

# 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 2019 I want to highlight some of the more interesting and successful claims or situations we handled.

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1. We received a call from a member in the 9<sup>th</sup> District. Jane Doe applied for an increase in her 10% service-connected condition and was denied. Jane told us the contracted Veterans Administration exam (not at a VA hospital) was poorly done, the doctor was in a hurry, and spent most of the time looking at his smartphone. We requested a new exam but this time asked it to be held at Hines hospital. Jane had the exam and got increased to 30%. Not only does she get more money but now qualifies for a small property tax deduction and can claim her spouse and two children as dependents. She went from \$140 per month to \$541.
2. A member in the Moline area was getting treatment at Hines hospital and noticed our mini-office door was open. John stopped in to chat. After a friendly discussion and some questioning by our Service Officer there it turns out he was a jet mechanic during the Korean Conflict. His hearing was damaged from the loud jet engine noises and he developed tinnitus. He thought the time limit to file had long ago expired, that was over 60 years ago. A claim was started that day and he was later granted 10% for hearing loss and 10% for tinnitus. Got a nice retro check of \$2,700 and will now receive \$276 a month. By the way he was a 23 year member of a Post in our District.
3. Out of the 2<sup>nd</sup> District, a former Army nurse, Jane, was passing by our mini-office door at Hines and decided to stop in and ask a few questions. Her dad died 12 years ago and her mom, the widow, will soon be entering an assisted living facility. Any benefits? After some questions turns out the vet served in Vietnam and he died of pneumonia. However the secondary cause of death was

Parkinson's. That is one of the Agent Orange conditions. A claim was immediately filed, the vets records transferred in from the Veterans Administration archives and she was awarded Death and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) of \$1,319. It was a life changer for the family.

4. A member in the Moline area, called our office. She was on the VA's Non-Service Connected pension program which is based on low income. Her benefit started over 8 years ago and at that time she was advised that she should report any change of income. In the meantime she developed memory problems. She started getting Social Security and didn't report that to the VA for two years and ended up with a \$27,000 overpayment. We helped her file for a waiver (forgiveness) of the debt. Based on her medical condition it was granted and she doesn't have to pay it back.

These are a few of the more interesting cases we handled last year and it's the reason I still work as a Service Officer, even though I just turned 70!

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