



VEO NEWS



A NEWSLETTER FOR THE COMMUNITY OF VETERANS AMONG THE FEDERAL EMPLOYEES OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- ◆ *Memorial Day 2017*
- ◆ *Rolling Thunder's 30th*
- ◆ *Native American Vets*
- ◆ *Remembering D-Day*
- ◆ *News from the VA*
- ◆ *Who's Who at VEO?*

Agriculture Offers Veterans Promising Career Choice USDA Provides Assistance for Beginning Farmers, Ranchers



By Michael A. Alston

WASHINGTON— I am honored and humbled to serve as the current USDA Military Veterans Agricultural Liaison. In this role I hope to build off the great work of my predecessors and position USDA and the field of agriculture as promising and fulfilling career choices for Veterans

As veterans who are part of our USDA employee community you know firsthand what it means to serve and sacrifice and then transition out of the service into a new career. That journey can be challenging. I want to share with you a few of the initiatives we have across the USDA to make this process a little easier for veterans choosing to work in agriculture.

Military veterans are eligible for preferences, priorities, and incentives in current USDA programs. We also consider Veterans to be part of the beginning farmers and ranchers communities, and as such they have access to a host of additional benefits and discounted rates on crop insurance as well as other resources.

Access to credit is essential for many farmers and ranchers, whether to help them start a business, expand a business or make it through a tough year. In 2016

alone, USDA provided more than \$187 million to veterans through 1,500 direct and guaranteed loans. Veterans also qualify for programs that make it easier to acquire capital for a farm operation. For example, the microloan program, offered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA), offers up to \$50,000 to small and mid-sized farmers.

Veterans are not subject to the term limits applied to other USDA direct operating loans for this program, and will have a limit on the interest rate charged for operating loans. USDA is also improving veterans' access to land through the FSA's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

Landowners who lease or sell land to Veterans who are farmers receive additional CRP payments as an incentive to transfer their land to Veterans under this program. These are just a few examples of how we are helping Veterans who are interested in getting into agriculture.

We also want to hire Veterans at USDA, either at our headquarters offices in Washington or at our more than 2,100 offices across the country. Veterans bring skills to the agricultural community, and we want those smart, experienced folks to come work with us. Currently, more than 13 percent of the USDA workforce, or 12,000 employees, are Veterans. I am so proud of that number but know that number can grow.

(Continued on Page 3)



This Month in Military History

Armed Forces Day, Memorial Day 2017

WASHINGTON—May is a time for remembrance of servicemen and women, both living and those deceased.

The nation marked Armed Forces Day on May 20 to thank current all-volunteer military members for their patriotism to our country. They answer a call to action just like generations during previous conflicts, and serve daily in harm's way around the world.

The nation also paused on May 29 to reflect on service members who gave their lives in the line of duty. For 149 years Americans set aside Memorial Day to honor those who perished, and as President Lincoln notably described, for their *last full measure of devotion*. Their ultimate sacrifice is remembered in all manner of events from solemn ceremonies to festive celebrations.

Slightly more than one percent of the U.S. population today experiences the reality of military service. While Americans express support, firsthand understanding about military life impacts just a segment of society.

With passing time stories about a family member's military service and sacrifice sometimes fade, but in Washington, D.C. traditions and symbols endure. At Arlington National Cemetery the Secretary of Defense, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff accompanied the President to lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

"If you have ever known one of the fallen, you have known greatness. But it is hard to be content with their silence, for we miss them. The empty chair on a holiday, empty every day. The photograph that goes wherever you do. The picture fades, but the person in it does not," said Secretary of Defense James Mattis.

"In a world awash with change, some things stand firm," he added.



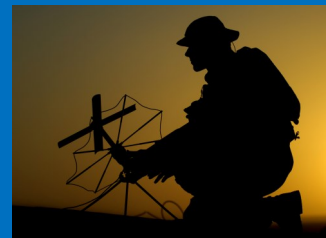
Soldiers from the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment, *The Old Guard*, participate in the *Flags In* mission at Arlington National Cemetery May 25, 2017. Soldiers place an American flag at every grave marker in the cemetery annually prior to Memorial Day. (Photo by Sgt. Nicholas Holmes)

He spoke to an audience that included Gold Star Mothers and families of the fallen. "The kid on the line who never got a chance to grow old will always be there to teach us that suffering has meaning if it is accepted out of love for others," said the former general who enlisted in the Marine Corps as a private 48 years ago.

"Their fighting spirit persists, passed down through the ranks, their spirit echoes in those who serve today in the air, on land, and at sea," he said.

Currently the Defense Casualty Analysis System reports that 6,905 service members died in military operations beginning on October 7, 2001. While most served in Afghanistan, Iraq, or both, casualty areas also include Southwest Asia, the Philippines, the Middle East, the Arabian Sea, and parts of the Mediterranean Sea.

