

Eyes Right

Spring 2015

The quarterly publication of



2015 Boot Camp and Job Fair

This April is all about employment at the Veterans Service Commission of Summit County (VSC). With both a Job Boot Camp and a Veterans Career and Job Fair early in the month, veterans may want to swap their spring-cleaning out with a little resume updating. And the VSC can help.

Job Boot Camp is a free one-day employment preparation course that will be held at the VSC headquarters Saturday, April 4 from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. The course is open to any veteran in Summit County seeking employment or entry into a new career field. Job Boot Camp helps veterans uncover their specific interests and talents, update resumes, hone interviewing skills and much more.

"The VSC's Job Boot Camp prepares veterans to find meaningful employment," said David Burden, VSC project manager. "We bring in area professionals to share their expertise and explain what employers are seeking. Veterans who participate leave with the tools and confidence to conduct successful career searches."

The Job Boot Camp will cover a wide range of information in a single day including tips on dressing for success, table manners, social media and employment resources, among others. Veterans will even learn how to perform an effective "sales pitch" at job fairs, marketing themselves as the right fit for a company.

See Boot Camp, page 2



Judge Amy Corrigall Jones (left) and Judge Jerry Larson (right) at the Valor Court ceremony at the VSC.

Valor Court Celebrates Program's Success

For the past 18 months, the Valor Court in Summit County has been giving dozens of veterans in the Summit County Common Pleas Court or the Akron Municipal Court the opportunity to make changes in their lives and get back on the right track. Rather than sentencing veterans to jail time, the Valor Court hears their cases and, when appropriate, directs them to treatment and services that are more beneficial to their individual circumstances. Veterans in trouble with the law may often have service-related conditions that contributed to their situation.

In mid-February, the Veterans Service Commission of Summit County (VSC) hosted Akron Municipal Judge Jerry Larson and Summit County Common Pleas Judge Amy Corrigall Jones for a ceremony recognizing the progress the Valor Court has made since its inception in November of 2013. To date, five veterans successfully completed the program and several others are on track to do the same soon.

Herbert Watson, 65, was among those attending the event at the VSC. Watson is a Vietnam veteran who has been a Valor Court participant since the fall of 2014. After experiencing

legal trouble as a young man right after returning from duty and not having the same resources available to him then, he sees the value of Valor Court.

"They understand where you're coming from," said Watson. "It's a very positive program. They've made resources available to us."

Wayne Wright, 67, is another Vietnam veteran who is involved with the program from a different angle. Rather than being a participant, Wright is a peer mentor for veterans in the program. He meets with Valor Court participants every other week and tries to offer them as much support as possible. Often, that means just being a good listener.

"A veteran will open up to a fellow veteran more quickly than someone else," Wright explained.

The program has tremendous value beyond keeping veterans out of prison for misdemeanors. Wright mentioned that many participants are younger Afghanistan or Iraq veterans who are trying to get their lives started in the civilian world.

"These young men need to go out and get a job," said Wright. "Once they go through the program and accomplish everything they need

to do... that record is expunged, making a good job a possibility."

The court has been operating for 18 months, and dozens of veterans have entered the program in that time. The court boasts a 95 percent retention rate for participants, which is higher than many other specialty court programs.

Valor Court also benefits taxpayers. The daily cost to provide for an incarcerated individual is between \$70-126. By redirecting veterans to more beneficial programs and services, citizens are saving thousands of dollars each year. The services to which these veterans are redirected are often their own federal VA benefits that they have earned through their service.

The Valor Court is always seeking mentors. Interested veterans can learn more by contacting Jonathan Groza at 330-330-375-2009 or Tamara Keefer at 330-643-8534.

Judges Jones and Larson thanked the VSC and Valor Home for their support of the program, as well as mentors, community legal aid, local attorneys and many others who contribute to the Valor Court's success. ★

E.Y.I.

AMVETS Memorial Day events

Monday, May 25

Fairview Cemetery
3990 Brecksville Rd.
7:45 a.m. – Assemble
9:00 a.m. – Services

West Richfield Cemetery
4219 Broadview Rd.
9:30 a.m. – Assemble at Historical Building (Old Town Hall)
10:00 a.m. – Services

Bath Memorial Services
(Across from the schoolhouse)
11:45 a.m. – Services

Submit Memorial Day events

Know of a Memorial Day event that you think other veterans may be interested in as well? Please send all pertinent event information to dburden@vscsummitoh.us to be posted on the VSC website.

Discount to the Summit County Fair

The Summit County Fair is offering \$1 admission to Summit County veterans on Wednesday, July 29 with valid proof of service. Non-veterans may bring a new toy to donate to Toys for Tots and receive \$1 admission until 4 p.m. The fairgrounds are located at 229 E. Howe Road in Tallmadge. For more information, visit www.summitfair.com/fair.html or call 330-633-6200.

