FORT SAM HOUSTON RETIREMENT SERVICES BULLETIN

http://fsh-intranet.amedd.army.mil/rso/

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Ft Sam Houston Retiree Appreciation Day

SPC Jordan Martin, Akeroyd Donor Center lab technician, performs a blood pressure check prior to drawing blood from Esther Quesada, a regular donor from Kingsville, Texas, in the Bloodmobile.

Retiree Appreciation Days and Military Retiree Seminars offer military Retirees and their families a chance to learn current information about topics such as benefits, entitlements, health care, and special services available for them. The Ft. Sam Houston Retiree Council and the Retirement Services Office will host the annual Retiree Appreciation Day on November 7, 2009. As in past years, the event will be held in Building 2841, Willis Hall, located on the corner of Harry Wurzbach and Stanley Roads from 8:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. Various BAMC clinics and civilian health care providers will lead the health fair portion. The ID Cards and Vehicle Registration Operations, located in Bldg. 367 will be open from 8:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. Ft. Sam Houston Retirement Services, SJA, TRICARE, Retiree Dental Plan, Texas Veterans, and several local universities and colleges will be available for information and services. Call (210) 221-9004 or visit www.samhouston.army.mil/hra/Retirement.aspx.

Shirlie Dowd, Troop Medical Clinic optometry intern, tests Isabel Pellerin's Eyesight at the optometry booth.

BRAC Bringing Change

If you've been on Fort Sam Houston lately you have probably noticed street detours, multiple construction sites, building renovations as well as newly-erected structures. Yes, there is much activity on the installation as a result of BRAC growth. Many changes are taking place daily to handle the ever-increasing migration of various units, many of them major Army headquarters commands as well as significant increase student population that will nearly double the student population at the Military Education and Training Campus, to approximately 9,000 Army, Navy and Air force students. Fort Sam has awarded almost three billion dollars for new construction and renovation projects. Some of the changes you have probably already noticed include San Antonio Military Medical Center North-BAMC, expansion to include a 5,000 space parking garage; construction of a new in-patient bed tower; expansion of the emergency medicine and Level 1 Trauma capability and the addition of a helicopter landing area on top of BAMC. San Antonio Military Medical Center-South, formerly Wilford Hall Medical Center, is also undergoing expansion of its services and facilities to become a center of excellence for ambulatory care clinics. Some of the other changes on Fort Sam Houston include a new community shopping center, that includes planning for a multiplex movie theater, new post exchange, expansion of the commissary, and new guest housing that feature a new 981 room Candlewood Suites hotel complex. Work has begun on the expansion of the Walters Street Gate entrance incorporating the new bridge over IH 35, the expansion of Walters Street to six lanes and a new visitors center. Fort Sam Houston and San Antonio also will be home to more than 9,000 new family members. All of these projects will certainly improve services and quality of life on the installation for thousands of Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen and their Families, Retirees, Civilian and Contractor personnel. Fort Sam Houston truly is the "place to be" in the 21st century. For additional information on BRAC, Joint Basing, and FSH expansion log on to www.samhouston.army.mil and click on "BRAC information".

TEXAS LEGISLATION FOR VETERANS AND MILITARY

Legislation Related to Veteran Affairs & Military Installations That Passed During the recent 81st Legislative Session include:

