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OKLAHOMA VETERANS NEWSMAGAZINE

Serving Active Duty Military, Veterans and Their Families



Esports Program Aims to Reduce Veteran Suicides

American Legion Lebron Post 58

Esports program, which is designed to reduce veteran suicide by providing an environment of a connection.

Story and photo by Van Mitchell

Suicide has no single cause and no one approach can end it-but prevention is possible, especially when Veterans find support before a crisis happens.

That's the mission of the American Legion Lebron Post 58 in Guthrie with its Bunker 58 Esports program, which is designed to reduce veteran suicide by providing an environment of a connection, teamwork, and camaraderie for local veterans.

"Bunker 58 started as an idea between three Legionnaires a couple of years ago," said Army veteran and Lebron Post 58 Chaplain George Shafer. "We were sitting around drinking coffee, and one of our members read an article in the National American Legion Magazine about a partnership with a gaming organization. And in that article, it explained to us that eSports provides a level of camaraderie, accountability, and competition that veterans crave. We began the process of looking into what it would look like to get that program at our post here in Guthrie. And we began looking at the cost and looking into the internet, and considering where we could potentially run the program."

Shafer said the process began of reaching out to Regiment Gaming, which is the nation's largest veteran-only gaming community in the country.

"I was able to make contact with Chris Earl, who's the CEO of Regiment, and that began a working relationship with both Regiment and Paradox Customs to get the computers," Shafer said. "Our committee worked tirelessly from February until July, getting the room designated, getting the room prepared. We coordinated with the community. We coordinated with many entities to help make this happen. And finally, on July 10th, we had our grand opening."

Shafer said the grand opening was a success. "It exceeded our expectations dramatically," he said. "We were hoping on a Wednesday afternoon to hopefully get 10 or 20 people to come out and look at what we were doing. We ended up having over 100 people show up. We were able to speak with veterans and attendants who had never stepped foot into an American Legion before. We were able to procure new memberships coming from a younger demographic. And the response that we got from our immediate community was overwhelmingly special."

Shafer said Bunker 58 is a passion project for Lebron Post 58 members.

"Many of our committee members are enthusiastic about this project because we know somebody who has succumbed to being part of the 22 a day," Shafer said, in reference to the



Lebron Post 58 Chaplain George Shafer stands next to one of the gaming platforms that is part of the Bunker 58 Esports program at Lebron Post 58 in Guthrie.

number of veteran suicides per day. "Our goal is to have this program up and running so that it is a safe place to land for any veteran who finds themselves struggling during the holidays, starting with Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving through the week after New Year's, is our target goal to get good at facilitating, mentoring, and assisting veterans through this new venue."

Shafer said each E-sports committee member are being trained how to operate the gaming equipment by Brent Lemmons, vice-chair of the Esports committee and former Esports coach at Guthrie High School.

"We're training our committee members on how to operate the equipment," Shafer said. "We will train up the entire committee on how to start up, run, diagnose, fix, assist, get people onto gaming platforms, working with the different areas of hardware like the mouse, the keyboard, the headset, the controller, the towers."

Shafer said when the training is finished, the goal is to host game nights and tournaments.

"We'd like to have beginner nights where people just step in and they learn about what Esports is, and how they can take advantage of it," he said.

Shafer, like other veterans, has had his share of struggles since leaving the military.

He said his faith and a support network has helped him.

"I am a veteran that has struggled," he said. "I've been out of the military for 10 years. I have struggled with the aimlessness,