Volunteers needed for Memorial Day

On the Saturday before Memorial Day, May 23, volunteers from the Summit County veterans' posts visit our county's cemeteries and honor veterans by placing a flag on each gravesite. Volunteers of all ages are welcome to help with this tradition or to volunteer in a different capacity. Please complete the volunteer form available on the VSC's website at www.VSCsummitOH.us or contact David Burden at 330-643-7636.

Women Veterans Resource Fair

Women veterans who are in need of services or are interested in learning more about resources that are available to them are invited to attend this event at the VSC, 1060 E. Waterloo Rd. in Akron, on Saturday, May 16 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Representatives from the VA, Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services, VSC and other organizations will be on site to help with medical needs, jobs, support, housing and other needs. Veterans attending the event can ride Metro Bus Route #2 to the the intersection of Waterloo Road and Arlington Road.

Veterans for Valor Run

Join other veterans, active duty members and local supporters in a new 5k and 1-mile event on May 23 in Cuyahoga Falls. Learn more about the event at VeteransForValor.com.

Boot Camp from page 1

The VSC will host the Veterans Career and Job Fair Wednesday, April 8 from 12 – 3 p.m. Those veterans who participate in the Job Boot Camp the previous Saturday will have exclusive access to employers one hour prior to the start of the Job Fair. The local employers at the event will be specifically seeking veterans to hire, making this an opportunity that can't be missed.

Registration is required to attend the Boot Camp. The deadline to register for the event is Mar. 30. While registration is not required for the Job Fair, it is highly encouraged. Veterans who are interested in either event can register by calling 330-643-2830 or visiting www.VSCsummitOH.us and clicking on the appropriate tab on the left hand navigation. ★

Director's Corner

Veterans with ALS can now qualify for VA automobile grant

Veterans or service members with certain disabilities that resulted from an injury or disease incurred or aggravated during active military service may receive a grant to purchase a new or used automobile or other conveyance. Additionally, the grant may be paid if disabilities are a result of medical treatment, examination, vocational rehabilitation or compensated work therapy provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).



A recipient of the automobile grant may only receive it once during his or her lifetime. The grant is up to \$20,000 and is paid directly to the seller of the automobile. To qualify for the loan, the veteran or service member must have one of the following disabilities:

- Loss or permanent loss of use of one or both feet
- Loss or permanent loss of use of one or both hands
- Permanent impairment of vision in both eyes to a certain degree
- Severe burn injury
- Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)

Does VA pay to adapt a vehicle?

Yes. Veterans or services members who qualified for an automobile grant and those with ankylosis (immobility of the joint) of one or both knees or hips resulting from an injury or disease incurred or aggravated by active military service may qualify for adaptive equipment. The adaptive equipment grant could include power steering, power windows, power seats and special equipment needed to assist the eligible person into and out of the vehicle.

Before purchasing equipment, you should contact your local VA medical center's prosthetic department. The adaptive equipment grant may be paid more than once, and it may be paid to either the seller or the veteran.

For more information about applying for the automobile and/or the special adaptive equipment grant, call the Summit County Veterans Service Commission (VSC) at 330-643-2830. Request an appointment with a Veterans Service Officer (VSO) to assist you in completing the necessary forms. The VSO will then submit all required forms and supporting documentation to the local VA regional office.

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.

Resources for Veteran Business Owners

Putting your leadership skills to use

Discipline, commitment and leadership are just some of the qualities military members cultivate during their service. Having developed these characteristics, veterans can employ them in their new civilian careers or leverage them to start their own businesses. Many veterans are well suited to become successful entrepreneurs because of the nature of their experience in the military, and a myriad of resources exist to assist veterans all along the way.

The Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (VA OSDBU) has partnered with BusinessUSA.com to provide a valuable tool to veterans called the Veteran Entrepreneurial Portal (VEP). From starting a business and accessing funding to growing a business, the VEP connects veterans with proven best practices and information. The VA's website

also offers tips on interacting with federal agencies for procurement opportunities, corporate partnerships designed to give veterans business skills and strategic outreach.

Franchises offer the benefits of business ownership without the stress and investment of building a brand from the ground up. The International Franchise Association (IFA) is a channel for veterans who are seeking franchising opportunities. According to IFA, veterans own one in every seven franchises. The group provides a list of the 100 top franchises for veterans with the rankings based on actual feedback from veteran franchise owners. This list contains dozens of franchises in the areas of automotive, home cleaning, pet training, real estate and in-home care.

Akron SCORE, located at 175 S. Main St. in the Summit County Building, offers free mentoring to local business in Summit County. Mentors

are highly successful entrepreneurs and business professionals who donate their time to the organization through email or in-person mentoring. Online and local workshops are also available free of charge and cover a wide variety of topics such as starting a business, marketing techniques, social media use and payroll software.

