**VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS BLAZING STAR POST #1574**

**17 CANNON AVENUE**

**STATEN ISLAND, NY 10314**

**Website. http://blazingstarvfwpost1574.org/wp**

**February 2020**

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| BLAZING STAR POST 1574 CONTACT NUMBERS  Al Porto, Commander - 718-578-1242, albert.porto38@gmail.com  Paul Dietrich, Quartermaster - 718-698-5269, paul@the-dietrichs.com  William Alcock, Adjutant - 718-698-1923 |

**Calendar Events**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Event | Location | Time | Remarks |
| 1 February 2020 | Blazing Star Post Meeting | Gold Star Post | 1000 | Saturday |
| 7 March 2020 | Blazing Star Post Meeting | Gold Star Post | 1000 | Saturday |
| 4 April 2020 | Blazing Star Post Meeting | Gold Star Post | 1000 | Saturday |
| 2 May 2020 | Blazing Star Post Meeting | Gold Star Post | 1000 | Saturday |
| 6 June 2020 | Blazing Star Post Meeting | Gold Star Post | 1000 | Saturday |
| **8 July 2020** | **Blazing Star Post Meeting** | **Gold Star Post** | **1300** | **Wednesday** |
| 1 August 2020 | Blazing Star Post Meeting | Gold Star Post | 1000 | Saturday |
| 2 September 2020 | Blazing Star Post Meeting | Gold Star Post | 1300 | Wednesday |
| 7 October 2020 | Blazing Star Post Meeting | Gold Star Post | 1300 | Wednesday |
| 4 November 2020 | Blazing Star Post Meeting | Gold Star Post | 1300 | Wednesday |
| 2 December 2020 | Blazing Star Post Meeting | Gold Star Post | 1300 | Wednesday |

July’s meeting will be changed to the 8th at 1300.

**Membership**

1. Consider Life Membership. You save money over the long run and eliminate the need to renew yearly. Below are the membership rates for Life membership and Installment Plan Life Membership.

**Age on 31 Dec             Payment in Full             Installment Plan Option                               
                         Total:                   Initial Fee:        11 payments of:**

Through Age 30               $425.00                $45.00                $38.64

31-40                                  $410.00                $45.00                $37.27

41-50                                  $375.00                $45.00                $34.09

51-60                                  $335.00                $45.00                $30.45

61-70                                  $290.00                $45.00                $26.36

71-80                                  $225.00                $45.00                $20.45

81 and over                        $170.00                $45.00                $15.45

2. We mailed out our first packages to our newest member Michael Marra who is currently deployed to the Middle east. Please keep Michael in your prayers so he can return to us and his wife and 9-month old son.

3. Dues Renewal Reminder:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Eans, Ernest** | **UnPaid** | ***6/30/2019*** | **EXPIRED** |
|  | **Gomes, Dannyel** | **UnPaid** | ***6/30/2019*** | **EXPIRED** |
|  | **Nelson, Eric** | **UnPaid** | ***5/31/2019*** | **EXPIRED** |
|  | **Santiago, Luis A** | **UnPaid** | ***4/30/2019*** | **EXPIRED** |

**Service Officer**

1. Veterans are encouraged to enroll in the VA health care so they are on record should they ever need it.  No cost to apply.  Apply on line at [www.va.gov/healtheligibility/vfw](file:///C:\Users\Albert\Documents\VFW\Newsletters%202011\www.va.gov\healtheligibility\vfw) or call 1-877-222-8387.

2. DD Form 214 website. http://vetrecs.archives.gov. If you need assistance, contact the post service officer, Doug Encarcion.

3. Survivor Outreach Services. The website has a lot of information for those left behind when a service member or veteran passes. <http://www.sos.army.mil/> or <http://www.westpointmwr.com/acs/survivor_outreach_services.html>

4. To someone going through a difficult time, one simple act has the power to make a difference. Reach out to veterans and service members in your life today – <http://www.veteranscrisisline.net/ThePowerof1.aspx>.

5. Online Health Care Application.[www.vets.gov](https://www.vets.gov/).  or call 877-222-VETS (8387).

6. Veterans Representative on Staten Island. Monique L. Rada Engagement and Community Services Coordinator

NYC Department of Veterans’ Services [1 Centre Street, Suite 2208](x-apple-data-detectors://1/0) [New York, NY 10007](x-apple-data-detectors://1/0) [917-628-8487](tel:917-628-8487) [mrada@veterans.nyc.gov](mailto:mrada@veterans.nyc.gov)

7. [Vets.gov](http://vets.gov/) Connects Veterans to Services.