SEE ESPORTS PAGE 4

Veteran NewsMagazine to Offer Needed News and Support

Story by Steve Sibley, E7 RETIDV

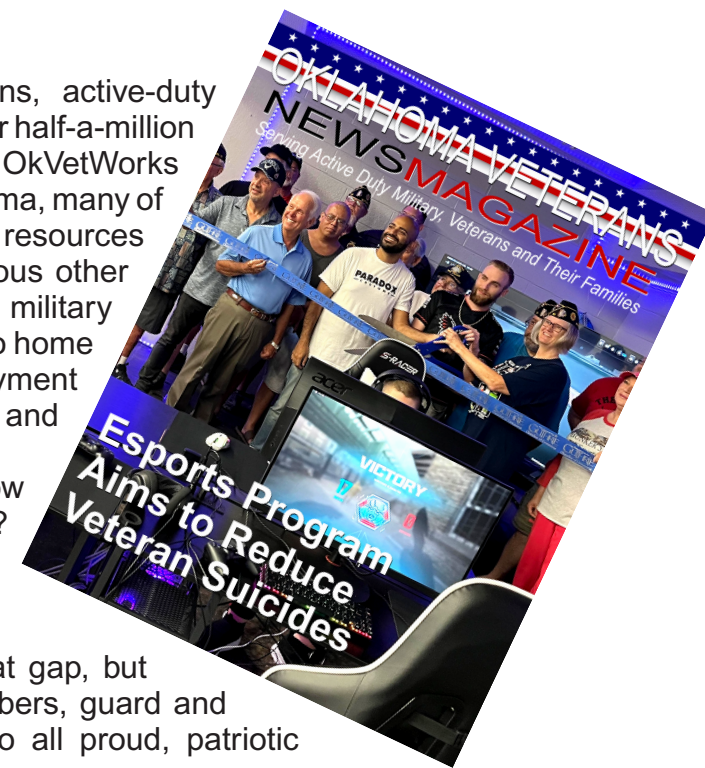
Oklahoma is home to approximately 285,000 veterans, active-duty members, guard and reservists. That number reaches well over half-a-million when you include their spouses and caregivers. Additionally, OkVetWorks directory lists over 1000 veteran-owned businesses in Oklahoma, many of which are 501C3 non-profits offering information, support and resources to military members, veterans, and their caregivers. Numerous other businesses provide products and services to veterans and military members from food service to financial services, healthcare to home care, home improvement to housewares, education to employment and many offer veterans and military members discounts and employment preferences.

For veterans in Oklahoma, their greatest challenge is how and where do they find all these resources and access them? Likewise, for providers with information and resources for veterans and their caregivers, their challenge is connecting with them to provide their information and services.

The purpose of our new magazine is to not only fill that gap, but to also bring the stories of Oklahoma's active service members, guard and reserve members, veterans, and even their care givers, to all proud, patriotic Oklahomans.

We are offering fair and competitive advertising rates for businesses and service providers. If you are a large company, perhaps you'd not only like to advertise with us, but you'd also like to sponsor a veteran owned non-profits ad. Every month, Oklahoma Veteran NewsMagazine will be read by thousands of Oklahoma military members, veterans, and thier caregivers with distribution to VFWs, American Legion Posts and Military facilities throughout the state. They'll also be found in various walk in locations such as restaurants, stores, gyms, and other gathering locations. Plus, we will be online with a website and Facebook.

For more information on how you can feature your business in the Veterans News Magazine or bring to light the work of a service member, veteran, or caregiver through a feature story, we want to hear from you.



