



Mile High Flyer

Air Force Association

Denver, Colorado

An independent air and space organization



Mile High Chapter # 127

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Winter 2004 edition

*****UPCOMING EVENTS*****

March – National Women’s History Month
 March 20 – First day of spring
 March 31 – Chapter quarterly meeting (Heather Ridge)
 April 4 – Daylight-saving time starts at 2 a.m.
 April 9 – POW/MIA Day
 April 18 – UVC banquet (Marriott at I-225/Hampden)
 April 23 – 24 – Rocky Mountain Regional Workshop
 May 9 – Mother’s Day
 May 14 – Armed Forces Day luncheon (Radisson SE)
 May 15 – Armed Forces Day
 May 31 – Memorial Day
 June 14 – Flag Day
 June 20 – Father’s Day
 June 20 – First day of summer
 August 20 - 22 – State AFA convention, Denver Radisson

From the chapter president
 By Barbara Baldivia Flores

This is proving to be a very busy year for your chapter. We are sponsoring several activities within the Mile High area.

Our chapter is co-hosting with the Association of the United States Army (AUSA) and the Aurora Rotary Club for the March 2004 membership luncheon. Col. Allen Kirkman, commander, 460 ABW, Buckley AFB, is the guest speaker.

The luncheon is Wednesday, March 31, with the social at 11:30 a.m. and lunch at noon at the Heather Ridge Country Club north of I-225 and Iliff in Aurora. Cost for the luncheon is \$20. Be sure to put this on your calendar and RSVP by March 26 to Jack Powell by calling (303) 755-2484.

The Armed Forces Week awards luncheon is Friday, May 14, at the Radisson SE Hotel at I-225 and Parker in Aurora. A social begins at 11:00 a.m. and lunch follows at noon. Cost for the luncheon is \$30. The Aurora Chamber of Commerce and several other military organizations host this event.

Be sure to get your reservations in early. The average attendance is 200 to 250 people, to give you an idea of the

support from the community in recognizing our military members. Please RSVP by May 10 to Jack Powell by calling (303) 755-2484.

Your chapter sponsors the Distinguished Graduate Award for the Airman Leadership School at Buckley AFB. The graduation banquets are March 25, May 6, Jun 17, and Jul 29. Contact me at (303) 676-4275 if you are interested in attending one or more of these banquets.

This year the National Convention for the Arnold Air Society/Silver Wings NATCON is at the Adams Mark Hotel, Denver from April 9-12 (Easter Weekend). Your chapter is sponsoring some of the activities for this grand event.

Participants include cadets and Silver Wings members from all AFROTC detachments (approximately 150 units) and their advisors (active duty Air Force officers) from approximately one-fourth of the units. There is an AFA-sponsored luncheon April 10 for \$20 per person.

Members from National AFA to include John Politi and/or Pat Condon and members of the Aerospace Ed Board/Staff are scheduled to attend the luncheon. The Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Gen. John Jumper, will most likely attend a portion of the NATCON. Total attendance is 1200 to 1500, so be sure to make your reservations early.

Make plans to attend all the events at the State AFA annual convention that our chapter is hosting in 2004. The golf tournament is at Mira Vista and the banquet is at the Radisson SE at I-225 and Iliff in Aurora, Friday, Aug. 20. The business meeting is Saturday, Aug. 21. More information will follow in the Summer 2004 newsletter.

This is only a brief summary of upcoming activities. However, other activities in which we are involved include aerospace education, providing scholarships and grants to our members, and identifying science classes that need funding due to school budget constraints.

If you are interested in volunteering to help continue all AFA does for our military families and communities, please contact me at (303) 676-4275 or barbara.flores@dfas.mil

Country salutes hospitalized vets

The week of Feb. 14 each year allows everyone the chance to say thank you to a special group of men and women, more than 98,000 veterans of the U.S. armed services who are cared for every day in VA medical centers, outpatient clinics, and nursing homes.

