

Happy New Year!!

“Roll Call”

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The Monthly Newsletter From The Marquette County Veterans Service Office

Articles published in the newsletter are provided for general veteran & public information. They are taken directly from a wide variety of local, state and national publications and are edited only to accommodate the space provided.

Veterans Crisis Line 24/7 Confidential Assistance: 1-800-273-8255 or www.veteranscrisisline.net

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Burn Pit Toxic Emissions

Open-air burn pits have operated widely at military sites in Iraq and Afghanistan. Many returning Veterans are concerned about their exposure to smoke from burning trash and human waste.

The most recent Institute of Medicine (IOM) report on burn pits, was released on October 31st. VA does not endorse and is not responsible for the content of report but is currently assessing the report and is sponsoring several other studies on possible health effects which include:

- Asking the IOM of the National Academy of Sciences to conduct an in-depth review of the existing literature on the potential adverse health effects of exposure to smoke from burn pits in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- Conducting the National Health Study for a New Generation of U.S. Veterans. The study group includes 30,000 Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) Veterans and 30,000 Veterans who served elsewhere during the same time period. The study covers a wide spectrum of health effects, including those that may be associated with exposure to smoke from burn pits.
- Participating in the Millennium Cohort Study, a Department of Defense epidemiological study begun in 2001 that has almost 150,000 participants. The study is designed to evaluate how military service may affect the long-term health of service members. Data are being collected on respiratory health.

• The VA/Department of Defense Pulmonary Health Working Group is looking at pre- and post-deployment health and also reviewing the health records of military working dogs that receive the same exposures that the troops do. These dogs may serve as sentinels for human health.

• Sponsoring additional studies by individual VA researchers and tracking other studies by non-VA researchers.

Smoke produced by the burn pits may spread a variety of pollutants through the air that blows into working and living areas. These toxins can include dioxin, particulate matter, hydrocarbons, volatile organic compounds, carbon monoxide, hexachlorobenzene, and ash.

The make-up of the smoke depends on what is being burned, which is not consistent from one burn pit to another, or from one time period to another at the same burn pit. Health effects depend on a number of factors, such as the kind of waste being burned, individual susceptibility, duration of exposure, air flow patterns, and closeness to the pit.

You may be at greater risk if you burned waste at the pit compared to those were only in the vicinity of the smoke. Waste products in burn pits include, but are not limited to: Chemicals, Paint, Medical and human waste, Metal/aluminum cans, Munitions and other unexploded ordnance, Petroleum and lubricant products, Plastics and styrofoam, Rubber, Wood, and Discarded food.

Exposure to toxins may affect the skin, eyes, respiration, kidneys, liver, nervous system, cardiovascular

system, reproductive system, peripheral nervous system, and gastrointestinal tract.

Most of the irritation related to solid waste burning exposure is temporary and resolves once the exposure is gone. These include:

- Eye irritation and burning
- Coughing and throat irritation
- Breathing difficulties
- Skin itching and rashes

At this time, research has not shown long-term adverse health effects from exposure to the burn pits. VA takes this issue seriously which is why it has undertaken the above mentioned studies on possible health effects.

Australia Looking for a Few Good [US] Veterans

With the Iraq War officially over and the Army downsizing in the face of defense budget pressure, more troops will be making the transition back to civilian life -- a potentially challenging prospect given the state of the economy.

But for those who want to stay in uniform, there may be a new option emerging -- just not an American one. Australia has put out the "Help Wanted" sign for foreign national veterans.

"We are looking for serving or ex-serving foreign military personnel, who can directly transfer their job and life skills to whichever Service they join, with limited training and preparation," the Australian Defence Force has announced on its website.

Jobs to be filled include special forces types, intelligence officers and

submariners, according to the announcement, but the separate recruitment pages for each service branch show that the Aussies will consider veterans with a broad range of military experience.

As the U.S. tightens its defense belt slightly over the next year, the Army and Marine Corps will cut end strength by thousands of men and women. The Army expects to lose about 7,400 Soldiers by October, to reach an end strength of 562,000.