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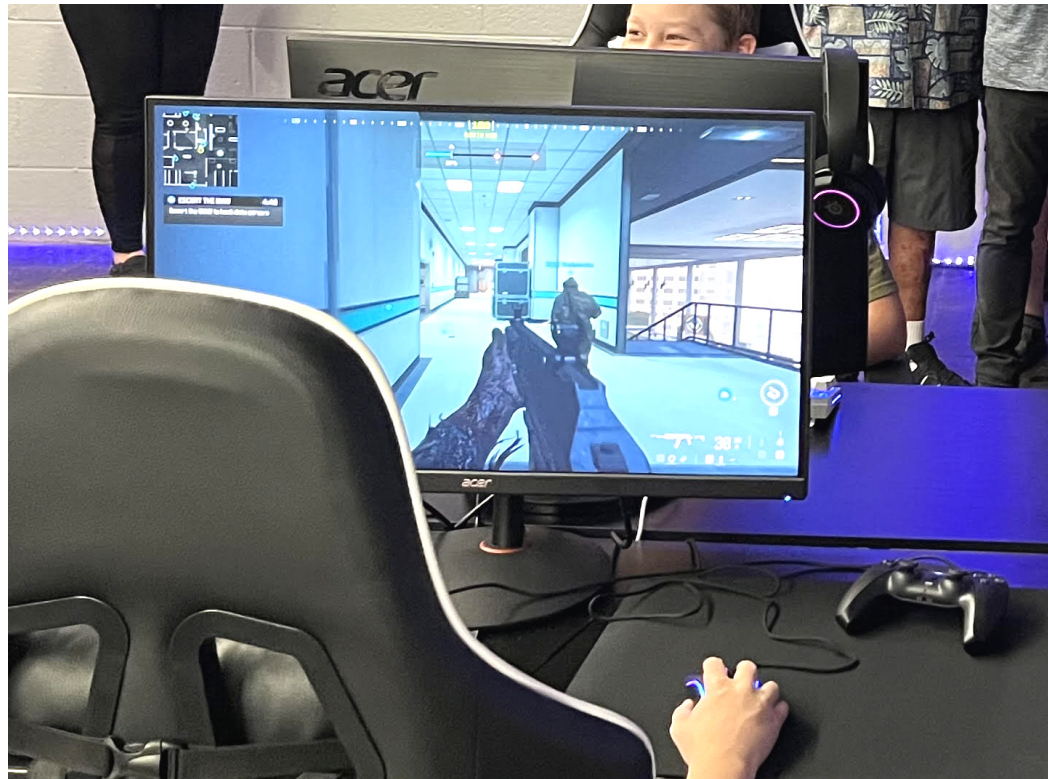
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and the lack of passion, feeling worthless, feeling empty, feeling void."

Shafer said his struggles help him better help other veterans.

"When I see that in somebody else, I'm able to recognize it," he said. "Not because I've experienced exactly what that person has experienced, but it rekindles my desire to ensure that nobody ever feels that way again. To ensure that they understand that they're made in the image of God, in the image of their creator, and that they have worth, and that they have value. Even if they no longer wear the uniform or serve the country, they still have value and they still have worth, and they still have things that they were put on this planet to do. And if I can help them get through this short, temporal period of feeling empty, it's my honor to do that."

According to a 2023 Military Times article, video games have gone hand in hand with military service since the 1990s when service members would take their Nintendo or Sega Genesis consoles on deployment with them. While much has changed in the quality and quantity of gaming services and platforms, one thing has remained constant: Military members love video games.

They love them so much that the Navy, Army, Marine Corps, Air Force/Space Force, and Coast Guard have established esports teams. The services founded these teams to modernize outreach and recruitment efforts and show a different side to military service.

Shafer said the long-term goal of Bunker 58 is to give veterans an outlet to turn to instead of suicide.

"The long-term goal is to end veteran suicide. So, do I believe video games are the answer for veteran suicide? No, I do not. I believe that ESports are a methodology to reaching potential veterans that could be struggling," he said. And that is our responsibility. Do we want veterans to come out and play video games? Of course. Absolutely. We want to provide that environment. We want the environment to be safe, we want it to be warm, we want it to be engaging. But when people pull me aside in my role as a chaplain to discuss matters of faith, suicidal tendencies, financial hardships, joblessness, I believe that is the core of the program that will eventually begin to save lives."

For more information about Bunker 58 call the Lebron Post 58 post at (405) 282-2589.

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Son of Edmond Natives Supports U.S. Navy's "Take Charge and Move Out" Mission



Chief Petty Officer Joel Hall. Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class.

Chief Petty Officer Joel Hall is serving in the U.S. Navy as part of the nation's nuclear deterrence mission at Strategic Communications Wing One (STRATCOMM WING ONE). Its TACAMO ("Take Charge and Move Out") mission provides airborne communication links to nuclear missile units of U.S. Strategic Command.

Hall, a 1994 Corona High School graduate, joined the Navy 24 years ago.

"I joined the Navy because I wanted to better myself," said Hall. "I thought the military could provide me with some much-needed structure."