8. John Bartow, Assistant VSO, Veterans of Foreign Wars 518-626-5687.

9. The following web site is the medical providers close to your house who have accepted the VA Choice program and are registered to do so.  Quite a few here on SI.  It gives a map where you can see them in relation to where you live or work.  You can also get contact information to reach out to them. <https://www.va.gov/opa/apps/locator/>

10. A VBA Representative at the Staten Island Vet Center every Wednesday.  **There are no walk-ins everyone must call  (718)816-4499 to set up an appointment.**  All services are free. Samuel B. Cottes, Jr., Veterans Outreach

Specialist, Staten Island Veterans Center, US Department of Veterans Affairs; Readjustment Counseling Services, 60 Bay Street, Staten Island, NY 10301 Tel: (718) 816-4499 x 7747 Cell: (929) 359-2449 Fax:  (718) 816-6899

11. Discharge Upgrade Online Tool.

<http://www.ourveterans.nyc/discharge_upgrade_online_tool?utm_campaign=180129&utm_medium=email&utm_source=nycveteransalliance>

12. The VA has released a new listing of sites outside of Vietnam where Agent Orange was used, tested, or stored by the military:

<https://www.publichealth.va.gov/docs/agentorange/dod_herbicides_outside_vietnam.pdf>

There are 149 sites on this list in eleven states and eight countries, including Fort Drum in New York State.

Please pay close attention to the range of dates during which the VA acknowledges that Agent Orange was used, tested, or stored at these site, as this range of dates differs for each site. At Fort Drum, for instance, the VA acknowledges the presence and usage of Agent Orange between May and October of 1959. Please also pay close attention to the notes in the chart to the specific locations at many of these sites where Agent Orange was used and the specific ways that Agent Orange was used at these sites. Additionally, the VA has launched an "Exposure Ed" mobile app, which is designed to educate Veterans about the health impact of exposure to Agent Orange or other herbicides: <https://mobile.va.gov/app/exposure-ed>. Importantly, this app should not be used by Veterans as a medical diagnostic tool. The app does contain useful basic information about health risks and resources available, but it is not a substitute for a medical diagnosis and prognosis given to a Veteran by a doctor.  The other big news regarding Agent Orange is the news that the VA *has not* released yet: the potential for four new medical conditions -- hypertension, bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and Parkinson's-like symptoms -- to the list of conditions pressured to be linked to Agent Orange exposure.  The VA Secretary, Robert Wilkie, announced that the agency will not publish a decision regarding these four conditions until "late 2020 at the earliest." The VA's Office of Research and Development is carrying out two concurrent studies regarding these diseases and Agent Orange exposure, and Secretary Wilkie said that the VA will make no decisions about these four conditions until both of these studies are completed. Two nationally recognized studies already link these conditions to Agent Orange exposure: a 2018 study by the National Academies of Sciences and a 2016 study by the Institute of Medicine. Here is a link to the National Academies study: <http://nationalacademies.org/hmd/Reports/2018/veterans-and-agent-orange-update-2018.aspx>

Here is a link to the conclusions of the Institute of Medicine study (the full study is more than a thousand pages):  <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK356062/> However, Secretary Wilkie stated that these studies lacked "definitive causal links" between Agent Orange and these four diseases, leading to the need for the VA to conduct their own studies.

**Employment and Education**

1. Looking for a job? Need quality employees? USE VETJOBS! [www.vetjobs.com](http://svarialce.vfwemail.org:81/CT00004002MzA1OTA1NDk=.HTML?D=2011-08-26)

2. Vets looking for jobs, the website: 100000jobsmission.com. Go there to apply and search for available jobs specifically held for veterans.

Bottom of Form

General

1. Staten Island University Hospital's Military Appreciation Program. This program entitles active duty members and veterans free parking 12 times per year at the SIUH parking lot. Go to the Security Office with proof of military/veteran status. You will be given 12 parking stamps. Place them on parking ticket and no fee.

