



VFW News

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Woodstock VFW Post 5040 and Auxiliary



Heartland Blood Centers

Your community blood service since 1943

Fifth annual blood drive collects 31 units and yields a winner

By Matt Klos, VFW News Editor

On January 18, Woodstock VFW Post 5040 hosted its 5th annual blood drive and pancake breakfast. This year's blood drive Chairman, Alan Belcher, reported that 31 units of blood were collected. "Ralph Ritter did most of the work," Alan said, "Thanks to all those that helped out."

Collecting this year was Heartland Blood Center which has traditionally parked a collection bus in the VFW parking lot. Up to four donors at a time can

give blood in the bus. Leading the Heartland team was Amanda Freeman. Her team consisted of Jennifer Pfeifer, Steve Bekoe, Joseph Neu (bus driver and collection specialist), and Debbie Williams.

It was an early day for all who helped out. The Heartland team left Aurora at 6:00 am, arriving at the VFW at 7:00 am to set up. While they were setting up their bus, the VFW volunteers were busy inside preparing the lower hall for the pancake breakfast. A free pancake breakfast (pancakes, sausage, eggs, orange juice, milk, and coffee) was given to each donor. Helping out at the VFW was Ralph Ritter, Brian Ritter, Alan Belcher, Charlie Mathey, Bob Gibson, Jeanie Kulinsky, VFW Commander Fred Noble, and Larry Dhom. They started about 6:30 am.

One of the perks in this year's drive was that all donors would be entered into a drawing for a \$100.00 gas card. The drawing was done from a pool of donors over

the last several weeks and included our donors in the raffle. Whiles sometimes you never really hear if anyone won, our drive was lucky enough to produce a winner! **Congratulations to David Dhom (VFW member Larry Dhom's son) who was the winner of the \$100.00 gas card!**

For the past several years, our Post has only held one blood drive a year. This year, we are working with Heartland to schedule several more for this year. We are even considering a joint drive with the Woodstock Moose. The next drive scheduled at the VFW will be April 5. As this date draws closer, look for announcements in the *VFW News*.



Nick Mathey left (Charlie Mathey's grandson) and Thomas Byrd (right), Hank Engstroms son-in-law, give blood in the Heartland Blood Center bus on January 18. Attending to Nick is Jennifer Pfeifer, one of the team of five team collection specialists at the drive. (Photo by Matt Klos).

Come down to the Post for our
4th Annual Turkey Fry
 February 19, 5-8pm
 \$6.00 per person
 All you can eat
Menu:
 Deep fried turkey, potato pancakes, baked beans, coleslaw, roll & butter

Ladies Auxiliary News

Sent in from a relative of Mary Lou Mishler, "I do not know if Mary Lou Mishler is still on the membership roles of the Auxiliary or not, but I know that for many years she was. She passed away January 8th at Skagit Valley Hospital in Mount Vernon Washington. The family is having a memorial and celebration of her life on Friday January 16th at 3:00PM at the Gilbertson Funeral Home located at 27001 88th Ave NW, Stanwood Washington. She has resided in her home on Camano Island for the last 13 years."

Our condolences to her family.

**Happy Valentine's Day
from VFW Post 5040
and the Ladies Auxiliary**

Win a free trip to the Veterans Golf Classic in Myrtle Beach, S.C.

KANSAS CITY, MO, - If you received a Purple Heart for wounds sustained in the Persian Gulf War, Iraq or Afghanistan, you could be one of 8 lucky vets to win VFW's trip to compete in the Veterans Golf Classic beginning on May 17, 2009.

Airfare, hotel accommodations and tournament entry fee for each winner are included.

Each player must have a United States Golf Association slope handicap or must be able to validate 5-6 of your most recent scores to be eligible. Don't miss this chance.

Only one completed entry per veteran will be accepted and must be received prior to the drawing on April 1, 2009. Winners will be notified by mail or e-mail in April.

To fully qualify for the trip, winners must send a copy of their Purple Heart documentation to VFW National Headquarters by April 15, 2009.

Winners will receive:

- Coach airfare from your hometown to Myrtle Beach, S.C.
- Four nights of accommodations in Myrtle Beach, S.C.
- Transportation to and from tournament courses.