Got a question or suggestion?
Maybe you might want to share your story, or about a veteran co-worker?
Send it to tonya.johnson@fns.usda.gov
or call (703) 305-2069





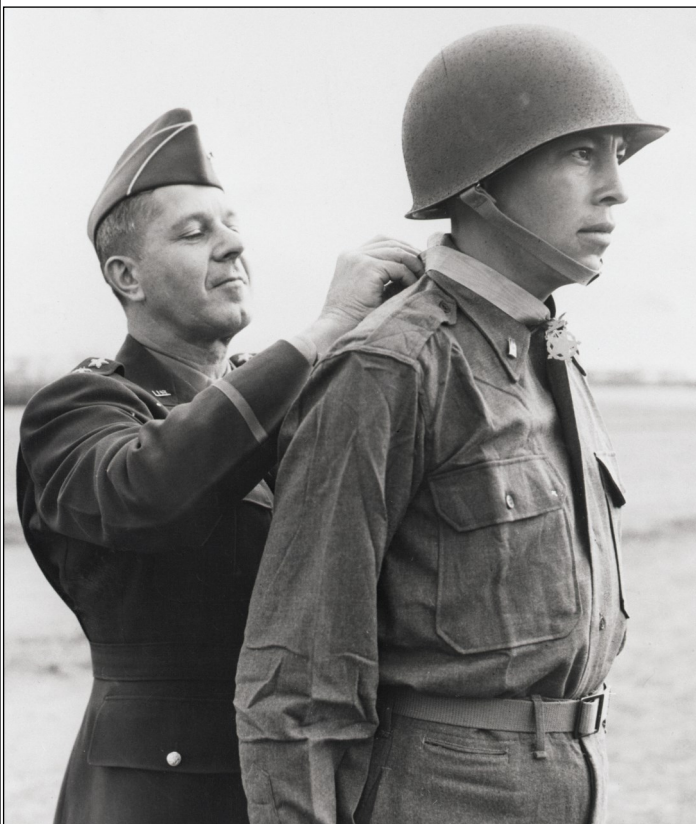
Memorial to Honor Native American Veterans

Dedication Planned on Smithsonian Museum Grounds

By David Vergun
Army News Service

WASHINGTON — A memorial to Native American veterans will be erected on the outside grounds of the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian.

The anticipated dedication of the National Native American Veterans Memorial is Veterans Day, Nov. 11, 2020, according to Rebecca Trautmann, project manager of the memorial.



Army 2nd Lt. Ernest Childers, from the Muscogee Creek nation, receives the Medal of Honor from Army Lt. Gen. Jacob L. Devers, at 5th Army headquarters in Italy, April 8, 1944. (Photo courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian)

Ben Nighthorse Campbell of the Northern Cheyenne Nation, and Chickasaw Nation Lt. Gov. Jefferson Keel are leading an advisory committee of tribal leaders and veterans in assisting with outreach to Native American nations and tribes and advising on plans for the memorial,

Trautmann said.

The advisory committee and the museum are also seeking community input and support for the memorial, she added. "Regional events bring together tribal leaders, Native American veterans, and community members to gather insight and advice." There have been some 30 consultations to date with several more planned this summer.

Trautmann noted that the memorial has received congressional approval and that no federal funding will be used for the project. The project is expected to cost \$15 million and donations are being solicited.

Eileen Maxwell, public affairs director of the museum, said the memorial is fitting because "Native Americans have served in the armed forces in every major military conflict since the Revolutionary War and in greater numbers per capita than any other ethnic group."

She added that today, the Defense Department estimates that some 24,000 American Indian and Alaska Native men and women are on active duty, and more than 150,000 veterans self-identify as American Indian or Alaska Native.

(Continued from Page 1)

As Veteran employees of the USDA, I hope you can support me and our Vets-to-Ag efforts as you engage with fellow Veterans and current service members. It is critical that we get our message out to the thousands of service members and Veterans in order to inform and educate them about all the great programs USDA has to offer for those who are looking to transition and to get them into a career in agriculture. For more information on our Vets-to-Ag efforts, visit www.usda.gov/veterans.

Thank you, and your families, for your service and your continued service with the USDA.

[Mr. Alston is currently Acting Deputy Undersecretary, Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services, and Military Veterans Agricultural Liaison.]

Veterans, Ceremonies Commemorate D-Day

World War II Service Members Mark 73rd Anniversary of Historic Landing

By Army Spc. Kelsey M Little

SAINTE-MERE-EGLISE, France, June 5, 2017— "There are moments in a nation's history when its future course is decided by a chosen few who walked bravely into the valley of the shadow of death," said Army General Curtis M. Scaparrotti during a wreath-laying ceremony at the Iron Mike Memorial in tribute to the 1944 allied landing in Europe.

"In such moments, young men and women pledge their lives so that their nation can live," said NATO's supreme allied commander for Europe and the commander of U.S. European Command.