Today, Hall's parents and family all live close by in Edmond, Oklahoma.

"Thank you to my wife and kids for their support," said Hall. "My parents were another reason I joined. I wanted them to be proud."

The Navy's presence aboard an Air Force base in the middle of America may seem like an odd location given its distance from any ocean; however, the central location allows for the deployment of aircraft to both coasts and the Gulf of Mexico on a moment's notice. This quick response is key to the success of the nuclear deterrence mission.

The Navy command consists of a Wing staff, the Center for Naval Aviation Technical Training, and three Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadrons: The "Ironmen" of VQ 3, the "Shadows" of VQ 4 and the "Roughnecks" of VQ 7.

Hall serves as a Navy career counselor with VQ 4.

"My favorite thing about my job is getting to help other sailors," said Hall.

"My proudest Navy accomplishment is getting to watch my junior sailors succeed," said Hall.

As Hall and other sailors continue to perform missions, they take pride in serving their country in the United States Navy. "Serving in the Navy gives me a sense of pride," added Hall. "I'm honored to have volunteered to do something that most people don't have the ability to."

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Oklahoma Bike Week 2024 Route 66 Rally for the Veterans



photo courtesy www.webbikeworld.com



This year's Oklahoma Bike Week, Route 66 Rally for veterans will be held from Thursday, November 16, 2024 to Sunday, November 19, 2024.

This is the Old School style Adult Only Motorcycle Rally and Biker Party dedicated to Our Veterans.

Live bands and entertainment will welcome visitors along with bike games, people games, wild contests food and more. Be sure to check out our vendors.

There is an air conditioned bar with pool tables for added relaxation.

On-site camping is available, with a swimming pond, sandy beach, hot indoor showers and outdoor showers, full RV hookups, dry RV camping, free tent camping, lots of good fresh water and lots of shade are all here at the rally.

The Motorcycle Rally will be a fun party - rain or shine with all weather facilities!

Not only will we be celebrating our veterans at this rally, we will be taking care of them.

Weekend passes \$40 and All Veterans get a 50% discount off rally tickets. Vendors will be offering discounts to all veterans. For more information visit, <http://route66bikerrally.com>

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Veteran Advocates Symposium Attendance

Story and photo by Darl Devault,
Contributing Editor

You know when an Oklahoman has massively advocated for the greater good when they become nationally known for earning the camaraderie and trust between active duty and former United States military service members.

The hallmark for Edmond, Okla. resident Major Edward Pulido's, U.S. Army (Ret.) advocacy for his fellow veterans is known throughout the veteran services movement simply as Major Ed.

When the National Veterans Foundation lists its first podcast it simply states: Major Ed was our first guest to be interviewed on the American Heroes Network Radio 1/15/2013 on our first program.

Major Ed's challenging work and determination to serve other veterans since his devastating injuries cut short his career while serving with the Coalition Military Assistance Training Teams under the command of General David Petraeus has promoted him into something rarer than rank, a brand in the veterans services movement.

Not consciously trying to build his brand bigger, he is simply displaying integrity by sharing his thoughts, feelings, words and actions to bring attention to the plight of America's defenders after they have served.

Approached for an interview with the attention afforded the upcoming Veterans Day November 11 he changed the emphasis of this story from himself in a selfless gesture. He is advocating Oklahoman veterans attend the November 15-16 Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs 2021 Governor's Symposium for Veterans Services in Norman.

The event featuring Gov. Kevin Stitt and his wife Sarah speaking in separate plenary sessions the first day runs 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. both days at the Norman Armed Forces Reserve Center, 4000 Thunderbird St.

Topics are Suicide Prevention, Lethal Means Safety, Women Veterans, Native Veterans, Crisis Care and Management, Best Practices, Employment, Education, and more.

There will be special sessions on Veteran Agriculture as a means for Employment and Mental Health, and the release of OKVALOR (Oklahoma's Veterans Assistance Locator).



Major Edward Pulido, U.S. Army (Ret.) (left) poses with John Daly, the former PGA Tour star, with whom he created a nonprofit to address veterans' needs.

