

NEWSLETTER SPRING 2011

HARMONY CHAPTER NO. 18
CHAPTER HOME
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 LAKEWOOD, WASHINGTON 98499-8643

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DAV Harmony Chapter 18 meets throughout the year on the third Saturday of the month. A potluck lunch is scheduled to start at noon, with the meeting following at 1 p.m. The meetings last about one hour.

MEETING DATES:

- May 21, 2011
- June 18, 2011
- July 16, 2011
- August 20, 2011
- September 17, 2011

Contact information:

Commander:

Mark Melton

Office: (253) 302-4960

Adjutant:

Jake Holeman

Office: (253) 472-4680

Chaplain

Mike Webb

(206) 220-6225

Dept. Service Officer

Mark Melton

Office: (253) 302-4960

National Service Office

Seattle: (206) 220-6225

American Lake VAMC

253-582-8440 Ext. 6990

VA – 1-800-827-1000

DAV Van Service

American Lake VAMC

(253) 583-1343

M-F, 7 a.m. to 2 p.m.

* You can also find us if you have facebook at DAV Harmony 18

Next Meeting Info Box

At our next meeting, which will be at 1 p.m. on 5/21/2011 at our Chapter location: 5604 75th Street West (on the street behind the McDonalds on Custer Road SW), we will continue to set priorities on how we can be of service to other Disabled American Veterans and their families. Please post the dates of our meetings on your calendar and plan to attend.

The main dish provided by the chapter for May, pizza; June, poor boy sandwiches. Please bring a side dish that will complement the main dish or a salad or a dessert.

The Auxiliary meets at about the same time as does Harmony Chapter 18.

Upcoming Events

Hot Dog Lunch Served

Keep May 21 and 22 open. Not only will we have our installation of officers at our meeting on Saturday May 21, but we will be serving hot dogs at West Marine in Fife. We will have two shifts, the first one from 10 a.m. until 12 noon, so that those who need to be installed can get back to the meeting by 1 p.m., and those members who aren't being installed can take their place at noon, and will miss the meeting. This is one of our fund-raisers

which helps pay our bills and carries the chapter through until we get our annual funds from National in early July.

So get ready to volunteer for a shift on May 21 or May 22, 2011.



Harmony Chapter 18 members participating in the serving hot dogs at West Marine in Fife.

Spring Forget-Me-Not Campaign

On Memorial Day weekend, Saturday and Sunday, May 28 and May 29, 2011, Chapter members will be conducting our spring Forget-Me-Not drive at two locations. One will be at Fred Meyers located on Bridgeport Way between Lakewood and University Place, and the other site will be at the Summit Trading Center, located on 104th and Canyon.

MUSINGS OF THE ADJUTANT

We have a great summer planned. Another DAV Day at the Ballpark is planned and we will be watching the Tacoma Rainiers play at the newly revamped Cheney Stadium on Sunday, July 17th at 1:35 p.m. Included in the \$10 ticket is a hot dog lunch. We all had a lot of fun last year. Below center is Richard Carithers with his grandson. This year we will be hosting a golf tournament/raffle at the VA golf course at American Lake. The picture below is the DAV sponsored 5th hole at the course.



What else is being planned? We have planned to have a chapter picnic on August 13, 2011 at Harry Todd Park in Tillicum. And finally, we have just received word that West Marine in Fife has asked us to serve a hot dog lunch at their location on May 21 and May 22. This usually turns out to be a great opportunity to receive sufficient donations during the summer that helps to fund our budget for helping veterans and their families. We are often asked to serve the lunch a number of times throughout the summer. Picture above on the far left was taken at the site last year.

Check out our newly elected and appointed officers on page 3. It is also important for every member to get involved in our activities.

CALENDAR UPDATES

Get your calendar out and post this important information before it slips your mind!

April 22: Meet at 1 p.m. at Building 200 at the American Lake Division of the Puget Sound Medical Center and distribute Easter candy to the residents of the hospital. This is always a great event and you can talk to the patients and some of their family members. It is a moving experience to give back to the community that we serve.