1. **SB 90 - *Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children,*** Effective May 5, 2009; *the Interstate Compact* streamlined enrollment, eligibility, placement, and graduation requirements for military children who move to or from Texas.
2. **SB 93 Hazlewood (HW) Legacy Act,** Exemption of tuition and fees, other than the deposit and student service fees for up to 150 semester credit hours
3. **SB 279 - SAPCR Military Deployed Parent** Military conservator's deployment may not be used to justify modification of a court order providing for the conservatorship of a child.
4. **SB 297 In-state Tuition & Fees**
5. **SB 847 Hazlewood Fees (Averitt Anderson)** This legislation extends the ability to issue a high cost program fee for Hazlewood students to Texas technical colleges.
6. **SB 1325 Veteran Mental Health** Department of Health Services to solicit and train volunteers for peer-to-peer mental health intervention for veterans.
7. **SB 1655 Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) Functions & Vet Themed Lotto Scratch-off Ticket** Requires that under the career ladder program -- openings in all positions, except entry level positions, be posted within TVC concurrently with any public posting.
8. **SB 1940 Funding Stream for Fund for Veteran Assistance "Veteran Courts"** Authorizes money in the fund to be appropriated to TVC to make grants to address veterans' needs and administer the fund.
9. **SB 2223 Sustainability of Camp Bullis was amended onto HB 2919** Allows for creation of a Regional Military Sustainability Commission which would consider any development that might affect military operations within five-miles of the boundary line of Camp Bullis.
10. **HB 269 College Credit for Military** Allows a student to receive up to 12 hours of course credit at a public institution of higher education for at least two years of honorable military service.
11. **HB 551 - Electronic Application for Voting** Allows a federal postcard application be scanned and submitted electronically by service members and their families to the local voter registrar or elections administrator versus submitting solely by mail and in some instances fax.
12. **HB 965 Disabled Parking Placard** New legislation entitles a veteran to register, for the person's own use, any number of motor vehicles for which the registrant may be issued specialty license plates for disabled veterans and disabled parking placards.
13. **HB 1452 Fed. State Alignment Defined Eligible Vet/Spouse** Aligns the state definition of "active military, naval, or air service," "covered person," and "veteran" with federal law for the purpose of receiving priority of service in certain job training and employment assistance programs.
14. **HB 2806 Reinstatement after Military LOA**
15. **HB 3139 Toll Road Discount for Certain Vets** Grants a toll project entity the authority to establish a discount program for veterans disabled, received a Purple Heart, or were awarded the Medal of Honor.
16. **HB 3452 Texas Armed Services Scholarship Program**
17. **HB 3593 License Plates for DAVs** Grants a toll project entity the authority to establish a discount program for certain veterans: those who are disabled, received a Purple Heart, or were awarded the Medal of Honor.
18. **SB 469 Homestead Property Tax Exemption for Totally Disabled Vets was amended onto HB 3613** Allows a disabled veteran who receives 100 percent disability compensation an exemption from taxation of the total appraised value of the veteran's residence homestead.
19. **HJR 116 VLB Bond Authority** "Reauthorizes" or "evergreens" all previously authorized general obligation bonding authority in the Veterans' Housing Assistance Fund, the Veterans' Housing Assistance Fund II, and the Veterans' Land Fund.

For detailed information on each of the above Bills, log on to http://www.legis.state.tx.us/ or call (512) 463-1252.

SAMMC-N
Brooke Army Medical Center
3851 Roger Brooke Dr.
Fort Sam Houston, TX 78234
Information Desk: 24/7
(210) 916-4141

SAMMC– S
Wilford Hall Medical Center
2200 Bergquist Drive
San Antonio, TX 78236
(210) 292-7412

FT SAM HOUSTON RETIREE COUNCIL

MG (RET) DARREL R. PORR, CO-CHAIRMAN

CSM (RET) JAMES HARDIN, CO-CHAIRMAN

COL (RET) MARY MESSERSCHMIDT

COL (RET) NORBERT O. PICHA

COL (RET) STANLEY E. THOMAS

COL (RET) THOMAS C. VEACH

COL (RET) BRADLEY D. FREEMAN

COL (RET) JAMES G. SOLOMON

LTC (RET) CHRIS MEILINGER

LTC (RET) THOMAS TRUMBLA

LTC (RET) SUAZANNE JARDINE

MAJ (RET) JAMES R CUNNINGHAM

CSM (RET) CHERYL M. MATHIS

SGM (RET) HOWARD T. RAY

SGM (RET) KASHA M. ZILKA

SGM (RET) ROBERT L. MASTEN

SAMMC-N (BAMC) & SAMMC-S (WHMC)

