



★ ★ THE TOPPER ★ ★

MVP Enrolls Quarter of a Million Veterans

The Million Veteran Program proudly announced a monumental milestone—the enrollment of the 250,000th Veteran volunteer—placing MVP in the top five largest genetic and health databases in the world. Charles McGee, a Korean War Veteran who served in the Navy, enrolled at the VA Loma Linda Healthcare System in California on March 3, 2014. Charles was deployed on the USS *Erben* DD-631, a *Fletcher*-class destroyer, where he spent nearly three and a half years of his four-year enlistment period (1952-1956). His service to the nation has continued throughout his life. Charles is a former commander of an American Legion Post and is currently captain of a seven-man color guard in Palm Springs, California.

The MVP team is appreciative of each and every Veteran who has volunteered his or her time to join this ground-breaking research effort. To reflect on the history of the program:

November 11, 2014



Veterans Day & Remembrance Day



MVP enrolled the first Veteran January 5, 2011. Just 10 months later, the 100,000th Veteran enrolled October 17, 2012. Now MVP is more than a quarter million Veteran volunteers strong.

The Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Research and Development has awarded four contracts to small businesses to perform single nucleotide polymorphism genotyping, whole exome sequencing, and whole genome sequencing on a subset of MVP samples. Some samples will be randomly selected and others will be carefully chosen to compare the genetics in groups of Veterans with a specific disease or trait (e.g. posttraumatic stress disorder) to Veterans without the disease or trait. In the future, results from these genomic analyses will be securely available to approved researchers for additional studies.

The goal of MVP is to partner with Veterans receiving services in the VA health care system who volunteer to

share their health information, as well as genetic material.

Active involvement in this program includes:

- Filling out surveys about health and health-related behaviors;
- Providing a blood sample (containing DNA and other substances) that will be stored for future genomic analyses;
- Allowing secure access to VA and VA-linked medical and health information, including past and future health records; and
- Agreeing to future contact.

Veterans—and in fact all Americans—stand to benefit greatly as researchers learn more about the effects of genes on health. Screening, diagnosis, and treatment for some illnesses—such as some forms of cancer—have already been improved through knowledge about the effects of certain genes. MVP will lead to new knowledge about which genes put people at risk for certain diseases, and which ones affect how people respond to treatment. This knowledge may eventually lead to better treatments and preventive measures for many diseases, including common illnesses such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.

Article adapted from MVP Summer 2014 newsletter

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VETERANS UPWARD BOUND



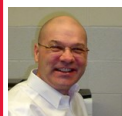
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VA Legislation Offers Limited Private Care Option

Reacting to the clamor for change at the VA, the House and Senate hustled two bills through their respective chambers in early June. The resulting legislation aims to ease over crowding at VA health care facilities and put senior VA leaders on notice that Veterans are their first priority.

Lawmakers pounced on an opportunity in early June to fundamentally enhance an ailing VA health care system. They really had no choice. Public outrage over Veterans languishing while awaiting medical appointments at VA facilities was such that legislators on Capitol Hill knew quick work was needed.

It showed how fast Congress can operate when properly motivated. Both bills were introduced the day VA released the results of an internal audit directed by acting Secretary Sloan Gibson.

The House acted first, unanimously approving *H.R. 4810—the Veterans Access to Care Act*—on June 10. It requires VA to:

- Offer private care to any enrolled vet who lives more than 40 miles from a VA medical facility or who has waited longer than 30 days for an appointment.
- Use existing contracts with private medical providers “to the greatest extent possible,” and submit a quarterly report to Congress about this activity.
- Offer the private care option to Veterans through 2016.
- Eliminate performance bonuses for all VA employees through 2016.
- Conduct an independent assessment of all VA medical facilities, and report findings, recommenda-



tions and plans for action to Congress.

On June 11, the Senate passed its version, *S. 2450—the Veterans Access to Care through Choice, Accountability and Transparency Act*.

The Senate bill offers the private care option—with reimbursement from VA—until September 30, 2016.

On June 17, seventeen veterans and military groups wrote a letter to the House and Senate VA committees. The letter noted that their input had been “limited,” warning that Congress must pay for the private care option without relying on budget “gimmicks” or shifting money from other VA accounts.

Like a previously approved, separate House bill, *S. 2450* also gives the VA secretary more flexibility to fire underperforming senior executives. But the Senate bill offers those terminated executives more ability to appeal the decision.

In addition, *S. 2450* would:

- Give the VA the authority to lease 26 new major medical facilities nationwide.
- Hire more doctors and nurses.
- Expand GI Bill benefits for the spouses of troops killed in com-

bat.

- Offer in-state tuition rates for vets using *Post 9/11* and *Montgomery GI Bill* benefits.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the private care option would cost \$54 billion annually and bring some 2 million new vets into VA’s system. The 8.3 million vets already in the system would increase their use of VA care by some 75% according to CBO.

A budget deal reached in December 2013 requires that new expenses, such as the cost for this legislation, be offset elsewhere in the federal budget. The Senate bill waives that rule. The House bill would be partially funded by bonuses that would have been paid to VA executives.

Article adapted from VFW magazine August 2014

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Weather Advisory

Soon the roads will be at the mercy of changing weather that can leave them snow or ice covered. Some of you may wonder if you should come to class or not. Our rule of thumb is that, if WKU is having classes, we are also. WKU announces closings on all local radio stations and WBKO. The best source would be WKYU-FM. Weather closures are also posted on WKU’s homepage or students can call 270-936-0000 for a recorded message or you can call our office at 745-5310 before you decide to depart the comfort of your home. Even if WKU is having classes, we urge you to use your own best judgment. If you feel it is dangerous to be out, then call us and let us know you will not be in class.