May 21: Potluck will be held at noon on 5/21/2011 at the chapter home. Bring a dessert, salad or side dish that complements pizza (provided by the Chapter). Our monthly **business meeting** will be held at 1 p.m. following the potluck. It normally lasts less than an hour. The Auxiliary meets at same time.

May 21 & May 22: The chapter will be cooking and serving a hot dog lunch at West Marine in Fife from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. each day. Please sign up for shifts.

May 28 & May 29: Forget-Me-Not drive at two locations, Fred Meyer on Bridgeport and The Summit Trading Center. Please sign up for shifts at a location convenient to you.

June 1-4: DAV Washington State Convention in Yakima.

June 18: Potluck will be held at noon on 6/18/2011 at the chapter home. Bring a dessert, salad or side dish that complements poor boy sandwiches (provided by the Chapter). Our monthly **business meeting** will be held at 1 p.m. following the potluck. It normally lasts less than an hour. The Auxiliary meets at the same time.

ELECTED AND APPOINTED OFFICERS FOR HARMONY 18 AS OF MAY 2011



Commander & Service Officer
Mark Melton



Senior Vice Commander
Richard Carithers



Junior Vice Commander,
John Baxley



Treasurer
Joyce Elter



Adjutant & First-Year Trustee
Jake Holeman



Chaplain
Mike Webb



Second-Year Trustee
Frank Camodeca



Third-Year Trustee
Bernie Schwartz



Judge Advocate
Marty Luna



Riley Moore
Sergeant-at-Arms



Adam Cushing
Legislative Chairman

DEPARTMENT SERVICE OFFICER

Most service officers working at the VA Hospital at American Lake do not make reservations to see their clients; instead they work on a first-come-first seen schedule, Monday through Thursday. They do not work on Fridays. This is a good system because vets usually do not have to wait in line to be seen. Our DAV Department Service Officer at American Lake, Commander Mark Melton sees clients from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. Monday through Thursday. The service officer's phone number at American Lake is (253) 583-1303. At the Chapter his number is: (253) 302-4960. His email address is: davchpt18@gmail.com

Commander's Briefing:

Another year is just about gone.

Sitting here at my desk looking at the past year's Chapter activities, I have to admit it was a very productive year.

One of the largest accomplishments the Chapter did was having a new Chartered Auxiliary Unit and the start of their Junior Auxiliary. Thanks to all the members in the Auxiliary; you have all the support from the Chapter and from me.

The Chapter has gained great recognition in the community for the outstanding services we provide to help our Disabled Veterans and their families so they can live a better life. This has been accomplished by attending functions and providing assistance to the Task Force Phoenix Warrior Transition Battalion at Joint Base Lewis-McCord, providing holiday food baskets for our returning soldiers and their families which were facing hard times at Fort Lewis, taking time to share Easter with the patients at American Lake VAMC and at Orting Soldiers Home. We were able to pass the Mission and Purpose of our Chapter to the leaders of the community by having City of Lakewood Council members, Representative Steve Conway 29th Legislative District and members of U.S. Senator Patty Murray's staff attend our meetings. We were able to have fun with a Chapter picnic, sponsoring a baseball game with the Tacoma Rainiers and attending a halloween party with the Wounded Warriors.

I would like to thank the Management and employees at West Marine in Tacoma for all the support and donations they have contributed to our chapter this past year and we look forward to working with them again this coming year.

We are going to have a great year coming up. We have our Chapter picnic scheduled in August, a golf tournament at American Lake Veterans Golf Course in July and fund raisers with West Marine. More information will be posted later about these activities.

I look forward in working with all of you this coming year as your Commander.

Mark Melton

.BITS & PIECES

The [Department of Defense](#) has launched an online [Career Decision Toolkit](#) that will allow Service Members to self assess their transition needs and explore subjects such as careers; financial planning for transition; job search success; effective resumes and cover letters; interviewing excellence; and negotiating your ideal compensation.

For more employment and career exploration resources visit:

http://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/employment/job_services_and_employment_resources/career_exploration_and_transition_assistance.

VA Raising Suicide Awareness

March 16, 2011

The Department of Veterans Affairs is reaching out to veterans in crisis and their families in a new public service announcement to raise awareness about suicide prevention resources, such as the Veterans Crisis Line.

