

Eyes Right

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New Director of the Ohio Department of Veterans Services

Col. Rodney "Chip" Tansill was recently appointed as the new director of the Ohio Department of Veterans Services (ODVS) by Governor John Kasich, taking over for previous director Col. Tim Gorrell. Tansill left his position as executive director of the Franklin County Veterans Service Commission in central Ohio to take on this new role.

Tansill joined the United States Army Reserve in 1982, and he was deployed to the Persian Gulf in 1990 for Operation Desert Storm. Tansill served in various capacities until retiring from the military in 2015. During his more than 30 years in the military, he earned several awards and decorations, including the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star, Meritorious Service Medal with five oak clusters and the Army Commendation Medal with three oak clusters.

"We're looking forward to working with Col. Tansill as he settles into his new position as director," said Larry Moore, executive director of the Summit County VSC. "His enthusiasm and vision for helping veterans aligns well with our mission and what we're trying to accomplish in Summit County."

Originally from West Virginia, Tansill attended Fairmont State College and graduated with a bachelor's degree in criminal justice. He has also

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Quicker Access to Services

VSC improves speed for current and new clients

Whether seeking assistance with VA claims or emergency financial aid, the Veterans Service Commission of Summit County (VSC) is addressing the wait time for all of its customers by analyzing its current process and making improvements whenever possible. For instance, the addition of walk-in hours in 2012 allowed the VSC to connect veterans with a service officer even though they didn't have a previously scheduled appointment.

Veterans can also help speed up the process by bringing along the appropriate documents to support their claims. If a veteran is seeking help with a VA claim for a service connected condition, he or she should gather medical evidence, dependent information, discharge papers, diagnosis papers and supporting documentation. If all of the necessary paperwork is there, the VSC service officer can file the claim that same day. More importantly, by working with an expert such as a service officer, claims are more likely to be fully developed. This keeps the claim moving through the VA for approval, rather than winding up in the VA's appeals backlog.

"We are here to help veterans get the resources they need to live successful lives after their time in the

service," said Larry Moore, executive director of the VSC. "We also want them to have a pleasant experience every time they come to the agency. That means getting face time with a service officer with as little waiting and hassle as possible."

If they are facing severe financial hardships, veterans may be eligible to receive same day assistance without an appointment. To be eligible, the veteran must be a new client or one who has not used the VSC's assistance within the past five years. He or she must have been honorably discharged from service and a resident of Summit County for the past 90 days. Finally, documentation must be presented that can support the claim of financial hardship. If all necessary documentation is provided, assistance for all household items will be considered. If the documentation cannot be gathered, emergency assistance will be considered for a limited range of needs, including utility disconnects, evictions and food.

To be considered for same day assistance, veterans should bring the following information to the VSC:

- Recent bank statements
- Utility bills (gas, electric, water)
- Verification of all household income
- Explanation of need

Unlike fast cash loans, financial aid from the VSC does not have to be repaid, which means no interest charges. This assistance is meant to tide veterans over during a serious financial hardship brought on by loss of job, medical crisis, necessary home repairs or family emergency. Before adding the burden of a high-interest loan to an already difficult financial situation, veterans should visit the VSC to explore the resources that may be available. Financial assistance applications are taken daily between 8 a.m. to 11 a.m.

In addition to efforts to accelerate filing claims and applying for assistance, the VSC also strives to make the process as easy to navigate as possible. Outreach services are available for veterans who are physically unable to come to the VSC due to disabilities and who have no family members or representatives to go on their behalf.

"Everyone at the VSC, from our commissioners to our service officers, wants to provide the best possible experience for clients, so we are continually looking for adjustments that can be made and areas where we can improve. It's a constant process, but if one more veteran can get the help he or she needs, it's worth it to us," said Moore. ★

F.Y.I.

Applications available for winter clothing

The VSC is offering vouchers of up to \$150 per child for assistance with winter clothing this year. Funds can be used to purchase coats, gloves, hats and boots. Applications are available now and will be accepted until Dec. 1. In order to be eligible, recipients must be the child or ward of an honorably discharged veteran who can demonstrate financial need and has been a resident of Summit County for at least 90 days. Applications will be accepted Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the VSC (1060 E. Waterloo Rd. in Akron).