Don't forget: Turkey Fry, February 19, 6pm

Who is the US ARMY?

From the internet: www.army.mil

The average Soldier is:

RANK: E-4 (Corporal / Specialist)
AGE: 22
TIME IN SERVICE: 4 Years
BASE PAY: \$1,978.50/month
EDUCATION: High School Graduate
MARITAL STATUS: Married w/ two Children
RACE: 60% Caucasian/40% Minority
GENDER: 85% Male/15% Female
AVERAGE WORK DAY: When the mission is complete

† Chaplains report †

By Pete Lockinger

Current Members on the Sick List

- LaVerne Emricson
- Glenn Fringer
- Bob Gaylord
- Dean Mishler
- Jack Meyers
- Ashley Wilson

Draping of the Charter

- Richard "Dick" Galke
- Jack Wendt

Please keep these members in your thoughts and prayers.

VA to offer Health Care to previously ineligible veterans

WASHINGTON, Jan.8, 2009 – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today plans to re-open enrollment in its health care system by July 2009 to about 265,000 veterans whose incomes exceed current limits.

"We're pleased to be able to offer what has been called 'the best care anywhere' to many more new veterans," said Dr. James B. Peake, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. "We'll be able to provide these newly enrolled veterans with the kind of timely, high quality health care veterans who already use our system are accustomed to."

The change affects veterans whose incomes exceed the current VA means test and geographic means test income thresholds by 10 percent or less. Congress provided funds in VA's fiscal year 2009 budget to support the new enrollment.

In 1996, Congress established a priority-based enrollment system for VA and a uniform package of medical benefits for all enrollees. The legislation opened enrollment in VA's health care system to all eligible veterans and required that each year the Secretary of Veterans Affairs assess veterans' demand for services and determine if the necessary resources are

available to provide timely, quality care to all enrollees.

Enrollment for the lowest priority of the eight groups—veterans who are not being compensated for a military-related disability and who have incomes above a set threshold—was suspended on January 18, 2003, although veterans in that priority group who were already enrolled for care were permitted to remain enrolled.

VA originally suspended enrollment for Priority 8 veterans because it was unable to provide all enrolled veterans with timely access to its health care due to a tremendous growth in the number of veterans then seeking enrollment. VA now plans to reopen enrollment for a portion of these veterans without compromising the Department's ability to provide high quality health care services to all enrolled veterans who are eligible for care.

VA's computer systems are being modified to accommodate the changes, and the Department is preparing communication and education materials to ensure that Congress, veterans service organizations, and the public are aware of the coming changes.

"The rule will take effect by June 30, 2009, if the regulatory process proceeds smoothly," Peake said. "We look forward to welcoming these newly eligible veterans into the VA system. VA will continue to monitor wait times to ensure the quality of care is not adversely affected."



5th Annual Blood drive volunteer help. Pictured from left is Ralph Ritter, Brian Ritter, Alan Belcher, Charlie Mathey, Bob Gibson, Jeanie Kulinsky, VFW Commander Fred Noble, and Larry Dhom. (Matt Klos photo).

Upper left photo: Flags waving. Our VFW Post flagpole in the background flies the American flag, matching the flag on the Heartland Blood Center collection vehicle. Above photo: Collection vehicle in front of our VFW Post. (Matt Klos photos).



US soldier in Afghanistan contacts VFW about donating items for Afghani children

By Matt Klos, VFW News Editor

When it comes to helping out those in need, the VFW likes to get involved, especially when it comes to helping our soldiers overseas. A request came in about a month back to our VFW through email and was brought up in our monthly VFW meeting. Major Ed Collins, a resident of Indiana, is the son of Larry Collins who is a local resident of Woodstock. Maj. Collins left the US on Veterans Day 2008 (November 11), arriving in Kyrgyzstan to begin his current overseas tour. From Kyrgyzstan, he entered Afghanistan where he will spend the next seven to ten months.

