

ARMED FORCES DISPATCH



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 Serving active duty and retired military personnel, veterans and civil service employees

SIXTY-THIRD YEAR NO. 30
 DECEMBER 23, 2023



WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA Volunteers participate in the 32nd Wreaths Across America Day in Section 59 of Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Va., Dec. 16, 2023. On this day, more than 30,000 volunteers placed approximately 260,000 wreaths at every gravesite and niche column at Arlington National Cemetery. U.S. Army photo by Elizabeth Fraser

California judge refuses to stop class-action lawsuit demanding housing for disabled veterans

by Linda F. Hersey, Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON - A federal district court judge in California has refused to dismiss a class-action lawsuit demanding the Department of Veterans Affairs provide housing to thousands of disabled veterans living in encampments and on the streets of Los Angeles.

U.S. District Court Judge David O. Carter, in a ruling Dec. 14, described housing needs as urgent, stating the number of homeless veterans has tripled since an earlier lawsuit brought against the VA was settled in 2015 yet failed to yield adequate results.

“It is unclear how many veterans have died on the streets of Los Angeles in that time never having received housing or services,” Carter wrote in the Powers v. McDonough case, heard in U.S. District Court for the Central District of California.

The judge ordered both sides to “expedite a timeline” and move the lawsuit forward. The case is expected to advance to trial if a settlement is not reached. The next hearing date is scheduled for January 2024.

Defendants in the case are VA Secretary Denis McDonough, Steve Braverman, director of the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System, and Keith Harris, senior executive homelessness agent with the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System.

“This is the greatest legal decision on behalf of veterans,” said Mark Rosenbaum, an attorney for the plaintiffs. “We are ready to go to trial in June or July [2024] and we are going to win because of the story of these veterans taking on a nation that has not served them. The only remaining questions is whether the administration and Congress will fight the veterans or reach a settlement [finding] that ‘unhoused veteran’ is an oxymoron in America.”

Jeffrey Powers, a 60-year-old Navy veteran, is among a dozen plaintiffs named in the lawsuit, along with the National Veterans Foundation. Plaintiffs were identified as homeless veterans in greater Los Angeles diagnosed with serious mental illness, brain injuries **see Veterans, page 6**

MILITARY WILL CONDUCT RESEARCH, CLINICAL TRIALS OF PSYCHEDELIC DRUGS TO TREAT SERVICE MEMBERS FOR PTSD, HEAD INJURIES

by Linda F. Hersey
 Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON - The military will conduct research and clinical trials to determine whether cannabis, magic mushrooms and other psychedelic drugs can treat service members suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury under provisions of the defense spending bill approved by Congress recently.

Section 723 of the National Defense Authorization Act, which received final Congressional approval Dec. 15, provides \$10 million in research grants for psychedelic-assisted therapies and for “qualified” plant-based alternative therapies that include cannabis.

Medical cannabis is legal in 38 states, the District of Columbia and three U.S. territories but remains illegal under federal law. Language in the legislation states that service members can participate in the clinical trials without breaking the law.

The provision in the NDAA, which specifies spending guidance for DoD during the current fiscal year, was spearheaded by three retired military officers — Rep. Dan Crenshaw, a former Navy SEAL; Rep. Morgan Luttrell, also a former SEAL; and Rep. Jack Bergman, a retired Marine Corps lieutenant general.

Luttrell suffered a traumatic brain injury, or TBI, in a Black Hawk helicopter crash in 2009. He credits psychedelic-assisted therapy outside the U.S. after

his medical discharge with saving his marriage and changing his life.

Under the legislation, the Defense Department will award research grants to universities and government agencies to conduct the tests. Service members with certain medical conditions must receive permission to undertake the medically administered therapies in controlled clinical settings.

Veterans’ groups such as Special Operations Association of America have expressed support for the legislation. Limited studies show a decrease in depression, anxiety and stress among users of certain psychedelic drugs.

David Cook, the executive **see Research, page 2**

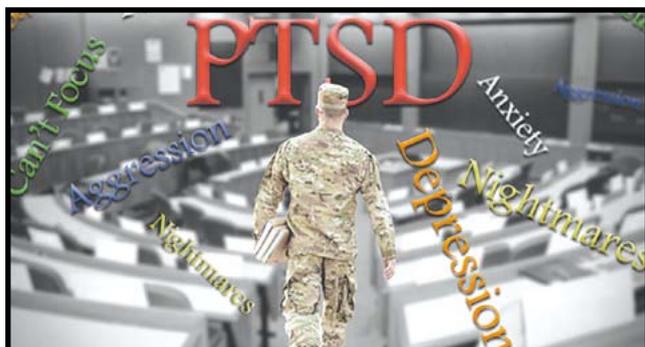


Photo courtesy of Army University Press.

USS John L. Canley to commission in San Diego

Future USS John L. Canley (ESB 6) will join the active fleet Feb. 17, with a commissioning ceremony at Naval Air Station North Island. The first of its name, the ship honors Marine Corps Sgt. Maj. (Ret.) John L. Canley, Ret., who was awarded the Medal of Honor 50 years after his actions during the Battle of Hue City. Canley served as Company Gunnery Sergeant, Company A, First Battalion, First Marines, First Marine Division in the Republic of Vietnam from Jan. 31 to Feb. 6, 1968. Sgt. Maj. Canley passed away in Bend, Oregon May 11, 2022. On Nov. 10, 2020, then Secretary of the Navy Kenneth J. Braithwaite announced that ESB 6 would be named USS John L. Canley to honor a man who exemplified all that has made our service strong and our Nation thrive. The ship’s sponsor is Patricia Sargent, Canley’s daughter. ESB 6 will be the newest commissioned Expeditionary Sea Base and the sixth ship in the expeditionary mobile base platform. ESB 6 is a highly flexible platform used across various military operations. When commissioned, the ship will be employed as a mobile sea-based asset. It will be a part of the critical access infrastructure supporting the deployment of forces, equipment, supplies, and warfighting capability.

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Military pay increase

Senate approves defense bill with largest pay raise for troops in 22 years.

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Sunday, December 31:	10am – 6pm
Monday, January 1:	10am – 6pm

Location

San Diego Convention Center
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Tickets

All tickets must be purchased
online at SDautoshow.com.



Homes at Bennett Shores East, an on-base military housing community at Naval Station Mayport, Fla., March 18, 2019. U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Anderson W. Branch

DOD releases 2024 basic allowance for housing rates

by David Vergun
DOD News

Basic allowance for housing, or BAH, rates for 2024 will increase by an average of 5.4 percent. The new rates, which are paid to all U.S.-based active-duty members of the uniformed services when government quarters are unavailable, take effect Jan. 1.

“The proposed 5.2 percent basic pay increase plus the 5.4 percent increase in the basic allowance for housing build upon DOD’s support of military members and their families. These increases ensure the military compensation package remains strong and competitive with the private sector and supports the economic security of our service members and their families,” said Jeri Busch, DOD’s director of military compensation policy.

