

Veterans and Health

October is National Audiology Awareness Month. From the Department of Veterans Affairs website, “Hearing loss, including tinnitus, which is a ringing, buzzing or other type of noise that originates in the head, is the most prevalent service-connected disability among Veterans, with more than 30 million Veterans suffering from a form of it due to frequent exposure to loud noises from weaponry and aircraft. Because of the pervasiveness of hearing loss among Veterans, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is recognizing October as Audiology Awareness Month by highlighting important VA research on the subject and advances made in treating Veterans with hearing loss.”

Recent findings include a study in California that linked exposure to jet fuel with auditory processing problems, changes that occur inside the brain rather than the ear. Current studies are being conducted on older Veterans whose hearing problems are getting worse. Also being studied are Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans who were subjected to blasts while in combat and what those blasts may have on future hearing problems. Although to me, this seems to be a ‘no-brainer’, we need research on possible treatments.

Also the VA is rolling out a program for Veterans, who need routine audiology appointments, will be able to directly schedule them, without the need for a referral from their primary care provider.

No Veteran should be without a place to call home. In September, the VA announced \$3.5 million in funding to help homeless Veterans. This program and programs of the past have cut homelessness for Veterans nearly in half since 2010. Two states, Connecticut and Virginia have announced an end to Veteran homelessness in their states. The criteria is “The state must be able to “quickly” find permanent housing for any future homeless veteran (i.e. within 90 days), and the state must have more veterans *exiting* homelessness, at any point, than the number *entering* homelessness. The only exceptions are veterans who have been offered housing and have refused it.”

I am honored to be a board member of the Housing and Redevelopment Authority of Clay County, an organization that has been providing affordable housing to Clay County residents for over 30 years. Director Dara Lee and her excellent staff provide services to help our residents find housing. My favorite program is Cares for Kids, a program funded by the State to help families with children in school find affordable housing and to provide funding to help pay for housing. Our children need a home to go to when they out of school. Although formal analysis is still a couple years away, I know this will have a positive impact on the performance of those children in our schools.

Veterans Day is only a month away. If your organization is planning an event for Veterans Day, please send me the information and I will include it in a future column. Recently, I’ve been contacted by friends who represent groups that are willing to sing military and patriotic songs for organizations. If interested, send me an e-mail.