day

July 27 denotes the signing of the armistice agreement ending the Korean War in 1953.



Question and Answer Column

Perhaps one of the most popular Veterans Administration benefit changes in recent years is the inclusion of so many new veterans in the VA health care system. Since November 1998, VA hospitals opened their doors to veterans who were not necessarily service connected nor on VA pension. These are VA hospital category 6 and 7 veterans who have completed their military service honorably or under honorable conditions, and have submitted an application for VA health care. This would include a copy of their DD-214's and statement of income and financial net worth. Here in Anoka County, we have helped many veterans with these applications and forwarded their paperwork to VA hospitals in Minneapolis and St. Cloud. One of the

most frequently asked questions regarding this benefit is:

“Once I begin receiving health care with the VA hospitals, can I drop my health insurance and/or Medicare supplement?”

The answer we give in this office is that VA health care should **NOT** be considered a substitute for good health insurance. While veterans can obtain excellent outpatient care, inpatient care, as well as low cost prescription drugs, the VA hospitals in this VISN (Veterans Integrated Service Network #13) do not have a Class One Trauma center. Should a veteran require emergency room treatment, he or she would be taken to the nearest hospital with such a treatment center, and would be responsible for the cost of this care. While this benefit is

currently in place for veterans and very popular, future VA budget constraints could eliminate it altogether. For these reasons, VA health care should be considered as a supplement to good health insurance that can help veterans with the costs of health care and provide them with another source of medical treatment, but not a substitute for health insurance.

If any veterans have questions regarding their benefits and would like them addressed in the Anoka County Veterans Advocate, please send them to:

Anoka County Veterans
Service Office
2100 3rd Ave., Room 233
Anoka, MN 55303