



## AFSA Retiree and Veteran Affairs Newsletter

### - ARMED FORCES DAY – 21 MAY 2022

President Harry S. Truman led the effort to establish a single holiday for citizens to come together and thank our military members for their patriotic service in support of our country. On August 31, 1949, Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson announced the creation of an Armed Forces Day to replace separate Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force Days.

The single day celebration stemmed from the unification of the Armed Forces under the Department of Defense. Many events across the United States take place on Armed Forces Day to honor Americans in uniform who served their country in times of war and peace. Those who are honored on this day include people who serve the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Space Force and Coast Guard. National Guard and Reserve units may celebrate Armed Forces Day/Week over any period in May because of their unique training schedules.

### - MEMORIAL DAY 2022



Memorial Day, 30 May 2022 is just a few weeks away. Remember, Memorial Day commemorates the men and women who died while in the military service of their country, particularly those who died in battle or as a result of wounds sustained in battle. In other words, the purpose of Memorial Day is to memorialize the veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country. We spend time remembering those who lost their lives and could not come home, reflecting on their service and why we have the luxury and freedom that we enjoy today. We might consider how we can support and safeguard their grieving families and loved ones who are left behind. Lest we forget...

### - THE FUTURE OF HEALTH CARE IS IN YOUR GENES

This Military Appreciation Month, enroll in VA genetic research to make a difference and leave a legacy for all Veterans and service members. The Million Veteran Program (MVP) is inviting over one million Veterans to

help build one of the largest, most diverse research health databases in history. We're less than 120,000 Veterans away from this goal. You can help!

To learn more and sign up, visit [www.mvp.va.gov](http://www.mvp.va.gov) or call 866-441-6075 to schedule an appointment. From all of us at MVP, we thank you for your participation and support of VA research.

## **- SUICIDE PREVENTION RESOURCES**

Despite suicide being a major health crisis among adults in the United States, there are still a lot of myths and misconceptions surrounding suicide prevention. The belief that nothing can be done for someone who really wants to die by suicide is a myth. In fact, most suicidal ideation is associated with a treatable mental health disorder and most suicide attempts happen during an acute crisis time-period of less than one hour.

You can always call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1 if you are in crisis, or know a Veteran that is in crisis. Helping someone overcome the immediate crisis and connecting them to mental health treatment can save a life.

The VA Health Care System (VAHCS) has resources for Veterans that are in need of mental and emotional support. Our Mental Health Clinic and our Community Based Outpatient Clinics provide services such as psychiatry, individual and group psychotherapies, as well as specialized treatment for those suffering from substance use disorders, serious mental illness, and/or socioeconomic challenges.

## **- SECOND COVID-19 VACCINE BOOSTER SHOTS FOR THE IMMUNOCOMPROMISED**

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recently updated its COVID-19 immunization guidance recommending a second booster dose for the immunocompromised (anyone with a weakened immune system due to several types of conditions and treatments), as well as for people who received a primary dose and first booster of Johnson & Johnson's vaccine.

As the understanding of COVID-19 expands, we know you may have questions about the latest developments with the ongoing pandemic and we are here to help.

## **- MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH: LEARN WHAT YOUR FELLOW VETERANS KNOW**

Veterans can take many different paths toward improving their mental health, but for many that journey begins when they connect with a fellow Veteran. Veterans who are facing life challenges tend to trust each other, bonding over the common experiences they share. "It doesn't matter what you've been through; you just work through it together," explains Kelly, a Veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps. "[It's] very empowering."

This year, VA's annual Mental Health Month campaign, Veterans Know, demonstrates and leverages the mutual respect, understanding, and caring among Veterans. Throughout May, visitors to [MakeTheConnection.net/MHM](http://MakeTheConnection.net/MHM) will find powerful messages of hope and encouragement from Veterans for Veterans and their supporters. Veterans offer advice based on their experience and discuss the various ways they have improved their mental health. "If we survived combat, then we owe it to the new generations to help them survive the rest of their lives," says Gordy, a U.S. Army Veteran.

The campaign invites Veterans to learn some important things that other Veterans Know, including inspirational ideas to keep in mind, such as:

- Barriers can be broken
- It can get better. Connection is key
- You can get through it
- Support helps with healing
- It's never too late to start healing

This May, visit <https://www.maketheconnection.net/MHM> to learn more about mental health and healing from Veterans who know, because they've been there.