SAMMC-N Everyone entering BAMC/ SAMMC, Fort Sam Houston or Camp Bullis will need a government issued ID. Examples could include driver's license, state identification card, military ID, pass port, etc. This applies to everyone in the vehicle age 16 and over. It also applies to pedestrians, cyclists and motorcycle riders. If they are driving their own vehicle (and it doesn't have a current DOD decal) they will need to enter the SAMMC-N & SAMMC-S through the IH35/George Beach Access Control Point (ACP). The vehicle must have current registration/ license tags and current vehicle Inspection (for those states that require it). Visitor must also be prepared to show proof of insurance and they may be selected for a random vehicle inspection by the security guards and/or FSH Police. The visitor will receive a pass that is good until 2359 hours the day of their visit. If they are visiting for multiple days, they will need a pass every day. If they are TDY for an extended period of time, they may be able to get a pass for the duration of their visit. **SAMMC-S** Visitors possessing a government-issued picture identification card may enter the Bergquist Gate, directly in front of Wilford Hall off Military Drive. Visitors who do not possess a government -issued ID must go to the Lackland Air Force Base Gateway entrance for a visitor pass. This gate is the second entrance off of Military Drive from Hwy 90 and the base visitor center is located to the right of the gate. The visitor must go into the visitor center, give the name of the Wilford Hall patient they wish to visit, and produce a valid driver's license and proof of insurance for their vehicle. The visitor center staff will call the Wilford Hall information desk to verify the patient is admitted. Visitors driving a rental car or using a taxi cab must follow the same procedures. Those trying to reach a loved one at the SAMMC-South facility (WHMC), please call the Information Desk at (210) 292– 7412. More information is posted on http://sammc.amedd.army.mil/index.asp

NEW ACCESS CONTROL POLICY

Since Aug. 17 2009, Fort Sam Houston has incorporated a new access control program to facilitate gate access. The purpose of the new program is to minimize access of people using forged or invalid documentation and allow access control point guards to scan credentials to verify the authorization and privileges of people entering Fort Sam Houston. The program integrates a combination of background checks, identification scanning and registration procedures. Contractors, vendors, visitors and other personnel not authorized a Common Access Card or identification Card outlined IAW Army Regulation 600-8-14, dated Dec. 20, 2002 must obtain a Fort Sam Houston Badge, RAPID Gate Badge, Temporary Pass or Daily Pass applicable; Facility Entry Control Badges issued by an organic or tenant organization are not valid for installation access. Tenant or organic organizations must appoint a primary and alternate authorizing official who will be responsible for approving issue of a Fort Sam Houston Badge, RAPID Gate Badge or Temporary Pass.

GATE ACCESS INFORMATION

- Camp Bullis: Visitors Access 24/7
- Harry Wurzbach (West) : M-F, 5:30 a.m.—7:00 p.m., Closed weekends & Holidays
- Harry Wurzbach (East) : Visitors Access 24/7
- Winans: M-F 4:30 a.m.-10:00 p.m., Sat-Sun/Holidays 6:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m.
- Nursery: M-F 4:30 a.m.-10:00 p.m., Sat-Sun/Holidays 6:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m.
- BAMC IH 35: Visitors Access 24/7
- BAMC George Beach: M-F & Holidays 5:30 a.m.-7:00 p.m., Closed Weekends
- Schofield— Visitors Access 24/7
- Jadwin: M-F 6:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m., Closed weekends & Holidays, Commercial Access Only
- Walters Gate—Visitors Access 24/7
- 5A Quad: M-F, 6:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m., Closed weekends & Holidays
- Wilson: Visitors Access 24/7

Department of Veterans Affairs

Office of Public Affairs
Media Relations

Washington, DC 20420
(202) 461-7600
www.va.gov

News Release

NEW! "Innovation Competition" Begins at Veterans Affairs"

VA Employees Asked to Submit Recommendations for Transforming Service to Veterans. To speed its transformation into a 21st Century organization that is Veteran-centric, results oriented and forward-looking, the Department of Veterans Affairs has launched one of the largest innovation competitions in the agency's history. The competition solicits ideas from VA employees and co-located Veterans Service Organizations who are on the front lines of the Veterans Benefits Administration and encourages them to submit entries addressing everything from claims processing times to better process transparency."The men and women of VA know that many Veterans are often asked to wait too long for the critical services they have earned while defending our Nation," Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki said. "These employees who grapple with the claims process every day have the first hand knowledge and experience necessary to help us understand inefficiencies and improve the system. We are confident that our team will come forward with many creative and original ways to accelerate processes and better deliver services for our nation's Veterans." President Obama announced the innovation competition while speaking to the Veterans of Foreign Wars in August. "We're going to fund the best ideas and put them into action, all with a simple mission: cut those back logs, slash those wait times, deliver your benefits sooner," said Obama. The on-line proposal period began on Tue, Sept, 8, and will conclude after Veterans Day. Employees from the agency's 57 regional offices have been encouraged to submit entries via a secure online platform. At the close of competition, administrators from each regional office will select the winning ideas, which will be reviewed by a team chaired by Patrick W. Dunne, the VA Secretary for Benefits. The final selections will receive full funding for project development and execution at the Regional Offices submitting the idea.