Question, Persuade, Refer and Talk Saves Lives training will be available to those interested in suicide prevention training. Info at Governor's Symposium (oklahoma.gov)

"Major Ed has stated in his work with the John Daly – Major Ed Heart of a Lion Foundation 'At the end of the day it's all about empowering and supporting those that fight for our freedom,'" said Lisa Mussett, U.S. Air Force veteran and Women Veterans Program Director with the Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs who has worked alongside Pulido

continued next page



John Daly,
Former PGA
Tour star.

PULIDO From Page 8

for many years. "Major Ed's statement about empowering and supporting our veterans is a key mission of the upcoming symposium. We strive to highlight many partners across the state, those providing services to veterans and their families."

Mussett will offer a breakout session at the symposium, to discuss a special project for Women Veterans called the HerStory Project. "The project includes photographing women veterans to accompany the State Veteran Registry," Mussett said. She extends a personal invitation to the 30,669 women veterans in Oklahoma to attend the Symposium, to learn more about the HerStory Project and the annual Women Veterans Recognition Day Program. Women vets can email her directly at okwomenvets@odva.ok.gov

Deployed to Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom, Pulido was fighting in a war where wounds had increased in severity as a result of a change in enemy tactics. The insurgency war had intensified with increased sophistication and use of improvised explosive devices (IED).

On August 17th, 2004, after 19 years with the U.S. Army and U.S. Army Reserve, the 36 -year-old Hispanic officer's life was changed forever. He was severely wounded by one of those

IEDs or roadside bomb in Baqubah, Iraq, 35 miles northeast of Baghdad, earning the Purple Heart medal.

"I will never forget on that day I did not just lose my leg. On that day, I sacrificed my leg for my country and for everyone in this nation to be free," Pulido said.

After that fateful day he faced multiple challenges, which, included miscommunication on his whereabouts, 17 operations, numerous hospital stays and rehabilitative sessions. Along with the loss of his left leg to amputation he was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injury. He also faced what he says was one of the toughest battles of all—whether to stay in his beloved military or become a medically discharged veteran.

He says his decision to leave the military was based in part on a compelling desire to reach out to other wounded veterans and their families who were seeking help for their injuries and post-war obstacles.

He went on to devote his life to veterans' services issues as the founder and CEO of the John Daly - Major Ed Heart of a Lion Foundation. He works with 2-time PGA Major Championship winner John Daly to provide mental, physical, and wellness support to our nation's children, first responders, and America's veterans. "Together, we will never leave our nation's children, our first responders and Americas Veterans and their

families behind on the field of battle, so help us God," Pulido said.

He now sees his mission as advocating for and serving other wounded veterans with their ongoing needs while raising awareness about their sacrifices made to keep our nation whole.

"I was given a second chance to do something bigger than myself," Pulido said recently. "Before August 17, 2004, I wasn't educated about how important it was to have a purpose or a passion. But God tested me that day, gave me hope and another chance to do something really worthwhile.

Our veterans know what we can accomplish on the world stage, but they also want opportunities—to work, be productive and not be patronized or relegated to the notion they have returned home as damaged goods. Through my personal story, I want to help them reach their goals so when they encounter their own set of challenges, they can also experience their own triumph and positive change."

He is the former Sr. VP, co-founding member of the Ambassador for Folds of Honor Foundation and co-founder of Warriors for Freedom Foundation.

He worked with Marie Bartlett to self-publish his story "Warrior for Freedom: Challenge, Triumph and Change." The book details the extreme lows and highs of helping the American people understand the visible and not so visible costs of war. The book is his attempt to help the public and the corporate community understand how they can help our nation's heroes and their families.

Warrior for Freedom is now available on Amazon and on his web site www.majored.org.

A portion of the proceeds from each book sale goes to veteran charities he supports and represents: John Daly-Major Ed Heart of a Lion Foundation www.jdme.org and Warriors for Freedom: www.warriorsforfreedom.org.

West Point cadet to apply OMRF experience to medical career

Liam Sasser was no stranger to research when he arrived at the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation last month for the John H. Saxon Service Academy Summer Research Program.