BAH is a valuable component of the overall pay package and is designed to help offset the rental housing expenses service members may face when living off base in local communities. BAH rates are aligned with the housing costs of civilians with

comparable incomes to each pay grade (with and without dependents) to ensure the military community can afford to rent adequate, suitable and available homes in safe neighborhoods, wherever and whenever they may be assigned,” said Kevin Scott, a housing economist within DOD’s Military Compensation Policy Directorate.

“The Department pays about \$27.9 billion in BAH disbursements to over 1 million service members each year,” he said.

“Considering the large footprint and wide-ranging impact of BAH on the well-being of military families, the department is committed to ensuring BAH data collection and housing estimation processes are driven by industry-leading data sources, innovative methodologies and proven quality assurance techniques,” Scott said.

The 2024 BAH rates were determined directly from verified local housing listings collected in about 300 housing markets, including densely populated

metropolises, suburban and rural duty stations, he said.

The BAH rate-setting process relies on a wide variety of data sources that include:

- U.S. Census Bureau survey data
- Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index
- Industry-leading commercial subscription rental cost databases
- Trusted online rental listing websites with verified listings
- Local market expertise from the services and local military installation housing offices

Housing data include median market rents for a variety of housing sizes. Electricity, heat and water/sewer are also averaged in the computation.

BAH rates are then calculated for each pay grade, both with and without family members, based on the cost of adequate housing for civilians with incomes comparable to each service member pay grade grouping. The goal is to obtain high-quality, accurate, current-year housing cost data.

An integral part of the BAH program is the provision of individual rate protection to all members. No matter what happens to measured housing costs – including the out-of-pocket expense adjustment – an individual member who maintains uninterrupted BAH eligibility in each location will not experience a BAH rate decrease unless the member receives a reduction in paygrade or change in dependency status. This ensures that members who have made long-term commitments in the form of a lease or contract are not penalized if the area’s housing costs decrease, according to the Allowance Division.

Refer to <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3617400/>.

Research

continued from page 1

director, said he knows of SOAA members who received psychedelic-assisted medical therapies and had positive outcomes.

“The results, though small in sample size, have been nothing short of miraculous,” Cook said in an interview with Stars and Stripes.

He described the legislation as a life-or-death issue for many veterans experiencing PTSD and the effects of TBI.

“What’s been proposed and implemented in the past is obviously not working today,” he said. “Legislation like this aims to give our heroes more options and hope for life-saving treatments.”

Clinics participating in the study must report their findings to Congress, including the medical conditions treated, outcomes and whether active personnel returned to full duty. Large doses of one of the drugs to be tested, ibogaine, have led to serious cardiovascular problems and death.

Nevertheless, Cook said that SOAA members have been encouraged by greater attention in Congress to pursuing alternative treatments for PTSD and TBI.

“Those of us who are serious about the suicide epidemic gripping our service members and veterans have to pivot in our thinking and approaches to these issues,” Cook said.

SECNAV calls on industry, academia to help restore competitive shipbuilding, repair landscape

Calling it a strategic imperative, Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro urged industry and academia to join efforts to restore the nation's competitive shipbuilding and repair landscape.

Del Toro delivered the remarks at the NDIA Delaware Valley Chapter Naval Nuclear Submarine and Aircraft Carrier Suppliers' Conference at Drexel University in Philadelphia, Dec. 14.

"I'm here at this conference today because I believe in the potential of our joint efforts to get shipbuilding and maintenance right. It is my number one priority," said Secretary Del Toro. "While the vision is ambitious, it is achievable. We are a nation accustomed to taking on ambitious endeavors, and restoring our maritime strength is no exception."

To do so, requires a multi-pronged approach, Secretary Del Toro stated, including investing in the revitalization of our shipbuilding industry and merchant marine fleet, developing innovative technologies to maintain our naval edge, strengthening partnerships with key allies to counter China's growing influence, and promoting fair competition.

The Department of the Navy's



Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro delivers remarks at the Naval Nuclear Submarine and Aircraft Carrier Suppliers' Conference Dec. 14. During the third annual conference, Del Toro urged industry and academia to join efforts to restore the nation's competitive shipbuilding and repair landscape. U.S. Navy photo by MCC Shannon Renfroe

commitment to innovation and rapid technology development presents an attractive opportunity for industry participation, stated Secretary Del Toro. For example,

- Pennsylvania alone boasts more than 570 vital submarine industrial base suppliers, 39 of which are classified as critical. In the past five years, the Department of the Navy (DON) invested more than \$250 million to build capacity, increase capability, and add resiliency to these suppliers.

- The Department of the Navy added 1,000 new small busi-

nesses by investing nearly \$2 billion dollars through initiatives led by the Office of Small Business Programs to the Navy-industry team.

"Now, the key is to help find and train the right people, and our Talent Pipeline Initiative has been instrumental in addressing workforce shortages," said Secretary Del Toro.

Philadelphia, for instance, was the first location for the DON's pilot program, which it has since expanded to Pittsburgh and other locations. Since its launch in 2021, this initiative has placed more than 1,200 skilled workers

with Pennsylvania suppliers, with over 698 placed in fiscal year 2023 alone.

"We are also committed to expanding apprenticeship programs, as evidenced by the recent reinstatement of the Philadelphia Shipyard's program—previously suspended since 2017—currently training over 100 workers," said Del Toro.

High-paying, high-skilled "new-collar" jobs that restore America's manufacturing prowess are a priority of this Administration, said Del Toro, combining traditionally blue-collar trades

with cutting-edge technologies.

"We must establish programs that build capacity in fields like naval architecture, engineering, and lifecycle management, as well as technical expertise in nuclear welding, robotics, software management, and additive

manufacturing," said Secretary Del Toro. "Your work on these programs will be invaluable to developing and rebuilding our nation's shipbuilding landscape. Everyone here has a part to play in these efforts—and it is a strategic imperative that we rise to the occasion."

Ships Underway
Total Battle Force
 291 (USS 232, USNS 59)
Deployed
 109 (USS 75, USNS 34)
Underway
 85 (52 Deployed, 29 Local)



These are approximate positions of the Navy's deployed carrier strike groups & amphibious ready groups throughout the world as of Dec. 18, 2023, based on Navy and public data. You can access this and other information through the U.S. Naval Institute's portal at <https://news.usni.org/topstories>.

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NAVY SHOTS DOWN 14 SUSPECTED ATTACK DRONES OVER RED SEA



STARS AND STRIPES - A U.S. warship shot down 14 suspected attack drones over the Red Sea on Dec. 16, and a Royal Navy destroyer downed another drone that was targeting commercial ships, the British and American militaries said. Houthi rebels in Yemen have launched a series of attacks on vessels in the Red Sea, one of the world's busiest shipping routes, and have launched drones and missiles targeting Israel, as the Israel-Hamas war threatens to spread. U.S. Central Command said that destroyer USS *Carney* "successfully engaged 14 unmanned aerial systems" launched from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen.

The drones "were shot down with no damage to ships in the area or reported injuries," Central Command tweeted.

