

Buckley AFB, CO - RETIREE ACTIVITIES OFFICE (RAO) NEWSLETTER - March 2019

18401 East A-Basin Ave, Stop 95, Buckley AFB, CO 80011

Building 606, Room 104, phone **720-847-6693**, e-mail address: **460sw.rao.org@us.af.mil**

Normal Hrs of operation: Mon 1000-1600, Tues 0900-1200, Wed 1200-1500, Thurs 1000-1300 & Fri 0900-1200

Director: Steve Young, Lt Col, USAF, Ret

NEW RETIREE ACTIVITIES OFFICE (RAO) LOCATION: We have moved from Rm 164 to **Rm 104** in the same building - much closer to the main building entrance. Office organization is still a work in progress but the computers, phones and printer have been re-connected. To reach our office: as you come in the main entrance to **Bldg 606**, turn left and then enter the first hallway on your right. Rm 104 is the first room on your left, right at the entrance to the hallway.

RAO VOLUNTEERS NEEDED: We only have 7 RAO volunteers that support our “Help Desk” (720-847-6693) in Rm 104 of the Mission Support Building (Bldg 606) so the office is not fully manned every day of the week. You can leave a voice mail at 720-847-6693 anytime, and we check Voice Mails frequently to return calls, but *we need more volunteers*. *A typical volunteer would spend a single 3-4 hour shift in the office per week*. You don't have to be an expert on retiree matters, you just need a desire to help other military retirees and their spouses and a willingness to learn! We will start by having you sit with an experienced volunteer to go over reference materials, explain RAO procedures, etc. You won't work a solo “shift” until you are comfortable doing so. The job mainly consists of answering phone calls, responding to Voice Mails and meeting with people who come by the office. You either answer customer questions yourself or refer them to the appropriate subject matter expert (SME) and provide them with the contact information for that SME. *If you think you might be interested, or just have questions, please contact me (Steve Young) at my home e-mail - elkfive@centurylink.net.*

MIKE SUPER - MAGIC & ILLUSION SHOW: Mike Super will present a magic & illusion show at the Leadership Development Center (**LDC - Bldg 1032**) on base **Saturday, 2 Mar, at 1800**. He was a finalist on America's Got Talent and winner of NBC's Phenomenon. *This show is free and retirees are welcome!* For more information you can call 720-847-5278.

VETERANS COMMUNITY LIVING CENTERS - TIME SENSITIVE LEGISLATIVE ISSUE: On 26 Feb I received information from the United Veterans Coalition (UVC) regarding high turnover rates (over 20%) at the four Veterans Community Living Centers (VCLCs or nursing homes) in CO, due mainly to non-competitive wages, and the negative impact it is having on vets needing these facilities. In some cases this results in VCLC applicants being turned away from the facility due to staffing shortages. A budget proposal submitted by the Dept of Human Services (which operates the VCLCs), which addresses this issue, is being considered by the legislature's Joint Budget Committee. *I've attached a flyer that provides details on this issue, a list of the state legislators for the four VCLC Districts (and their contact info) and a link to the UVC site where you can find sample letters/e-mails you can use if you want to engage on this issue. If you do choose to contact a legislator on this issue, UVC suggests you do it before Wed, 5 Mar.*

BUCKLEY AFB RETIREE ACTIVITIES OFFICE (RAO) COFFEE SOCIAL: *The second quarterly RAO “coffee social” is planned for Tuesday, 9 Apr 19 at 0900 - spouses are welcome!* After the last newsletter I heard from a few retirees requesting the meeting be held on a day the commissary is open. In Feb the commissary schedule changed and it is now closed on Mondays so we are adjusting for that. About 25 retirees attended our first event held on 14 Jan where we had presentations from Tricare (Harley Hicks) and base legal (Susan Hurd). These events are held at the Community Center (Panther Den) on base. The facility is on your right by the 4-way stop on Aspen St at the entrance to the Aerospace Defense Facility (ADF) - there is an electronic sign right beside the street at that stop sign. Breakfast items will be available for *purchase* until 0930 and after that you can purchase drinks (coffee, etc). There are ~45 parking spots assigned to the Panther Den on one side of the facility and along the ADF compound fence (designated by brown signs for “Panther Den Customer”). The entire parking

