

Minnesota Grants and Veterans Help

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs announced that their 2020 grant application period is open until 31 January 2020. Funds for the grant come from the sale of 'Support Our Troops' license plates. Minnesota organizations with programs designed to "support and improve the lives of Veterans and their families" now may apply for grants ranging from \$1,000 to \$100,000. The website for application information is mn.gov/mdva/resources/federalresources/grants/. I checked some of the past winners and found these among others: The Middle River Veterans Outdoors, Inc who used their grant to provide wheelchair-bound Veterans and family members with an outdoor fishing and hunting experience with the aid of a tracked wheelchair. Yes, that is the Middle River in northern Minnesota, population of about 300 people. The Community Action Partnership of Hennepin County used their grant to provide rental subsidies for Veterans and their families who are at risk of eviction. And the Ars Bellum Foundation used their grant to provide at no cost to Veterans, eight-week Art Therapy Sessions with a certified art therapist to help reduce symptoms of PTSD.

The Clay County Housing and Redevelopment Authority in cooperation with the VA in Fargo is continuing its joint program to end Veteran homelessness in our community. Since west central MN has very few identified homeless Veterans, much of this federal money is going to Cass County of ND to end homelessness for Veterans there.

I recently received the newsletter from Military Families Learning Network, located at the University and works with the Department of Defense. The organization provides information, research and training for professionals working with military family service. One of the more interesting articles was about the makeup of military families. Not surprising, the trend of families in the military reflect the changes in families of our population in general with more single parents, more unmarried couples with children and same-sex families. We are also seeing more dual-military marriages where both parents are in the military. Another of the major concerns with military families is what happens to school-aged children when a family member is deployed or when the family moves with a new military assignment. School disruptions generally have a negative impact on the child's learning. It is recommended that parents compile a folder of school information for each child including report cards, test information, notes from teacher conferences, individualized education plans and even photographs of the student so the new teachers can put a face with a name.

The Beyond the Yellow Ribbon program in Minnesota is designed to assist families when a family member is called to active duty or deployed. Moorhead's chapter has been in existence since 2011 and has helped a large number of families.