



RETIREE NEWSLETTER

Retiree Activities Office (RAO)

Travis AFB, California

Summer 2022

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Disclaimer

The newsletter is an authorized electronic publication for Air Force retirees and surviving spouses, and contents are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, or the Department of the Air Force.

The appearance or mention of commercial products or services is not meant to imply endorsement by the Department of Defense or the Department of the Air Force.

Acknowledgement

Articles appearing in this newsletter are compiled from Department of Defense, Department of the Air Force, local sources, other installation RAO newsletters, and other U.S. military sources. Information has been edited and reprinted for the benefit of our retiree population.

No commercial gain is derived for this publication. News items are current as of their use in this newsletter. Please advise of any errors, omissions, or suggestions for improving our newsletter.

Your Source of Information

The RAO has a large library of booklets, pamphlets, flyers, brochures and guides offering useful information covering Veteran and Retiree Benefits, Estate Planning, Personal Loss, Consumer Protection, Security of Personal Finances and Credit, and a host of other topics.

Visit our office or email us and let us know what you need. We will provide you with copies of the requested material in office, or if requested, we will email it to you.

You can also access and download many of these guides and documents on our Northern California Facebook group pages through the Travis Air Force Base Retiree Activities Office official Facebook page.

What We Do

Our office is the link between military retirees in our area, Travis active duty units, and DOD, Federal, and State agencies that provide support and assistance to retired military and their families nation-wide.

We provide information and help our retired members, veterans and their families from all Services access the benefits they've earned from their honorable and dedicated service to our Nation and its people.

We are information central for the retired community locally and nation-wide. We provide contact information and referrals for help with retired and SBP annuitant pay issues, TRICARE services, FEDVIP enrollment, ID card renewal appointments, tax assistance, legal assistance, estate planning, and many other issues.

We are not subject matter experts; however, our goal is to get you to the right people that can help you when you need it.



From the Desk of the RAO Director

RAO Summer Closures & Events

The Travis Retiree Activities Office is closed for Federal Holidays and AMC Family Days. Here are our Summer closures through September 2022:

1 & 4 July 2022 (Independence Day Weekend—the first is an AMC Family Day).

2 through 5 September 2022 (Labor Day Weekend)

Volunteers Needed!

Ms. Bunny Dominguez, David Grant Medical Center's (DGMC) Retiree Activities Office Coordinator, needs to bring a minimum of ten new volunteers on staff.

We need people to backfill former volunteers staffing the North and South Information Desk, Lab, Pharmacy, Medical Records, and other medical center volunteer positions. Vacancies occurred due to COVID vaccine requirements and age-related medical conditions.

Volunteers provide patients with directions to DGMC's various clinics, information on-base activities and services, assist the BX and Hospital Pharmacy in dispensing prescriptions, and shuttling patient records between the clinics and Medical Records Section.

They help free up medical staffers from routine tasks so those staffers can concentrate on doing what they do best - provide medical services to Active Duty, Dependent and Retiree families.

People wanting to volunteer must have access to the installation and possess a military or dependent's ID card. Card-holding divorced spouses may also serve as volunteers.

Before starting volunteers must complete the following:

--Hospital and Team Stepp Orientation (8-hour session)

-- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act training (Annual) – covers the protection and privacy of medical records

-- Vaccinated for Flu and COVID

— TB – Tine test

People are the life-blood of the military services' volunteer programs. They are the main point of contact for retirees and family members seeking help in accessing benefits and services they earned.

Please consider offering your services a few hours each week if you have the time and motivation to do so. Please contact Ms. Bunny Dominguez at 707-423-3649 for additional information.

Other Volunteer Opportunities

The Travis Heritage Center, Airman and Family Readiness Center, and Base Thrift Shop periodically need volunteers.

We encourage anyone with the desire, time, talent, and interest to offer their talents and skills to these organizations.

We all have a stake in making life better for the entire Active Duty, Reserve, Guard, and retired military community.

Summer Hours

We have several volunteers taking extended vacations over the spring and summer months. Most of the time, our office is staffed with a volunteer to help you.

At times, volunteers may not be available due to medical appointments and personal reasons.

Please call 707-424-3904/3905 and leave a voicemail with your contact information and a description of your issue. Someone will reach out to you within 24 hours (excluding weekends). You may also email rao-travis@yahoo.com for help.

VA and State Burial Benefits

Funeral Benefits

Military retirees, veterans, and their spouses are eligible for burial in a national veterans' cemetery. The retiree or veteran must have retired or separated with a discharge other than dishonorable.

Deceased military retirees and veterans are entitled to the following:

- ◆ Headstone, grave markers, or a medallion
- ◆ Presidential Memorial Certificate signed by the current President of the United States
A U.S. Flag to drape the coffin
- ◆ Burial Allowance through the Department of Veteran Affairs
- ◆ Honor Guard (funeral homes can arrange through the installation's base honor guard administration)
- ◆ \$255.00 Death Benefit paid through the Social Security Administration

We have resource books and VA pamphlets that explain military burial eligibility and benefits in detail.