Emergency financial aid for veterans

When veterans are faced with difficult financial times due to loss of employment, family emergencies, medical crisis or other financial hardships, the VSC may be able to provide financial aid. These funds can be used for paying rent and mortgage, as well as past-due utility bills, which can be particularly challenging during the winter months.

Learn more about this program and apply for assistance by calling the VSC at 330-643-2830 or visiting the office at 1060 E. Waterloo Rd., Monday through Friday from 8 to 11 a.m.

Transportation schedule for winter months

The transportation schedule for the VSC's 18-passenger mini bus will remain unchanged this winter. Veterans wishing to receive transportation to medical appointments will need to arrive at the agency, located at 1060 E. Waterloo Rd. in Akron, at 6 a.m. The bus departs promptly at 6:30 a.m.

The bus will make stops at the Akron Community Based Outpatient Clinic (ACBOC) and the Metro RTA Transit Center before traveling to Wade Park VA Medical Center.

Veterans are also able to board the bus at the Metro RTA Transit Center. Those who wish to board at the Transit Center are encouraged to call 330-643-2830 in advance to schedule a pick-up. Riders should arrive at the Transit Center for a 6:45 a.m. pick-up.

Free tickets to the Nutcracker

The VSC is offering free tickets to veterans who wish to see the Nutcracker, performed by Ballet Theatre of Ohio, which is performing at The Akron Civic Theater from Nov. 28 until Dec. 6. Veterans must register for a ticket by calling 330-643-2830. Only two tickets will be given per veteran.

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earned master's degrees from the U.S. Army War College and Trident University.

As ODVS director, Tansill will oversee its mission to connect with veterans and their families, advocating on their behalf when appropriate. The ODVS provides oversight and training to county veterans service commissions in all 88 counties of the state. It is responsible for ensuring that commissioners and service officers are

properly trained and meet certification standards.

The ODVS also works directly with the VA to coordinate programs and operations, as well as the Ohio General Assembly and Congressional representatives to ensure that state and federal legislation supports veterans and their families. The department is responsible for the operation of the Ohio Veterans Homes in Georgetown and Sandusky. ★

Director's Corner

Seeking photos for the Wall of Faces

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund is seeking photographs of the veterans whose names are inscribed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, or The Wall, in Washington, D.C. These photographs are part of an effort to create The Education Center at The Wall by allowing visitors to put a face to a name. While the 58,000 names listed across the wall have a tremendous effect, seeing the faces helps people to understand that each of these soldiers was a real person with a family, friends, hobbies and dreams. The Education Center at The Wall will also include more than 150,000 items that have been left at the memorial, a Vietnam Era timeline and The Wall's history.



There are 3,097 names of Ohio Military Personnel on The Wall, and the Buckeye State Council of Vietnam Veterans of America is seeking photographs for each and every one of them. More than 1,000 photographs still need to be found, 59 of which are of Vietnam veterans from Summit County. To see the full list of names from Summit County, please visit the VSC's website at www.VSCsummitOH.us and click on the "Wall of Faces" page. The names of other Vietnam veterans can also be found by going to www.vvmf.org/thewall.

These photographs do not need to be of the veterans in their uniforms. They can be photos from high school, a newspaper photo or even a photo of the veteran as a child. As long as the photo can be identified as belonging to the veteran listed on The Wall, it will be accepted.



As of June 20, 2015, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund has collected 41,713 photographs for the Wall of Faces. I invite all members of Summit County to aid us in locating photos for these soldiers who gave their lives during the Vietnam War. With a concerted effort, I know that we can put a face to a name for all of our local heroes. If you have a photo of one of these veterans that you would be willing to submit, please contact us at 330-643-2830.

In Appreciation,

Larry D. Moore

Executive Director



VSC Services for Vets

We assist veterans in need with their basic living needs. These services are available to eligible veterans, their dependents and widows. Services are subject to change.