U.S. Army paratroopers from the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, the 101st Airborne Division, and the 82nd Airborne Division; French, British, Dutch and German troops; French nationals; and family and friends par-



World War II veteran Vince Speranza receives a hug as an appreciation for his service during a dinner in Sainte-Mere-Eglise, France, June 3, 2017. (Photo by Army Master Sgt. Sean McCollum)



Two D-Day veterans who participated in the liberation of France share a laugh in Saint-Laurent-sur-Mer, France, June 5, 2017, while attending a ceremony to commemorate the 73rd anniversary of D-Day. (Photo by Airman 1st Class Alexis C. Schultz)

ticipated in the ceremony, marking the 73rd anniversary of the D-Day landings in France.

Each year, countless visitors come to visit the Iron Mike Memorial here. The 14-foot tall statue of a World War II-era airborne soldier is a copy of a sculpture that stands at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The statue was

erected to pay tribute to the numerous American paratroopers and infantry soldiers who lost their lives in this area of France.

An inscription on the Iron Mike Memorial statue says that about 254 U.S. soldiers were killed and 525 were wounded during the Battle for La Fiere Bridgehead, June 6-9, 1944.

"This 500-yard stretch of causeway transformed a unit, defined its character and inspired an Army," he said.

Costly Battle

"The Battle of La Fiere was the most significant operation of the 82nd Airborne Division during World War II," Scaparrotti said. "It was also the costliest small-unit action in the history of the U.S. Army."

During the early days of the Normandy invasion, the small bridge and causeway over the Merderet River, along with a nearby bridge and causeway at Chef du Pont, were critical objectives for both sides. For the Germans, they were essential to breaking up the American landing at Utah Beach. And the Americans needed to control the river crossing to expand their beachhead in Normandy.

(Continued on Page 5)

Veterans, Ceremonies Commemorate D-Day

World War II Service Members Mark 73rd Anniversary of Historic Landing

(Continued from Page 4)

Even though the Americans were lightly armed, the Germans were never able to cross the bridge.

"Several hundred airborne warriors seized a causeway that helped free a continent and end a war," Scaparrotti said.

The National Commander of the American Legion, Charles Schmidt, noted that each of the attendees and participants who gathered at the ceremony stood in the same place as those who fought and died for the liberation of Normandy during World War II.

"Our promise is that no matter how many years pass, the world will never forget their sacrifices," Mr. Schmidt said. "We as a nation are committed to this memory."

More than 160,000 Allied forces landed in Nazi-occupied France on June 6, 1944 as part of the biggest air, land and sea invasion ever executed. It ended with heavy casualties—more than 9,000 Allied soldiers were killed or wounded in those first 24 hours. But D-Day is largely considered the successful beginning of the end of Hitler's tyrannical regime.



Army paratroopers pose for a photograph with a child after participating in an airborne operation to commemorate D-Day in Sainte-Mere-Eglise, France, June 4, 2017. (Photo by Alexis C. Schultz.)



A vintage C-47 Skytrain flies over Caentan, France. More than 350 paratroopers from the U.S., France, and Germany participated in D-Day events this year.

TOTAL ALLIED TROOPS

« WHO LANDED IN »

NORMANDY: 156,115



American
73,000

British
61,715

Canadian
21,400



ALLIED AIRCRAFT

THAT SUPPORTED LANDING

« 11,590 »



NAVAL VESSELS

INVOLVED IN D-DAY

« 6,939 »



MORE THAN

[10,000]



ALLIED CASUALTIES



{American casualties}
6,603

{British casualties}
2,700

{Canadian casualties}
1,074

Spotlight on Memorial Day

Events Offer Solemn Reminders, Provide Healing



WASHINGTON—As the nation rendered honors to those who fought and sacrificed, consider that 50 years ago there was a backlash against returning servicemen from Vietnam. Anti-war demonstrations more frequently replaced parades and recognition. Since then veteran activists, especially those who served in elected office, have worked to restore healing and pride to that generation.

Estimates of 900,000 bikers, highlighted by veteran organizations, descended on Washington Memorial Day weekend for the 30th annual Rolling Thunder demonstration May 28. They traveled from across the country and even Canada to raise awareness and solidarity for America's missing in action and prisoners of war. This year Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, and Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. David Shulkin joined the ranks of riders who staged at the Pentagon before the noon start time.

Among aging Vietnam veterans, the yearly pilgrimage becomes an emotional camaraderie highlighted by a wreath laying at Arlington National Cemetery, and a candlelight

vigil at the Vietnam Memorial. It's their welcome home as much as a time to heal.

Thoughts often turn to friends with whom they served—a *battle buddy* still living, or perhaps a memory captured by a photograph taken decades ago. While emotional, their Memorial Day offers an opportunity to inspire understanding of men and women who gave their lives in the line of duty.

According to the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, more than 83,000 Americans remain missing from WWII, Korea, Vietnam, the Cold War, the Gulf War, and other conflicts.

