

Did You Know?

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That the American Legion VA&R Chicago office helps veterans and their dependents through many different means. We have walk-in hours, interviews by appointment, receive daily e-mails, telephone calls and regular mail. We also attend outreach events. Some of our contacts are routine e.g. follow up on claims, submitting new evidence or updating addresses or banking information. Other contacts involve much more and often times end up with our office filing a new or reopened claim. While we try our best to help all we serve we realize that we can't assist everyone. In those cases at least we will steer them in the right direction. Looking back at the last twelve months I want to highlight some of the more interesting and successful claims or situations we handled.

1. A veteran had been denied enrollment into the Veterans Administration hospital. She didn't have any service-connected disabilities, a purple heart, recent combat theater, etc. Her combined income including her spouses put her over the means test threshold. I explored any loop holes with her and was able to determine she had 45 days of TDY at Camp Lejeune! Due to the drinking water problem there we got her into Hines hospital.
2. Another veteran wanted to get hearing aids at the Veterans Administration but he too didn't qualify for enrollment under the various categories. Turns out his job during the Cold War was intercepting and translating Russian fighter pilots conversations. The job entailed wearing earphones most of the time. Got him service-connected disabled compensation for the resulting tinnitus and he got his hearing aids.
3. A routine call from a veteran resulted in a favorable claim for HIV. He was infected by an unfaithful spouse and didn't realize he could get service-connected disabled compensation. After all it wasn't his fault she cheated.
4. A grandson was trying to obtain a free government headstone for his grandfather. Seems when the vet died money was tight and no one in the immediate family could afford to buy one. The grave went unmarked for 45 years. The grandson did some research on the internet and was able to locate a death certificate. With that we were able to get a copy of the vet's DD 214 and two months later the headstone was shipped to the cemetery.
5. And my favorite recent case; a veteran called up requesting an increase in her service-connected compensation. Her condition had worsened since she last applied three years ago. I reviewed her records and found that they had granted her an increase back then but never processed the check. She got three years of back pay.

People are always asking me why I am still working part-time as an American Legion Service Officer. Didn't I have enough of the job with 33 years at the Veterans Administration? I simple reply that as long as I can continue to help my fellow veterans and have successful outcomes like the ones above I will continue to work and long as I can.

Hope to have the results of our state resolutions that were submitted to the national convention in next month's article.

Old age is not so bad when you consider the alternatives.