area around the Aerospace Defense Facility (ADF) is *always* very full so you may have to park at a lot down the road (on the right), or across the street in lots by the Comm Squadron building, and walk over to the facility. No one mentioned parking issues at our first event. **For this second social** we plan to have a presentation by the base **Casualty Assistance Representative** and one done jointly by the **CO Transition Assistance Advisor (TAA) office** and **HQ Air Reserve Personnel Center (ARPC) retirement section** focused on **Gray Area Reservists**.

INCOME TAX FILING ASSISTANCE: It's that time of year again so I thought some of you might be interested in a few tax preparation options available in our area, if you don't do your own using Turbo Tax or whatever. While H&R Block obviously charges you to do taxes, **there are at least two free alternatives**.

There is an H&R Block Tax Booth located in the food court of the Base Exchange. Their prices run from \$59 (W2 income only) - \$189 (paid mortgage interest, etc) depending on the complexity of your taxes.

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program offers *free* tax help to people who generally make \$55,000 or less, persons with disabilities and limited English speaking taxpayers who need assistance in preparing their own tax returns. IRS-certified volunteers provide free basic income tax return preparation with electronic filing to qualified individuals.

In addition to VITA, the **Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE)** program offers **free tax help for all taxpayers, particularly those who are 60 years of age and older**, specializing in questions about pensions and retirement-related issues unique to seniors. The IRS-certified volunteers who provide tax counseling are often retired individuals associated with non-profit organizations that receive grants from the IRS.

The **web site** at <https://www.irs.gov/individuals/free-tax-return-preparation-for-you-by-volunteers> provides you with **two links where you can search (by zip code) for places near you that offer free tax return preparation by volunteers**. One link is for the **"VITA/TCE Locator Tool"** and one is for the **"AARP Tax-Aide Site Locator Tool."**

I talked to one of the tax preparers at the AARP Tax-Aide site at the Parker Library and those locations will do taxes for *anyone* at no charge - you don't need to be an AARP member. There were 17 different AARP tax-aid locations listed within 20 miles of my zip code - at libraries, retirement homes, senior centers, rec centers, etc. Some of them allow you to make appointments on-line and others you have to call. If you have additional questions for them you can call the AARP tax-aid site located nearest you or visit <https://cotaxaide.org>.

FEDERAL EMPLOYEE DENTAL & VISION INSURANCE PLAN (FEDVIP): Some of you probably selected one of the FEDVIP dental/vision plans and some may not have signed up for anything. **BENEFEDS is still taking enrollments under some circumstances** if a military retiree missed the **Open Season enrollment**. The RAO has gotten a few such calls from retirees wondering if they can still sign up. If you intended to enroll in a FEDVIP plan before the end of the Federal Benefits Open Season on December 10, 2018, but were unable to do so for reasons beyond your control, **visit www.BENEFEDS.com** to find out what options are available to you. BENEFEDS.com is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and accessible via computer, cell phone, and tablet. If you have enrollment questions and do not have access to the internet please **call the BENEFEDS Customer Service Center at 1-877-888-FEDS (1-877-888-3337) TTY 1-877-889-5690, Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. (ET)**. New military retirees will have 60 days from their retirement from active duty to enroll in one of the FEDVIP dental or vision plans.