U.K. Defense Secretary Grant Shapps said that HMS *Diamond* fired a Sea Viper missile and destroyed a drone that was "targeting merchant shipping." The overnight action is the first time the Royal Navy has shot down an aerial target in anger since the 1991 Gulf War.

Shapps said attacks on commercial ships in the global trade artery by Yemen's Houthi rebels "represent a direct threat to international commerce and maritime security."

"The U.K. remains committed to repelling these attacks to protect the free flow of global trade," he said in a statement.

HMS *Diamond* was sent to the region three weeks ago as a deterrent, joining vessels from the U.S., France and other countries.

Global shipping has become a target during the war between Israel and Hamas, which like the Houthis is backed by Iran.

Houthi rebels said they fired a barrage of drones Dec. 16 toward the port city of Eilat in southern Israel. The announce-

ment came hours after Egypt's state-run media reported that Egyptian air defense had shot down a "flying object" off the Egyptian resort town of Dahab on the Red Sea.

Israeli-linked vessels also have been targeted, but the threat to trade has grown as container ships and oil tankers flagged to countries like Norway and Liberia have been attacked or drawn missile fire while traversing the waterway between Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.

Earlier this month, three commercial ships in the Red Sea were struck by ballistic missiles fired from Houthi-controlled Yemen. A U.S. warship shot down three drones during the assault, the U.S. military said.

French container shipping line CMA CGM Group said Dec. 16 it had ordered all its vessels scheduled to pass through the Red Sea to "pause their journey in safe waters with immediate effect until further notice."

On Dec. 15, Maersk, the world's biggest shipping company, also told all its vessels planning to pass through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait in the Red Sea

PHOTO: Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS *Carney* transits through the Suez Canal, on Oct. 18, 2023. U.S. Navy photo by Aaron Lau

to stop their journeys after a missile attack on a Liberian-flagged cargo ship. German-based shipper Hapag-Lloyd said it was pausing all of its container ship traffic through the Red Sea until Dec. 18.

Houthi spokesman Mohamed Abdel-Salam said Dec. 16 that the rebels have engaged in "communications and discussions" with international parties, brokered by Oman, on the Houthis' attacks on ships in the Red and Arabian seas.

He tweeted that the Houthis would continue targeting Israel-linked vessels "until the aggression stops" and the siege of Gaza is lifted. He added that "any genuine steps responding to the humanitarian situation in Palestine and Gaza through bringing in food and medicine would contribute to reducing the escalation."

Jill Lawless and Samy Magdy/Associated Press contributed to this report.

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Army develops new solution for recruiting on the go

by Christopher Hurd
Army News Service

WASHINGTON - Earlier this month, Sgt. 1st Class Tatiana Johnson, an Army recruiter at the Waldorf Recruiting Center in Maryland, decided to try the new Go Recruit mobile application, specifically made for Army recruiters.

She grabbed her phone and walked across the street from her recruiting center to a movie theater to do some prospecting. After talking to a few interested people, she uploaded their information into the recruiting database in seconds just by using the app.

"It's so much easier to get [contact information]," she said. "[The app] isn't something we were asking for, but it's something that we needed."

Development for the mobile app and web browser version started in March. A team from the Army Software Factory worked with a team from the Army Analytics Group to create an application that gives recruiters access to information on the go.

The team's design experienced numerous versions and

countless recruiter feedback during the six-month process.

The final product is similar to what recruiters in the private sector use for applicant tracking. The application rolled out to recruiters Nov. 20 and is compatible with iOS and Android phones.

The software lets recruiters call, text, and email candidates without logging into the recruiting system. It also allows recruiters to scan drivers' licenses, pulling in the associated information.

The height and weight data alerts recruiters to which candidates are within Army standards and which are options for the Future Soldier Preparatory Course.

These features eliminate the need for recruiters to head into the office to upload information from a computer.

"This app has reduced the time it takes to become proficient as a recruiter when it comes to prospecting," Johnson said.

Reducing commuting time has allowed Johnson to double her face-to-face interactions with candidates. In her first



Army Soldiers with the Wichita Recruiting Company hosted a recruitment booth at Hutchinson, Kansas on Sept. 9, 2023. Official U.S. Army photo

week using the app, she's had 40 meetings. This is something she said would've been impossible before.

Go Recruit mobile also reduces search time for recruiters. They can filter information in the database on targeted demographics depending on what they're looking for.

It also reduces time when recruiters are making house calls.

They can click on a candidate's address and have that come up in a corresponding GPS application.

Johnson said this streamlined process helped her recruiting station increase prospect numbers by around 150 percent.

"My commander is overwhelmed with the number of contacts we have now," she said.

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In just one week, Johnson said this tool dramatically changed how her station recruits on the go.

"This app is definitely amazing, and every recruiter should

have it on their phone," she said. "It's a game changer."

Army recruiters can only download the application on their government phones through the DOD Mobile Apps Gallery.

FLEET & FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER SERVICES

Fleet and Family Support Centers are available to provide support via phone, telehealth, in person appointments, email, social media, webinar and command GMIs. If you would like to schedule an appointment with one of our providers, please call Centralized Scheduling at 1-866-923-6478.

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Medal of Honor Spotlight: Navy Lt. Thomas Eadie

by Katie Lange
DOD News

Navy Lt. Thomas Eadie spent a combined 30 years of service in the Navy from the early 20th century to after World War II. His work as an expert diver salvaging shipwrecks earned him several accolades, especially when it came to saving a fellow diver who had gotten tangled far below the water. For that rescue, he earned the Medal of Honor.

Eadie was born on April 8, 1887, in Glasgow, Scotland. His parents, William and Rebecca, moved to the U.S. in 1890, settling the family in New Jersey. Eadie had a brother, George, and a sister, Margaret.

Eadie enlisted in the Navy in July 1905 shortly after he'd turned 18. Trained as a gunner's mate and as a diver, he remained in the service until 1913, when he moved to Newport, Rhode Island. At some point, he married Margaret Gerrie, and they had a daughter named Marion.

Eadie returned to the Navy during World War I, then worked as a civilian diver for a time before returning to the Navy yet again in 1926. By then, he had worked his way up in rank to chief petty officer.

Eadie was credited with helping to salvage two sunken submarines: the USS S-51, which sank off the

coast of Rhode Island in 1925, and the USS S-4, which sank off the coast of Provincetown, Massachusetts. Both operations earned him a Navy Cross, but it was the latter that earned him the Medal of Honor.

On Dec. 18, 1927, the Coast Guard received calls that the USS S-4 submarine had been involved in a collision with a Coast Guard destroyer and sank off the coast of Provincetown while undergoing sea trials. Rescue efforts began immediately, although Eadie and a handful of other expert divers weren't able to arrive at the scene until the next day, thanks in part to bad weather that was thwarting the operation.

A few minutes after Eadie went into the water, he was able to locate the sunken sub. Reports show that when he tapped on its torpedo loading hatch to see if anyone had survived, he received six slow taps in reply, indicated six men were still alive. He got no other responses when he tapped on other sections of the hull, so he returned to the surface to report his findings and recuperate from the dive, which is necessary for all divers operating in deep waters. Other divers went down in his place to continue the mission.