Financial Assistance

- Mortgage payments / Homeowner's insurance
- Rent
- Utilities
- Roofs
- Furnace (replacement and repair)
- Stove and Refrigerators
- Food
- Children's clothing
- Adult work clothing
- Car payments, repairs and insurance (limited)

Medical / Dental

- (including dentures, glasses and hearing aids)
- Regularly scheduled transportation to VA medical facilities and Ohio Veterans Home
- Grave markers and flags

Veterans Affairs Assistance

- Assistance applying for Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits

Preparation of VA forms and paperwork

- Supportive documentation of claims and pertinent data
- Proper submission of claims to the VA
- Service connected compensation
- Non-service pension
- Widows pension
- Burial benefits
- Headstones

If you are a veteran in financial need or need help with your VA claim, please visit us at 1060 E. Waterloo Rd., Akron or call 330-643-2830.

Dangers of Sequestration in 2016

How budget cuts could affect our troops and national security

With the nation's legislative leaders still divided on the 2016 fiscal budget, Congress passed a bill Sept. 30 that would continue to fund the government until Dec. 11, avoiding a government shutdown. Broader discussions regarding the budget are underway, but cuts in certain areas could have serious consequences for the Department of Defense (DoD), military service members and subsequently, our national security.

Operating for the past several years on continuing resolutions in lieu of a defense appropriations bill, the DoD has been striving to maintain current military technologies, but unlike China and Russia, it hasn't been able to focus on making any technological advancements. These countries and others are making developments in new aircraft and cruise, ballistic, anti-air and anti-ship missiles, creating ones with better accuracy and range. But,

before the military can consider any advancements, it will need to play catch up on expenses like ship and aircraft maintenance that has been delayed by limited budgets.

This is the seventh consecutive year that Congress has failed to pass a defense appropriations bill, and sequestration-level funds compromise the military's readiness and overall ability to respond to threats. That means soldiers may not get the training or equipment they need to perform their jobs as safely and effectively as possible.

"As veterans, we are invested in the national security of the country that we have served," said Larry Moore, executive director of the VSC. "We have friends and family members who gave their lives to protect this country. We are equally concerned about the safety of current service members. These men and women who serve shouldn't be put

at risk because of budget cuts."

In late October, the House passed a bill for a two-year budget, which is expected to be approved by the Senate. If the bill passes, it would increase spending by \$50 billion in 2016 and \$30 billion in 2017 to be split evenly between domestic and military spending. This additional funding would result in better military planning because it would provide a more stable budget from which to allocate funds. That could also mean better preparedness and readiness of the military.



This issue is of the utmost importance for Americans at home and abroad. If you have concerns about sequestration and its effects, contact your local representatives to remind them that our nation's security and our service members' safety are priorities that shouldn't be shortchanged. ★



Tip of the

H.A.T.

Helping America's Troops

Welding School Digs in to Help Veterans

Memorial Day is always a big event for the Veterans Service Commission of Summit County (VSC). Each May, the agency and a group of local volunteers pay homage to service men and women who have passed away by marking their graves with an American flag. This is not only a gesture of respect, it is also a symbol of the freedom they defended during their lifetimes.

This year, a local welding school in Barberton played a big role in these activities by creating an h-shaped tool that punctured the ground when stepped on, making it easy to position the flags for display. Lane Smerglia, education supervisor for Akron Testing Laboratory and Welding School, said the VSC approached her about helping with Memorial Day, and she jumped on the opportunity.

"It allows our students to build and give back to the community, and when it comes to the vets, we're all about helping them whenever we can," Smerglia said.

The VSC helped with the design of the tool, seeking something that would be easy for the volunteers to use. A group of five or six students, along with Smerglia, created about 90 of these hole-punching tools for the Memorial Day events, spacing the work out over the course of a few months.

The Akron Testing Laboratory and Welding Lab has worked with the VSC on multiple projects for the past several years. The school has also worked with other nonprofits on restoration work, including the Summit County Historical Society of Akron. In addition to aiding the community by assisting these organizations with various needs,

the school also trains many veterans who are referred there by the VSC.

"Over the years, we've established a great relationship with the instructors at the Akron Testing Laboratory and Welding School," said David Burden, VSC project manager. "They're always willing to help, whether that means making a tool for us or working with a local veteran who wants to begin a career in welding."