Maj. Collins' request was that of a particular need. He was looking for an organization to help out and knowing VFW member Ralph Ritter, contacted us to see if we could help. "The kids here would love to get soccer balls. They can be deflated and sent to me, with a hand pump, and we can inflate them. When we are out in the cities, we throw the kids these balls, and the next day we see them playing with them. They love soccer here," wrote Maj. Collins, "Also, school supplies and clothing for orphanages would be good too."

To start helping, our VFW Post voted to donate \$300.00 to help with gathering and sending items as they come in. A box has been set up at the entryway into the VFW bar to collect items. The story doesn't end here though. As with several of the soldiers in our Post, they have some neat stories to tell about their service which I always like pass on to our readers.

In an email, Maj. Collins gave details about his background. I found it really amazing when I emailed him late one Sunday night that I was conversing with someone in the armed forces, in another country, in a hostile battle zone. He is about 10 1/2 hours ahead in time zones, but within 6 minutes, I already had a response back with an answer to my email. Here is some information that Maj. Collins provided:

I am a Major in the Indiana Army National Guard, currently deployed to Afghanistan in Operation Enduring Freedom. I am assigned to the city of Mazari Sharif, in the Balkh Province of northern Afghanistan. I am the Operations and Com-



Convoy through a village. (Maj. Collins photo).

munications Officer for the Regional Police Assistance Command. Our mission is to provide assistance, mentoring and training support to the Afghan National Police at the regional level (much like what a large group of states in the US would be - Eastern US, Central US, etc). There are nine provinces (which equate to our states) in this region. We have several teams that work for us up here that provide the same services to police at the district level (equates to our counties) and policeman walking a beat. Here in the north, we work very closely with foreign nationals from several countries, all here to do the same thing. Ultimately, we are trying to get the Afghans to be able to provide a safe and secure environment for their people to live and work in, much like what we enjoy in the USA. The other countries that I am currently working with are Germany, Norway, Finland, Sweden, Croatia, and I have some contact with personnel from Latvia and Belgium.

This city, Mazari Sharif, is the 3rd largest city in the country with a population of 350,000 people. It is home to the 3rd most holy shrine in all of Islam (worldwide), known as the Blue Mosque. It is a Sunni shrine, which the large majority of Afghanistan is Sunni Muslim. This is a site we see once or twice a week normally. There are a lot of markets around the Mosque, as well as government offices and other businesses.

A little about me. I have been in the US

Army for over 25 years. I joined the Army in 1983 as a Private, became a radio repairman, and was assigned to West Germany for 3 years. After getting promoted to Sergeant, I moved to California to learn how to speak Czech and Slovak at the Military Language Institute. I left active service, attended Northern Illinois University, graduating in 1992 and became a Second Lieutenant in the Active Army, Armor Branch. I was assigned to Fort Hood, TX, and later became a Signal Officer (Communications) at Fort Hood. In 1996 I left active duty, moved to Indiana, and joined the Indiana National Guard. I became a Company Commander and an Operations Officer. In 2002 I deployed to Bosnia as a Communications Officer in Brčko, Bosnia. I am currently, when not deployed, a full time Guardsman, Director of the Indiana National Guard Simulations Center at Camp Atterbury, Indiana.

I am married to another full time Guardsman, SFC Lisa Collins. I have four children and one granddaughter. My oldest daughter, her husband, and daughter live in Colorado Springs, Colorado. My next daughter lives in Broomfield, Colorado. My third daughter lives in Quincy, Illinois, and my wife and son live in Noblesville, Indiana.

If the people of Woodstock would like to help a little and actually know that they are making a difference in the lives of some simple, hard working friendly people, they can donate school supplies, soc-

cer balls (the favorite sport here other than Buzkashi - a game similar to polo), and clothing for children. There is an orphanage here in town. The children, boys and girls, are allowed to wear tennis shoes, t-shirts, slacks, and warm jackets and gloves, as well as stocking hats. When the girls get older, they will wear a burkha (an enveloping outer garment worn by women made from felt), but they still wear warm clothing underneath. Even though I am in Afghanistan, we get snow here. It has snowed here twice already and gets down to near zero during the winter months. In general, it is much like central Illinois in weather. We are surrounded by large mountains on two sides and the Uzbekistan border is just 25 miles away.