That afternoon, another diver, Fred Michels, went down with a hose that they were hoping to connect to the S-4 to deliver the trapped men much-needed fresh air. How-

ever, as Michels was attempting to connect the air line to the sub at a depth of 102 feet, his tether became seriously entangled in the wreckage, trapping him.

When the team above water realized what was happening, Eadie quickly volunteered to go back down to help, even though he was still recovering from his first dive.

Eadie finally reached Michels after the trapped diver had been underwater for about an hour and a half. Eadie saw Michels' line was twisted up in the submarine's metal, so he requested that a hacksaw be lowered down. Eadie sawed at the wreckage for 45 minutes before he was able to release Michels from the tangle.

After more than two hours of extremely dangerous work, Eadie succeeded in getting Michels back to the surface. Michels was put in the ship's decompression chamber in serious condition, but he survived thanks to Eadie's skills and his ability to stay calm under pressure.

Sadly, the crew lost the hose that

Michels had carried down to attach to the submarine, so they were never able to get fresh air inside it. All 39 crew members and one civilian



Navy Chief Gunner's Mate Thomas Eadie smiles and wears the Medal of Honor, which had just been presented to him by President Calvin Coolidge in a ceremony at the White House in early 1928. Eadie received the medal for rescuing another man during diving operations on USS S-4 on Dec. 18, 1927. Navy photo

observer on the S-4 died. The sub was raised on March 17, 1928, and eventually returned to service before being stricken from the register in 1936. Eadie was quickly nominated for the MOH, which he received on Feb. 23, 1928.

Eadie continued to serve the Navy for another decade before retiring from active duty in 1939; he returned yet again in April 1942 during World War II, when he was appointed as a chief gunner. He received a commission, then retired for good as a lieutenant in September 1946 after a combined 30 years of service.

From 1941-1942, Eadie was the national commander of the U.S. Legion of Valor. While in London in 1960, he became an honorary member of the British Foreign Legion, according to his obituary in the Newport Mercury newspaper.

Eadie died on Nov. 14, 1964, at age 87 at the Brockton Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Brockton, Massachusetts. He is buried in Island Cemetery in Newport, Rhode Island, where he spent the last few decades of his life.

Veterans

continued from page 1

and/or physical disabilities.

"The judge has been very focused on what is best for the veteran and putting an end to the finger-pointing," Powers said. "He wants to get this problem fixed and made it clear he will not allow [the VA] to do nothing."

"I am happy about this ruling for myself and the veterans who will come after me, so that they do not have to go through this," said Powers, who lived in a tiny shed and before that a tent, which he abandoned because of a rat infestation at the encampment.

Los Angeles has roughly 4,000 unsheltered veterans, according to a 2023 census count of homeless veterans conducted by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. That number represents a 12% rise from the previous year.

At issue is the future of a nearly 400-acre gated campus in West Los Angeles held in a charitable trust for veterans and supportive services for veterans with disabilities. Veterans have camped on the sidewalk outside the campus, where VA health services are located.

The plaintiffs' attorneys argued the land has been inappropriately leased by the VA for business developments unrelated to veterans' health care and housing, breaching the VA's fiduciary duty as trustee.

The lawsuit, filed in November 2022, further argued the Greater Los Angeles VA does not offer "anything close to adequate permanent supportive housing" at the campus.

Two buildings with veterans housing opened on the campus in the summer, bringing the number of housing developments for veterans to three.

A VA spokesman who spoke on condition of anonymity said the developments demonstrate "forward momentum on this critical project."

"While there is still much work to do, VA is working aggressively to combat veteran

homelessness in the Greater Los Angeles area, providing 1,464 homeless veterans with permanent housing thus far this year, which is the most of any city in America and on pace to exceed VA's calendar year goal for 2023," he wrote in an email.

More than \$140 million has been invested at the West LA campus by the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System in the past three years, according to the VA.

But the funding is not enough to meet the housing needs of the city's homeless disabled veterans.

At the same time, portions of the campus have been leased by the VA for oil drilling, a private school and university athletic fields.

Disabled homeless veterans meanwhile "are unable to meaningfully access" VA health care services located on the campus, according to the complaint.

They are effectively denied access to medical, mental health and other services by the health care system because of their situations, attorneys said.

The complaint argued Powers and the other plaintiffs do not "want to live in an institution in order to receive services."

"The government they served has refused to serve them and, far from welcoming them home, has left them homeless," according to the complaint, which argued the veterans are shut out of services and live on the streets or in conditions outside "the magnificent WLA campus."

Numerous studies show homeless individuals with traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress disorder, schizophrenia and severe depression need to be stabilized in community housing near services and support, according to the complaint.

Veterans "are being unnecessarily institutionalized or placed at serious risk of institutionalization, solely by virtue of their disabilities, which represents unlawful discrimination," according to the complaint.

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Naval Surface Force establishes Surface Readiness Group in San Diego

by Commander

Naval Surface Force, Pacific Fleet

SAN DIEGO - Naval Surface Forces established Naval Surface Readiness Group (SURFGRU) Southwest at Naval Base San Diego Dec. 14.

The ceremony marked the formal establishment of SURFGRU Southwest, which joins Surface Readiness Groups previously established in Japan, Hawaii, Norfolk and Mayport. SURFGRUs will ultimately operate from each fleet concentration area with a mission focus on force generation and preparing more, ready ships for on-time maintenance execution.

“The establishment of Surface Readiness Groups is ultimately about the readiness of our force



Rear Adm. Yvette Davids, acting Commander, Naval Surface Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet and Capt. Gil Clark, inaugural commander of Naval Surface Group Southwest, cut the ribbon during the command establishment ceremony. Official U.S. Navy photo

and achieving our North Star objective of 75 mission capable ships,” said Rear Admiral Yvette Davids, Acting Commander,

Naval Surface Forces. “These commands will help prepare the Surface Force for the high-end fight.”

The North Star goal is an objective set by the Naval Surface Force to have 75 mission-capable ships available on any given day.

The establishment provides a single accountable commander with a team of readiness and training experts that focus on force generation in support of operational commanders.

“This investment is for our ships to become more ready and more lethal,” said Capt. Gil Clark, inaugural commander of Naval Surface Group Southwest. “That lethality comes from the readiness we will generate?readiness allowing our ships to answer any call our nation and our leaders require.”

SURFGRUs will play an integral role in achieving North Star 75 goal by spearheading maintenance for ships on the waterfront during their workups. This force generation focus by SURFGRUs will enable destroyer and amphibious squadrons to focus more on operations and tactics. This delineation of responsibility will ultimately provide more effective workup phases for ships, resulting in better prepared Sailors and units for future deployments.

The rise of cold spray technology at Fleet Readiness Center Southwest

by Janina Lamoglia

Fleet Readiness Center Southwest

NAVAL AIR STATION NORTH ISLAND - In the realm of naval aviation maintenance, repair, and overhaul, a transformative technology is taking flight. At the heart of this revolution is Fleet Readiness Center Southwest, where a team of dedicated engineers is pioneering the use of cold spray technology.

