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Cadence Call - 2020 Q1

Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs sent this bulletin at 02/14/2020 06:50 AM PST

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Welcome to Cadence Call, ODVA's new newsletter focused on communicating the good work the agency,

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its partners, and the State of Oregon is doing every day in order to meet our broad, yet important vision of ensuring veterans and their families thrive in Oregon.

In the military, a good cadence motivates and coordinates people to accomplish a unified mission — a mission much larger than the individual. Born of the idea that no single organization can truly address the broad needs of the veteran community, ODVA is calling cadence to coordinate existing resources and align broader partnerships around a shared vision for Oregon veterans. Government, nonprofits, private companies and citizens, and local community service organizations have answered the call of this cadence. In unison and with vigor in our step, Oregon is addressing issues faced by today's veterans and their families.

As we launch this inaugural newsletter on Valentine's Day, I want to take this opportunity to encourage all veterans and their families to explore their earned veteran benefits by scheduling an appointment with a local Veteran Service Office (VSO). Some of the most disheartening, and unfortunately frequent, stories that ODVA encounters are those of spouses of veterans whose loved one dies without accessing their benefits. This is especially true for our veterans who served our nation during the WWII, Korean and Vietnam eras and who often develop chronic conditions later in life that were unknowingly caused by their service.

Perhaps upon discharge, these veterans did not know about their earned benefits. Or perhaps they initially were told by the VA that they did not qualify for any veteran benefits that were available at that time. Or perhaps they had the mistaken belief that if they accessed their earned VA benefits they would be taking benefits from fellow veterans who "really needed" them. Whatever the reason, upon their death, and at a very emotional time, surviving spouses in particular are left to navigate a system in search of veteran benefits that could potentially alleviate financial hardship.

If you are a veteran, one of the best gifts of love you can give your significant other this Valentine's Day is to ensure they are taken care and don't have to

navigate the veteran benefit system alone. Ensure your military service paperwork and discharge documents are accessible and that you and your family talk to a VSO to understand the benefits that are or will be available to you. You served your country and these earned benefits are the result of that service. And if you love a veteran, encourage them to explore their benefits. Consider offering to accompany your veteran when they go to the local VSO.

Through our partnership with all 36 counties in Oregon, you can find an accredited VSO near you by visiting [ODVA's website](#) or by calling ODVA at 800-692-9666.

This is our cadence. Sound off!



ODVA Director Kelly Fitzpatrick



Kelly Fitzpatrick is the director of the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs and Governor Kate Brown's policy advisor on veterans' issues. She is a retired Army officer. Her military awards and decorations include multiple awards of the Meritorious Service Medal, the Southwest Asia Service Medal and the Army Parachutist Badge.

ODVA Welcomes New Deputy Director

Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs Director Kelly Fitzpatrick has selected U.S. Army veteran Sean O'Day to serve as the new deputy director of ODVA.

O'Day, who continues to serve as a judge advocate for the Army Reserve, is an accomplished attorney and government affairs specialist. He has been in public service for over two decades, most recently as the executive director of Mid-Willamette Valley Council of Governments.



He has also served as general counsel for the League of Oregon Cities and deputy city manager and deputy city attorney for the city of Salem.

"The Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs is proud to welcome Sean O'Day to our team," said ODVA Director Kelly Fitzpatrick.

"Sean's long, distinguished and dedicated service to our nation's military clearly shows his commitment to serving all those who served. He will be a valuable addition as we continue our vision of ensuring all veterans and their families thrive in Oregon."

LTC O'Day began his military career in 2005 and now serves as command judge advocate for the 451st Expeditionary Sustainment Command in Wichita, Kan. He has served as a judge advocate for the Army, Army Reserve and Oregon Army National Guard, including a tour of duty in Afghanistan, and has gained a wealth of experience helping veterans and service members, something he believes will serve him well in his new role.

"As a judge advocate, your role is often that of a problem solver, and I enjoyed the work of serving those who are serving in various ways," O'Day said. "In my civilian career, I have always like the opportunities that those in leadership positions have to help their organizations grow and succeed, and I look forward to doing that here at ODVA."

The deputy director of the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs oversees agency-wide operational and program responsibilities for ODVA, and assists the director in strategic, budget and policy implementation.

Deputy Director O'Day first reported for duty on Monday, Feb. 3.

Oregon Veteran Initiatives and Programs

Expanding Access to Behavioral Health Services for Veterans

During the 2018 Legislative Session, the Oregon Legislature invested \$3.1 million over two biennia to understand and expand services for veterans' behavioral health. This dedicated funding partnered ODVA and Oregon Health Authority to drive priorities for future funding and state services for veterans.