OSHER LIFELONG LEARNING INSTITUTE: "Curiosity never retires!" is the motto of some 3,000 active adult (50+) members of Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at the University of Denver. OLLI offers three 8-week terms per year at locations in Aurora, West Denver, Highlands Ranch, Central Denver, Boulder and DU, with classes on history, the visual and performing arts, current events, science and technology, philosophy, literature and much more. No grades, no tests - just learning for the fun of it in a welcoming, social and non-competitive environment. **Registration for spring terms began on February 18, with classes starting on April 1. You can register up until classes start but the class you want may be full if you wait. The cost of enrollment is \$130 per term**, which entitles a member to sign up for as many classes as desired (on a space available basis) across the 6 OLLI locations. Discover more about OLLI at <https://universitycollege.du.edu/olli/>.

MEDICARE ADVANTAGE PLANS - YOU CAN STILL CHANGE PLANS! While the Medicare open enrollment period for 2019 ended on 7 Dec 18 **if you are currently on a Medicare Advantage plan and want to switch to a new Medicare Advantage plan, or to Original Medicare, you have until 31 Mar to make the change.** **I've attached an article** from the March issue of Money Magazine that provides some additional information on this recent change in enrollment policy. The article mentions something I have passed on to several RAO customers which they were not aware of - *some* Medicare Advantage plans charge "\$0 premiums" (in essence the private health plan company gets your Medicare Part B premium payment) and cover some services Original Medicare doesn't, like gym memberships (Silver Sneakers) and hearing aids.

PAPA JOHN'S PIZZA - GET 40% OFF YOUR ONLINE ORDER & SUPPORT YOUR DENVER USO: The Denver USO has a new partnership that just started with ~27 Denver Papa John's Pizza restaurants. **Anyone using the "USODEN" code at one of these stores when ordering online (papajohns.com) will get 40% off their pizza and USO Denver will get 10% of the proceeds from these sales.** The code is good for as many pizzas as you want to order, you just have to enter the code for each pizza in your order. So, if you like Papa John's pizza here is a chance to save yourself some \$ *and* support your Denver USO in the process!

RECEIVE VA DISABILITY CLAIM DECISIONS IN 30 DAYS OR LESS: If you're submitting a claim for an increase in disability compensation, you need to know about VA's Decision Ready Claims (DRC) Program. **Using this program, VA will deliver your decision within 30 days or less of when the claim is received.**

Here are the DRC steps to expedite your claim decision:

1. Appoint and work with an accredited Veteran Service Organization.
2. Gather all relevant/required evidence to support your claim, such as military service records and medical exams.
3. Attend a VA claim exam, if needed.
4. Submit your claim.

In addition to claims for increases, the DRC program covers certain claims related to direct, presumptive and secondary service connections. Surviving spouses can file certain claims under DRC, and transitioning service members can file pre-discharge claims less than 90 days from leaving the military. Learn more about DRC by visiting Explore.VA.gov or by calling your local VA Benefits Advisors on Buckley AFB at 720-847-4838.

STATE VA BENEFITS: Everyone knows about the federal benefits available to veterans, but did you know many *states* also offer great benefits to their veterans? State benefits range from free college and employment resources to free hunting and fishing licenses. Most states also offer tax breaks for their veterans and specialized license plates, some states even provide their veterans with cash bonuses just for serving in the military. A handy summary of the benefits each state and territory offers can be found here: <https://militarybenefits.info/state-veterans-benefits/> There may be a benefit available to you or your family that you didn't know about!

DENVER VA REGIONAL BENEFITS OFFICE HOURS & LOCATIONS: *Do you have a question about your VA Benefits? Compensation Claim, Pension Claim, Aid and Attendance, Appeals, survivor and burial benefits, Home Loans, Employment, or Education*

The VBA Office in the Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center is holding office hours:

Office Hours: Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. (last appt. at 3:30 p.m.)

Phone: (800) 827-1000

Location:

Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center

Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)

1700 North Wheeling Street

Aurora, CO 80045

Sign up to meet with a counselor in the Pharmacy waiting room.

We also have a Veterans Affairs Office on Buckley AFB in Bldg 606. There are three Benefits Advisors there (Mr Gross, Mr Veck, Mr Zucker) who can be reached at 720-847-4838 from Mon-Fri 0800-1600.