This innovative approach is not only enhancing the repair capability for aging aircraft but also paving the way for substantial cost savings, an increase in readiness, and environmental benefits. Luc Doan, a senior materials engineer with nearly three decades at FRCSW, alongside fellow F/A-18 Senior Engineer, Conrad Macy and materials engineers, Stoney Middleton and Matthew Chu spearheaded this initiative.

Cold spray, a subset of thermal spray technologies, stands out for its unique method of depositing metallic powder. Unlike other thermal techniques that rely on heating the powder to its melting point, cold spray propels the metal powder at high velocities, creating a solid-state process without the need for melting.

This technique creates a metallurgical bond with the substrate, resulting in a robust and durable repair. What distinguishes FRCSW in this field is not just the technology itself but also the scale and sophistication of its implementation. The Materials Engineering Department boasts an array of cold spray and ancillary equipment, including multiple low-pressure cold spray systems manufactured by Centerline and Inovati as well as a high-pressure VRC cold spray system, which has just been added to FRCSW’s repair toolbox.

Introduced to FRCSW in 2009, cold spray technology was initially used in partnership with original equipment manufacturers, academia, and other partners. Conrad Macy, a Fleet Support Team Engineer known for his innovative and passionate approach, was instrumental in recognizing the potential of the Cold Spray technology to repair corrosion and wear damage. He implemented it to repair the low in-supply, long lead-time, and high-value F/A-18 Aircraft Mounted Auxiliary Drive (AMAD) gearboxes.

To learn more about cold spray technology, go to <https://www.navair.navy.mil/news/Rise-Cold-Spray-Technology-Fleet-Readiness-Center-Southwest/Thu-12142023-1318>.

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Marine killed in Camp Pendleton training accident remembered as compassionate, outstanding leader

by Rose L. Thayer
Stars and Stripes

Sgt. Matthew K. Bylski, a 23-year-old Marine who died Dec. 13 in a rollover accident during training at Camp Pendleton, had nearly five years of service and was known for his willingness to help others.

“He was so compassionate. He was always upbeat and would do anything he could to bring you out of a bad situation and put you in a better mindset,” his brother Josh Bylski said in a statement released by Hazel Park Schools in Michigan where the Marine graduated high school.

Bylski, who grew up in near-by Royal Oak, Mich., died as he was serving as the vehicle commander of an amphibious combat vehicle at Camp Pendleton, according to the Marine Corps base. A rollover accident occurred as the vehicle with 14 other Marines inside was on land.

One Marine remains at the hospital in good condition, the others have been treated and released, the service said Dec. 14. The accident remains under investigation.

Bylski was an amphibious combat vehicle crewman assigned to the Battalion Landing Team 1/5 of the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit.

“Words fail to express our sorrow at the tragic loss of Sgt. Bylski, an outstanding Marine and a leader within his platoon,” said Col. Sean Dynan, commanding officer of the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit. “The MEU — the Marines who lived, trained, and learned from Sgt. Bylski, mourn alongside his family and friends. The entire 15th MEU ‘Vanguard’ family is affected by his absence.”

Bylski enlisted in January 2019 — shortly after his 2018 graduation from Hazel Park High School where he played baseball and football, according to the district. He is survived by



Sgt. Matthew K. Bylski, at right, a 23-year-old Marine who died Dec. 13 in a rollover accident during training at Camp Pendleton, had nearly five years of service and was known for his willingness to help others. (Facebook)

his wife, Lexi, and his parents, Ken Bylski and Sandra Rogoff.

“He was a real special kid,” Ken Bylski said in a statement from the school.

Bylski’s awards and decorations from the Marine Corps

include two Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals, Navy Meritorious Unit Commendation, Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal and Sea Service Deployment Ribbon.



MCAS MIRAMAR (Dec. 8 2023) Effective Dec. 8, Marine Corps Air Station Miramar’s West Gate will be open starting at 6 a.m., and remain open per its normal operating schedule. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Kimberlyn Patterson

New assignments for Marks, Meyer

The secretary of the Navy and chief of naval operations announced the following assignments on Dec. 18:

Rear Adm. (lower half) **Donald W. Marks** is assigned as commander, Naval Surface and Mine Warfighting Development Center, San Diego.

Rear Adm. (lower half) **Richard W. Meyer** is assigned as deputy commander, Third Fleet, San Diego.

In addition, Rear Adm. (lower half) Michael T. Spencer is assigned as commander, Naval Aviation Warfighting Development Center, Fallon, Nev.



ABOARD USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN (Dec. 6, 2023) Lt. Eric Warrington, right, and Lt. Aaron Kim, hit biodegradable golf balls off the flight deck during a wardroom social event. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Clayton A. Wren

MARINE CORPS RECRUIT DEPOT, SAN DIEGO

(Dec. 18, 2023) Marine Corps Pfc. Bruno, the Depot mascot, waits to begin ammo can lifts during a combat fitness test here. The CFT evaluates a Marines capacity to complete combat oriented tasks in a quick manner. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Janell B. Alvarez



ABOARD USS SOMERSET (Dec. 12, 2023) Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) 1st Class Reyvin Olaes signals to Sailors as they remove chocks and chains from an MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter. Somerset is assigned to the Boxer Amphibious Ready Group. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Evan Diaz

CAMP PENDLETON (Dec. 6, 2023)

Marines assigned to Charlie Battery, Battalion Landing Team 1/5, 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, load an M777 towed 155 mm howitzer during a Supporting Arms Coordination Exercise here. The purpose of SACEX was to test the artillery Marines’ ability to coordinate and execute fire missions efficiently while located away from the rest of the MEU.



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The Meat & Potatoes of Life



by
Lisa
Smith
Molinari

I'll admit, it was my own fault. I not only created the monster, I nurtured and enabled it, until it became an unruly beast, with razor sharp claws and gnashing teeth, hell-bent on turning my family against me and crushing my holiday spirit.

It all started long ago, when our family was young. Back then, I believed naively that being a good mom meant that I had to work hard to give my family magical holiday experiences. So, while my Navy husband, Francis, was busy with work, travel, and deployments, I was home with our kids, creating an elaborate schedule of family traditions for every holiday, complete with special foods, activities, crafts, music, experiences, and surprises.

When the kids were in elementary school, I ran our 101-house neighborhood's annual Halloween parade, pumpkin carving contest, and party. I also insisted on sewing our three kids' costumes, serving as home room mom, and reading only Halloween-themed books at bedtime. Pure idiocy!

During Thanksgivings, I cooked elaborate dinners while Francis cozied up with the kids to watch the Macy's parade. I considered cooking all day a labor of love and took pride in watching my family ooh and ahh as they took their seats around our candle-lit Thanksgiving feast. Never mind the fact that our kids

Monstrous Holiday Expectations: A mother's cautionary tale

mostly just ate the diner rolls. Oh, the stupidity!