2. Free parking for veterans at Richmond County Medical Center. Veterans can park for free in the visitors parking lot where tokens are required. Stop at the main reception desk or security post, show proof you are a veteran (drivers license with vet on it, retired ID card, VA card or similar) and they will give you a free token for the parking lot. Get it on the way in as the reception/info desk is not manned all night. Use the token to exit the lot. Saves you $4 per visit.

3. The Defense POW/MIA Office announced the identification of remains belonging to the following personnel. Returned

home are:

**Army Cpl. Arthur C. Ramirez, 19,** Btry B, 57th FA Bn, 7th Inf Div, Chosin Reservoir, North Korea, Dec. 6, 1950

**Army Pvt. Horace H. Middleton, 20,** Co F, 2nd Bn, 5307th Comp Unit (Prov)(Merrill’s Marauders), Myitkyina, Burma, July 12, 1944.  
**Army Sgt. John V. Phillips, 25,** HQ Co, 31st Infantry Regt, Cabanatuan POW camp, Philippines, July 27, 1942.

**Army Pvt. Roy Brown, Jr., 22,** Co I, 126th Infantry Regt, 32nd Inf Div, Papua New Guinea, 1942.

**Army Pvt. Charlie M. Waid, 26,** Medical Det, 31st Infantry Regt, Cababatuan POW camp, Philippines, Nov. 19, 1942. **-- Army Cpl. William L. Brown, 18,** Co B, 1st Bn, 32nd Inf Regt, 7th Inf Div, Chosin Reservoir, North Korea, Dec. 2, 1950.

4. The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency is seeking the public’s help to find and encourage more MIA families to donate a DNA sample to help speed the identification process of recovered remains. Each military service and the State Department has a service casualty office that can explain how to donate.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Army: 800-892-2490 | Navy: 800-443-9298 | State Department: 202-485-6106 |
| Marine Corps: 800-847-1597 | Air Force: 800-531-5501 |  |

5. Staten Island Community TV: Veterans TV Shows are available 24 hours a day via Youtube. To view, google "Youtube, Ed Salek, In Honor of" or go to Youtube.com and search for Ed Salek, In Honor of.

6. Staten Island University Hospital is working together on a new volunteer program that would place volunteers with people that don't have family or friends to sit with them or be a liaison between them and the doctors/nurses.  This came about years ago when a man at SI University Hospital who was a veteran who had no one to be with him. If anyone would like to be a volunteer at Staten Island University Hospital for this purpose, contact Bart Cambria, who heads the Volunteer Program at the hospital.  He is simply taking names, and basic information. Bart can be reached at: (917) 584-0168 or [bcambria@northwell.edu](mailto:bcambria@northwell.edu).

**Items of Interest**

The Defense Department recently announced expanded commissary, military service exchange and MWR [access Jan. 1](https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/67974/commissary-military-service-exchange-mwr-access-extended-veterans-beginning-january/) and established a standard for physical access to military installations. Below are the top 10 questions Veterans have asked the Defense Department about the expanded access. For more information on expanded access, call Military One Source at [1-800-342-9647](tel:18003429647).

**Q1. How do I get access if I have a 0 percent service-connected condition, but my income is too high to get a Veteran Health Identification Card?**

A1. Veterans who have received a Health Eligibility Center Form H623A that states they have been placed in VA health care priority group 8E may bring this form paired with an acceptable credential like a REAL ID-compliant driver’s license or a U.S. passport for installation and privilege access.

**Q2. If I’ve got a DoD-issued identification card because I’m retired, a Medal of Honor recipient, or have a 100 percent VA-documented disability or unemployability rating, do I also need to have a Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC) to get access to DoD privileges?**

A2. No.  If you are eligible for a DoD-issued retiree, Medal of Honor, or 100 percent disabled identification card, you should obtain and use the DoD-issued card to access DoD installations and privileges.  While you could use a VHIC if you had one, you would be subject to the commissary credit/debit card user fee if you paid for your commissary purchases with a commercial credit or debit card.  The commissary credit/debit card user fee is not charged to DoD-issued identification card holders.  Your DoD-issued identification card will also allow you broader morale, welfare, and recreation activity access.

**Q3. How does the installation access process work for me and my guests; and if I have old felony activity on my record, will I be denied access to the installation?**

A3. All newly eligible Veterans and caregivers and any guests traveling with them who are age 18 or older must stop at the visitor control center before entering an installation for the first time to verify identify, establish purpose for the visit, and undergo a basic on-the-spot background check.