"We're going to fund the best ideas and put them into action, all with a simple mission: cut those backlogs, slash those wait times, deliver your benefits sooner," said Obama.

Casualty Notification & Survivor's Assistance Office

The Fort Sam Houston Casualty Assistance Center (CAC) provides assistance and advice upon the death of any Active Duty Soldier, Retiree or Veteran. In the event of a Retiree death contact the FSH CAC immediately. Ensure you have the following information available: Retirement date of the deceased, date/place of death, and Retiree and spouse (if applicable) Social Security Numbers. Contact the CAC at (210) 221-0051/1780. Upon reporting the death, you may obtain information on burial entitlements and arrangements for interment at the Fort Sam Houston or Houston National Cemeteries. The funeral home making the arrangements will notify the CAC for burial honors per your request. The FSH CAC is open Monday through Friday from 7:15 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.; after-duty hours call (210) 221-2087 or the FSH IOC (210) 221-2782. We welcome Mr. Edward K. Maney as the new supervisor of the FSH CAC. His team of professionals includes Memorial and Mortuary Affairs, Training Coordinator and Survivors Benefits Coordinator. Survivor Outreach Services are also available through Army Community Service The FSH CAC is committed to honor and respect fallen comrades who have given the ultimate sacrifice in defense of freedom for our Nation. For additional information log on at www.samhouston.army.mil/hra/casualty.aspx.

Retirement Services Office

Retirement Services assists, informs and prepares Soldiers and their Family Members in their transition to Retirement and up-to-date information on their rights, benefits and privileges after Retirement. The services offered are Pre-Retirement briefings, Survivors' Benefit Plan Counseling , Personal Record Updates, Re-issuance of leave and earning statements , Address changes , Allotment changes , Statements of pay, W-4 Form changes, Re-issuance 1099-R, Bank changes, and Divorce and former spouse changes. The RSO office is located at 1706 Stanley Road, Bldg 2263, 2nd floor, room 225A on Fort Sam Houston, Mon - Fri 8:00 a.m.– 4:00 p.m. and Thurs 8:00 a.m.– 4:00 p.m. (210) 221-2964. For additional information, visit http://fsh-intranet.amedd.army.mil/rso/.

Veterans Identification Card

The Department of Veterans Affairs provides eligible Veterans a Veterans Identification Card (VIC) for use at VA Medical Facilities. The VIC protects the privacy of Veterans' sensitive information, as it no longer displays the Social Security Number or Date of Birth on the front of the card. The VIC will only display the Veteran's name, picture, and special eligibility indicators – Service Connected, Purple Heart and Former POW, if applicable, on the front of the card. Only Veterans who are eligible for VA medical benefits will receive the card. Once the Veteran has their picture taken for the VIC at the VA Medical Facility, the card will be mailed to the Veteran within 7-10 days after the Veteran's eligibility has been verified. To ensure the VIC is received at the appropriate address, it is important that the Veteran's address is verified and the correct address is entered in the Vista computer system. If the U.S. Postal Service cannot deliver the card, it will be returned to the facility where the Veteran requested the card. If you have questions or concerns, please call: the VA Health Resource Center, 1-877-222-VETS (8387).

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC)

200 Stovall Street
Alexandria, VA
22332-0470
1-866-281-3254
CRSC
Service Center:
Mon -Fri
8:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.
EST
E-mail your questions about the CRSC Program to
crsc.info@us.army.mil

Combat Related Special Compensation-CRSC

The 2008 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) was signed into law on January 29, 2008 to include Chapter 61, a new component for Combat Related Special Compensation (CRSC). This legislation expands eligibility to medical retirees with less than 20 years of service, effective January 1, 2008. Medically retired veterans must still provide documentation that shows a causal link between a current VA Disability and a combat related event.