The Christmas season was the holiday that I really screwed up. I went overboard every year, creating the most cozy, cinnamon-spiked, wood-burning, pine-scented, twinkle-lighted atmosphere I could muster. I'd cart our family to bonfires, tree lightings, neighborhood caroling, and mall Santa visits, all while guzzling gallons of hot cocoa stirred with peppermint sticks. I'd break out Christmas themed books for bedtime, ramping up anticipation so that Christmas became an impossible, sugar-plum vision of present-heaped joy. What a fool I was!

As embarrassing as it is to admit these heinous mothering crimes now, it's my hope that other moms will learn from my mistakes. When I thought I was creating wonderful family traditions, I was really creating impossible family expectations that would come back to bite me in the holidays to come.

The first nip happened one Thanksgiving when the kids were teenagers. As usual, I got up at the crack of dawn to prep the turkey, chop onions, simmer the giblets, and begin the million other tasks required for the holiday.

Francis appeared mid-morning in search of coffee. By that time, I was ready for company, but he soon disappeared from the kitchen. An hour later, I saw him out the window, laughing with a neighbor. An hour before dinner, I found Francis and the kids in our living room, draped on the sofas, enjoying the Macy's Day parade television broadcast in their slippers.

"Food about done, Hon? I'm

getting hungry," Francis yawned, as I stared back at him, irritated. An hour after dinner, I found him asleep in his recliner, a crust of pie perched on his sweater.

This scene would repeat itself on December 24th, when I found myself alone in the kitchen, cooking the elaborate Christmas Eve meal my family had come to expect — bacon-wrapped beef tenderloin, sausage stuffed mushrooms, home-made macaroni and cheese, onion-Swiss bread, and steamed asparagus — while I seethed with resentment.

It took an unflattering holiday melt-down in front of my family for me to finally kill the monstrous expectations that I'd created so long ago. Not only did I have to come to terms with the fact that my beloved traditions were unsustainable, my family now understands that everyone has to pitch in to help on the holidays.

Last year, I started a wonderful new tradition of delegating holiday duties. Last week, I emailed a written "Thanksgiving Day Plan" to our three adult children, an invited boyfriend, and Francis. It began with the following warning, "Listen up! This is extremely important! The family will NOT spend the entire day lounging in the family room watching the Macy's parade while Mom cooks the whole Thanksgiving dinner in the kitchen all by herself."

I finally wised up and realized that good mothers avoid monstrous holiday expectations. And my family now understand that Happy Holidays happen when Mom gets to have fun, too.

December Nights 2023 in San Diego's Balboa Park

The City of San Diego really kicked the festivities up a notch with this year's massive celebration of "December Nights" throughout Balboa Park.

This major event, which hundreds of thousands of San Diegans eagerly look forward to every year, is held on the first Friday and Saturday of December. It is basically a gigantic, pull-out-all-the-stops, Balboa Park-wide open house with a December holidays theme.

While this year's event certainly did build on traditions from past December Nights, this year's event was elevated with the addition of great new entertainment, different concert stages and more. They even added a skating rink!

Parking is always a challenge — the problem being how to park the vehicles of tens of thousands of visitors converging on Balboa Park, all at about the same time. The best thing to do is to take public transportation or otherwise get dropped off at the Park. If you do drive, be sure to get there early both days, while parking is still available. It fills up quickly.

According to a report by Rob Nikolewski on December 2 in the San Diego Union-Tribune, City of San Diego officials anticipated "attendance topping 300,000 for the 47th edition of the annual celebration of the season" (you can read Rob's entire report about December Nights at <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/local/story/2023-12-02/december-nights>).

I tried to corroborate that statistic through various City of San Diego sources but was unable to do so. Nevertheless, I have no doubt that the 300,000-plus figure was in the ballpark. The weather was great and the park was packed both days.

There was so much to see and do that I shot 1,400 photos! Even with seeing all of that, I did not nearly experience everything. I simply ran out of time (and energy). Two days were not enough.

Come along with me now as I share with you some of my favorite and most

AutoMatters™ & More



by Jan Wagner

memorable moments from December Nights 2023 in Balboa Park.

The best way to begin once you are in the Park was to study the map and the comprehensive entertainment schedule at one of the staffed visitor information booths, and then make a rough plan for your visit (subject to changes, as you see what is there in-person).

Something that I absolutely make it a point to experience each year at December Nights is top up my energy level with a generous serving of delicious paella from the House of Spain — one of the International Houses in Balboa Park. Throughout the event they made huge trays of paella, and it truly looked good enough to eat — which I did, both days!

The variety, quantity and quality of the live entertainment was phenomenal. Among dozens of groups and perfor-

mances were the Christmas Story Tree, Ballet Folklorico La Joya de Mexico, eKlectic Dance Company, House of Peru Dance Group, House of Scotland Pipe Band, Legendary Lion Dance Association, Makani Kai Polynesian Dance Troupe, Mariachi Victoria de San Diego, Raylin Cloggers, San Diego Civic Dance Arts, San Diego Junior Theater, San Diego's Balboa Park Puppet Guild, San Diego Women's Chorus, School of Rock San Diego, and more.

This year, in addition to the local entertainers, visitors were treated to a free holiday concert in the Organ Pavilion by the hometown group SWITCHFOOT. They have sold almost 10 million copies worldwide of their 12 studio albums and performed in concert in over 40 countries.

Outside, over at the Museum of Us quadrangle, we were captivated by "A Ciballera Christmas," the story told through ballet as "A ballerina searches for the true meaning of Christmas amid The Nutcracker."

Museums opened their doors, giving thousands of visitors the opportunity to explore a variety of world-class museums at no charge. I explored an incredible collection of fine art in galleries at The San Diego Museum of Art.

I encourage you to mark your calendar to visit December Nights in Balboa Park in 2024, from 3-11 p.m. on Dec. 6 and from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m., Dec. 7.

To explore a wide variety of content dating back to 2002, with the most photos and the latest text, visit "AutoMatters & More" at <https://automatters.net>. Search by title or topic in the Search Bar in the middle of the Home Page, or click on the blue 'years' boxes and browse. Copyright © 2023 by Jan Wagner — AutoMatters & More #820

SENATE APPROVES DEFENSE BILL WITH LARGEST PAY RAISE FOR TROOPS IN 22 YEARS

by Svetlana Shkolnikova
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON - The Senate approved a compromise \$886 billion defense bill Dec. 13 that will give service members the largest pay raise in more than two decades and invest in efforts to counter threats around the world.

Senators passed the National Defense Authorization Act, an annual must-pass bill setting policy for the Pentagon, by a vote of 87-13. The legislation must still be approved by the House but is set to raise basic pay for troops in January by 5.2 percent, the biggest hike in 22 years.

The pay increase was one item to which lawmakers in the Senate and House agreed. The chambers this year passed starkly different versions of the defense bill, with the House padding its legislation with divisive social issues. Those provisions were largely stripped out after

months of bipartisan negotiations.

"I'm pleased the final version of the NDAA has many of the strongest provisions of the Senate's original bill," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said in remarks before the vote. "We'll give our service members the pay raise they deserve."