ID CARD RENEWALS FOR BUCKLEY AFB AREA RETIREES

For ID card renewal there are several places you can use in our area, both on and off Buckley AFB. If your computer is compatible, you can use the following two web sites to locate ID card facilities near you and to make an appointment. The RAPIDS locator web site is at <https://rsl.dmdc.osd.mil/rsl/> and the appointment site is at <https://rapids-appointments.dmdc.osd.mil> . If the links above won't work for you, info on the nearby ID card facilities you can use is below:

MPF at Buckley AFB (Bldg 606 on 18401 E A-Basin Ave) - they are really by appointment only. You can call them at 723-847-6990 to schedule an appointment.

ANG at Buckley AFB (18860 E Breckenridge Ave, Hangar 801, Rm N224) - You can call 720-847-9295, closed Monday.

NAVOPS Space Ctr at Buckley AFB (7 N Snowmass St, Bldg 1301) - you can call 720-847-7808, Closed on Monday

Army Reserve at Fitzsimmons (12963 E 23rd Ave, Bldg 262 (?), Rm 121) - you can call 303-365-3060

CO HQ Army NG in Centennial (6848 South Revere Pkwy) - you can call 720-250-1315, Closed on Monday.

NOAA Facility in Boulder (Skaggs Bldg, Rm GB515 - 325 Broadway) - you can call 303-497-6119, open Mon-Wed-Fri by appointment only.

GRAY AREA RESERVISTS: We get quite a few calls in the RAO from Gray Area Reservists approaching 60 who have questions regarding the processing of their retirement orders, when they can anticipate their first pension check, what they need to do regarding Tricare, etc. Based on that, I thought I would provide some contact information in this newsletter regarding good POCs for Guard/Reserve members from the various services. In addition, we send a personal letter to Gray Area Reservists we know of in our AOR several months before their 60th birthday with some of this information.

Air Force Guard/Reserve:

Air Reserve Personnel Center (ARPC): 1-800-525-0102. In the past some of our customers have told us they experienced significant hold times, dropped calls, etc when calling this number. If you, or anyone you know, is experiencing this please get in touch with us and we will use our back-channel contacts at ARPC to try and assist.

Army Guard/Reserve Personnel in CO

88th Readiness Division Retirement Services Office (RSO) - 60 South O Street, Ft. McCoy, Wisconsin 54656
608-388-7448/9321 or DSN 280-0596

<http://soldierforlife.army.mil/retirement/reserve-component-retirement-services>

Navy Guard/Reserve Personnel

PERS-912: 1-866-827-5672 or 1-833-330-6622

https://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/support/retired_activities/Pages/default.aspx

USMC Reserve Personnel

MMSR-5 Reserve Retirement & Separation Section: 703-784-9306/9307

Coast Guard Reserve Personnel

National Retiree Help Desk Hotline (unless it is a pay related issue): 1-833-224-6743 -

For pay related issues call 1-800-772-8724 or 785-339-3415

<https://www.dcms.uscg.mil/Our-Organization/Assistant-Commandant-for-Human-Resources-CG-1/Retiree-Services-Program/>

Colorado Transition Assistance Advisor (TAA)

This office assists Service members in accessing Dept of VA health care services & benefits. The TAA initiative was started in May 2005 when the National Guard Bureau (NGB) signed a MoA with the VA.

Amy Eagen - 720-250-1173 (works Tues-Fri)

MyPay ADDRESS CHANGE: The simplest and quickest solution for changing your mailing address is through myPay, using the online account management system. For any questions or concerns regarding myPay, call 888-332-7411 (option 5) for a customer service representative. Both retirees and annuitants may call DFAS Retired and Annuitant Pay at 800-321-1080. If you call MyPay have your banking information available - you may need **routing and account information** before they will talk with you.