The purpose of the National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Program is to:

- ? Pay tribute and express appreciation to hospitalized veterans;
- ? Increase community awareness of the role of the VA medical center;
- ? Encourage citizens to visit hospitalized veterans and to become involved as volunteers

Gerald McRaney was the 2004 chairperson. A celebrated actor, McRaney played a U.S. Marine in the television show "Major Dad."

As chairman, McRaney led VA's annual patient recognition program inviting the public to visit and honor hospitalized veterans across the country from Feb. 9-15 and throughout the year.

He also served as a national spokesperson for the nearly 100,000 volunteers who serve veterans in VA facilities.

During the national salute, VA invites individuals, veterans groups, military personnel, civic organizations, businesses, schools, local media, celebrities and sports stars to participate in a variety of activities at VA medical centers.

Contact your nearest VA Medical Center and ask for voluntary service to discover the wonderful things you, your group or organization can do to salute America's Heroes.

Project Vote Smart provides voting tools

Thousands of candidates and elected officials are swarming the media whether it is through television, radio, newspapers or magazines. But do you really know who works for you? Do you know who is seeking your vote?

Project Vote Smart, a citizen's organization, has developed a Voter's Self-Defense system to provide you with the necessary tools to self-govern effectively: abundant, accurate, unbiased and relevant information.

As a national library of factual information, Project Vote Smart covers your candidates and elected officials in five basic categories: biographical information, issue positions, voting records, campaign finances and interest group ratings.

What would you like to know? Access our library of information through either the menu on the left hand side or the links above.

To find out more about PVS, call our Voter's Research Hotline 1-888-VOTE-SMART with any questions.

Regional AFA workshop set

By Chuck Zimkas, Colorado AFA president

It's official! Our Rocky Mountain Region Workshop dates are April 23 – 24 in Cheyenne, WY. The host chapter is the Cheyenne Cowboy Chapter.

The workshop site is the Hitching Post Inn in Cheyenne. The inn is a community partner of the Air Force Association and we will work on a special lodging rate for our workshop attendees. The current schedule is as follows:

Friday, April 23 – Icebreaker at the Hitching Post Inn

Saturday, April 24 – Workshop session – all day (This is followed by dinner)

An invitation was forwarded to Maj. General Frank Klotz, commander, 20th Air Force. It is hoped that he is able to join AFA members at the Saturday night dinner during which he'll address the group.

Boyd Anderson, chairman, Aerospace Education Foundation, and Brad Sutton, AFA national director, have already agreed to give the AEF and membership presentations at the workshop. I am considering a command chief's open discussion on AFA at the workshop as well.

It is our hope that vice presidents for AEF and membership (chapter and state level) attend this workshop and participate in the opening discussion on these topics.

Of course, if there is any other topic you would like to include in the agenda, please let me know as soon as possible. I am working on the schedule and agenda having already started to receive registration packets starting in mid-February.

I am excited about this opportunity for the chapter and state AFA members together and look forward to sharing ideas and moving toward making our Air Force Association better for our men and women in uniform and the nation.

Homeland defense tops National AFA issues

No cause justifies perpetrating violence against innocents. Americans have awakened to the dangers of terrorism and the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction, or WMD.

Terrorists will use every means available, including suicide tactics, to achieve their objectives. The goal of terrorists is to fundamentally reshape the international system in accord with their radical beliefs.

AFA has supported the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the intra-governmental effort to attack terrorism at its roots, using every available tool.

AFA believes Congress and the Administration should work together to adequately fund DHS so that it has the resources to effectively secure our homeland.

Chapter officers

Many activities take place outside the view of the general membership and it is the officers of chapter 127 usually drive these activities. Here are the officers of the chapter who continue to serve their country:

President	Barbara Flores	(303) 386-3726
Vice president.....	Ralph Charlip	(303) 331-7500
Secretary.....	Ron Geurts	(303) 525-9012
Treasurer.....	Justin Wheeler	(303) 676-7335

OMB gives Retiree pharmacy co-pay reprieve

Recently there was a lot of e-mail traffic and conversations about an Office of Management and Budget, or OMB, draft proposal to significantly increase the retiree cost share of the TRICARE Pharmacy Benefit.