Currently the Defense Casualty Analysis System reports that 6,905 service members died in military operations beginning on October 7, 2001. While most served in Afghanistan, Iraq, or both, casualty areas also include Southwest Asia, the Philippines, the Middle East, the Arabian Sea, and parts of the Mediterranean Sea.

Rolling Thunder 2017

Heavy Metal, Heavy Rains Fuel Memorable Ride

ARLINGTON, Va.—Throughout its 30 year history the *Rolling Thunder* motorcycle rally has evolved beyond accountability for service members who were prisoners of war or remain missing in action.

Today it is also a premier demonstration of patriotism that unites Americans across generations. That includes supporters like the trucking industry, veterans groups, military families, and the public. Rolling murals depicting images of battles, detailed symbols of freedom, and national pride also stage at the Pentagon's North parking lot. Like their two-wheeled counterparts, they increase in number each year.

Beyond color, the trucks add vivid reminders of America's recent military engagements,



kick-off. A lone bugler playing Taps, followed by the National Anthem, preceded the official signal to start engines.

As if on cue, rain began to fall, heavily at times, on bikers who had been waiting patiently for hours. But it dampened neither spirit among riders, nor enthusiasm among crowds lining the route.

As bikes splashed and engines roared, supporters waved flags along the Memorial Bridge, Constitution, and Independence Avenues. Rolling Thunder goes on annually — rain or shine.

the fallen, and unaccounted service members.

The rally traces its origin to 2,500 motorcycles loudly announcing their appearance on Capitol Hill in 1987. Back then the founders, mostly veterans of the war in Southeast Asia, named their demonstration *Rolling Thunder*, after the 1965 bombing campaign over North Vietnam. This year an Air Force B-52 bomber jet paid a symbolic tribute as it flew low over the Pentagon parking lot just before the noon

Shout Outs!

[If you know a veteran that goes above and beyond, nominate them for the Veteran Spotlight so we can also get to know how awesome they are! Send nominations to: tonya.johnson@fns.usda.gov]



News from USDA Headquarters

VA: Beware of Fake Telephone Number Involving Veterans Choice Program

VEO President's Corner

By Tonya Johnson



WASHINGTON—The Department of Agriculture's Veterans Employee Organization (VEO) Executive Board consists of members representing several of the 29 agencies at USDA. Current members include:

- Ms. Tonya Johnson (FNCS), VEO President
- Mr. Yowei Peralta (AMS), Vice President
- Dr. Lisa Fyall (GIPSA), Executive Board Member
- Mr. Randy Vanadisson (APHIS), Executive Board Member
- Ms. Tammy Moody (NRCS), Executive Board Member
- Mr. John Bowe (NRCS), Executive Board Member
- Mr. Roseal Fowlkes (DM), Member at Large

The VEO extends its appreciation to our Executive Champion, Mr. Malcolm Shorter for his continued support and the confidence he has placed in our team. We do not take that confidence for granted.

The position of secretary is presently vacant.

VA Warns of Recent Telephone Scam

WASHINGTON—The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently took action in response to a phone line that appeared set up to take advantage of veterans who misdialled the *Veterans Choice Program* telephone number.

The two phone lines differed only in area code. **The correct *Veterans Choice Program* phone line is 1-866-606-8198**, while the imposter phone line was using 1-800-606-8198. The fake line did not provide information about the *Veterans Choice Program* or its eligibility criteria. Instead it claimed to offer callers a \$100 rebate if they provided a credit card number.

A statement from the VA said that “the VA would never ask veterans for such information or offer any type of financial incentive through the *Veterans Choice Program* phone line. The VA is also taking the attempt to imperson-

ate its *Veterans Choice Program* phone line very seriously. VA is acting to ensure veterans are not exploited by getting the word out. It is also working with the VA Office of the Inspector General to take legal action and ultimately shut the fake line down.”

According to the VA, “Veterans can tell if they have reached the correct phone line, if the phone line automatically states the caller has reached the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.” The fake line would incorrectly confirm that callers had reached the *Veterans Choice Program*. If veterans are unsure if they reached the correct phone line, the VA recommends that they immediately hang up and make sure they dial **1-866-606-8198** correctly.

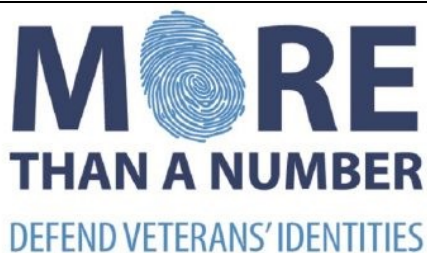
The VA is urging veterans to call the *Veterans Choice Program* phone line at **1-866-606-8198** with questions and to determine eligibility. More information on the *Veterans Choice Program* can also be found [here](#).

In addition, the [VA Identity Safety Service](#) offers a toll-free identity theft help line to veterans and their beneficiaries who believe that they are at risk for identity theft: **1-855-578-5492**. It operates Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (Eastern Standard Time) with voicemail for after-hours calls. Any calls pertaining directly to VA data are referred to VA staff and investigated accordingly.

