



VETERANS ADVOCATE

Blue Star Service Banner

Special points of interest:

- Blue Star Service Banner
- Medal of Honor Recipient
- ALS in Gulf War Veterans

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“They say there are no more heroes. They are wrong. Every guy in my squad was a hero-and everything I know about honor, loyalty and courage, I learned from them.”

-Anonymous

The Blue Star Service banner program was a common site in America’s neighborhoods during World Wars I and II. Created in 1917, people hung it in their windows to denote that a member of the family was serving in the armed forces. Leaders of the nation’s largest wartime veterans organization today believe the program can play a vital role in America’s war on terrorism.

“We know that in today’s society people sometimes do not know their neighbors a few doors down the street. We believe display of the Blue Star Service Banner by families of service members will reveal to everyone just how close to home this battle against terrorism hits,” Robert Morrill, the Legions’ national public relations commission chairman, said. The goal is to honor and recognize our men and women in uniform and demon-

strate to all Americans how many families have a personal stake in this battle.



The Anoka County Veterans Service Office has purchased a limited quantity of the Blue Star Service Banners from monies donated by the Fridley American Legion to give to those Anoka County residents who have members of their families currently serving in the military. At this time we will give a Banner to a spouse of a service person, or parent of an

unmarried service person, who is currently listed as being on active duty in the military, as well as a business requesting the banner having an employee currently serving on active duty. This includes those Guard and Reserve Personnel activated following the September 11, 2001 tragedy. It **does not** include individuals who are in the Guard or Reserve that are on “active duty for training”. Requesting persons or businesses must currently reside in Anoka County. If you think you are eligible call the Anoka County Veterans Service office at 763/323-5290 or drop by our office in the Government Center, 2100 3rd Ave., Room 233 Anoka, MN.

Others may purchase them on their own through the Advertising Flag Company, Inc. 3801 South Ashland Ave. Chicago, IL 60609-2192. Or by calling: 1-888-352-4776.

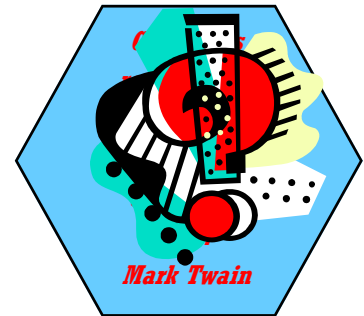
Anoka County Medal of Honor Recipient



Richard Keith Sorenson 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 an assault battalion of the 4th Marine Division during battle of Namur Island, Marshall

Islands, on February 1-2, 1944. Putting up a brave defense against a particularly violent counterattack by the enemy during invasion operations, Pvt. Sorenson and 5 other marines occupying a shell hole were endangered by a Japanese grenade thrown into their midst. Unhesitatingly, and with complete disregard for his own safety, Pvt. Sorenson hurled himself upon the deadly weapon, heroically taking the full impact of the explosion. As a result of his gallant action, he was severely wounded, but the lives of

his comrades were saved. His great personal valor and exceptional spirit of self-sacrifice in the face of almost certain death were in keeping with the highest traditions of the U.S. Naval Service.



Veterans Urged to Get Radiation Care

Thousands of veterans exposed to cancer-causing radiation during atomic tests conducted decades ago could find it easier to get compensation under a new regulation aimed at giving them the same treatment as civilians.

The Department of Veterans Affairs is to publish in the Federal Register a proposed rule covering vets who were stricken with cancers of the lungs, colon, bone, ovary, and brain and central nervous system and who were present at certain atomic bomb exercises, served at Hiroshima and Nagasaki during post-World War II occupation in Japan or were prisoners of war in Japan.

So-called 'atomic vets' already receive compensation for 16 types of cancer, including leukemia, thyroid,

breast, stomach, liver and esophagus.

The new regulation adds the five new diseases and expands places they may have been exposed to make their benefits comparable to what civilians have been receiving since last summer.

The five illnesses are being added to veteran affair's so-called presumptive list. Meaning if a veteran is found to have the disease and the veteran served in those locations, it is presumed the illness is related to service time.

"It is a perfect example of justice denied way too long," said Sen. Paul Wellstone, who pushed to extend the benefits.

Officials expect to receive some 92,000 claims from surviving vets

and 48,000 from dependents. They have estimated the cost of the program over 10 years at \$769 million.

Last year, Congress made it easier for more civilian employees to get payments from exposure in Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Tennessee, Alaska and other sites. The proposed regulation would extend that to veterans.

Publishing the regulation opens a 60 day comment period after which officials could incorporate comments or amend the rule. It is then subject to another 90 day comment period before becoming final.

Desert Shield-Desert Storm Vets have higher rate of ALS

In a large epidemiological study, researchers supported by both the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DoD) have found preliminary evidence that veterans who served in Desert Shield-Desert Storm are nearly twice as likely as their non-deployed counterparts to develop amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), commonly called Lou Gehrig's Disease.

VA, working with DoD, studied nearly 2.5 million veterans for this investigation. Both VA and DoD fund and operate programs dedicated to studying Gulf War illnesses and the

effect of continuing deployments on the health of the men and women who have served in the armed forces.

This study, begun in March 2000, involved nearly 700,000 service members deployed to Southwest Asia, and 1.8 million who were not deployed to the Gulf during the period Aug. 2, 1990 to July 31, 1991.

The study found 40 cases of ALS among deployed veterans. Although the researchers found the risk of ALS to be twice as high for deployed veterans, it is a rare disease and the number of affected individuals is small.

Scientists would expect to find 33 cases in a similar-sized population over the same time period.

ALS is a fatal neurological disease that destroys the nerve cells that control muscle movement. Neither a cause nor an effective treatment for ALS is known.

The investigation, jointly funded by DoD and VA for \$1.3 million, included case reviews, examinations and at-home interviews of the participants.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi said he was pleased that the VA is once again making a major contribution that

will benefit veterans and, in fact, all Americans.

"These findings are of great concern and warrant further study," Principi said. "I intend to make certain that VA's medical resources and research capabilities are fully focused on this issue."

He said he would also explore VA's options for compensating veterans who served in the Gulf and who subsequently develop ALS.

Direct Deposit

Four out of five VA compensation and pension beneficiaries already are enrolled in "direct deposit," which provides for their VA compensation or pension payments to be moved to a designated bank account automati-

cally each month. Both the VA and the Treasury Department strongly encourage eligible veterans or their survivors to sign up for this service by calling 1-800-827-1000.

Neither the VA or the

Treasury Department controls the postal delivery. With "direct deposit" there is no waiting should there happen to be a delay in the mail, or perhaps lost mail. The funds are automatically deposited into your designated

account and available for your immediate use.

Anoka County Veteran Services Office

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Service Office Closed

The Anoka County Veteran Services office will be closed on the following dates:

Monday, February 18, 2002
in observance of Presidents' Day.

We highly recommend that you call the office to make sure that there is a service officer in to see you before you arrive. We are a walk-in office and see clients on a first come first serve basis.

OPERATION UPLINK

Phone cards are being offered free of charge to service men and women by the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The serviceman or woman can go online to www.VFW.org and click on programs to complete a form, or call toll free 1-800-479-5228



Something
may find
you worth
reading!

Patriot Day

President Bush signed legislation that designates a holiday in honor of those who were killed in the Sept. 11 attacks.

Without fanfare, Bush signed a House resolution naming September 11th as Patriot Day. The measure requires the president to issue a proclamation each year and order flags lowered to half-staff in observance.