MAIL OPTION: Please include both your old and new mailing address, along with the effective date for the new address. In addition, please include your name, social security number and signature with date on your request. For retirees, use the address below:

DFAS U.S. Military Retired Pay
8899 E 56th Street
Indianapolis, IN 46249-1200
Or FAX DFAS Retired Pay at 800-469-6559

If you are an annuitant please mail your request to:

DFAS U.S. Military Annuitant Pay
8899 E 56th Street
Indianapolis, IN 46249-1300
Or FAX DFAS Annuitant Pay at 800-982-8459

LIFE CHANGING EVENT? KEEP DFAS INFORMED: Ensuring your retired pay comes to you accurately and on time is our primary goal at DFAS. To do this, we need your help to keep your account up to date. As a retiree, the sooner you alert us to any change that might affect your pay, the more timely and accurate your pay will be. Keeping your account up to date includes making sure your mailing address, banking information, allotments, tax withholding status, and your beneficiary choices are current. Be sure to report any change of life events as soon as they happen. These life-changing events include:

- Marriage
- Divorce
- Death of a spouse or child
- Birth or adoption of a child

Some changes, especially those regarding SBP, have a one-year time limit, so it is very important that DFAS is notified of life-changing events when they happen. When you notify us, be sure to include supporting documents, such as birth or marriage certificates. Keeping your contact information updated is also key to staying informed. We occasionally send out correspondence regarding changes in the law that affect your pay, and a new Retired Account Statement (RAS) is sent when your net pay changes (unless you are on **myPay** where the new RAS is available online). **If your mailing address is not correct and you are not on myPay, we have no way of notifying you about changes. The easiest way to stay up to date is to use myPay. You can use myPay to change your mailing address, your direct deposit information, certain allotments and your tax withholding status.** You can also use

myPay to verify payment information, including allotment amounts, or tax withholding, or check your Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) coverage on your RAS. **You can create a myPay account at <https://mypay.dfas.mil/>**

SURVIVOR BENEFITS:

Reporting the Death of a Retiree

Please report the death of a retired service member as soon as possible to avoid delay and possible financial hardship to surviving beneficiaries. You can contact the Buckley AFB Casualty Office at (720) 847-6946 for assistance with this claim as well as other applicable claims, for example Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) Claim, Civil Service Claim, VA Claim, other insurance claims, etc. Our goal is to provide our survivors with “one stop” assistance with the necessary paperwork that comes with the death of your retired loved one. **If you are not sure who your Casualty Assistance Representative (CAR) is, you can call 877-353-6807, enter your zip code, and you will be automatically transferred to the base CAR responsible for your area.**

Reporting the Death of Annuitant

When you pass, your eligibility for Survivor Benefit Plan ends. Prompt reporting of a deceased military annuitant’s death can help avoid delay and possible financial hardship to surviving family members or executors, who will be required to return any unearned payments of the decedent’s annuity pay. Be sure to let your survivors know that your (SBP Annuitant) death will need to be reported to DFAS or you can contact our Casualty Assistance Representative Loretta Lopez at 720-847-6946.

Retirees

Do your loved ones know who to contact in the event of your death? Casualty Assistance Representatives (CARs) stand ready to lend a hand with your casualty assistance needs. Call them for an appointment to talk about what you should have ready for your loved ones in the event of your passing.

Buckley AFB Casualty Assistance Office (Loretta Lopez) - CAR/SBP Rep 720-847-6946

Retired Air Force.....	1-877-353-6807
Retired Army.....	1-800-626-3317
Retired Coast Guard.....	1-800-772-8724
Retired Marines.....	1-800-847-1597
Retired Navy.....	1-800-368-3202
Retired Civil Service.....	1-888-767-6738
Receiving VA Compensation.....	1-800-827-1000
Social Security Administration.....	1-800-772-1213

FREE MOVIES: Buckley AFB shows a family movie at the Leadership Development Center (LDC - Bldg 1032) on the 3rd Friday of every month. Doors open at 1800 and the movie starts at 1830. MWR determines movies shown based on the most popular and rating appropriate movie sent to them through their movie program. You can check the schedule at the following link: <https://www.460fss.com/> **The movie for 15 Mar is TBD at this time but you can check the 460FSS FaceBook page at <https://www.facebook.com/460FSS/>.**

Groups can schedule a movie showing at the Panther Den on base by contacting Justin Lentz (720-847-7197). Justin can provide the most current list of available movies when you contact him.