* Newly eligible Veterans must show a Veteran Health Identification Card that displays “PURPLE HEART,” “FORMER POW,” or “SERVICE CONNECTED” below the photo on the front of the card; or a Health Eligibility Center Form H623A that states the Veteran has been placed in VA health care priority group 8E, paired with an acceptable credential like a REAL ID-compliant driver’s license or a U.S. passport. (DoD installations cannot accept a driver’s license that is not REAL ID-compliant as proof of identity.)
* Newly eligible caregivers must show an eligibility letter from the VA’s Office of Community Care that lists them as the Primary Family Caregiver for an eligible Veteran under the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers, paired with an acceptable credential like a REAL ID-compliant driver’s license or a U.S. passport. (DoD installations cannot accept a driver’s license that is not REAL ID-compliant as proof of identity.)
* Guests of newly eligible Veterans or caregivers who are age 18 or older must show an acceptable credential like a REAL ID-compliant driver’s license or a U.S. passport. (DoD installations cannot accept a driver’s license that is not REAL (ID-compliant as proof of identity.)

If the installation has credential enrollment capability and the acceptable credential(s) used are enrollable, they can be enrolled for recurring access so that the individual(s) don’t have to stop at visitor control every time they want to visit the installation.  Even a guest’s acceptable credential can be enrolled.  It will not allow them to enter the installation without someone who is eligible to enter the installation, but it will allow them to have their credential scanned from the car when entering with an authorized individual.  This is the same process used for anyone who desires entry to an installation.

An individual may be denied access if derogatory information shows up on the background check that reflects on the integrity or character of an individual that indicates that such an individual may pose a risk to the good order, discipline, morale, or safety of a DoD installation or the resources or personnel on that installation. Examples include, but are not limited to, aspects of an individual’s criminal history or current status as wanted or as a known or appropriately suspected terrorist. There is a process for an individual with accurately identified derogatory information that prevents individuals from establishing either historic or current fitness to seek an exception due to their specific circumstances, allowing them to be granted unescorted access. DoD Components may grant unescorted access to a convicted felon, in accordance with applicable Federal, State, and local laws, after considering appropriate mitigating factors such as the nature and seriousness of the offense, the circumstances surrounding the offense, recency and frequency of the offense, the individual’s age and maturity at the time of the offense, the individual’s effort toward rehabilitation, and other factors. Under these conditions, an individual should apply directly to the installation commander requesting an exception to all allow access to the installation.

**Q4. Are dependents of newly eligible Veterans and caregivers also eligible for DoD privileges?**

A4. No. The Purple Heart and Disabled Veterans Equal Access Act of 2018, only gave these privileges to specific Veterans and caregivers, not to their dependents.  Dependents may accompany eligible Veterans and caregivers as their guests, but they may not make purchases.

**Q5. Why can’t all Veterans have these DoD privileges?**

A5. The scope of operations on military installations is sized to take care of the needs of military members and their families.  Military operations are not funded or sized to accommodate all Veterans. Expanding access to the 4.1 million Veterans and caregivers directed by the Purple Heart and Disabled Veterans Equal Access Act of 2018 (and that number continues to grow daily), will already be a test of DoD’s capacity. Inserting another 15 million Veterans into the mix would overwhelm the system and our military members and their families would suffer for it.

**Q6. Will Veterans who choose to live overseas be able to access military installations and privileges in overseas foreign countries?**

A6. It depends. U.S. law doesn’t apply outside of the United States and outside of the U.S. territories and possessions. Access in overseas foreign countries is subject to applicable host-nation laws and applicable international agreements, like status of forces agreements. The function of the installation also sometimes restricts access. It is best to check with the installation you desire to visit to find out if, as a Veteran or caregiver in one of the new Veteran or caregiver categories, you will be authorized access. Chances are that if you are a retired military member living abroad and didn’t already have access as a retiree, you will not get access under any of the new categories.

**Q7. Can newly eligible Veterans and caregivers bring guests to the installations and facilities?**

A7. Yes. Guests will be subject to installation access procedures described in #8 above and must remain with the eligible Veteran or caregiver at all times when they are on the installation. Also, guests cannot make any purchases in commissary or exchange stores.