Junior troops struggling with finances could see additional benefits under a measure that allows the Defense Department next year to give a monthly bonus to ranks E-6 and lower.

A Republican effort in the House to give the same service members a 30 percent raise was left out of the final defense bill. Other conservative priorities that included overturning the Pentagon's travel and leave policy for troops seeking abortions and other reproductive health care were also scrapped.

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Saturday, December 23
 1pm Trolls Band Together pg
 3:10pm Napoleon r

Sunday, December 24
 1pm The Hunger Games: The Ballad
 of Songbirds and Snakes pg13

Wednesday - December 27
 6pm Napoleon r

Thursday - December 28
 5:50pm Wish pg
 8:10pm The Marvels pg13

Friday - December 29
 5:30pm Trolls Band Together pg
 7:30pm Silent Night r

Saturday - December 30
 1:50pm Wish pg
 3:50p Trolls Band Together pg

6pm Silent Night r For updates check
<https://sandiego.navylifefsw.com/mov>



Pendleton Theater and Training Center
 Bldg 1330 Mainside (Across
 from Mainside Center)

Saturday, December 23
CLOSED

Saturday, December 30
 1:30pm Trolls Band Together (PG)

Lowry Theater - NASNI,
 619-545-8479
 Bldg. 650

Outside food and beverage are NOT
 permitted. Debit/credit cards only.

Saturday, December 23
 12:50pm Wish pg

2:50pm Hunger Games: Songbirds & Snakes
 6pm Napoleon r

Sunday, December 24
 1pm Wish pg
 3pm Trolls Band Together pg

Friday - December 29
 6pm Silent Night r

Saturday - December 30
 1pm Trolls Band Together pg
 3pm Napoleon r

6pm Silent Night r
Sunday - December 31
 1pm Wish pg
 3pm Hunger Games: Songbirds & Snakes

Bob Hope Theater 577-4143
 MCAS Miramar Bldg 2242

Saturday, December 23
 12pm FREE Show: Polar Express (G)
 3pm Wish (PG)

6:30pm The Hunger Games: Ballad
 of Songbirds and Snakes (PG-13)

Sunday, December 24
 12pm Wish (PG)

3pm Napoleon (R)
Friday, December 29
 6pm Silent Night (R)
Saturday, December 30
 3pm Napoleon (R)
 6:30pm Silent Night (R)

SOCIAL SECURITY MATTERS

Social Security Disability vs. Spouse Benefits vs. Survivor Benefits (& COLA)

Dear Rusty: I retired from working in June but will not sign up for Social Security until age 70 and, to do that, I plan to draw from my IRA for the next 3 years. My wife is receiving Social Security disability benefits and will reach her full retirement age in March of next year. I know that my wife simply reaching her full retirement age will not mean an increase to her benefit - except for COLA. What I'm wondering is, can my wife get spousal benefits of any sort based on my Social Security benefits - either before I draw or after I am drawing - apart from her benefits at my death? Her Social Security disability amount is only a fraction of my maximum benefit. Signed: Baffled Husband

Dear Baffled: Looks like you're confused about your wife's Social Security disability benefits, retirement benefits, spousal benefits, and survivor benefits. Here's what you need to know:

When your wife reaches her full retirement age (FRA) next year, her current Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefit will automatically convert to become her regular SS retirement benefit at the same amount she was receiving on SSDI (disability). The amount stays the same because your wife's SSDI amount is based on her FRA entitlement.

Your wife cannot get any spousal benefits from you until you claim your own Social Security retirement benefit. Since you plan to delay claiming until you are 70 several years from now, after your wife's SSDI converts to become her regular retirement benefit at her FRA next year, she will continue to receive her own SS retirement benefit until you claim. At that point your wife will get a "spousal boost" added to her own SS retirement benefit. The amount of her spousal boost will be the difference between her FRA entitlement (same as her SSDI amount), and 50% of your FRA entitlement (not half of your age 70 amount - spouse benefits are always calculated using FRA amounts, regardless of when Social Security is actually claimed).

Your wife cannot get a spousal benefit from you until you start your Social Security, but after you claim she will receive her higher spousal benefit (her own SS retirement benefit plus a spousal boost) for the rest of her life, or until you predecease her. If you die first, your wife will get 100% of the amount you were receiving at your death (e.g., your age 70 amount), instead of the smaller amount she was receiving as your spouse while you are both living.

Regarding COLA, after becoming eligible for benefits, everyone gets the annually awarded COLA increase whether they are already collecting SS benefits or not. The next annual COLA increase will be added to your wife's SSDI at the end of this year and added to her SS retirement amount each year thereafter, and then to her higher amount as your spouse after you claim. And even though you are waiting until age 70 to claim, the annual COLA will still be added to your Primary Insurance Amount (PIA) each year, and you will receive that past COLA in your monthly payments after you later claim.

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Veterans find relief at Brain Therapy TMS in San Diego

After years of suffering and multiple treatment failures with pharmacological trials, veterans have found relief for their treatment-resistant depression and PTSD through the innovative treatment approach provided through the services at Brain Therapy TMS in San Diego.

"Brain Therapy TMS is a recognized leader in providing Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation to resolve mental and neuropathic disorders without medication, using the most technologically advanced system available today. TMS is a proven, breakthrough therapy that heals specific areas of the brain that are impaired by brain cell dysfunction, which significantly improves mood, function, energy, focus, and general well-being."

Transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) is a noninvasive procedure that uses magnetic fields to stimulate nerve cells in the brain to improve symptoms of depression, Post-traumatic stress disorder, and a variety of other mental health and physical health conditions.

Major depression, a global health concern growing at epidemic proportions, remains challenging to treat. TMS offers a ray of hope. Many studies have reported its positive effects in alleviating depressive symptoms. Delving into its mechanism reveals TMS's ability to modulate neurotransmitter pathways, especially those associated with mood regulation. TMS is an effective treatment with minimal side effects and no downtime. Many clients receive TMS before work, at lunchtime, or after work. After years of failed treatment, clients at Brain Therapy TMS have seen life-changing results during their treatment.

Nathan W stated, "As a combat vet, I have struggled with PTSD, depression, and sleep issues for the last 13 years. With only 12 TMS treatments, all of these have improved significantly. I first noticed the quality of my sleep improving. Sleep has not felt restful in over a decade. I would very rarely reach REM sleep and actually dream. That changed within the first week of TMS. I now dream every night and wake up feeling rested. This treatment has been an absolute game changer, and I highly recommend it."

If you are suffering from depression or PTSD, there is hope. Contact us for a free consultation to see if TMS is a suitable treatment option. 619.762.4150 • 866.228.5773. www.braintherapytms.com

Coronado Public Library invites you to Chill Out and Read!

This January, Chill Out and Read! Starting January 1, join Coronado Public Library's Winter Read Challenge and report your reads by January 31 for a chance to win prizes! Head to coronado.beanstack.org to get started.

Kids can report up to 10 books to win 2 prizes. Teens in 6th-12th grade can report up to 4 books to receive 2 entries into a gift card raffle. Adults of all ages can report up to 2 books to receive 2 entries into a gift card raffle.

