

Did You Know?

(By: Raymond P. Toczek Legion Service Officer)

312-980-4266

Raymond.Toczek@va.gov

That as Chairman of the 1st Division VA&R committee I am required to make a report each year to that Division. I thought it would be informative to our members who live outside the 1st Division to see what we have accomplished up north.

It has been a pleasure and honor to serve the First Division as your representative on the VA&R Commission for the 2016-2017 year as well as one of the two Division service officers. I attended two VA&R meetings which were held at our Bloomington headquarters as well as the Washington D.C. conference. VA benefit law changes continue and every effort was made to get this info to the Division level. This was done by way of my monthly articles in the Department and Division newsletters, oral presentations before the Division meetings and having handouts available at the meetings. I also hosted 9 Power Point presentations at local posts, senior centers, local libraries and several VA hospitals. These presentations covered the entire spectrum of VA benefits from headstones to home loans and pensions to hospital care. I hope to do more of these in the fall if appointed to this position again

The 1st. Division will have 8 resolutions submitted to our Department convention. One that was submitted last year regarding the Veterans Administration Bronze Medallion for marking private headstones was accepted and Congress passed Public Law 114-315. Veterans who died prior to 1990 and purchased their own headstone can now have the family order this Medallion.

I have been the editor of a monthly article in the Department newsletter entitled "Did You Know" and have received many favorable comments. You can view these articles (back two years) on the Department web site www.illegion.org. Feel free to copy and paste these articles into your district or post newsletters. Just give credit to Department if you do. I have also cohosted a monthly BINGO game at VA Jesse Brown hospital. Post 183, 777 and 806 were cosponsors. These games are held at 2:00 on the first Monday of the month. Veteran patients come down from the wards and outpatient clinics to play. We average 30-40 veterans per game and \$200+ is given out in prizes and raffle gifts each month. Donations for this are welcome.

The VA&R Director of the Chicago office, Wayne Macejak, was able to get some funding from Department and that office is now better staffed but we have had many personnel changes. We lost Carolina Contreras when she accepted a better job offer. She was replaced by our own former 9th District Commander, Al Pizarro who is fluent in Spanish. He served in the Army and was stationed in Germany. Terry James also left the office for a better job and there are no current plans to replace him. There are no current walk-in hours but veterans may call to make an appointment. Telephone hours are Monday through Friday from 8:00 to 4:00 with 24/7 voicemail after that.

To be continued in the next newsletter...