What is Veterans' Preference?

In recognition of the sacrifices made by those serving in the Armed Forces, Congress enacted laws to prevent Veterans seeking Federal employment from being penalized because of time spent in military service. By law, Veterans who are disabled or who served on active duty in the Armed Forces during certain specified periods or in military campaigns are generally entitled to preference over non-Veterans both in Federal hiring practices and in retention during reductions in force.

Preference applies in hiring for many positions within the Federal competitive service, and provides a uniform method by which special consideration is given to qualified Veterans. Veterans' preference laws do not, however, guarantee Veterans a job, nor do they give Veterans' preference in internal agency actions such as promotion, transfer, reassignment, and reinstatement.

The Department of Labor's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy



VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING SERVICES

and VETS developed an online, interactive system called the Veterans' Preference Advisor to help Veterans understand:

- Whether or not they're eligible to receive Veterans' preference,
- The type of preference to which they may be entitled,
- The benefits associated with the preference and,
- The steps necessary to file a complaint due to the failure of a Federal agency to provide those benefits.

The Advisor leads the inquirer through a series of questions to determine eligibility and provides specific information and instructions for filing a complaint. It is important to note that the tool is intended to be a first step and to pro-

vide general information, but it does not offer definitive advice regarding an individual's Veterans' preference entitlement.

The Veterans' Preference Advisor can be accessed at the Department of Labor's website under elaws Advisors: www.dol.gov/elaws/vets/vetpref/choice.htm

Article adapted from DOL Education & Outreach Program brochure

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TIME CHANGE!

Don't forget to set your clocks back on Sunday, November 2 at 2:00am. That's when Daylight Saving Time officially ends.



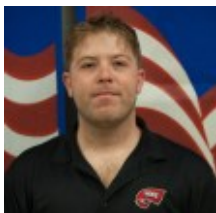
Got Financial Aid Questions?

Call VUB at 270-745-5008

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Notes and News

WKU VETERANS UPWARD BOUND GRADUATE WINS NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP



Joe Hunter

Joe Hunter of Bowling Green was recently selected as the winner of a \$1000 scholarship granted by the National Association of Veterans Upward Bound. Hunter, a veteran of the U.S. Marines, graduated from VUB in 2013 and is pursuing a bachelor of science degree in electrical engineering at WKU. He was one of six students in the country to receive this award and is the tenth WKU VUB student in the last 11 years to win this prestigious scholarship. WKU is one of 50 Veterans Upward Bound projects across the United States and the only one in Kentucky.

Hunter is the vice president of WKU's Student Veterans Alliance and a WKU president's scholar. In the community, he is a member of the Southern Kentucky Veterans Council and the local VFW Post 1298.

The staff of Veterans Upward Bound is very proud of Joe. His achievement reflects very positively upon the quality of our program and the caliber of our students.



THE TOPPER

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WKU

The Director's Desk



Greetings! I want to tell you about some changes here at VUB at WKU which I hope will help more southcentral Kentucky veterans receive the academic assistance they need to get back in school.

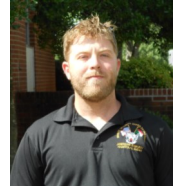
First, let me introduce you to VUB at WKU's newest staff member:

Beth England, our new fulltime Adult Education Specialist.

Before joining VUB, she worked almost two years with WKU's regular Upward Bound program, and before that she spent six years with Gear Up Kentucky, giving her quite a bit of experience with grant-funded educational access programs. Beth is coordinating the academic side of our program, which includes our classes, our online tutorials, and our new individualized tutoring program.



And that brings us to our second big change. Starting this semester, we have new tutors who can help prepare our participants for postsecondary school. Our tutoring staff currently consists of two VUB alumni, **Philip Parsons** and **Joe Hunter**. Both are past recipients of scholarships from the National Association of Veterans Upward Bound projects, and both are also current officers in WKU's Student Veterans Alliance. So whether you're trying to brush up on algebra or English, we now have a tutor who can help.



Tutors are available to meet individually with any current VUB participant, whether they are attending our regular classes or working online. For more information or to schedule an appointment with a tutor, please contact Beth at 270-745-5024 or Mary.England@wku.edu.



Important Numbers and Dates

Schella Smith, WKU VA Certifying Official
(270) 745-3732

Stephanie Gabbard, VA Voc-Rehab, B.G. Office
(270) 846-2092

Military Student Services, WKU
(270) 745-5837

Carrie Orning, BGTC VA Certifying Official
(270) 901-1003

Department of Employment Services, Bowling Green
Don "Mac" McGlothlin (270) 746-7265

VA Regional Office, Louisville
(502) 566-4482

VA Regional Office, Nashville, TN
(615) 695-6384

VA Medical Center, Louisville
(502) 287-4000

VA Medical Center, Nashville, TN
(800) 228-4973

Military Records Branch, Frankfort
(502) 607-6040

American Legion, Bowling Green
(270) 781-3574 Veterans Service Officer
Veterans of Foreign Wars, Bowling Green
(270) 781-1872

NOV 7 Registration Deadline for ACT, Dec 13

NOV 8 BG Veterans Day Parade

NOV 11 Veterans Day & Remembrance Day

NOV 26-28 Thanksgiving Holiday, VUB Closed

DEC 11 Last Day of VUB Winter Classes

DEC 13 ACT Test Date

DEC 19-JAN 2 WKU Winter Break, VUB Closed

JAN 9 Registration Deadline for ACT, Feb 7

JAN 12 First Day of VUB Spring Classes

JAN 19 MLK, Jr. Day, VUB Closed

*Please call early for information on test dates. VUB may pay testing fees, but to do so we must have your application at least six weeks prior to the registration postmark deadline.