TRICARE COSTS FOR 2019: **I’ve attached a sheet** that shows Tricare costs for 2019. I just took this off the **Tricare web site.**

BUCKLEY AFB PUBLIC AFFAIRS: A good way to find out what is happening on Buckley AFB - the Public Affairs staff has information available on the Buckley AFB web site (<http://www.buckley.af.mil/>) as well as the Buckley AFB Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/BuckleyAirForceBase/?rf=106189116104357>)

BUCKLEY AFB NEW COMMISSARY HOURS & HOLIDAYS FOR 2019: Beginning in February the commissary will be closed on Mondays. The only other days they will be closed are Thanksgiving (28 Nov), Christmas (25 Dec), and New Year's Day (1 Jan 2020). This change was driven because the commissary had to decrease hours to be in line with HQ recommendations for a store of their size. In addition to the Monday closures, the commissary hours are also being adjusted as shown below starting on 3 Feb. Hopefully the impacts of these changes on commissary customers will be minimal.

Sundays 0800-1900
Tuesday - Saturday 0800-1900
Early Bird Hours 0800-0900 This time is *supposed* to be for customers with 20 items or less
CLOSED All Mondays (starting February 4th)
CLOSED November 28 Thanksgiving
CLOSED December 25 Christmas Day
CLOSED January 1 New Year's Day

AIR FORCE RETIREE AFTERBURNER: Here is the link to the Afterburner for latest retiree news:
<http://www.retirees.af.mil/Library/Afterburner/>

VETERAN OWNED BUSINESS DIRECTORY: One of your fellow retirees sent me the link below so I am passing it on to you. The web site allows you to search for veteran owned businesses by type of business, by state, etc. <https://www.veteranownedbusiness.com>

BUCKLEY AFB WEB SITE - RETIREE PAGE: Check our Retiree page on the Buckley AFB website at <http://www.buckley.af.mil/Units/Retiree-Activities-Office/> We recently added more links to our "bare bones" site. The links are for informative websites related to ID cards, military/retiree support organizations and online news, reporting the death of a service member/spouse, retiree information/resources, veteran's records, survivor assistance, travel & lodging, etc. **We welcome your feedback on the site!**

BUCKLEY AFB OUTDOOR REC & ITT: Buckley AFB Outdoor Rec and Information Tickets & Travel (ITT) (Bldg 1022) provides many programs and services to the Buckley community, as well as the worldwide US Department of Defense community. Stop by and check out ITT where they sell many in-state and out-of-state tickets to theme parks including Elitch Gardens, Disney and Universal Studios, plus local professional sports games such as the Nuggets and Rockies. For skiers and snowboarders, they sell lift tickets and season passes to most Colorado ski areas. For their ticket list, stop by ITT or give them a call at 720-847-6100.

Other services provided by Outdoor Rec include an RV storage lot, Williams FamCamp RV Park, guided trips, outdoor adventures, ski and snowboard tuning services and retail sales of outdoor apparel and equipment. They also offer a wide variety of equipment for rent at very reasonable prices (camping gear, home & garden equipment, picnic needs, sports equipment & games, campers & trailers, party equipment, etc). See their website for additional information: <https://www.460fss.com/outdoor-rec-itt/>

This newsletter is a RAO publication for retirees, annuitants and surviving spouses. Content is not to be construed as the official view of, or endorsed by, the RAO, the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense or the Air Force.