The Corps eventually plans shrinking its manpower by about 16,000 to reach a total Marine force of 186,800. The Navy already has brought down its numbers by more than 50,000 since reaching a wartime strength of 383,000 during the build-up for the Iraq invasion. It expects to ship another 3,000 Sailors off to civilian life by next fall.

Only the Air Force expects to add people next year, but just a few hundred; and its end strength of about 333,000 for 2012 will still be about 40,000 Airmen lighter than it was in 2004.

According to the U.S. State Department, the U.S. and Australia each recognize dual citizenship. Serving in the military of one is not listed as a cause for losing citizenship in the other. The Australian defense site also notes that security clearances acquired while in the U.S. military are transferable to the Australian military.

"Australia is a great country and staunch ally, and aside from a common language, we share the same values and beliefs," said Joe Davis, a spokesman for the Veterans of Foreign Wars. "As our military begins to downsize, it could be a great opportunity for those who want to continue serving."

Among veterans who saw a story on the Aussie recruiting announcement posted to the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America site on Tuesday, a number said they would consider making the move Down Under, and some indicated enthusiasm for the idea.

Ricardo Mireles of Texas, a retired Navy man, posted that if he were just out of the Navy, he'd "be there in a heartbeat, no doubt!"

"Why not?" posted Laci DeLisle, whose Facebook page shows her in an Army uniform, hugging family members at an airport. "People here are trying to stay in when they don't need us anymore. I'd be down for it."

For more, visit:
<http://www.defencejobs.gov.au/>

Top Cities for Job Growth and Raises

Anywhere there's fossil-fuel expansion, skilled workers are in short supply, so companies may have to raise pay to attract employees.

NewGeography's top cities for job growth include five Texas towns: Fort Hood, El Paso, College Station, Midland, Austin, Bismark, New Orleans, Dubuque, Manhattan, Pascagoula and more.

Get the full list here:
<http://tinyurl.com/76rtq36>

GI Bill 2.0 Changes

A New Online Housing Allowance will be payable to students enrolled solely in distance learning (including online education). The housing allowance is half the national average BAH for an E-5 with dependents (the rate will be \$673.50 for 2011). This is subject to prorating based on the number of credits being taken. - Effective October 1, 2011.

Note: This does not include active duty or their GI Bill eligible spouses. See a list of all GI Bill 2.0 changes:
<http://tinyurl.com/bs4e4zp>

More Traumatic Injury Benefits

Service members who suffer severe injuries to the genitourinary organs will now be eligible for service members' Group Life Insurance Traumatic Injury Protection (TSGLI).

TSGLI provides a one-time payment to service members sustaining certain severe traumatic injuries resulting in a range of losses, including amputations; limb salvage; paralysis; burns; loss of sight, and other traumatic losses.

The first payments for genitourinary losses will be made to eligible service members and Veterans on Dec. 2, eligibility for these new losses will be retroactive to injuries incurred on or after Oct. 7, 2001, the beginning of the Global War On Terror.

For more information on all of the TSGLI eligibility requirements, or to apply for a TSGLI payment, service members and Veterans should go to www.insurance.va.gov/sqliSite/TSGLI/TSGLI.htm or contact their branch of service TSGLI Office (contact information available at above link).

Test Your Way to a Degree

CLEP tests are widely accepted by colleges and universities to test out of classes. There are two types of CLEP exams -- General and Subject. These exams will save you money, save you time and help you skip ahead.

Learn more here:
<http://tinyurl.com/c4rjrb4>

While you don't need to be enrolled in a school to take CLEP exams, a good next step is to compare schools to find the one meets all your needs, including offering college credit for past military training and experience.

Small Business Boot Camp

The Small Business Administration (SBA) and Syracuse University are expanding the successful Entrepreneurship Boot Camp for Veterans with Disabilities (EBV) program to an eighth school, Cornell University.

Since the program's inception, more than 320 wounded warriors have graduated and more than 150 businesses have been launched by graduates. Participating schools include Syracuse University, University of Connecticut, UCLA, Florida State University, Texas A&M University, Purdue University,

Louisiana State University, and Cornell University.