The people here are extremely impressive in that they truly just want to be free to live peaceful lives. They have been at war for 40 years - literally, without pause. It would be wearing on any culture, and has been especially so here.

Hopefully our Post can help out Maj. Collins and send over some donated items. I'll keep you posted with what becomes of this and maybe even get some more pictures back. If you feel inclined to help out, please contact the *VFW News* Editor (Matt Klos - email on last page), our Post (815)-338-5040 or Ralph Ritter, (815)-338-5018.



Maj. Collins under an overhang. Notice the snow on top of the overhang . (Maj. Collins photo).



The Shrine of Hazrat Ali, also known as the Blue Mosque, is a mosque in Mazari Sharif, Afghanistan.

The building itself gives the city in which it is located, Mazari Sharif (meaning "Tomb of the Exalted") its name.

It is about 3 km from my base camp. I drive by it nearly every other convoy I go on.

(Photo by Maj. Collins)

NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

From the VFW Washington Weekly Newsletter (2009/01/30)

Army Recalls Body Armor: The Army is recalling more than 16,000 sets of body armor to ensure that no one in the field is wearing defective equipment. The precaution is being done to settle a disagreement Army has with a Defense Department report that said some ceramic plates failed during a testing phase called "first article testing," which is the initial step to ensure new products meet Army standards. The DOD Inspector General said some of the plates were not tested correctly, whereas Army said there was no evidence of any

imperfections in the plates. The ceramic plates are the bullet-proof part of a soldier's body armor that slide into the front and back of the vest. Army Secretary Pete Geren denied any problems with testing, but said the armor is being recalled as a precaution. The recall represents less than 2 percent of the 1.9 million sets of body armor that have been fielded since 2001. Army officials added that not one soldier has been killed because of an armor defect. The VFW will continue to monitor this issue.

Reserve Component Mobilization:

The total number currently on active duty in support of the partial mobilization for the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 94,070; Navy Reserve, 6,148; Air

National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 15,289; Marine Corps Reserve, 7,417; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 746. This brings the total number of mobilized Guard and Reserve personnel to 123,670, a decrease of 1,920 from last week. These figures include the totals of voluntary and involuntary activated Reserve Component members. Of this total, 90,657 personnel have been involuntarily mobilized, while 33,013 are voluntarily serving on active duty. Total activated since 9/11 is 690,092.

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From the Editor's Desk

By Matt Klos,
VFW News Editor

Hello to my fellow VFW Comrades. Happy February. I hope, where ever you may be, you are warm and dry. It has been a cold winter here in the Midwest and snow seems to have stuck around forever.

I hope you didn't mind the extra stories in this newsletter that were not directly related to our Post. I tried to find something interesting that you might want to read. Unfortunately, I didn't have much to put into the newsletter about our Post.

I always struggle with these issues sometimes. It's frustrating. I've mentioned this before, but each month I have two main issues to deal with in producing the newsletter.

The first is how many stories do I have to work with. From the VFW meeting, emails, conversations, etc. I try to accumulate tidbits throughout the month. Then the following weekend after the monthly meeting, I start going through what I have to see what I can use in the newsletter.

The second is the size of the issue. This is always tough because I worry about the cost. Do I do a four pager or an eight pager? Six pages is out of the question because of extra handling by the printer. It costs less to print eight pages rather than six.

When I do have more to put into the news letter than will fit in four pages (taking into account the last page contact information, the calendar page, and our advertising space), I begin to get concerned. Will I have enough to fill all eight pages then? If not, then what will I fill it with?

You can see the results this month. I had some stories, but not enough to fill all the gaps. Therefore, some of the pictures are larger, some stories are from the internet, and I spaced things out where I could.

And look at that. I wrote just enough in my "From the Editor's Desk" column to fill up what space I needed and complete another issue of our newsletter.

Ok, wrap it up to send to the printer. See ya!

★

WOODSTOCK AMERICAN LEGION

Meets Second Monday of Each Month
 (Except December) at the VFW at 7:30 P.M.