You may come into the office to get copies, or request them by email. These publications are available at no cost to you.

National and State Veterans Cemeteries

Military retirees, veterans, and their spouses that wish to be buried in a National Veterans Cemetery can submit a pre-needs request online at va.gov/

burials-memorials/pre-need-eligibility.

Pre-need requests don't guarantee burial space, but it makes your wishes known ahead of time.

If a pre-need request wasn't submitted, the surviving spouse's funeral home may contact the National Cemetery Administration's scheduling office at (866) 900-6417 and follow up with a call to (800) 535-1117.

Military retirees, veterans, and their spouses are also eligible for burial at California State Veterans Cemeteries.

You may contact your County Veterans Service Office for eligibility information and documentation requirements, or you can stop in at our office and pick up a CA Veterans Resource Booklet.

Our office has informational pamphlets and California Veterans Resource Books available that explain burial benefits in detail.

If you don't have access to a computer, please stop by our office. We have handouts, executor/survivor checklists, and resource booklets available at no cost to you.

A little advanced planning can make this transition less stressful for your family when the time comes.

Welcome Aboard

We've onboarded a new volunteer in the Travis Retiree Activities Office. We extend a hearty welcome to CMSgt (Retired) Yuriko Howell who will periodically staff the volunteer desk in our office.

We greatly appreciate the skills and expertise she'll bring to the office.

Organizing Estate Documents

Final Affairs Planning

You may know where your DD Form 214



Record of Military Service, Retirement Orders, bank account numbers, life Insurance policies, tax returns, listings of accounts, liabilities, and people or

companies that owe you money are, but that doesn't mean members of your family do!

Over the past three months, we've had several surviving spouses come in for assistance filing for Arrears of Pay, Survivor Benefit Plan Annuities, life insurance claims, and VA benefits.

The major issue was the deceased retiree/veteran had filed away important documents in file boxes, or shoe boxes without explaining to their spouses where the documents were, or what the documents looked like. In some instances, the documents were thrown away by error or lost.

We helped surviving spouses request copies of Military Personnel Files, DD Form 214s, and inpatient/outpatient records through the National Archives online interface. It used to take 3 to 4 weeks to get copies to the requester.

Backlogs at the National Archives are common. It takes a lot longer for the retiree or veteran to get copies through the mail. Lacking these documents impacts the surviving spouse at a time they don't need the additional stress and delays timely access to death benefits.

We recommend you stop by our office for a copy of the Retiree/Executor checklist, then purchase an 11/2 - 2-inch binder and a set of tabbed index sheets.

Next, go through the checklist, place each important document in a document protector and place it behind one of the indexed tab divider sheets inside the binder. Create an index sheet as you file documents in the binder.

After you've filed all the required documents in the binder, label the binder End-of-Life/Estate Planning and go over the documents with your spouse and non-sponsored majority-aged children. Let them know where the records will be stored (fire-safe/bank safety deposit box). This will help them find your records when needed to settle your final affairs.

Use the same method for a log of User IDs and Passwords. These will be needed to close online banking, retail accounts, subscription services, social media accounts, and pay bills using online bill pay, etc.

This is a recommended method. You may have your preferred way of doing it. Our point-- review our checklist, take time to plan your organization method, create your plan, and brief your family. Make sure they understand where all your important documents are stored and make them easy to find when the records are needed.

News You Can Use

Space A Travel Restrictions Lifted



The DOD lifted COVID-driven space available travel restrictions on 4/14/2022 in a memorandum sent from Paul D. Cramer (performing duties as the interim Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment).

Retirees may use space-available travel. Please be aware that Space-A travel into some countries may not be allowed due to COVID conditions within those countries.

Some countries may have additional entry requirements you need to meet before their Customs and Immigration services will allow you to enter.

If you plan on flying overseas, please check with the embassy or consulate of the country you plan on traveling to for information on entry requirements.

Travelers may check the U.S. State Department site for travel advisories that address personal safety and security concerns.

You may also call the U.S. military passenger terminal you plan to depart from to get clearance requirements. Their passenger service agents have access to the Foreign Clearance Guide and the latest updates regarding any travel restrictions currently imposed at the destination.

If you need long-term parking during a trip, please contact 60 FSS/Outdoor Recreation through the 60 FSS website for availability pricing and complete their online reservation form to reserve space before your trip.

Vacation Lodging

Space A travel and hotel rooms in military lodging are not guaranteed. Travelers need to be prepared to pay for travel costs and hotel/lodging expenses if Space A seats and base lodging accommodations aren't available.

When traveling on vacation, military retirees should be prepared to pay and reserve off installation lodging when space is not available on base.

Retirees are charged room fees when staying in military lodging.

The DOD lists lodging facilities and their room fees by installation. Current room rates can be found at the www.dod.lodging websites.

We strongly recommend retirees research lodging rates and room availability at the travel destination (both on and off base), and budget for the worst-case scenario.

Rooms may become unavailable to retirees if there is an influx of active duty coming in on temporary duty at the destination installation.