The new television spot encourages veterans in crisis to call the crisis hotline number at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) and then push 1 on their telephone keypad to reach a trained VA mental health professional who can assist the veteran 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The VA says more than 379,000 people have called the hotline, and more than 200,000 of these callers have identified themselves as veterans, family members or friends of veterans. The hotline has led to more than 13,000 rescues of actively suicidal veterans.

The hotline also operates an online Veterans Chat program, which provides veterans, their families and friends with the ability to communicate anonymously online in real-time with a trained VA mental health professional. Veterans Chat can be accessed through the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline's web page at <http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/Veterans/Default.aspx>.

Through the hotline and Veterans Chat, VA can connect veterans and their families with important services, including suicide prevention coordinators, as well as general inpatient and outpatient psychiatric services at VA medical centers and community-based outpatient clinics.

The hotline, which is part of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, was started in 2007 as a partnership between the VA and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

New Rules Aid Korean War Veterans

January 25, 2011

Veterans exposed to herbicides while serving along the demilitarized zone (DMZ) in Korea will have an easier path to access quality health care and benefits under a Department of Veterans Affairs final regulation. The new rules expand the dates when illnesses caused by herbicide exposure can be presumed to be related to Agent Orange.

Under the final rule, VA will presume herbicide exposure for any veteran who served between April 1, 1968, and Aug. 31, 1971, in a unit determined by VA and the Department of Defense (DoD) to have operated in an area in or near the Korean DMZ in which herbicides were applied.

Previously, VA recognized that Agent Orange exposure could only be conceded to veterans who served in certain units along the Korean DMZ between April 1968 and July 1969.

In practical terms, eligible Veterans who have specific illnesses VA presumes to be associated with herbicide exposure do not have to prove an association between their illness and their military service. This "presumption" simplifies and speeds up the application process for benefits and ensures that Veterans receive the benefits they deserve.

The DAV encourages veterans with covered service in Korea who have medical conditions that may be related to Agent Orange to contact their nearest National Service Office for assistance with claims for access to VA health care and compensation as soon as possible.

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Memorial Day Thoughts

Originally called Decoration Day, Memorial Day is a day of remembrance for those who have died in our nation's service. There are many stories as to its actual beginnings, with over two dozen cities and towns laying claim to being the birthplace of Memorial Day. There is also evidence that organized women's groups in the South were decorating graves before the end of the Civil War: a hymn published in 1867, "Kneel Where Our Loves are Sleeping" by Nella L. Sweet carried the dedication "To The Ladies of the South who are Decorating the Graves of the Confederate Dead". While Waterloo N.Y. was officially declared the birthplace of Memorial Day by President Lyndon Johnson in May 1966, it's difficult to prove conclusively the origins of the day. It is more likely that it had many separate beginnings; each of those towns and every planned or spontaneous gathering of people to honor the war dead in the 1860's tapped into the general human need to honor our dead, each contributed honorably to the growing movement that culminated in Gen Logan giving his official proclamation in 1868. It is not important who was the very first, what is important is that Memorial Day was established. Memorial Day is not about division. It is about reconciliation; it is about coming together to honor those who gave their all.

We can reflect on the scripture when preparing for this special day of remembrance. John 15:13: *"Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.* Romans 13:7: Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

God Bless, Chaplain Mike

Future Events

Save Sunday July 17, 2011 for the "DAV Day at the Ballpark." We will have tickets for \$10 each which will include the game as well as a hot dog, chips and a soda. The game starts at 1:30 p.m. and the Rainiers play the Salt Lake Bees.

The Chapter is hosting a 2-person best ball golf tournament on July 30 between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. at the American Lake VA Golf Course. Please sign up with Mark or Frank Camodeca as soon as possible. There will also be a raffle.

A Chapter picnic will be held at Harry Todd Park in Tillicum between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. on August 13, 2011. There is a covered area, with picnic tables. We will have access to a ball field as well as a basketball court. A great time is expected by all.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO BRING TO THE DEPARTMENT SERVICE OFFICER TO MAKE OR UPGRADE A VA CLAIM?