What is a Chapter 61 retiree? A Chapter 61 retiree is anyone who was medically retired from military service with a 30% or greater rated disability. This includes those on the Temporary Disabled Retirement List, which falls under "Chapter 61." The term "Chapter 61" derives from the corresponding chapter in Title 10 US Code defining the different categories of medical separation and retirement. For example, retirement under, "10 USC Sec. 1201" means Title 10, US Code, Chapter 61, and Section 1201.

How will the 2008 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) affect my CRSC eligibility? The NDAA expands eligibility to Chapter 61 and TERA retirees with less than 20 years of service. Current eligibility requirements state that you must be in receipt of retirement pay and have that retirement pay reduced by a Veterans' Administration (VA) waiver to be eligible. These requirements are and will still be in place for Chapter 61 claimants .

When can I apply as a Chapter 61 retiree? As of June 9, 2008, CRSC has received the implementation guidance from DoD and is currently processing Chapter 61 and TERA claims.

I submitted my claim before the law was passed and received an ineligible letter. What should I do? If you are a Chapter 61 retiree that had previously submitted a claim form and received an ineligible letter, you will need to reapply athttps://www.hrc.army.mil/site/crsc/chap61.html For assistance completing your application for CRSC, please call 221-0761/9004/0936 or 2964. **How much money will I receive?** CRSC determines the combat relatedness of a claim. All payment amounts are determined by DFAS. Payments are unique for each service member based on years of service, retirement pay, and more. If you have any questions regarding the amount payment, contact DFAS directly. Contact DFAS: 1-800-321-1080 or www.dfas.mil.

My HealtheVet – VA's Online Personal Health Record

VA's online personal health record, My HealtheVet at www.myhealth.va.gov, provides America's Veterans access to personal, secure, informed health information. Through a Web-based portal, registered Veterans have Internet access at any time to VA health information that allows them to become informed partners in their care with their medical providers. Any Internet user may record and store important health and military history information and access personal medical information by registering at the Web site. Visitors to the site can keep activity and food journals; record, track and graph their vital signs; record and store their health history and prescriptions; access trusted health information; and read about VA benefits and services. Veterans enrolled for care at a VA facility can use enhanced functions online after they make a visit to a VA medical center to verify their identity. All registered users can request VA prescription refills online, receive reminders, & tips on how to stay well. If you have any questions, please call 1-877-222-VETS (8387).

My healthevet

My Health, My Care: 24/7 Online Access to VA

NEW VA Enrollment Information

Priority 8 Calculator Are you eligible?

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has put forth new regulations for certain Priority Group 8 Veterans. These regulations may allow certain Priority Group 8 Veterans to enroll in the VA health care system, although they may have been denied in the past. Included are Veterans who applied for health care on or after January 1, 2009 but were denied because their household income was higher than VA's income limit. Veterans who fall into the Priority Group 8 may soon qualify if their income does not go over the current VA income limit by more than 10%. This new regulation has taken effect on June 15, 2009. For more information about enrollment and to see if you qualify, visit: www.va.gov/healtheligibility. An Enrollment Calculator is available to help Veterans determine their potential eligibility for VA health care services under the proposed regulation. Check to see if you qualify under the new rules for VA health care. For questions, please call 1–877–222–VETS (8387).

What is the Post-9/11 GI Bill?

The Post 9/11 GI Bill provides financial support for education and housing to individuals with at least 90 days of aggregate service on or after Sept 11, 2001 or individuals discharged with a service-connected disability after 30 days. You must have received an honorable discharge to be eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill. The Post-9/11 GI Bill became effective for training on Aug 1, 2009. The amount of support that an individual may qualify for depends on where they live and what type of degree they are pursuing. Approved training under the Post-9/11 GI Bill includes graduate and undergraduate degrees, and vocational/technical training. All training programs must be offered by an institution of higher learning (IHL) and approved for GI Bill benefits. Additionally, tutorial assistance, and licensing and certification test reimbursement are approved under the Post- 9/11 GI Bill. For more information, please visit the website www.gibill.va.gov/ or call the Education (GI Bill): 1-888-442-4551

Did You Know?

With the Post-9/11 GI Bill, you may be eligible for benefits up to 15 years after leaving service

Survivor Benefit Plan - (SBP)

Without SBP, Retired pay stops with the death of the Retiree.