2022 Retiree Appreciation Day



We are in the planning stages of a live Retiree Appreciation Day event

this year.

It's tentatively scheduled for Saturday, October 8, 2022.

To date, we have speakers from the Casualty Assistance Office, local MOAA chapter, Aerial Port, National Veterans Cemetery Administration in Dixon, DGMCC, and TRICARE committed to brief on topics of interest to our retiree families in the local area.

We expect to line up additional speakers future. Stay tuned for more information during the summer regarding the schedule, location, and times.

Helpful Hints

Funeral Planning



Death is the one thing that makes all living things equal!

No one leaves these earthly bonds alive. Military retirees, spouses, and family members need to have frank discussions about their funeral wishes for the time they pass away.

Among the decisions you need to make are:

- Burial or cremation
- Selection of Funeral Home to handle your remains
- Internment in a cemetery, ashes scattered, placed in a Columbarium, kept by a family member
- Implanted medical devices that need removal before cremation (Pacemakers or other devices that may contain hazardous materials)
- Clothing for the deceased, viewing, and memorial, open or closed casket

- Military retirees – military honors (yes/no)
- Memorial/religious service before burial or cremation?
- Hairstyling and makeup
- Flowers for your memorial service, burial, or cremation

There are other items you may want to consider, so the best course of action is to contact several funeral homes and mortuaries in your area to gather as much information as possible.

Ask lots of questions during the selection process. Consider your surviving spouse and family's financial situations when making your decision. Don't strap them with a lot of debt. It's a time when everyone is in a state of emotional stress and not a great time to make rational decisions.

Make sound choices based on the services you want and their costs. Make your selection and execute your plan.

Planning now should take a lot of stress off your loved ones during this critical time.

Locating benefits, services and contacts online

New computer and internet connected tablet users often have a challenge locating specific information online.

You don't need to write down, memorize, or type in long complicated Uniform Reference Library (URL) codes to get to the web page you're looking for.

DOD and Branch of Service web addresses can be lengthy and aggravating.

The easiest way to navigate to your topic is to use a Boolean search.

Type the topic in the browser's (Chrome, Firefox, Safari, etc.) search bar enclosed in quotation marks (example: "TRICARE cost shares and deductibles") and press the enter key on your keyboard.

Your browser will list every topic that contains that verbiage. Ninety-eight percent of the time the information you're looking for will be found within the first five links.

Click on the link after reading the description. Chances are, you will find your information.

Happy hunting!

Identity Fraud, Theft & Day Tripping

Protect Your Identity and Assets



We are in a tough economy now and we are experiencing a jump in scammer activity.

Scammers are ingenious and come up numerous ways to liberate your cash from you, destroy your credit rating, and saddle you with debt you didn't create.

They may fish for your personal information using email, text messaging, and direct calls to your cell phone or landline.

Be wary of calls where a person or agency contacts you with good news about winning a prize, money, or gift.

Usually, to collect the prize or money, they will ask you for personal information. After collecting your information, you may receive a congratulatory message explaining your claim has been processed.

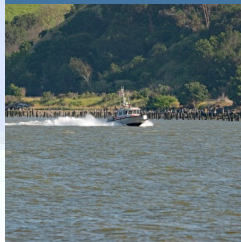
However, they will state you need to send them money to cover taxes and fees before they can send you the check, cash, or prize.

This scenario is a scam. If you get a text message, phone call, or email offering a similar deal, hang up if it's a call. Delete text messages and email from unknown senders.

To get more information about current scams and how to avoid them, visit the Federal Trade Commission website at [Scam Alerts | Consumer Advice \(ftc.gov\)](http://ScamAlerts.ConsumerAdvice.ftc.gov).

A deal or offer too good to be true probably is! Be careful and protect yourself.

Benicia State Recreation Area



If you need a budget-friendly activity over the weekend, Benicia State Recreation Area is a low-cost site to visit.

It's located 20 miles from Fairfield and it's a short drive down I-80 and I-870 (Columbus Parkway exit in Vallejo) to get there. Keep a close eye on the exit ramps and bear right at the end of the ramp.

The area is open from 8:00 AM until sunset each day.

There's a parking fee of \$6.00 and parking is limited.

Once the parking lots are full, the park's staff prevent entry.

Benicia State Recreation Area features hiking and mountain biking trails, nature observation trails, picnic areas, and other amenities.

The area features a botanical garden featuring native California plants. The garden draws a variety of songbirds.

The nature viewing areas are good places to view wading shorebirds and the Benicia/Martinez harbor.

If you like to fish, there are plenty of places along the hiking trails that parallel the Carquinez Straits where you can set up your rods and fish (make sure you have a license).

If you need information, you may call 707-648-1911 or visit their website at [Benicia SRA \(ca.gov\)](http://BeniciaSRA.ca.gov).

The site offers a brochure you can download that covers activities and amenities offered and plants and wildlife you might encounter while visiting.

There are public restrooms available located near the last parking lot.

We encourage you to visit, get some fresh air, and enjoy a picnic lunch.