For more information, visit the EBV Foundation website:
<http://tinyurl.com/cs9llwd>

VA Diabetes Mellitus Care

November is American Diabetes Month, a nationwide campaign to encourage all Americans to know their risk for diabetes, and to take action steps to decrease their risk of developing diabetes.

The Veterans Administration estimates that nearly 25% of veterans being treated at the VA have diabetes. The high rate among veterans is attributable, in part, to the older average age of veterans being treated by the VA.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that nearly 26 million people, or about 8 percent of the US population, have diabetes. That includes about 11 million persons 65 and older, or about 27% of seniors. In the United States, about one-in-four persons with diabetes are not aware that they have the condition.

While exact numbers are not available, it is likely that the number is lower for Veterans receiving regular VA primary care. However, many Veterans of all ages are at risk for diabetes because of the high rate of obesity and those who are overweight receiving VA care.

An individual does not have to achieve drastic weight loss. Losing about five percent of one's weight will help. In recent studies, a weight loss and exercise program was more effective than medication in both younger and older individuals. The medication was not effective in persons older than 60.

The VA offers a weight management program called MOVE! to all Veterans who are overweight or obese and for whom weight management is appropriate. It supports Veterans in developing plans that work for them to lose or maintain weight through balanced diet, physical activity, and behavior change approaches. For the

program to be tailored to the individual's needs, the Veteran can complete a 23 item questionnaire.

MOVE! is available in multiple convenient formats including group sessions, telephone-based care, and a new home messaging program called TeleMOVE! which uses the telephone line, provides daily support, and is interfaced with a scale for weekly home weigh-ins. Additional information on this program can be found at <http://www.move.va.gov>. Talk with your Primary Care Team about MOVE!.

Although the focus of American Diabetes Month is to identify individuals at higher risk for developing diabetes, it is important to remind persons who already have diabetes of the importance of weight loss and physical activity in managing diabetes.

Additionally, persons with diabetes or at risk for diabetes should manage other conditions, such as hypertension or high lipid levels, appropriately, and if they have diabetes, they should be screened at regular intervals for early signs of kidney, foot or eye conditions.

Some other risk factors associated with diabetes are:

- Family history of diabetes
 - Pre-diabetes (high fasting blood glucose — ask your doctor)
 - Hypertension (high blood pressure)
 - Low —good cholesterol (HDL) and high triglycerides
 - Presence of heart or other vascular disease
 - Very low physical activity
- for additional information on VA's diabetes care program.

refer to:

<http://www.va.gov/health/NewsFeatures/20111115a.asp>

VA Home Loans

The President has signed H.R.2112, the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act of 2012 into law renewing the expired higher loan limits for Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) loans for an additional two years, through December 31, 2013.

The higher loan limits expired on October 1, 2011, when the size of a mortgage that the FHA could buy or guarantee was reduced to \$625,500, down from \$729,750.

In addition, the formula for establishing limits for high-cost areas also fell from 125 percent to 115 percent of an area's median home price.

VA Loan Benefit Facts

One of the most significant benefits of military service is the VA home loan, which can help you purchase a home with no down payment or refinance an existing loan.

Get the guide to learn how to use your VA Home Loan entitlement here:
<http://tinyurl.com/coxp4fo>

Pearl Harbor Survivors Group to Disband

Veterans from Pearl Harbor observed the 70th anniversary of the attack Wednesday with a solemn ceremony at the site of the Japanese bombing, as an aging and dwindling group of survivors announced it would disband at the end of the month.

"It was time. Some of the requirements became a burden," William Muehleib, president of the Pearl Harbors Survivors Association, said after the ceremony. He also cited poor health among the group's 2,700 members, adding that most of the survivors have realized there are other things they'd like to do at their age.

The Japanese attack on Dec. 7, 1941, killed 2,390 Americans and brought the United States into World War II.

Survivors will be able to attend future commemoration ceremonies on their own. About 3,000 people, including Navy Secretary Ray Mabus and military leaders, attended this year's anniversary at a site overlooking the sunken USS Arizona and the white memorial that straddles the battleship.