The West Point cadet studies Alzheimer's and other neurodegenerative diseases during the academic year. However, Sasser said he was humbled and a bit overwhelmed in the lab of OMRF scientist Sathish Srinivasan, Ph.D., who focuses on the lymphatic system.

Lymphatic vessels transport blood, oxygen and nutrients throughout the body. When they stop functioning properly, fluid buildup results in a chronic

and potentially life-threatening condition called lymphedema. Srinivasan's lab is working to understand the mechanisms that promote the healthy growth of lymphatic vessels to combat lymphedema. "The breadth of this field surprised me," Sasser said. "I was surprised at how unexplored it is and how much this work this lab is producing to improve the understanding of lymphatics." OMRF's Saxon program compresses an intensive summer internship into three to four weeks, culminating in a presentation of their research. John Saxon III, M.D., a Muskogee physician and OMRF board member since 2000.

(SAMPLE FEATURE)



Liam Sasser, a West Point student, is part of OMRF's John H. Saxon Service Academy Summer Research Program for 2024.

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GO BEYOND

SAMPLE FEATURE

"THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE"

More Meaningful Ways to Honor Those who Served this Veterans Day

SURVEY

90% of Americans **THANK VETERANS** for their service when they see them in public

49% of veterans / current service members feel **UNCOMFORTABLE** being thanked for their service



SUGGESTION

Instead, show support in a way that is **PERSONAL** and **MEANINGFUL**

"I appreciate you and all of the sacrifices you and your family have made."

SURVEY

58% of veterans & current service members prefer others **DONATE** to or **VOLUNTEER** with a veteran-related organization to show their appreciation



SUGGESTION

LOOK FOR service organizations that provide support for...

- ★ military families
- ★ housing
- ★ mental health
- ★ employment
- ★ suicide prevention

SURVEY

39% of Americans are **UNSURE** **HOW TO START A CONVERSATION** with a veteran



SUGGESTION

ASK QUESTIONS to learn about service

- ★ When did you serve?
- ★ Where were you stationed?
- ★ What was your job while serving?

Veteran Resource Fair

Saturday, September 14th

9:00 - 12pm

Cornerstone Church - Youth Building

9900 SE 15th St, Midwest City, 73130

SENIOR NEWS & LIVING

Senior News & Living is sponsoring this event with Midwest City's Vet Chat organization, our advertising partners, and local Veteran resource providers with information and benefits for Veterans, their spouses, and caregivers who live in the surrounding area.



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration



Who should attend?

Those seeking information about:

- Healthcare Options and Providers
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- Medicare
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- Veterans Home Care
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- And more...

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FOR MORE INFORMATION Contact:

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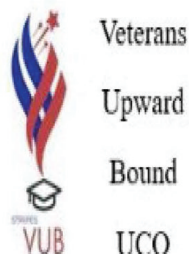
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North Oklahoma City VA Clinic

14400 Bogert Parkway, Suite 100
Oklahoma City, OK 73134-2653
Main phone: 405-302-1500
Mental health care: 405-302-1500

South OKC VA Clinic

17919 Mid-America Blvd, Ste 250
Oklahoma City, OK 73135-6610
Main phone: 405-855-6000
Mental health care: 405-855-6000

Tinker VA Clinic

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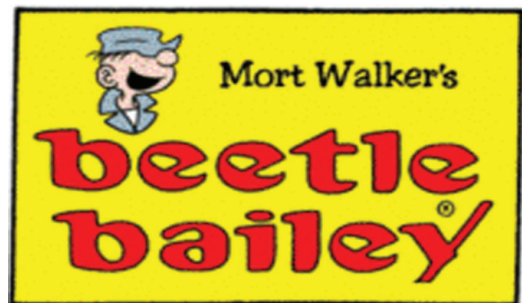
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SEPT 12 3rd Annual 9/11 Hockey Game
LOCATION: Blazers Ice Centre, 8000 S I-35 Service Rd, Oklahoma City, OK 73149
Note: September 11th a few of our officers participated in the 3rd Annual 9/11 Hockey Game. First responders from around the state - Oklahoma Force played against the Oklahoma Warriors team made up of military veterans and service members. The event played at the Blazers Ice Centre honored first responders. Free to the public. Hours: 6 pm- 8 pm