To begin, a portion of the funding was used to commission a study to understand the behavioral health needs of the veteran community and then firmly identify challenges and opportunities for reforms and expansion.

The resulting study, written by the Rede Group (available on the [OHA website](#)) includes:

- Information about the availability of behavioral health services for Oregon veterans.
- Findings regarding barriers veterans face in accessing behavioral health services.
- Recommendations for policy and other changes that may improve the accessibility and quality of behavioral health services for Oregon veterans.

The recommendations proposed steps to strengthen services and outreach for veterans, including:

- Reduce stigma about behavioral health issues to help more veterans feel comfortable seeking care.
- Strengthen suicide prevention programs.
- Improve care coordination for veterans and tailor services to better address the experiences those who have served in the military have faced.
- Expand the number of peer specialists who have their own first-hand knowledge of veterans issues and can provide effective support.
- Recruit more treatment providers to serve veterans.

Following the needs assessment, which included participation from more than 4,000 Oregon veterans, OHA and ODVA conducted in-depth forums to further solicit feedback on the study's 16 recommendations from veterans, service providers and policy makers. The forums were held in 17 locations across the state and included two forums for the LGBTQ veteran community and one forum focused on women veterans.

OHA and ODVA are committed to improving behavioral health services and outcomes for veterans. The results of the study and forums will be used to develop a five-year strategic plan to better meet the behavioral health needs of Oregon veterans.

To learn more about the work ODVA and OHA are doing to improve and expand access to behavioral health services for veterans visit [OHA's website](#) or watch the information hearings presented to the Legislature during [January Legislative Days](#).

Ending Veteran Homelessness in Oregon

With more than 1,400 homeless veterans in the state, and one of Gov. Kate Brown's top priorities being to functionally end veteran homelessness in Oregon, the Oregon Legislature allocated \$1.5 million in Lottery funding to Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) to develop dedicated resources to house veterans.

OHCS and ODVA partnered to better understand the specific challenges facing veterans in need of housing and dedicate funding immediately to improve existing services.

An early initiative to come out of that funding was "Operation Welcome Home," a short-term, intensive campaign that invested technical assistance in 10 communities to develop collaborative

infrastructure to serve veterans experiencing homelessness.

The initial goal of the campaign was to house 500 veterans by the completion of the project. ODVA and OHCS hosted a Veterans Convening and announced the successful completion of Operation Welcome Home with 529 veterans housed.

The effort continues across the state, including the development of a brand-new affordable housing complexes with dedicated housing for veterans.

Breaking New Ground, [Oregon's five-year Statewide Housing Plan](#), will continue to pave the way for more veterans to have access to housing opportunities and achieve housing stability and self-sufficiency through policy priorities, including ending unsheltered homelessness for Oregon's veterans and children.

Creating a New Bridge to Services for Aging Veterans

The Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs is expanding the Veteran Volunteer Program across the state after a successful pilot project aimed at recruiting and training volunteers to conduct outreach to aging veterans to help them access veteran benefits and resources.

With more than 50 percent of the state's veterans age 65 years or older, ODVA developed this program to ensure all veterans had the opportunity to learn about their earned benefits and other resources that assist with long-term care needs.

A phased rollout of the program is planned over the next two to three years and the program is actively recruiting volunteers now. If you or your organization is interested in more information, please visit [ODVA's Volunteer Program webpage](#).



I Am Not Invisible - Oregon Women Veteran Program

ODVA's "I Am Not Invisible" campaign continues to increase awareness of women veterans across the nation. The campaign was launched in 2017 through a partnership between ODVA Women Veteran Program and Portland State University Veterans Resource Center who sought to bring to light the diversity and achievements of women veterans, who are often made to feel invisible despite their courageous service.

The campaign originally exhibited portraits and stories of 20 Oregon women veterans, touring throughout the state and was invited to exhibit in the nation's capital in Washington D.C.

Shortly after, the campaign gained popularity, and many other partners, cities and states began creating their own "I Am Not Invisible" displays. Today, the "I Am Not Invisible" campaign has been recreated by 35 states and 48 cities including a campaign by the United States Department of

Veterans Affairs.

The national initiative has now included more than 2,000 portraits of women veterans, bringing unprecedented visibility to women-identified veterans across the country.

For more information about ODVA's exhibit, visit iani.oregondva.com.

Legislative Update

During January Legislative Days, ODVA provided informational presentations to legislative committees regarding partnership work around veteran behavioral health and other agency initiatives. Below are links to the informational hearing recorded videos.