## **- BENEFITS, RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO VETERANS OF OIF**

Those who served in OIF, or the Southwest Asia Theater of Operations and other locations, may now be entitled to compensation for medical conditions presumed to be related to exposure to fine particulate matter.

Veterans and survivors who believe they may be eligible for compensation for asthma, rhinitis or sinusitis that emerged within a 10-year period after separation from military service are encouraged to file a claim for benefits.

Those who served in the following locations are presumed to have been exposed to particulate matter and may be entitled to the new presumption: Southwest Asia Theater of Operations beginning August 2, 1990, to the present. Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Syria or Djibouti beginning September 19, 2001, to the present. The Southwest Asia Theater of Operations refers to these locations and the air space above them:

- Iraq
- Kuwait
- Saudi Arabia
- The neutral zone between Iraq and Saudi Arabia
- Bahrain
- Qatar
- The United Arab Emirates
- Oman
- The Gulf of Aden
- The Gulf of Oman.
- The Persian Gulf
- The Arabian Sea
- The Red Sea

For more information on the new presumptive conditions, visit the Airborne Hazards and Burn Pit Exposures – Public Health page at <https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/hazardous-materials-exposure/specific-environmental-hazards/>

VA is committed to providing Veterans with the medical care, benefits and services they have earned.

## **- 2022 AFSA INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION & FAMILY REUNION**

The AFSA delegates, general membership, and International Committees share invaluable information, discuss, and ratify, such things as, AFSA's Legislative Platform for the coming year and other goals and objectives.

In addition to the AFSA's general membership business, the AFSA is proud to host the Military Enlisted Leadership Conferences. These conferences convene simultaneously with the AFSA to discuss Air Force-specific business. However, these separate conferences come together during Professional Development forums.

AFSA manages these forums with coordination through many of the military conferences. These forums consist of keynote addresses from senior congressional decision makers, Department of Defense and Department of the Air Force senior leadership, war historians, and other professional speakers, just to name a few. Each speaker provides a rich insight to the Air Force's past, its present and its future. Moreover, these forums continue to build on the strong solid foundation of our professional enlisted corps.

This year, the 2022 AFSA International Convention & Family Reunion will convene Sunday, August 7 through Thursday, August 11 at the Convention Center Tropicana in Las Vegas, Nevada. And, the Professional Education and Development Symposium (PEDS22) begins Saturday, August 13 through Thursday, August 18, 2022 at the Grand Hyatt San Antonio River Walk and the San Antonio Marriott River Center in San Antonio, Texas.

All Professional Development Forums are open to all military members on Active Duty and DoD civilian personal at no cost. Visit our website @ [www.hqafsa.org](http://www.hqafsa.org) and click on the **CONVENTION 22** box on the top menu under **MORE** for additional exciting information about the hotel and surrounding area. Hotel reservations are on our website and registration for the Professional Education & Development Symposium and Convention.

### **- VA PENSION FOR SURVIVORS**

This Memorial Day, as we honor the men and women who died while serving in the U.S. military, we also remember the families they left behind. If you're the surviving spouse or child of a deceased wartime Veteran, you may be eligible for VA's Survivor Pension program. Visit: <https://www.va.gov/pension/survivors-pension/>

### **- AFSA MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION**

Founded in 1961, the Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA) legislates, advocates and educates America's elected, military and community leaders in support of the quality of life for our 70,000 military members and their families. AFSA continues to work long and hard to ensure the many benefit reductions being proposed are minimized or nullified. Your membership will continue to pay dividends in terms of fair and equitable pay increases, retirement programs, educational benefits, and affordable and available health care.

AFSA MEMBERSHIP is open to all: Visit: [WWW.HQAFSA.org](http://WWW.HQAFSA.org) for more information and to join.

### **- ARE YOU A VETERAN IN CRISIS OR CONCERNED ABOUT ONE?**

Did you know that VA offers same day services in Primary Care and Mental Health at 172 VA Medical Centers across the country? Contact the Veterans Crisis Line (1-800-273-8255 and press 1, Chat, or Text 838255.)