Find out more about how to protect yourself from identity theft at [VA's More Than A Number: Identity Theft Protection website](#).

If you are already enrolled in VA health care, the *Veterans Choice Program* allows you to receive health care within your community. Using this program does not impact existing VA health care, or any other VA benefit.

On April 19, 2017, President Trump signed a law that removed the August, 7, 2017, expiration date and allows VA to utilize funding dedicated to the Veterans Choice Program until it is exhausted. The program increases access to care by authorizing appointments and expanding the availability of medical services for eligible veterans with community providers.





Veterans Administration News You Can Use



June is National PTSD Awareness Month



Learn

Connect

Share



LEARN—PTSD Treatment Works

Discover the facts.

Start with [PTSD Basics](#), key information about trauma, PTSD and treatment options. [Download our Understanding PTSD and PTSD Treatment](#) (PDF) brochure. For more advanced information, we offer many free, in-depth [Continuing Education Courses](#). Professionals can earn continuing education credits for most courses.

Explore your options.

Take the mystery out of PTSD treatment. Watch our short whiteboard video [PTSD Treatment: Know Your Options](#) to learn which treatments are best and use the [PTSD Treatment Decision Aid](#) to find the treatment that is best for you. Or visit [AboutFace](#), a website where Veterans, their family members and clinicians talk about turning life around with PTSD treatment.

CONNECT—Reach out

Help someone. Help yourself.

Do you think you might have PTSD or know someone at risk? Take action. Find out [what to do if you think you](#)

[might have PTSD](#) and learn [where to get help](#).

Give support. Get support.

If you are getting treatment, or have finished treatment for PTSD, we have [self-help tools](#) for managing stress. If someone you love has PTSD, get tips on how to take care of yourself while you support your loved one. See [support for family and friends](#) or get started with the [PTSD Family Coach mobile app](#).

SHARE—Spread the Word

Pass along what you learn.

Connect with us on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) to get up-to-date information or ask us questions about PTSD and treatment. [Subscribe](#) to our email publications - PTSD Monthly Update, Clinician's Trauma Update-Online, or PTSD Research Quarterly - and let others know they are free. Download and share this [printable PDF](#) to raise PTSD awareness .

Work together.

Join our PTSD Awareness campaign! We have [tips and materials](#) to help you organize an event or share information about PTSD and effective treatments.

In Their Own Words by Tonya L. Johnson

Meet the Veterans Employee Organization Staff Members

VEO Welcomes New Vice President

ALEXANDRIA—Join me in welcoming our new VEO Vice President, Mr. Yowei Peralta. Yowei has served as the VEO AMS representative since the organizations inception and has tirelessly worked to raise veterans' initiatives through his agency in the form of recruitment of veterans and internship programs. I first met Yowei during the building phase of the VEO and have worked with him at several Hiring fairs and events.

Yowei served in the U.S. Army for 11 years both as an enlisted and commissioned officer. He was the architect of AMS' new apprenticeship program launched in coordination with Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Labor. He is in the process of extending this program across the department. In addition, he is developing a multi-layered framework to produce the next generation farmers by coordinating with other departments, agencies, academia, cooperative extension programs, and non-profit organizations in the implementation of the new farmer rancher program.

Yowei has also coordinated with senior and executive staff, industry, private sector, and non-profit organization launching the first ever terminal market food waste challenge resulting in over 1.6 million pounds of food diverted from land fields into food banks as part of the Secretary's Food Waste Challenge initiative.

He is a member of the Federal Publishing Council which is commissioned to develop recommendations to enhance combined efforts of Federal organizations and Government Printing Office in providing the most efficient, effective and economical publishing services.

In his spare time Yowei volunteers with *Team Rubicon* and *The Mission Continues*:

Team Rubicon is non-profit disaster response organization that unites the skills and experiences of military veterans with first responders to rapidly deploy disaster response teams, free of charge to communities affected by disasters across the country.

The Mission Continues is non-profit that leverages the skills and unique experiences of current and former service members and deploy to neighborhoods in disadvantaged circumstances or that have been impacted by poverty and

violence.

Yowei has received a number of awards, including the Martin Luther King, Jr., Drum Major Service Award (2016), USDA Secretary's Award for Volunteer Service (2013), and administrator's award.



Yowei continues to find new ways and resources to help strengthen our mission. As a part of our VEO Strategic Plan, I have appointed him to lead our FY17 key initiative to establish two main task-area committees. By aligning ourselves with the Veterans Employment Program Offices, we will tackle the areas of recruitment, onboarding, retention, employee development and most importantly continually providing our veterans with the resources they need. We will also partner with Military Veterans Agricultural Liaison (MVAL) to foster inter-agency coordination and develop relationships with external groups such as *Wounded Warrior Project*, *Women Veterans Interactive*, and *Project Healing Waters*. We will continue to build and re-brand the VEO to help veterans where we work and where we live. Your continued support, participation and voice can and will make the VEO a success.