OMB now has elected to shelve the proposal – for the time being at least. The Pentagon now will study the issue and will make recommendations for the FY 2006 budget.

The Air Force Association and member organizations of the Military Coalition are watching this issue very carefully.

While the issue is shelved for the short term, it is likely to re-surface in the future. The OMB decision keeps the issue off the table until after the November elections, which means any final changes would not take effect until October 2005.

AFA senior leaders encourage all members to stay in regular contact with their respective Congressional delegations to protect your hard-earned benefits.

For more information and latest updates, visit the Tricare Web site at <http://www.tricare.osd.mil>.

VA gives priority for service-connected conditions

All veterans with service-connected medical problems will receive priority access to health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) under a new directive.

“Caring for veterans with service-connected medical problems is a major reason VA exists,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi. “This directive should ease the minds of veterans who no longer have to wait for health care appointments.”

The new directive provides that all veterans requiring care for a service-connected disability -- regardless of the extent of their injury -- must be scheduled for a primary care evaluation within 30 days of their request for care.

If a VA facility is unable to schedule an appointment within 30 days, it must arrange for care at another VA facility, at a contract facility or through a sharing agreement.

The directive covers hospitalization and outpatient care. It does not apply to care for medical problems not related to a service-connected disability. However, veterans needing emergency care will be treated immediately.

The new provision is an extension of rules that took effect in October 2002 for severely disabled veterans. Under the earlier rule, priority access to health care went to veterans with disabilities rated at 50 percent or more.

For the severely disabled, the priority includes care for non service-connected medical problems.

VA Secretary testifies for budget increase

Anthony J. Principi, Secretary of Veterans Affairs testified that the overall VA budget was increased in the President’s Budget for FY2005, but fell \$1.2B short of his request. Members of the House Veterans Affairs Committee were surprised to hear the Secretary state frankly that he had requested \$1.2B more than the President allocated.

Despite the shortcoming Principi assured the committee that the VA would find efficiencies and collect a \$250 user fee from some veterans with non-service connected ailments. Members of the committee opposed the user fees and promised to fight for further funding.

Lane Evans, Ranking Democrat stated, “I don’t think anyone on this committee will celebrate an increase in the veteran’s medical care budget of less than 2 percent. Plus we’ve seen before – and rejected on a bipartisan basis - the administration’s proposals that would increase pharmacy and primary care co-payments and establish user fees for veterans.”

Secretary Principi, who has two sons now serving in Afghanistan and Iraq, described a \$50Million cut in research that he proposed to replace with NIH dollars.

Congressman Vic Snyder (D-AR), a physician, criticized the proposed cuts in VA research that now leads the world in prosthetics development and other key areas.

Concurrent receipt payments began Feb. 1

The historic agreement to grant concurrent receipt of retirement and disability pay became a reality February 1, 2004, when the first payment checks are scheduled to be delivered to retirees currently enrolled in the special compensation for the severely disabled.

Remaining qualified retirees will receive their concurrent disability pay as the Defense Department determines their eligibility. Payments will be retroactive to January 1, 2004.

Qualified retirees are those who have served 20 years or more, including chapter 61 medical retirees with 20 years or more and National Guardsmen and Reservists with 20 years or more.

The law currently covers retirees with a VA disability rating of 50 percent and higher, except for Purple Heart recipients, who are qualified with a disability rating of 10 percent and higher. Eligible retirees will see an approximate 10 percent increase in their retirement pay each year until the 10-year phase-in plan is complete in 2014.

Air Force Association

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Almanac Facts

from Air Force Magazine

Top 5 Active Duty Force by Grade

Enlisted



Created by Steven Levins