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**The Office of Veteran Affairs at the University of Florida would like to welcome you to the March edition of our Monthly Veterans Newsletter.**

**-UF VA TEAM**



### **Operation Gator Gratitude**

Omega Delta Sigma – National Veterans Fraternity and Collegiate Veterans Society have joined forces with Gator Community Outreach to collect items needed by our troops. All donations will be sent as care packages to UF students currently deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. Requested items include socks, non-perishable food and snacks, and hygiene products. A complete list of items can be obtained from the Veteran's Affairs Office located at 222 Criser Hall, located next to the Registrar. All items can be dropped off at this location as well. Operation Gator Gratitude will run until Friday, March 27 at 5:00 p.m. For more information visit: <http://amagator.com/ogg.pdf>

### **Updated New GI Bill information**

We encourage all veterans attending University of Florida to visit the Questions and Answers section located at <http://www.gibill.va.gov/>. The website will be kept up-to-date as new information comes out about the New GI Bill. Currently there are answers to questions about the kicker program, college funds and the amount of tuition eligibility. However, be cautious, as information on the website might not be relevant if you are Active Duty or Reserve, so please be specific when you are searching the Questions and Answers section of the website. The website also allows you to sign up for e-mail updates.

### **University of Florida Student Wins Alachua County Veteran of the Year**

The 4<sup>th</sup> annual Alachua County Veterans Banquet was held on January 31 at the Clarion Inn and Conference Center in Gainesville. Collegiate Veterans Society former president Dan Wojcik was nominated for and won "Alachua County Veteran of the Year". Among the nominations were nominees from 11 local veterans organizations including the VFW, American Legion, and DAV. This prestigious award is voted on by the Alachua County Veterans Advisory Board and is given to the veteran who gives the most back to the Alachua veterans community. Wojcik was nominated by the University of Florida Collegiate

Veterans Society for his work both on campus and in the community. During Collegiate Veterans Society's reestablishment in 2006, Wojcik worked hard to make the organization what it is today and to prove to the community veterans organizations that the younger generation can have an impact on the veterans community. Wojcik's most recent accomplishment is the implementation of the Veterans Fountain located at the Reitz Union Green Pond. Congratulations to Dan Wojcik and all other nominees!

### **Florida Dependents Scholarship**

The State of Florida provides scholarships for dependent children and spouses of Florida veterans or service members who died as a result of service-connected injuries, diseases, or disabilities. The dependents of veterans or service members who have been verified by the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs as having service-connected 100% total and permanent disabilities also qualify. The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs will certify the official status of veterans or service members.

Application: Applicants must submit a completed (error free) Florida Financial Aid Application by April 1; applicant must ensure that the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs certifies their eligibility.

Value: two semesters of annual tuition and fees for up to 132 credit hours at eligible public post-secondary institutions. Please visit the website below for more information:

<http://www.sfa.ufl.edu/programs/childrenof.html>

### **Returning Veterans Outreach Program at the VA Hospital**

The Veterans Outreach for Integration of Care and Education (VOICE) is a new program offered through the VA Hospital to help provide a seamless transition for new veterans and their significant others. This program is designed to provide information on educational, health, and transition plans facilitated by the VA. Unlike most VA programs, VOICE is open to spouses, girlfriends, boyfriends, other family members, or close friends of the veterans who may have questions.

If you would like more information on this valuable new program, stop by the Veterans' Affairs Office at 222 Criser Hall for a brochure and contact information.

### **I am a Dependent, Am I Eligible for CHAMPVA?**

The Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA) is a comprehensive health care program in which the VA shares the cost of covered health care services and supplies with eligible beneficiaries. The program is administered by Health Administration Center, and their offices are located in Denver, Colorado.

Due to the similarity between CHAMPVA and the Department of Defense (DoD) TRICARE program (sometimes referred to by its old name, CHAMPUS), the two are often mistaken for each other. CHAMPVA is a Department of Veterans Affairs program whereas TRICARE is a regionally managed health care program for active duty and retired members of the uniformed services, their families, and survivors. In some cases, you may be eligible for both/either program on paper. However, if you are a military retiree, or the spouse of a veteran who was killed in action, you are and will always be a TRICARE beneficiary; you cannot choose between the two. Please visit the website below for more information:  
<http://www.va.gov/hac/forbeneficiaries/champva/champva.asp>

### **Veterans Homestead Exemption**

Eligible veterans with service-connected disabilities of 10% or more shall be entitled to a \$5,000 property tax exemption. To qualify for this homestead exemption, a veteran must be a bona fide resident of the state. Every person who is entitled to a homestead exemption in this state and who is serving in any branch of the Armed Forces of the United States may file a claim for a homestead exemption. Servicemen unable to file in person may file through next of kin or duly authorized representatives. Please visit the website below for more information:  
<http://www.floridavets.org/pdf/fvbg.pdf>

### **Student Veteran Organizations**

#### **Collegiate Veterans Society**

**Meeting Time:** Fridays at 11:00 a.m.

**Meeting Place:** Tigert Hall, University Relations Conference Room

**Contact:** Justin Levine, [jblevine@ufl.edu](mailto:jblevine@ufl.edu)

<http://grove.ufl.edu/~veterans>

#### **Omega Delta Sigma – Veterans Fraternity**

**Meeting Time:** Tuesday at 5:30 p.m.

**Meeting Place:** ROTC Building, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

**Contact:** Andrew J Kisz, [ufkisz@ufl.edu](mailto:ufkisz@ufl.edu)

<http://grove.ufl.edu/~omegadel>

For archived newsletters, please visit: <http://registrar.ufl.edu/va/news.html>.