Veteran Behavioral Health

January 13: [House Interim Subcommittee On Behavioral Health](#)

January 13: [House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness](#)

January 15: [Senate Committee on Veterans](#)

Update on Oregon Veterans Home - Roseburg

January 13: [House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness](#)

Update on ODVA Recruitment Efforts

January 13: [House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness](#)

Definition of a Veteran Informational Presentation (ORS 408.225)

January 13: [House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness](#)

Veteran Benefit Updates



Presumptives for Blue Water Navy

The Blue Water Navy Act (effective Jan 1, 2020) extends the presumption



Cap removed for home loan guaranty

Effective Jan. 1, 2020, the federal VA no longer limits how much you can borrow



Veterans and War Memorials Grant

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD)'s Veterans' and

of herbicide exposure to veterans who served offshore in Vietnam.

[Learn more](#)

to finance a home for its federal VA home loan guaranty.

[Learn more](#)

War Memorials Grant applications are due Feb. 13, 2020.

[Learn more](#)

Upcoming Events



Women Veterans Conference

The 2020 Women Veterans Conference is being held in Bend, Oregon on May 30-31. The conference is open and free to all women-identified veterans and provides educational opportunities to learn about earned state and federal veteran benefits, meet other women veterans from across the state and talk directly to service providers. If you are interested in attending or participating as a vendor, please visit the conference website at wvc.oregondva.com.

Oregon Veteran Benefit Expo - July 25 in Lincoln City

ODVA will host the next annual Veteran Benefit Expo at Chinook Winds in Lincoln City on Saturday, July 25, 2020. If your organization provides a direct veteran benefit or resources specifically for veterans, and you are interested in having your organization participate, please contact ODVA's Communications Office at ODVAPublicInformation@odva.state.or.us. To find out more about the Oregon Veteran Benefit Expo, please visit www.expo.oregondva.com



Black History Month - February 2020

Since 1986, the nation has set aside the month of February month to recognize the contributions of African-Americans to our nation. Many of those contributions were made through military service to a country that didn't always offer them equal civil rights under the law.

ODVA stands to celebrate and honor the experience and sacrifice of African-American veterans by

sharing stories of their historic and unique service to their country.



Lt. Clifford Allen, of the 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion, better known as the "Triple Nickles." Based in Pendleton, it was an all-black airborne unit of the United States Army during World War II.

Read "The Smoke Jumpers" from the current issue of VN Magazine

In November 1944, a group of 300 black soldiers stationed at Fort Mackall in North Carolina made military history when their unit was reorganized and redesignated as the 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion. They would be nicknamed the "Triple Nickles" (the spelling derives from Old English), because of their numerical designation and the fact that 17 of the original 20 members came from 92nd Infantry (Buffalo) Division. [Read more](#)

Women's Military History Week - March 15-21

March is the national observation of Women's History Month. In Oregon, March 19-23, 2020 is recognized as Oregon Women's Military History month. Follow along on [ODVA's Women Veteran Facebook page](#) to learn about the incredible contributions that women veterans have made in military history.

Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day - March 30

In coordination with the United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration efforts, Oregon has hosted nearly 200 commemorative events to publicly and individually thank and honor more than 34,000 Vietnam veterans and their families for their service and formally recognize veterans

who served on active duty between Nov.1, 1955 and May 15, 1975.

This year, ODVA will once again host an event to mark Oregon's official Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day designated on March 30 (National Vietnam War Veterans Day is March 29). To keep informed of ODVA events like Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day, subscribe to [event emails](#) or check out the event calendar link below.

See a complete calendar of events at oregondva.com/event-calendar

Veteran Program Highlight

Incarcerated Veterans Program

Although many federal VA benefits are affected by incarceration, justice-involved veterans may still be eligible for benefits, either at full or reduced levels.

With an estimated 6 to 8 percent of Oregon's incarcerated population being veterans, ODVA partnered with Oregon Department of Corrections in 2016 to develop a program that provides benefit and resource assistance for incarcerated veterans.

The Incarcerated Veterans Program is primarily focused on helping veterans with the reduction of benefits required by law in order to minimize the likelihood of an overpayment which must eventually be repaid by veterans. In addition, ODVA helps veterans and family members request apportionment of monetary benefits taken from the veterans.

The program also assists veterans when they are transitioning back to their communities by meeting with them in the months preceding their release to advise them on VA benefit eligibility, reactivating their full benefit entitlements and payments, and by identifying resources in their local communities that can help during their re-entry transition and post-prison experience.

To contact the Incarcerated Veteran Coordinators or learn more about the program please visit the [Justice-Involved Veterans webpage](#) or email IncarceratedVets@odva.state.or.us.

Introducing the ODVA team:

Incarcerated Veterans Program Coordinators
Shane Hagey and USAF CMSgt. (Ret.) Pat McGuffin



Career Spotlight



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