Muehleib said there are an estimated 7,000 to 8,000 Pearl Harbor survivors. Local chapters of the group will function as long as they have members and survivors can gather socially, but they will no longer have a formal, national organization.

The group's announcement came as President Barack Obama hailed veterans of the bombing in a statement proclaiming Wednesday as "National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day."

"Their tenacity helped define the Greatest Generation and their valor fortified all who served during World War II. As a nation, we look to December 7, 1941, to draw strength from the example set by these patriots and to honor all who have sacrificed for our freedoms," he said. Also this week, five ash scattering and interment ceremonies are being held for five survivors whose cremated remains are returning to Pearl Harbor after their deaths.

USS Utah survivor Gilbert Meyer said he comes back each year to see his shipmates entombed in the battleship which rests not far from where it sank.

Meyer, 88, recalled his ship rolling over after being hit by a torpedo and seeing Japanese planes dropping bombs. When the planes began showing machine gun fire, he knew it was time to move.

"That really got my attention, so I got in the water and swam ashore," he said.

WI Expanded Family Care

Wisconsin will expand a program that provides in-home care for people with disabilities and elderly people, Gov. Scott Walker announced.

The state's Department of Health Services will lift the cap on enrollment in Family Care, which provides flexible services to Medicaid-eligible people in the state, Walker said in a press conference at the Capitol.

Walker also will recommend the program be expanded across the state. He said he expects the

legislation expanding the program to have broad, bipartisan support.

Enrollment in Family Care has been frozen since the beginning of the year. The program is available in 57 of Wisconsin's 72 counties, and has waiting lists where it is available.

Walker said the program's expansions would be implemented in a way that would ensure it would be a "long-term, sustainable program."

Family Care is designed to provide an alternative to nursing home or other institutional care, providing individuals and families with a range of options from help in picking up groceries to in-home health care assistance.

VA Caregiver Program

The Department of Veterans Affairs is implementing a telephone support program to help the spouses of returning Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans, after a pilot telephone support program showed significant reduction in stress for spouses.

Typical issues spouses and Veterans face after deployment which the program focuses on include communication difficulties, the need to renegotiate family roles and responsibilities and the added stress of combat related injury. Spouses of returning vets have reported feeling overwhelmed, depressed, anxious and frustrated.

"Providing support to family caregivers is the right thing for VA to do," said Dr. Robert Petzel, VA's under secretary for health. "A simple series of phone calls can do so much good. Certainly, those who fought for our nation, and the spouses who allowed them to make that sacrifice, deserve this support."

Spouses participate in 12 telephone support groups over six months Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki in a VA press release said, "Returning to civilian life after living in constant combat readiness can be a shocking transition, and it is the immediate family, the spouses and children, who bear that brunt of that transition with those who served ... The more support we can provide to

the family, the better the outcome will be for our Veterans."

The spouse telephone support program is part of VA's Caregiver Support Program which can be reached at 1-855-260-3274. You can find general information about the spouse telephone support program at <http://www.caregiver.va.gov>

AF Enlisted Villages Offer

The Air Force Enlisted Village is offering a "New Year, New Beginning" move-in special for Bob Hope Village and Teresa Village.

The special features no waiting time and no first-month service fee when a lease is signed for either community between Dec. 15 and Feb. 15.

One- and two-bedroom apartments are available with basic cable, water, sewer and trash; maintenance and grounds keeping; free laundry facilities; ample parking; and security.

For more information, call the admissions office at 800-258-1413 to discuss eligibility regarding this special offer.

This special offer is available for a limited time and some restrictions may apply. For more information about the villages, visit the Air Force Enlisted Village website.

VETS Program

The U.S. Department of Labor, Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) offers employment and training services, to eligible veterans, through a non-competitive 'Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program.' Under this grant program, funds are allocated to State Workforce Agencies in direct proportion to the number of veterans seeking employment within their state.