Tammy Moody Joins VEO Board

ALEXANDRIA, Va.—Tammy Moody's wish to join the VEO, and be an active board member stems from her deep desire to help, support, and bring her personal experiences to show others they are not alone. Not only has she served in the military, but she was a daughter of a veteran, and is also the wife of veteran that is 100 percent disabled from combat-related injuries. Tammy is mother to a son currently serving in the Army and preparing for his first deployment as a forward observer.

I asked Tammy to submit a short biography.

"I entered the Army in June 1991 from Nurnberg, Germany, and attended basic training at Fort Jackson, S.C.. and advanced individual training at Fort Eustis, Va. Prior to moving to Germany with my husband, who was also serving, I grew up in the rural farming area of Ozark, Mo. "I lived on a 15 acre hobby farm and assisted my grand mother with her cattle ranch in Cedar Creek, Mo.

(Continued on Page 11)

In Their Own Words by Tonya L. Johnson

Meet the Veterans Employee Organization Staff Members

“My military assignments included Fort Sill, Okla. Baumholder, Germany, and Nahbollenback Army Depot, Germany as a Transportation Specialist. After leaving the military, I used my GI Bill to attend college and continued to work for the Department of the Army as a civilian in the transportation field and as a deployment specialist.”

“In the short five years while I was a soldier on active duty, I reached the rank of sergeant, and received many awards and titles including *Soldier of the Year for 21st TAACOM*, *NCOA Soldier of the Year*, and three Army Commendation Medals. As a civilian employee with the Department of the Army, I received the Commanders' Award for Civilian Service, the Achievement Medal for Civilian Service twice, and was inducted into the Tribal Order of the Cheyenne for contributions to the Army Apache Training Program.”



“I hope to use the experience, knowledge and understanding of this group of brave men and women to properly represent them, and to be their voice when needed, to help fight and to protect their veteran’s rights, as well as those rights that can be inherited by their family members.”

“Some fun facts about me: I love to travel and while volunteering with the *Global Medical Foundation*, I was fortunate to visit Ethiopia.”

“I love to paint, ride my motorcycle and watch the Isle of Mann TT races.”

Biker, Rocker, Rolls into VEO Board

ALEXANDRIA, Va.—Randy Vanadisson has more than 20 years experience in federal service with a strong background in investigations management, security, emergency communications, surveillance, equal employment opportunity issues, report writing, and liaison work. I asked Randy to submit a short biography. Please take a moment to welcome him.

“I’ve been with USDA’s Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) for over nine years. I am currently serving as the Secretary for the APHIS Safety and Health Committee. Previously I served as a Federal Air

Marshal for just under five years. During my time as an Air Marshal, I was selected as the Detroit Field Office’s EEO liaison between management and FAMS. I worked for four years as a Civil Rights Investigator for the Department of Education and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.”

“I served three years in the Army and during my enlistment, earned an Army Commendation Medal, two Army Achievement Medals, a Good Conduct Medal, and the Korea Defense Service Medal. I managed ground surveillance systems engaged in intelligence gathering for the 66th Military Intelligence Company, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment in Fort Carson, Colo., and the 102nd Military Intelligence Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division in Camp Es-sayons in the Republic of Korea. During my time in Korea I was selected to lead opposing forces teams in war training missions. Due to success in this assignment, I was selected to continue this mission full-time for three months, along with participating in real-world surveillance missions along the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea.”

“In 2013, I co-founded the *Libertarians Motorcycle Club* with two other veterans. One of our primary missions is helping veterans. We do this through raising money, conducting street feeds, helping homeless vets find shelter, food, transportation, and counseling if necessary. During the 2015 street feeds in Olympia, Wash., we served 22,000 plates of food and collected three tons of food donations. I am thankful I never saw combat, and have the utmost respect for those who have. When I see a vet who is down on his luck, I feel a pull to do something about it. In my personal life, I am surrounded by people who feel the same way.”

“Two Fun facts about me: I was once a rock star singer back in the late 80s heavy-metal days. I was signed to *Select Records* and had two videos in rotation on *MTV* in the U.S. and in Europe. (*We have a Rock Star in the VEO!*—Tonya)

“I became the Ohio State division II fencing champion in 1991 and was ranked nationally in the top 40 that same year.”

In Their Own Words by Tonya L. Johnson

Meet the Veterans Employee Organization Staff Members

Montana Conservationist, Soldier, Outdoorsman Joins VEO Ranks



MISSOULA, Mont.—John Bowe is a 16 year Veteran of the Army National Guard and Reserve. He is a native of Cadott, Wisconsin, with strong family roots based in agriculture and both sides of his family were involved in dairy farming, and the land that was homesteaded on my mother's side in the 1850s is still in their family today. I asked John to submit a short bio - please take a moment and welcome John.