Owning a business may not be ideal for everyone, so the Veterans Service Commission of Summit County (VSC) has many programs and resources available for veterans who are seeking employment or new career fields. Contact the experts at the VSC



by calling 330-643-2830 or visiting 1060 E. Waterloo Rd. in Akron.

Visit akron.score.org to see all of the available resources. To learn more about the VEP and franchising opportunities, visit www.va.gov/osdbu/entrepreneur/. ★



Tip of the **H.A.T.** *Helping America's Troops*

Remembering VSC Commissioner Dick Rauch

On December 18, 2014, the VSC lost a longtime commissioner and friend. Richard "Dick" Rauch passed away at the age of 90, after a life spent in the service of others. We extend our sincere condolences to his family and many friends.

"Dick had a genuine interest in helping veterans," said Larry Moore, Executive Director of the VSC. "He attended events for veterans whenever he could and was always thinking of ways he could help others."

Rauch was born in Richfield, Ohio in 1924. He joined the United States Army and served in World War II. After returning to civilian life, he began working for the East Ohio Gas Co., where he enjoyed a 47-year career as a foreman. He married his wife Jean in 1948, and the couple had three children, Sheri, Scott and Tami.

Through his volunteer work and activities, Rauch continued to surround himself with those who had served. He was a founding member of AMVETS Post 176, where he served as the organization's commander for many years. In 1969, he was recognized as the Ohio AMVET of the year.

"He helped many, many people being commander of the AMVETS for so long," said Tami Letosky, Rauch's youngest child. "If there were veterans traveling through town, they would stop at the AMVETS. I remember my dad giving them money to help them get through town and pay for food."

Rauch represented his fellow veterans and advocated for them as a VSC Commissioner for 16 years before retiring in 2013. Veterans at the Brecksville hospital, which is now closed,

often received a visit from him to bolster their spirits. He and Jean even started the annual Memorial Day parade in Richfield, which has been a yearly tradition for more than 60 years. Rauch was involved in other organizations as a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion Post 0473, the Masons and the Bath Kiwanis.

"He would do anything for a veteran," said Byron "Barney" Morris, Rauch's friend and a fellow member of AMVETS. "They all thought very highly of him, all the way to the AMVETS Department of Ohio in Columbus. There are a lot of people who miss him."

"Dick took his duties as commissioner seriously. He was compassionate and would help veterans and employees



VSC Commissioner Dick Rauch was a great advocate for all veterans.

whenever he could," said fellow VSC Commissioner Mike Stith. "At the same time, he never shirked from difficult decisions. I have seen him stand alone in important decisions, without wavering, and time proved him right."

Without a doubt, Rauch will be deeply missed by his family and friends, his Richfield community and all of those at the VSC. ★

1060 E. Waterloo Rd.
Akron, Ohio 44306
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

Service Officers

David Burden
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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

Free Memorial Day Flag!

Get a free 3' x 5' flag by filling out the short survey below and bringing it in to the VSC. The survey can also be submitted online at www.VSCsummitOH.us. ★

Zip: _____ Age: _____

Gender: Male Female

Do you use the VSC's website? Yes No

Do you follow the VSC on social media? Yes No

How did you hear about the VSC?

Your Health

Fisher House Keeps Wounded Warriors Near Family

Quality medical care is imperative to a veteran's recovery, but having loved ones nearby may help speed that process and improve a patient's outlook. Unfortunately, some family members of veterans who are hospitalized cannot afford the cost of renting a hotel or motel near the hospital. The Fisher House Foundation was found by Zachary Fisher in 1990

to provide "comfort homes," much like Ronald McDonald House Charities, for such individuals. More than 25,000 families were served in 2014 through this international organization. It is estimated that the 62 Fisher Houses throughout the United States, Germany and England have saved military families \$235 million since the foundation was established 15 years ago.

The Greater Cleveland Fisher House will cost \$7 million to construct. The Fisher House Foundation will pay half of the construction costs, and the Greater Cleveland Fisher House will be responsible for raising the other \$3.5 million. The group is well on its way to meeting that goal, having already collected a total of \$2.3 million through community fundraising efforts.

Current plans are to build on the grounds of the Louis B. Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center, the third largest VA hospital in the United States. The center offers a wide range of care to veterans, including surgical services, neurology and cardiology, among many others.

The proposed home will be 16,500 square feet with 18 to 21 suites that can accommodate as many as 42 people. Suites have individual bathrooms and bedrooms, but there is a common kitchen, laundry area, living room and dining room that all families share. While the facility will be built on the grounds of the Louis B. Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center, the home will also serve families of veterans who are being treated at Cleveland Clinic, MetroHealth System, University Hospitals and other hospitals in the area.

To learn more about the Greater Cleveland Fisher House, visit greaterclevelandfisherhouse.org. Those who are interested in making a tax-deductible donation can do so through the website or by mailing a check made payable to the Greater Cleveland Fisher House to 21866 Seabury Ave., Cleveland, OH 44126. ★



Rendering of the Greater Cleveland Fisher House.