The grants support two principal staff positions - DVOP (Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialists) and LVER (Local Veterans' Employment Representatives). This grant provides funds to exclusively serve veterans, other eligible persons, transitioning service members, their spouses and,

indirectly, employers. The grant also gives the State the flexibility to determine the most effective and efficient distribution of their staff resources based upon the distinct roles and responsibilities of the two positions.

DVOP and LVER staff provide services to all veterans that Title 38 indicates are eligible for their services, but their efforts are concentrated, according to their respective roles and responsibilities, on outreach and the provision and facilitation of direct client services to those who have been identified as most in need of intensive employment and training assistance.

DVOP and LVER staff, through outreach with employers, develop increased hiring opportunities within the local work force by raising the awareness of employers of the availability and the benefit of hiring veterans.

Respective roles and responsibilities include:

- DVOP specialists provide intensive services to meet the employment needs of disabled veterans and other eligible veterans, with the maximum emphasis directed toward serving those who are economically or educationally disadvantaged, including homeless veterans, and veterans with barriers to employment. DVOP specialists are actively involved in outreach efforts to increase program participation among those with the greatest barriers to employment which may include but should not be limited to: outplacement in Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program offices; DVA Medical Centers; routine site visits to Veterans' Service Organization meetings; Native American Trust Territories; Military installations; and, other areas of known concentrations of veterans or transitioning service members. The case management approach, taught by the National Veterans' Training Institute, is generally accepted as the method to use when providing vocational guidance or related services to eligible veterans identified as needing intensive services.

- LVER representatives conduct outreach to employers and engage in advocacy efforts with hiring executives to increase employment opportunities for veterans, encourage the hiring of disabled veterans, and generally assist veterans to gain and retain employment. LVER staff conduct seminars for employers and job search workshops for veterans seeking employment, and facilitate priority of service in regard to employment, training, and placement services furnished to veterans by all staff of the employment service delivery system.

To meet the specific needs of veterans, particularly veterans with barriers to employment, DVOP and LVER staff are thoroughly familiar with the full range of job development services and training programs available at the State Workforce Agency One-Stop Career Centers and Department of Veterans' Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program locations. Applications for funds under the Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program will be accepted only from the designated administrative entity that operates the employment service delivery system within the state.

For more information about Department of Labor employment and training programs for veterans, contact the VETS office nearest you, listed in the phone book in the United States Government under the Labor Department or visit our site: <http://www.dol.gov/vets/aboutvets/contacts/main.htm>.

The Coming Defense 'Train-Wreck'

Just when you thought it was safe to take a knee and run out the clock on 2011 in the hopes that the new year would be better — it ain't.

Sandra Erwin of National Defense magazine penned a deeply pessimistic look ahead Wednesday that concluded the Pentagon's 2012 could make 2011 look like a box social by comparison. The Building will continue to cover its eyes and plug its ears about the truth of the big crunch; the services' food fights will only intensify; strategy types' lazy

groupthink will persist; and cost and schedule problems are only going to worsen on the big programs.

But you could predict that about DoD any year — the real problems, Erwin writes, will befall the defense industry. 2012 could be the year that confirms all the doomsayers' predictions about consolidations, divestitures and eliminations:

Pentagon suppliers are headed for a period of "turbulence," says retired Air Force Gen. Charles F. Wald, director of Deloitte Services, a consulting firm. Companies will be consolidating, downsizing, shedding overhead and striving to maintain their core skills, he says.

Gouré estimates that many contractors have about a one-to-two-year window to make drastic decisions, such as whether to stick around or exit the market. "You already saw companies such as ITT, Northrop Grumman and BAE Systems" shedding assets, he says. "They'll either get out or buy up others' assets and hope like heck that things turn around. ... If you're not in position over the next year for the beginning of the train wreck you're going to be out of luck."

The defense budget, however, still will be gigantic by historical standards. It is expected to stay above \$600 billion (including war funding) for the next several years. But until the sequestration issue is resolved, many Pentagon contracts will be slowed down or not started, Wald predicts. "There will be pressure on large platforms. He foresees cutbacks in new ground-vehicle procurements, and a slowdown in ship construction. A replacement long-range bomber that the Air Force wants is unlikely to materialize for at least a decade.