SEPT 22 Mayor's Council of Veterans Affairs
LOCATION: Veterans Center, 1117 S. Main St Broken Arrow, Oklahoma 74012
Note: The Broken Arrow Mayor's Council of Veterans Affairs, newly

established by Mayor Debra Wimpee, will be not only a direct line to the Mayor and City leadership, but also a direct line between local veterans and veterans service organizations in the area. All organizations that offer services for Veterans are invited to attend, as well as any military members that would like to learn or share pertinent information with the Council. Hours: 1:30 – 2:30 PM

SEPT 25 INAUGURAL OKLAHOMA MILITARY & VETERANS GALA
LOCATION: Gaillardia Country Club, 5300 Gaillardia Blvd, Oklahoma City, OK
www.warriorsforfreedom.org/events
Note: JOIN Warriors for Freedom Foundation and the John Daly, Major Ed Heart of a Lion Foundation's at the Gaillardia Country Club on September 25th, 2022 where we will honor our Oklahoman military service members and veterans from all branches with a night to remember.

Attire Military: Mess Dress Blue / Evening Dress / Dress Uniform
Civilian: Black Tie (Display Awards as Appropriate), Evening Dresses/Suits.
Hours: 6:00 pm

NOV 22 Veterans Day Parade
LOCATION: 200 N Midwest Blvd, Midwest City, OK
Note: Commercial Vendors, Entertainment Children's, Entertainment Free, Food, Handicapped Access Hours: 10am -11am Call: (405) 732-2281

OCT 2 WOUNDED VETERANS OF
LOCATION: Pheasant Run Golf Course, 1702 Club House Dr, Enid, OK 73703 <https://www.facebook.com/woundedvetsok/>
Note: \$300 Team \$150 Hole Sponsorship •18 Holes •Cash Payouts •2 tee off times available (if enough to fill both slots) • 8am registration 7am •1pm registration 12pm •Lunch Provided 12pm. Phone: (580) 233-2355

ORGANIZATIONS

Oklahoma City VA Health Care System
LOCATION: 921 N.E. 13th Street Oklahoma City, OK 73104
Main Number: 405-456-1000 Or 405-456-1000.
Yukon VA Clinic: 1808 Commons Circle Yukon, OK 73099-9518
405-578-3400 - After Hours Number: 866-835-5273
North May VA Clinic: 2915 Pine Ridge Road Oklahoma City, OK 73120 405-752-6500 - After Hours Number: 866-835-5273
North Oklahoma City VA Clinic: 405-302-1500 - After Hours Number: 866-835-5237
Oklahoma City Vet Center: 6804 N. Robinson Avenue, Suite B Oklahoma City, OK 73116 405-456-5184

Wounded Veterans Of Oklahoma
LOCATION: www.woundedveteransofoklahoma.com
Main Number: (580) 478-5700
Upward Transitions
VISIT: www.upwardtransitions.org; 405-232-5507

VAMC-Homeless Program
CONTACT: Contact Learnard Vil at 405-456-1708 or email learnard.vile@va.gov
Volunteers of America
CONTACT: www.voak.org/veteran-services
Army Wounded Warrior (AW2)
CONTACT: Gregory Yoder at 405-778-0773 or email gregory.s.yoder@us.army.mil
Jobs for Oklahoma Veterans
VISIT: www.OKMilitaryConnection.com
Tinker Air Force Base-Family Advocacy Program
CONTACT: Joyce Atlee at joyce.atlee@tinker.af.mil or Audra Hunt at audra.hunt.ctr@tinker.af.mil for family resources or call 405-582-6604.
US Veterans Motorcycle Club of Oklahoma
VISIT: www.usveteransmck.com
Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association - Tulsa
VISIT: www.combatvetstulsa.com

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