The Survivor Benefit Plan is the sole means for Retired Soldiers to continue a portion of their military retired pay to their survivors. The decision must be made at retirement from military service and is a critical one, given its lifetime impact on the Family's financial well-being. This information is provided to ensure that you are able to make an informed decision about the SBP that best suits your needs. SBP was established by PL 92-425, 21 Sept 1972, so that retiring Soldiers could elect to provide the continuation of a portion of retired pay to their designated beneficiary. Retirees pay for SBP coverage with a percentage of their retired pay. The SBP payment is deducted from Retired pay before the retired pay is taxed -- it's a tax-free payment. SBP changes Retired pay from a "single-life payout" to a "joint and survivor payout". A single-life payout lasts only for the lifetime of the retiree. While this maximizes the monthly income for the retiree, it eliminates benefits for the surviving spouse. A joint and survivor payout stretches retired pay over the lifetime of the Retiree and the spouse. Monthly payments are reduced, but they are guaranteed to last over the lifetimes of two people. For more information, please visit: http://www.armyg1.army.mil/rso/sbp.asp or http://www.defenselink.mil/actuary/

FORT SAM HOUSTON ID CARD OFFICE
1704 Stanley Road, Building 367
Fort Sam Houston, TX 78234
(210) 221 - 0415
(Corner of Stanley Road & Reynolds Road)

ID CARDS/DEERS

The ID Card Section is located in bldg 367, on the corner of Stanley and Reynolds Roads. The office is open Monday through Thursday from 7:30 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.; Fridays from 7:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Walk-in hours are 7:30 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. daily. Appointments are from 1:00 p.m. until 3:15 p.m. Monday through Thursday. You have the option of walk-in or by appointment service. Please call 221-0415/2278 for an appointment. Bring your DD Form 214, Retirement orders, or (if applicable) marriage, birth, and/or death certificates for verification. For renewal you must have two pieces of identification; one must be a photo ID — no exceptions!!! If you wish to replace a lost or stolen card, you must also present the police report filed with the local Provost Marshal's office. We are currently in the process of streamlining the appointment system to help better serve you. The goal is to have a system whereby you log onto a site and are allowed access to schedule your appointment at your own convenience. We hope to have this system in place within the next 90 days. Pay attention to updates in the post News Leader or by visiting our web site at www.samhouston.army.mil/hra/idcard.aspx.

FORT SAM HOUSTON MWR

The Fort Sam Houston Family, Morale, Welfare and Recreation Directorate offers numerous programs, events, activities and services for every member of the military family, active and retired, which includes the young at heart to the seasoned Soldier. There is something for everyone to enjoy! To find out the latest happenings in FMWR on Fort Sam Houston go to http://www.fortsamhoustonmwr.com or call, (210) 221-1663 for information in any of the following areas:

- Community Club
- Bowling Center
- Harlequin Dinner Theater
- Child and Youth Services
- Campbell Memorial Library
- Golf Club
- Hacienda Recreation Center
- Jimmy Brought Fitness Center
- Canyon Lake
- Army Community Service

We're sure you will be amazed at the amount of activity planned for the Fort Sam Houston community.

Interactive Customer Evaluation

Your feedback will help us maintain the quality of excellence you expect.

You can make a difference on your installation with your views.

The Interactive Customer Evaluation (ICE) system is a web-based tool that collects feedback on services provided by various organizations throughout the Department of Defense (DoD). The ICE system allows customers to submit online comment cards to the service providers they have encountered at military installations and related facilities around the world. It is designed to improve customer service by allowing managers to monitor the satisfaction levels of services provided through reports and customer comments. ICE provides the following benefits: Allows DoD customers to quickly and easily provide feedback to service provider managers; gives leadership timely data on service quality; allows managers to benchmark the performance of their service providers against other DoD organizations; encourages communication across organizations by comparing best practices to increase performance results; and saves money. Please visit our Fort Sam Houston ICE Site at http://ice.disa.mil/

Voice Your Opinion…...