Growing up in Wisconsin and Western Montana, I have always had a strong interest in the outdoors and in natural resource management, and refined those interests in college- graduating in 1998 from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point with a degree in Soil Science. I began my career with the NRCS in 2002- working as a Soil Conservationist in Culbertson and Deer Lodge, Montana, moving over to the Missoula Field Office as the District Conservationist in 2008. In Missoula, I have the opportunity to manage a diverse workload in Missoula and Mineral Counties- with a focus on forest, range, and irrigated cropland management- along with a growing clientele of organic producers. I am a past Chair of the Montana NRCS Civil Rights Advisory Committee, and during my tenure oversaw the development of the initial mentorship program set up for new employees within the state, and also worked to increase the level of training that committee members received, and in turn passed along to the employees that they represented.

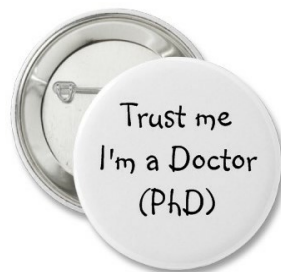
I deployed to Afghanistan in 2012-2013 as a Logistics Management Officer. In this capacity I managed tactical convoy operations in the southern part of the country and had the opportunity to work with Afghans engaged in shipping and commerce activities. While in Afghanistan I also had the chance to look at local agricultural activities- particularly melon and pomegranate production, and spent time discussing these activities with local agricultural development teams when I was able to do so.

My pastimes numerous outdoor activities- including hunting and fishing, and spending time at my cabin in Northwestern Montana whenever possible, especially with my two girls. I also like to garden with the kids, and have

also recently ventured into the world of beekeeping this past year. I am also an avid history buff, especially military subjects and the old west. I also like to travel- especially out to the coast, and particularly enjoy the Olympic Peninsula and San Juan Islands. I enjoy sports, especially baseball and football- and like any good Cheesehead am a diehard Green Bay Packers fan!

Passion, Humor, Commitment Drive Former Army First Sergeant to USDA

WASHINGTON—Dr. Lisa Fyall began her Federal Government career with the USDA, Farm Service Agency. She served with the GIPSA MBS Management Services as a supervisor since February 2011. Dr. Fyall provides guidance and interpretation on human resources and management regulations, policies, and procedures. Management services operations include travel, telework, work life programs, fleet, realty, and awards. Dr. Fyall credits the military with her successes in life. When Lisa and I finally got a chance to talk on the phone for the first time many weeks ago, that conversation lasted about 45 minutes and I knew then that her passion, humor, background, and commitment to public service is just what the *doctor* ordered (*Editor's note—Tonya's attempt at humor.*) Please join me in welcoming her to our team!



“Prior to my employment with USDA, I was a member of the Virginia Department of Transportation Civil Rights Staff as the Title VI Program Manager. I retired from the Army as a Sergeant First Class, and served my country for twenty years. In 2016, I graduated from The George Washington University with a Doctorate of Education in Human and Organizational Development. My concentration is on Adult Learning in respect to developing a synergy between the workforce and the organization to create an environment that stimulates growth, opportunity, and advancement. You cannot achieve what you do not know. My goal is to ensure all USDA veterans know and achieve. I am looking forward to lending my knowledge and skills to the Veterans Employee Organization.

(Continued on Page 13)

In Their Own Words by Tonya L. Johnson

Meet the Veterans Employee Organization Staff Members

(Continued from Page 12)

Together we can make things happen.”

Dr. Fyall is committed to assisting veterans reach their full employment potential through education and empowerment.

Fun facts About Dr. Fyall

“Two mantras that guided me thorough out my careers, Federal and Army were from MSG Vigil (Ret) in 1987. He told me, ‘*Always be an asset, never a liability,*’ and ‘*You can’t lead from the back.*’ Although the last statement was about running during physical training, it fits everything in life.”

“I am a big fan of Viking, Middle Age, Classic, and Science Fiction movies and television. I am anxiously awaiting the new season of *Game of Thrones*. One of my favorite movies was from Alfred Hitchcock’s, *Dial M for Murder*. I have watched this movie at least ten times, but always see something different.”



VEO President Runs, for Veterans 24/7

For the last four years Tonya Johnson represented the USDA VEO either on committees, as a representative, as vice president, as the USDA Connect site administrator, and now proudly as VEO President.

“I remember working on the first membership drive in July of 2013 when the VEO was only 75 members strong, and I was the only representative from FNCS. I remember when the VEO was referred to as the VAC and we had our first bylaws proposal and discussion on how to welcome new members, and that is when I became more than just a member – I became part of a growing team. The VEO did not start because we needed our own group. There are many veteran organizations out there. The VEO is our voice. It is our community connection, and it is our safe place.”

