

Veterans Leadership Conference

This week in Dallas, Texas, a special leadership conference is being held for individuals serving Veterans and those motivated to grow their skillsets, knowledge and influence across the nation. Among those speaking are former President George Bush, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Peter Pace, former Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert McDonald and former Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings. The main emphasis of this year's conference will be post-9/11 Veteran transition issues and leadership development. Attendees must apply and go through a review process before being invited to attend. This is the second year of the program held at the George W Bush Institute.

In May, the Department of Veteran Affairs and Microsoft Corporation formalized an agreement to provide 'telemedicine' opportunities to Veterans living in rural areas. The initiative will provide broadband Internet service to Veterans so they can access the VA's online services and health care. This will allow Veterans to have their medical appointments from their home.

In a not surprising announcement, the VA and the Elizabeth Dole Foundation released a report on the critical role of caregivers in Veterans health. The study found that when health care teams of doctors, nurses and social workers include caregivers, the health of the Veteran improves. This is especially true of wounded soldiers.

The Vet Center program will celebrate its 40th birthday this year. There is a Vet Center in Fargo. Vet Centers were opened 40 years ago to provide Veterans with a community-based counseling center that provides social and psychological services in a more relaxed environment. Many of our returning Veterans did not see the traditional VA hospital as a welcoming place to receive health care, leading to the development of the Vet Centers. The Vet Centers helps those returning from service or deployment with counseling and referral services that is community based. In addition, Vet Centers provide assistance to family members.

Don't forget to come to the Moorhead American Legion this weekend for their 100th birthday celebration. The big day is Saturday with activities for all age groups and interests.

This Friday and Saturday is also the local Scandinavian Festival and Viking Village at the Hjemkomst Center. Here is a bit of history. Seventy-five years ago, a group of Norwegian expert skiers parachuted into the wilderness near Vemork, Norway where the Germans were working on 'heavy water' to create an atomic bomb. The eleven person team, then skied to the plant, planted timed explosives and left as the explosions were going off. No lives were lost and not a single shot was fired by either side. The skiers went east to neutral Sweden and then back to their unit in England. The damage done was sufficient to set the bomb making back many weeks and the war ended without Germany having developed an atomic bomb.