1. Bring your DD 214
2. Bring your marriage certificate (if married)
3. Bring the birth certificates of your children.
4. Documents which answer the following questions:
 - a. **WHAT:** wounds, injuries, disease?
 - b. **WHEN:** Approximate time and date?
 - c. **WHERE:** Name of the battle, country, camp, ship?
 - d. **HOW:** Shot, mine, fall, POW?
 - e. **UNIT:** Name, address, Location of unit assigned?
 - f. **BEFORE:** Field Hospital, Med Center, Hospital, Clinic?
 - g. **NOW:** Current doctor's name and address; Dates of surgery, treatment or evaluation?
 - h. **LIST ALL DOCTORS AND TREATMENTS OUTSIDE THE MILITARY AND THE VA**

The more you can document, the better: and remembering details can help lead you to more supporting documents. Letters and statements from shipmates or comrades may also help to establish your presence in the events at which you were injured or infected.

The following letter was sent from a Tacoma resident to their state congressman. If you are in agreement with the sentiments of this constituent, please email Pierce Transit at the following email address:

<http://www.piercetransit.org/contacts.htm>

MESSAGE:

I'm writing to you as a private citizen on behalf the many staff, patients and volunteers who use Pierce Transit Bus Route 214 to get to and from the VA Hospital at American Lake. I ride these buses, so I know the value to the VA and the community at large. Many other people ride Bus 214 daily to the VA – going to work, patients getting treatment, others going home from work. Pierce Transit has a budget crisis – just like the state, just like the federal government. But you cannot take public transportation away from the poor, the working class, the disabled, and those seeking healthcare with no other means of transportation.

Pierce Transit has published their “Pierce Transit Reductions Notification Proposed Service Changes Effective by October 2, 2011” booklet. On page 34, Bus Route 214 Washington states “On weekdays select early morning trips will no longer operate to the Veterans Hospital due to low ridership.” What they do not clearly state is that that the Pierce Transit Bus System is proposing to eliminate the 4:53am and 5:26am trips. This reduction in bus service to the VA hospital will have a negative impact on several areas of the hospital that are reliant on VA staff and Veterans working in the Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) and Incentive Therapy (IT) programs that keep this facility functioning. These include the dietetics kitchen for breakfast meal preparation and inpatient ward meal delivery services; canteen breakfast service to the rest of the staff and Veterans; housekeeping staff for bed turn-over on the inpatient wards and the operating/recovery rooms; and Veteran patients receiving treatment and services in the sleep study program, methadone program, homeless programs, and surgeries. There are some night shift staff coming off work and heading home that use the early morning bus services sporadically too. Also, those patients who need to get to the Seattle VA hospital must catch the 6:45am VA shuttle to make their early morning appointments. This can only be done if they catch either of the two earlier morning bus runs on Bus 214! Again, Bus 214 is a vital public service that helps to keep this hospital running and the patients getting their access to their medical care.

I know Pierce Transit has experiences several financial blows lately – the fire at their Compressed Natural Gas fueling station and the voter defeat of Proposition 1. Since the current reduction in services to the VA hospital (bus runs were once every half hour, now only once an hour) I have been a personal witness to the bus drivers having to leave two wheel chair patients at the curb in the late afternoon and evening runs because the buses can only strap down two wheel chair patients at a time. I know it's happened more, but two incidents I can verify. This is a horrible situation for all concerned – obviously the most distressing for the two patients; and for those able bodied and wheel chair patients who got on the bus when the other couldn't; and lastly for the bus drivers having to tell them the wheel chair patients they can't come onboard because they are full and the next bus is an hour wait. This is a terribly distressing situation.

I have made my personal comments known at the Pierce Transit Public Hearings on the proposed reduction of services. At the first hearing, over 150 people from the Lakewood/University Place community showed up with 59 people making their comments known too. Not only was the VA hospital represented, but St. Clare's hospital and Piece College. (VA Hospital and Pierce College both use the Bus 214, so there is a double impact there.) At this public hearing the room was filled with disabled people – 2 blind, 5 dialysis, 5 wheelchairs, and 8 walkers. These were all people dependent upon bus services.

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