Any book read during the month of January counts in this challenge and anything you read (books, graphic novels, audiobooks, eBooks, reading to a child or sibling) counts too! So get cozy like the penguin, Chill Out and Read!

Coronado Public Library is located at 640 Orange Ave, Coronado, CA 92118. 619-522-7390. <https://www.coronadolibrary.org/>

Veterans Crisis Line
 Dial **988** then **PRESS 1**

Q&A: How does TRICARE For Life work with Medicare?

by TRICARE Communications

Will you be eligible for Medicare soon? You may have questions about the different parts of Medicare and how they interact with TRICARE For Life (TFL).

“TRICARE For Life is Medicare-wraparound coverage. This means Medicare and TRICARE work together to coordinate your benefits and reduce your out-of-pocket medical costs,” said Anne E. Breslin, TRICARE For Life Program Manager. “You’ll pay nothing out of pocket when the services you receive are a benefit of both Medicare and TRICARE.”

TFL coverage is automatic if you have Medicare Part A and Part B. But what do these terms mean? And how does TFL work with about Medicare Part C and Part D? Read on to learn more.

Q: Who is eligible for Medicare and TFL?

A: Most people become eligible for Medicare the month they turn age 65, as described in the TRICARE and Medicare Turning Age 65 Brochure. You may be eligible earlier if you receive Social Security disability benefits or have certain other health conditions. To learn more about the impact of Medicare eligibility before age 65 on TRICARE eligibility, see the TRICARE and Medicare Under



U.S. Marine Corps 1stSgt (Ret.) William M. McDowell discusses his time spent serving in the Marine Corps during an interview in Long Beach, CA, June 14, 2023. McDowell, who attended recruit training at Montford Point, NC, served during World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War, earning three Purple Heart Medals. (US. Marine Corps photo by Gunnery Sgt. Melissa Marnell)

Age 65 Brochure.

TFL is available to military retirees and their eligible dependents who are eligible for TRICARE and have Medicare Part A and Part B. This is regardless of your age or where you live. TFL is an individual entitlement. This means family members who aren’t eligible for Medicare stay eligible for TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select.

Q: How do I get TFL coverage?

A: Your TFL coverage automatically begins the first day that you have both Medicare Parts A and B. There are no TFL enrollment forms or enrollment fees.

To avoid a gap in your TRICARE coverage, make sure you’re enrolled Medicare Part A and Medicare Part B at least two months before you turn age 65. You can sign up for Medicare on the Social Security website or by contacting the Social Security Administration to set up an appointment.

Check out the TRICARE For Life Handbook to learn more about signing up for Medicare.

Q: What are the different parts of Medicare? Which ones do I need to have TFL?

A: You need to have Medicare Part A and Part B to have TFL.

Medicare Part A is hospital insurance. It covers inpatient costs for hospital care, skilled nursing facility care, hospice care, and some home health care.

Note: Most people are eligible for premium-free Medicare Part A if they or their spouse worked and paid Social Security taxes for at least 10 years. If you aren’t eligible for premium-free Medicare Part A, based on your own record, you may be eligible for Medicare on a current or former spouse’s record.

Medicare Part B is medical insurance. Coverage includes outpatient care, home health care, durable medical equipment, and some preventive services. Medicare Part B has a monthly premium based on your income.

You don’t need Medicare Part C or Part D to have TFL.

Medicare Part C refers to Medicare Advantage plans. Private companies contract with Medicare to offer these plans. Coverage includes Medicare Part A and Part B. Some plans also include vision, dental, and prescription drug coverage.

Medicare Part D is prescription drug coverage. Private companies contract with Medicare to offer these plans.

Q: What should I know about the optional parts of Medicare (Part C and Part D)?

A: With Medicare Part C, you’ll pay a monthly premium in addition to your Medicare Part B premium. If you choose to enroll in Part C:

- You must get all non-emergency health services from that plan’s network of providers.
- You’ll pay copayments at the time of service.
- You’ll need to file paper claims for TRICARE to reimburse you for TRICARE-covered services you receive.

If you need dental and vision coverage, you may qualify to purchase this coverage through the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP).

You don’t need to enroll in Medicare Part D to have drug coverage. With TFL beneficiaries remain eligible for the TRICARE Pharmacy Program.

If you enroll in Medicare Part D, you’ll pay a monthly premium. You’ll also need to follow your Medicare Part D plan’s rules for where to get prescriptions. Learn more about using Medicare Part D with TRICARE.

Q: Does Medicare or TRICARE pay first?

A: If both Medicare and TRICARE cover the service, TRICARE pays last. However, Medicare doesn’t cover all services that TRICARE covers. Be sure to check whether your health care services are covered by Medicare, TRICARE, or both, so

you aren’t surprised by any out-of-pocket costs.

Q: What if I have other health insurance?

A: TFL pays after Medicare and other health insurance (OHI), such as insurance based on your or your spouse’s current employment. Find more information about how Medicare and TFL interact with OHI in the

TRICARE for Life Handbook

Be sure to explore all your options and enroll in Medicare at least two months before you turn 65 to avoid any gaps in TRICARE coverage. Keep your contact information up to date in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System to ensure timely delivery of your TRICARE benefits.



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Toddler watching a movie on a tablet that tracks autism related behaviors. Duke University.

App aids autism screening

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) affects how a person behaves, communicates, interacts with others, and learns. It’s called a “spectrum disorder” because symptoms can vary widely. Early diagnosis can lead to early treatment and improved outcomes. But ASD can be hard to diagnose.

Kids are often screened for ASD before age 3 at well-child medical visits. Screening is usually based on a caregiver questionnaire. But scientists have been looking for ways to improve early detection.

An NIH-supported research team created a mobile app that might help. While a child watches videos on a tablet, the app collects a wide range of data. It tracks the child’s eye gaze, head movements, expressions, blinking, and other behaviors linked to ASD.

The app was tested in 475 toddlers, ages 17 months to 3 years. It correctly identified nearly 90% of the children who were later diagnosed with ASD. The app also identified over 80% of the kids who did not have ASD. The researchers now have a new study underway to see if parents can effectively use the app at home.

“This screening tool captures a wide range of behaviors that more accurately reflect the complexity and variability found in autism,” says Dr. Geraldine Dawson, who co-led the study along with Dr. Guillermo Sapiro at Duke University. “This app could help clinicians focus on the areas in which the child needs help, as well as identify areas of strength.”

More: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37783967/>

TRICARE and Medicare Turning Age 65 Brochure

TRICARE Medicare Turning 65 Brochure This brochure provides information on how to remain TRICARE-eligible after becoming entitled to Medicare at age 65. It includes details on how Medicare affects TRICARE coverage, signing up for Medicare, provider options, prescription drug coverage, and more.

Audience: TRICARE beneficiaries eligible for Medicare Part A at age 65

Download the TRICARE and Medicare Turning Age 65 Brochure PDF at https://tricare.mil/Publications/Brochures/medicare_turning_65

May be available in print at your local military hospital or clinic



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