Byron Callan, defense industry analyst at Capital Alpha Partners, says the May-September 2012 period will be "critical" for industry as it will set the tone for 2013-15 earning expectations.

"There is a natural tendency to think that 2012 could be a lot like 2011," Callan writes in a note to investors. But 2012 could be a volatile year for

the defense sector, particularly as a clearer picture emerges on who the Republican candidate could be. If Mitt Romney wins the nomination, defense stocks might trade higher, says Callan. If Republicans gain a majority in the Senate it might be a mixed picture for defense contractors as Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., an ardent critic of defense industry, would become chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Callan expects that Panetta will be leaving the Pentagon by early 2013, regardless of who wins in November.

Bottom line: The intransigence, gridlock and dysfunction that have plagued Washington will only get worse until the election — and probably remain in effect afterward. Congressional defense advocates will battle desperately against the sequestration threat, but they didn't have enough oomph to break the logjam in 2011, so there's no reason to think they'll have any more luck in 2012.

Study Supports Plavix

Researchers say more people should be able to safely take the blood thinner Plavix.

In 2010, the Food and Drug Administration required Plavix to have a warning label because of concerns that some people's bodies wouldn't be able to break down the drug.

This new research shows Plavix is safe and effective, and the warning label isn't needed.

Health experts say anyone with concerns should still check with their doctor.

Know the Signs of Alzheimer's

Knowing the warning signs of Alzheimer's disease is important because it may lead to an early diagnosis, experts say. According to the Alzheimer's Association, early diagnosis enables patients to:

- Plan ahead for the future.
- Potentially take part in a clinical drug trial.
- Start treatments that may help maintain independence for a longer time and possibly improve symptoms.

- Be involved in decisions about their care, living options, financial and legal matters.

- Cultivate relationships with doctors and care partners.

- Take advantage of care and support services that make it easier for patients and families to manage the disease.

Alzheimer's disease, a progressive brain disorder, is the most common type of dementia seen in the elderly. In a recent news release, the association listed the 10 warnings signs of Alzheimer's:

- Memory loss that disrupts daily life. This includes forgetting recently learned information, forgetting important dates or events, repeatedly asking for the same information, and relying on memory aides or family members for things that used to be handled on one's own.

- Challenges in planning or solving problems. For example, becoming unable to develop or follow a plan or work with numbers, having difficulty keeping track of monthly bills or following a recipe, difficulty concentrating, and taking much longer than normal to do things one has done before.

- Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, work or at leisure. This may include getting lost while driving in a familiar area or needing help using the microwave.

- Confusion with time or place. People may forget where they are or how they got there.

- Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships, such as judging distance.

- New problems with spoken or written words. A typical example is calling things by the wrong name.

- Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps in order to find lost objects.

- Declines in judgment or decision-making. For example, giving large amounts of money to telemarketers or paying less attention to grooming and keeping clean.

- Withdrawal from work or social activities.

- Changes in mood and personality. For example, becoming easily upset as well as confused, depressed, fearful, anxious or suspicious.

More information: The U.S. National Institute on Aging has more about the stages and symptoms of Alzheimer's disease:

<http://www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers/>

4 Secrets to Never Getting Sick

Ever wonder why you always seem to come down with a life-interrupting virus this time of year, while other women you know sail through the season snuffle-, cough-, and ache-free?

We canvassed the research and talked to top experts to uncover these key, study-backed secrets for staying well, even when you're surrounded by germs. The docs' #1 tip: Get the flu vaccine, ASAP. Then, follow these simple steps to boost your virus protection even more.

#1: Make friends with fresh air

Common wisdom has it that staying indoors, where it's warm and toasty, is easier on your immune system than being outside in the cold. Problem is, being inside puts you in close constant contact with other people—and their germs.

Adding insult to injury, you're already more vulnerable to illness now: Winter air is dry, whether you're indoors or out, so it pulls moisture from cough and sneeze droplets. That makes the drops lighter, so they—and the cold and flu viruses inside them—can hang around in the air longer. The arid air also dries out your nasal passages, creating cracks that viruses are all too happy to invade.