**Q8. Which of the following MWR activities can be used?  (This is not an exhaustive list, only the most frequently asked about activities.)**

A8.

AmericanForcesTravel.com: Yes.

Bowling: Yes.

Camping: Yes. Tent sites and RV parks.

Child Care: No.

Clubs: Yes.

Fishing: It depends. If lakes are operated as part of the installation park and picnic areas, no. If lakes are operated as part of the installation outdoor recreation activity, then it is at the discretion of the Military Department, subject to capacity and funding conditions.

Golf: Yes.

Gyms: No.

Libraries: No.

Lodging: Yes.   Cabins, cottages, recreation centers, resorts, and official temporary duty and permanent change of station lodging (on a space-available basis).

Movies: Yes, if there is an admission fee.  (No, if the movies are shown at no charge.)

Pools: Yes, if designated as a recreational swimming pool.  (No if designated as an aquatic training facility.)

Rentals: Yes.

Tickets: At the discretion of the Military Department, subject to capacity and funding conditions.

MAC flights: This is NOT an MWR, exchange, or commissary activity and access is NOT authorized.

Pharmacy: This is NOT an MWR, exchange, or commissary activity and access is NOT authorized.

USO: This is NOT a military organization.  USO is a non-Federal entity.

**Q9. What conditions are required to get access to the DoD privileges?**

A9. Newly eligible Veterans must meet at least one of the following conditions:

* Purple Heart recipient
* Former prisoner of war
* Service-connected disability rating (between 0-90 percent)

Veterans with a 100 percent disability or unemployability rating and Veterans who are Medal of Honor recipients already have DoD privileges, so they are not newly eligible.

Veterans include former members of any of the uniformed services (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, U.S. Public Health Service, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration).

Newly eligible caregivers must be the individual assessed, approved, and designated as the Primary Family Caregiver for an eligible Veteran under the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers.

In addition to meeting one of the above conditions, newly eligible Veterans and caregivers must possess the specific documentation that DoD will accept as proof of identity and eligibility for access:

* Veterans must possess a [Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC)](https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/68479/veterans-need-vhic-for-in-person-commissary-military-exchange-and-mwr-access/) that displays “PURPLE HEART,” “FORMER POW,” or “SERVICE CONNECTED” below the photo on the front of the card. If an eligible Veteran is not eligible to obtain a VHIC, the VA Health Eligibility Center Form H623A indicating placement in VA health care priority group 8E, paired with an acceptable credential, like a REAL ID-compliant driver’s license or U.S. passport, will be accepted. For information on enrolling in VA health care, visit [www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enroll](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enroll) or call 1-877-222-VETS (8387) Monday through Friday 8 a.m. until 8 p.m. Eastern time.
* Caregivers must possess an eligibility letter from the VA Office of Community Care that lists them as the Primary Family Caregiver for an eligible Veteran under the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers, paired with an acceptable credential like a REAL ID-compliant driver’s license or a U.S. passport.

**Q10. Can anyone with a Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC) get these privileges?**

A10. No. Only Veterans with a VHIC that displays “PURPLE HEART,” “FORMER POW,” or “SERVICE CONNECTED” will be authorized the new privileges. Veterans may be able to use a VHIC that doesn’t contain one of these markings to access an installation with a medical facility if they have an appointment there, but if the VHIC does not display “PURPLE HEART,” “FORMER POW,” or “SERVICE CONNECTED,” they will not have access to commissaries, exchanges, or morale, welfare, and recreation facilities.

**Learn more about the VHIC requirement and how you can get one**[**here**](https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/68479/veterans-need-vhic-for-in-person-commissary-military-exchange-and-mwr-access/)**.**

**Download the *Expanded Access at Commissaries, Exchanges and Recreation Facilities* fact sheet**[**here**](https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Factsheets/expanding-access-fact-sheet.pdf)**.**

**For more information on expanded access, call Military One Source at 1-800-342-9647.**

**Find facilities or shop online:**

* Commissaries: <https://www.commissaries.com>
* Army and Air Force Exchange System: <https://www.shopmyexchange.com>
* Coast Guard Exchange: <https://shopCGX.com>
* Marine Corps Exchange: <http://www.mymcx.com>
* Navy Exchange:  <https://www.mynavyexchange.com>