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Bill Lyford asks our VFW members to come to dinner

On the third Monday of each month, VFW members can come down to the Post for a pre-meeting dinner. "I don't stay for the meeting because I can't hear very well. However, I do come out for the dinner. It's a chance to catch up with people," said Lyford.

For those of you that have been avoiding coming to the monthly meeting because you cannot hear very well, we encourage you to at least come for the dinner. Your comrades would like to see you. ☺

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February 2009

☆☆☆☆☆☆ Post Normal Operating Hours (unless noted otherwise - closing times vary depending on patronage) ☆☆☆☆☆☆

Closed	4:00 pm - 8:00 pm	4:00 pm - 8:00 pm	4:00 pm - 8:00 pm	4:00 pm - 8:00 pm	4:00 pm - 9:00 pm	3:00 pm - 7:00 pm
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 <i>National Freedom Day</i>	2 Memorial Day Committee 7 pm Little League 7 pm Girls Softball 7 pm VFW Board Mtg. 6:30 pm <i>Groundhog Day</i>	3 Woodstock Jaycees Board Mtg. 7:30pm	4	5 VFW Ladies Auxiliary Meeting 7pm	6 Friday Dinner Special: Salmon Loaf (\$8) and Stuffed Pork Chops (\$8) 5 - 7:30 pm Lightning Raffle 7 pm	7 Saturday Raffle 4 pm
8 <i>Boy Scouts of America Founded (1910)</i>	9 VFW Officers Mtg. 7 pm American Legion Post 412 7:30 pm	10	11 Cub Scouts - 7 pm Celebrity Bar Tender Night, 7-9 pm	12 <i>Lincoln's Birthday</i>	13 Friday Dinner Special: Prime Rib (\$12) 5 - 7:30 pm Lightning Raffle 7 pm	14 Saturday Raffle 4 pm  <i>St. Valentine's Day</i>
15	16 VFW Meeting 6:30 pm - Dinner (VFW Members Only) 7:00 pm - Floor mtg. Deadline for March 2009 VFW News items <i>George Washington's Birthday Observed (Presidents' Day)</i>	17	18 Veterans Assistance Commission of McHenry County 7:00 pm	19 Marines 7:30 pm Marines Auxiliary 7:30 pm Turkey Fry, 5-8pm \$6.00 All you can eat. Deep fried turkey, potato pancakes, coleslaw, backed beans, rolls and butter	20 Friday Dinner Special: BBQ Ribs (\$10) 5 - 7:30 pm Lightning Raffle 7 pm	21 Saturday Raffle 4 pm
22 <i>Washington's Birthday</i>	23	24 Woodstock Jaycees General Mtg. 7:30pm <i>Shrove Tuesday</i>	25 <i>Ash Wednesday</i>	26	27 Friday Dinner Special: Meatloaf (\$8) 5 - 7:30 pm Lightning Raffle 7 pm	28 Saturday Raffle 4 pm
1 <i>Asiatic Fleet Memorial Day</i>	2 <i>Vietnam War Begins (1965)</i>	3 <i>"Star Spangled Banner" Made U.S. National Anthem (1931)</i>	4	5 VFW Ladies Auxiliary Meeting 7pm	6 Friday Dinner Special: Salmon Loaf (\$8) and Stuffed Pork Chops (\$8) 5 - 7:30 pm Lightning Raffle 7 pm	7 Saturday Raffle 4 pm

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WOODSTOCK VFW NEWS

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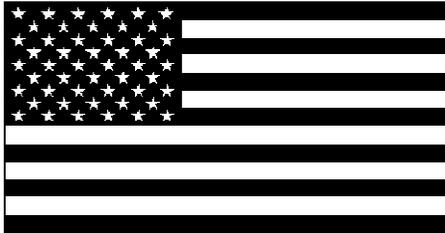
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This month's issue:

- Results of our 5th Annual Heartland Blood Center Blood Drive
- Maj. Collins in Afghanistan sends story
- Large pictures to view
- More...

Upcoming Events:

- Every Friday, dinner Specials.
- **February 14: Don't forget your sweetheart. It's Valentine's Day!**
- **February 19: Turkey Fry 5-8 pm; \$6.00 per person.**

VFW POST 5040, WOODSTOCK
We are open to the public!

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