Founded in 1953, the Akron Testing Laboratory and Welding School has more than 50 years of welding training experience. It has been a part of Smerglia's family since her grandmother took over in the early 70s, and Smerglia is now the third generation overseeing the school.

"We'd like to say thank you to all of our vets and active duty for their service and dedication," Smerglia said, adding that

veterans are always welcome at the school.

Several courses in welding are offered, and most of these last between four to six months. Daytime classes are Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., and evening classes are offered Monday through Thursday from 5 to 8 p.m. Financial assistance may be available for those who qualify. The class schedule, course descriptions and other information can be found online at <http://akronweldingschool.com>.

The Akron Testing Laboratory and Welding School is located at 1171 Wooster Rd. N, Barberton, Ohio 44203. Veterans who are interested in learning more about the various welding processes available at the school may contact Smerglia at lsmerglia@gmail.com or 330-753-2268. ★

1060 E. Waterloo Rd.
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p: 330-643-2830
f: 330-643-8779

www.VSCsummitOH.us



Veterans Service Commission of Summit County (VSC) provides comprehensive support services to Summit County residents who have served in any branch of the military. Veterans and their families who demonstrate need receive free financial, transportation and medical assistance as well as coordination and processing help with Veterans Administration (VA) claims and benefits. The agency was created in 1886 to aid veterans upon their return home from duty.

Commissioners

A.W. "Sonny" Cool
Bruce Hestley
Byron Morris
Robert Panovich
Mike Stith



Executive Director

Larry D. Moore

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David Donaldson
Clarence Drake
Robert Giannone
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Support Staff

Sharon Ameser
Mark Anderson
Karen Benfield
Gordon Dean
Marcie Howes
Jennifer Pelfrey
Carl Richardson
William Schnering
Yvonne Summers
Gail Warley

Spread Cheer this Holiday Season

The VSC is striving to make the holidays a little brighter for Summit County veterans and their families by providing Thanksgiving meals and hosting a toy drive in December for those in need. If you know a veteran who needs a little help, please contact us 330-643-2830 for more information. ★

Your Health

VA and Walgreens Partner to Offer Veterans Flu Shots

Fall is here, and with the change in season comes cooler weather and colorful landscapes. But, it also brings seasonal allergies, colds and worst of all, the flu. Doctors recommend a yearly flu shot as the best way to avoid the virus. The VA and Walgreens are partnering to make it easy – and free – for veterans enrolled in the VA system to get their flu vaccinations this season.

Veterans may go to the nearest VA health care facility during a scheduled appointment to receive their flu shot, or they can take a quick trip to their neighborhood Walgreens, where free shots will be provided to veterans from now until March 31, 2016. Walgreens does not require an appointment for a flu shot. Veterans need only walk in, find the pharmacist, present their veteran's identification card and use the code #5933XBAYV to receive their shot.

If you don't live near a Walgreens, flu shots are offered by many retail pharmacies, including CVS, Rite Aid and Giant Eagle, and they are often available as a walk-in service. Private insurance or Medicare may cover

the cost for a flu shot. It is especially important that young children and adults who are 65 and older receive a flu shot, as they are the most likely to experience serious complications from the illness. Those with medical conditions are also at a higher risk to develop flu complications. These diseases include but are not limited to asthma, chronic lung disease, blood disorders and heart disease.

Flu season occurs between October and May, with most cases of the illness in January and February. Vaccinations can be effective at any time during the flu season, but it is beneficial to receive them as early in the season as possible. It takes two weeks for the antibodies that protect against the virus to develop, and it's better to be vaccinated before influenza starts spreading in the community.

Individuals who have had Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS) or those with allergies to eggs or any other ingredient in

the flu vaccine should consult their doctors prior to receiving a vaccination. The flu shot is not recommended for children under six months.

To find the nearest VA health care facility location, veterans can call

the VSC at 330-643-2830 or search online at www.va.gov/directory/guide/division.asp?dnum=1&isFlash=0. Walgreens locations can be found online by going to www.walgreens.com/storelocator and putting in a zip code or city and state. ★