The United States Army Installation Management Command (IMCOM) is conducting a Customer Service Assessment. The assessment has been reviewed by the Army Research Institute and is an integral tool utilized by IMCOM to evaluate customer perceptions of IMCOM services. Your participation in the assessment is a key component in assisting IMCOM to determine the way ahead to improve programs and services. Everyone who has access to the installation to live, work or use installation services is able to participate in the assessment in those areas that are available and relevant to them based upon their role on the installation. The survey will take less than 15 minutes to complete. If at any point during the survey you need to "save" your responses and resume at a later time, please press the Save button at the bottom of your screen. To complete survey, please go to https://fsh-intranet.amedd.army.mil/cms/index.asp

FAREWELL MESSAGE FROM YOUR RSO

This has been a year filled with challenges and changes with even more to come. Effective October 1, 2009 I will be retiring from federal service. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve the Retiree population for the past five years and I would like to thank you for allowing me to work with you. I would be remiss if I didn't thank Col Garr, Garrison Commander; Mr. Waldrop, Deputy to the Garrison Commander; Ms. Linda Green, Director, Human Resources Directorate and Mr. Earnest Bridges, Chief, Human Resources and Administration Division for their support of the Retirement Services Program. I should also take time to thank the Fort Sam Houston Retiree Council led by MG (Ret) Darrel Porr and CSM (Ret) James Hardin co-chairs, and the Houston Texas Retiree Council led by LTC (Ret) Willie Bratcher for their active participation in their respective Retiree Appreciation Days. After a total of 45 years combined on military and federal civil service, I think that it is time to get off the "Merry Go Round". I can truthfully say that I totally enjoyed every day of my service whether it was helping that young Soldier and his family or the Retiree, widow, or former spouse. Thanks again and I'll see you at the RAD.

Salvador Toscano

Salvador Toscano
Retirement Services Officer

DFAS Suspends VSI/SSB Recoupment

Recoupment of military Retirees' Variable Separation Incentive (VSI), Special Separation Benefit (SSB) and separation payments by the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) has been temporarily suspended pending a formal DoD policy and legal review. According to DFAS officials, the suspension of recoupment actions is being taken for military Retirees in an active pay status effective for the May 2009 retired pay entitlements. Military retired pay for these members received on June 1, 2009, will not be reduced by any recoupment amounts. VSI, SSB and certain other separation payments, such as severance pay, were offered to active duty military members in an effort to reduce manpower in certain career fields, primarily during the 1990s. Those receiving these payments were also required to maintain an affiliation with the Ready Reserve of a military Reserve component. Provisions of these programs also included repayment should an individual remain with the Ready Reserve and earn status as a military Retiree. The federal statutes governing these programs do not allow DoD or DFAS to alter repayment ratios or provide alternative repayment plans for these military Retirees regardless of the financial hardships a Retiree many be experiencing. The policy and legal review will allow DoD and DFAS to determine what options, if any, may be available to allow DoD to meet its statutory responsibilities while providing relief to military Retirees impacted by recoupment actions. Letters to military Retirees in a SSB, VSI and Separation Payment recoupment status will be mailed advising them of the suspension of recoupment payments. Upon completion of the review, these members will receive a letter prior to recommencement of repayment reductions to their retired pay advising them of the review conclusions. http://www.dfas.mil/

Your Financial Partner @ Work

DFAS-IN
8899 East 56th Street
Indianapolis IN
46249
1-800-321-1080

Where to go to Replace Missing Military Records

Military Retirees and Veterans, regardless of when you retired or separated from military service, you have one source when requesting missing records and awards – the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, MO. The Army's Human Resources Command asks you not to send requests to them. NPRC forwards requests to HRC St. Louis only when NPRC is unable to respond to the request. Since there are still sources telling Retirees and Veterans to go to HRC-St. Louis for records, we ask retired Soldiers to share this information. All military Retirees and Veterans, who need to replace missing records or awards, can go online to http://vetrecs.archives.gov. Family members who need to replace missing records or awards for their veteran can also use this service. If you do not have access to a computer, you can write to: National Personnel Records Center (Military Personnel Records); 9700 Page Ave.; St. Louis, MO 63132-5200.

AKO for Army Retirees

Army Knowledge Online (AKO) has a site just for you – AKO for Army Retirees at https://www.us.army.mil/suite/page/559734. AKO for Army Retirees is your gateway to a wealth of information including Retiree resources on the Web and sites covering medical benefits, pay, and state and regional resources. Be sure to add it to your favorites!

IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

http://www.sammc.amedd.army.mil/phone_numbers.asp

San Antonio Military Medical Center—North…….. (210) 916-4141
(formerly Brooke Army Medical Center (BAMC)
Central Appointments:…….. (210) 916-9900
1-800-443-2262
Information Desk…… (210) 916-4141
Patient Administration…….. (210) 916-1029
Pharmacy…… (210) 916-1536
Pharmacy Refill…….. (210) 916-8700

San Antonio Military Medical Center – South..……... (210) 292-7412
(formerly Wilford Hall Medical Center)
Information Desk…… (210) 292-7412
Patient Administration……... (210) 916-3430
Pharmacy…… (210) 916-5411

Retired Pay (Cleveland)…….…… 1-800-321-1080

Retired Pay (Annuitants)……..….. 1-800-321-1080

TRICARE- South…….…… 1-800-444-5445

TRICARE Retirees Dental……..…….. 1-888-838-8737

Veterans Administration…….. 1-800-827-1000

FSH Casualty Assistance……. (210) 221-0051

Survivor Outreach Services…….. 1-866-272-5841

Army Community Service…….. (210) 221-2705

Social Security Administration……. 1-800-772-1213

Legal Assistance…… (210) 221-2353

The National Mail Order Pharmacy…… 1-800-903-4680

Fort Sam Houston Information……. (210) 221-1211

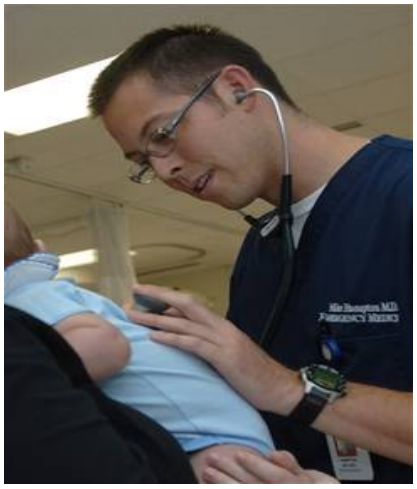
Outdoor Recreation……... (210) 221-5224

Canyon Lake Recreation…….. 1-888-882-9878

Bioenvironmental Engineering……. (210) 295-2311

BAMC Fisher House…….. (210) 916-6000

Conceptual Design Presentation.
Artist's concept of SAMMC-North



A SOLDIER'S CHRISTMAS

'Twas the night before Christmas, he lived all alone,
in a one bedroom house made of plaster and stone.

I had come down the chimney with presents to give,
and to see just who in this little house lived.

As I looked all about, a strange sight I did see,
No tinsel, no presents, not even a tree.

No Stockings by mantle, just boots filled with sand,
On the wall hung pictures of far distant lands.

With medals and badges, awards of all kinds,
A sobering thought came through my mind.

For this house was different, it was dark and dreary,
The home of a soldier, I could now see clearly.

The soldier lay sleeping, silent, alone,
Curled up on the floor in this one bedroom home.

The face was so gentle, the room in such disorder,
Not how I picture a United States Soldier.

Was this the hero of whom I'd just read?
Curled up on a poncho, the floor for a bed?

I realized the families that I saw this night,
owed their lives to these soldiers who were willing to fight.

Soon round the world, the children would play,
and grownups would celebrate a bright Christmas day.

They all enjoyed freedom each month of the year,
because of the soldiers, like the one lying here.

I couldn't help wondering how many lay alone,
on a cold Christmas Eve in a land far from home.

The very thought brought a tear to my eye,
I dropped to one knee and started to cry.

The soldier awakened and I heard a rough voice,
"Santa don't cry, for this life is my choice".

I fight for freedom, I don't ask for more,
My life is my God, my country, my corps."

The soldier rolled over and drifted to sleep,
I couldn't control it, I continued to weep.

I kept watch for hours, so silent and still,
as we both shivered from the cold night's chill.

I didn't want to leave, on that cold, dark night,
this guardian of honor, so willing to fight.

Then the soldier rolled over, with a voice soft and pure,
whispered, "Carry on Santa...., It's Christmas Day...., All is secure.

One look at my watch, and I knew he was right,
Merry Christmas my friend.... and to all a Good Night.

~ Author Unknown *~