“Through the USDA VEO I have participated in 3.5 years of hiring fairs with my colleagues, and at weekend events on my own time. Advocacy does not stop when you

clock out. I am a Veteran 24/7. If I had to highlight one of my proudest achievements it would be that. I was able to participate in the intra-agency Women Veterans Initiative that through collective efforts will continue to bring focus to employment of women veterans in the federal government. This council humbled me, and taught me that there is so much more to do, but I believe the foundation was established and that the ongoing progress will show for many years. I am more than just this write up. I am here to represent each and every one of you.”

“*What does it means to be a Veteran in USDA?* That is the question I ask myself and others everyday. I knew that in order to effectively capture the *voice* of the veteran, additional discussions needed to be held. Those discussions would provide the necessary feedback to compile and consolidate a list of recommendations, concerns, and establish a committee to represent our veterans at USDA.”

“I worked with the USDA VEO Executive Board to help advance veteran hiring at USDA and create an online forum for VEO members through *USDA Connect*. On a smaller scale, I needed to connect with my own agency veterans to grasp their feelings. I sent out another call for membership in April of 2016 for FNCS/VEO membership and committee leads, the responses were very positive and participation is increasing. Our veteran feedback includes: (a) Onboarding veterans and veteran awareness; (b) Employee awareness; (c) Internal communication and upcoming events. I believe the USDA VEO is committed to partnering and participating in activities that will amplify the role of veterans at USDA. I intend to continue that forward thinking on a larger scale with our VEO Executive Board, our representatives and our members! I look forward to working with all of you.”

Fun Facts About Tonya Johnson

“I am a veteran, mom, wife and a triathlete who took a year off to train, (2016 was insane with races. My husband put me on a budget. Oh—and my bike crash, stitches, broken ankle, bruised ribs, and knocked-out tooth helped with the take-a-year-off decision.) to kayak, and section-hike the Appalachian Trail during the day. I find a sense of calm in the outdoors. I start training for Iron Man Atlantic City in January 2018. My Ragnar team and I will also be preparing to go to Hawaii for the Ragnar in 2018.”

News From USDA Headquarters

Armed Services Blood Program Celebrates Donor Day

WASHINGTON—Don't wait until disaster strikes. What can you do? *Give blood. Give now. Give often.*"

That's this year's theme for World Blood Donor Day. Sponsored by the World Health Organization each year, World Blood Donor Day is celebrated June 14 and acknowledges the millions of men and women who roll up their sleeves to give blood. This year's campaign focuses on the need for blood donations in emergencies.

Celebrated on the birth date of Karl Landsteiner, the Nobel Prize winner who discovered the ABO blood group system, World Blood Donor Day made its debut in 2005. Since then, the day has served as a way to raise awareness about the need for blood and blood products and to honor those who voluntarily donate blood on a regular basis.

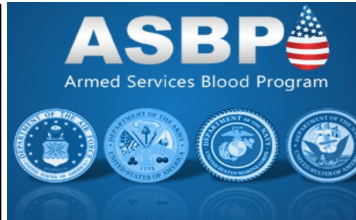
Of all of the World Blood Donor Day objectives, perhaps the most important one is the need to build a wider public awareness of the need for committed, year-round blood donation.

"Because blood may be needed at any time, it must be collected regularly. No one expects to need blood; however, if it is not available when the need arises, the consequences can be fatal," said Navy Capt. Roland Fahie, director of the Armed Services Blood Program.

"Blood and blood products cannot be stored indefinitely and cannot be manufactured. Regular donors are vital to the success of any blood collection program," he said.



A USDA employee donates at the Armed Services Blood Program during the recent quarterly drive.



"When you think about the idea that 40 or more units may be needed for a single trauma victim, or that a single unit of blood can sustain a premature infant's life for two weeks, it makes the decision to roll up your sleeve pretty easy. We hear all the time that there is no better feeling than saving a life, but only about five percent of eligible donors actually donate. That's why regular donors are so important in ensuring blood is available year-round."

As one of four national blood collection agencies in the United States, the Armed Services Blood Program was established in 1962. The ASBP is the sole blood provider for the U.S. military and now operates more than 20 blood donor centers worldwide. The program's main goal is to provide blood and blood products to ill or injured service members and their families worldwide – whether it's on the battlefield overseas or a military treatment facility in the U.S.

"The military is a very fluid organization. We do a lot around the world," Navy Capt. Roland Fahie said. "We have to make sure that we are able to support blood needs at locations all over the globe and respond often times very quickly. Therefore, we must continue to learn from our transfusion practices of the past, support and evaluate our needs now, and plan for the transfusion needs of our warriors and beneficiaries for the future."

"Our mission and outreach are not only to help our service members, but also to make sure, especially if we are partnering with another country and helping them develop infrastructure, that they can meet international safety standards and help their people — and even our people — if we get hurt," Fahie said. "We have assisted several countries with developing national standards for blood safety, and now we are looking at how we are going to implement those standards throughout the country."

"Right now, we supply blood and blood products for approximately 1.3 million service members and their families across the nation and around the globe every year," Fahie said. "That means we have a constant need for blood and for blood donors. Without donors, we wouldn't be able to do what we do."