Not only does escaping into the fresh air give you a break from all those germs circulating inside, but going for a stroll can actually boost your immunity: A 2010 Appalachian State University study showed that people who walked briskly for 30 to 45 minutes a day five days a week

during the winter had fewer illnesses than their sedentary counterparts.

"Exercise leads to an increase in natural killer cells, neutrophils, and monocytes, which ultimately increases immune function," says Ather Ali, N.D., M.P.H., assistant director of Complementary/Alternative Medicine Research at the Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center.

#2: Relaxation fights off colds

We know, we know—you're heading into the holidays, your kids are home from school, you've got family and work craziness, and your schedule is packed with parties and shopping marathons. There are a trillion reasons why taking time to chill out might be the last item on your to-do list. But here's why it should be a priority: "Being stressed will increase your susceptibility to catching a cold," says Ali.

That may be because, over the long term, it leads to the ongoing release of stress hormones, such as glucocorticoids. These impede your body's ability to produce cell-signaling molecules called cytokines, which trigger a disease-fighting response from your immune system.

"You're also less likely to take care of yourself—get ample sleep, eat right, exercise—when you're stressed," says Ali, which is crucial to upping your immunity (see secrets #1 and #4!)

#3: Clean hands are everything

Cold and flu can spread all too easily through touch—especially after you handle hard surfaces like tables and doorknobs, where viruses can survive for two to eight hours. Keep your fingers away from your eyes, nose, and mouth as much as possible, and make sure to master the art of hand-washing.

Soap and water remain your most effective tools there, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Germs can grow on bar soaps (ew!), so use the pumped kind—or better yet, a hands-free dispenser. Choose regular soap over antibacterial (the overuse of which may contribute to the development of antibiotic-resistant germs).

Lather for a solid 20 seconds before rinsing, and make sure to dry thoroughly (but not on your germy clothes!): "Damp hands are far more likely to spread bacteria than dry ones," says Dana Simpler, M.D., a primary care physician at Mercy Medical Center in Baltimore.

When you're on the go, alcohol-based hand wipes or sanitizers are good alternatives. To further reduce the spread of germs, cough or sneeze into a tissue or the crook of your elbow—not your hands—and if you forget, go lather up (or crack open the sanitizer gel): A 2010 American Cleaning Institute survey found that fewer than 40 percent of us wash our hands after coughing or sneezing, meaning we're putting our viruses back out there for others to catch.

#4: The magic bullet? SLEEP!

An occasional restless night is nothing to worry about, but a continuous lack of zzz's can hamper your immune system's ability to function, not to mention increase your risk of all sorts of health problems, including diabetes, heart disease, obesity, and depression.

Though experts often say that sleep requirements vary by individual, a 2009 Carnegie Mellon study found that anything short of seven hours nearly triples your odds of catching a cold—and that means seven straight hours, with no middle-of-the-night wake-ups. "For many of us, the only quiet time we have to think through things is when we're lying down at bedtime. Unfortunately, problem-solving in bed interferes with sleep," says Leslie Swanson, Ph.D., a sleep specialist at the department of psychiatry at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Instead of taking your troubles to the mattress with you, spend a few minutes before you turn in to jot down your concerns or pressing to-dos in a journal. Still tossing and turning? Go to another room and write some more, getting back in bed only when you're sleepy again, so you don't associate your bed with being wide awake.

Or, try this relaxation technique: Starting at your toes, tense your

muscles as tight as you can, hold for a few seconds, and then relax. Continue tensing and relaxing muscle groups as you move all the way up your body to your head. Then sleep soundly, knowing you'll wake up better equipped to fight off colds.

Read more: <http://tinyurl.com/d2c4u6l>

101st Honors WWII Nurse

The 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, flew to Brussels Dec. 8th to celebrate the 67th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge on what is referred to as "Nuts Day," complete with tours, parades and awards. In ceremonies two days later, Lady Augusta Chiwy, a Belgian nurse who saved hundreds of Soldiers during the battle, was awarded the Civilian Award for Humanitarian Service from the U.S. Ambassador to Belgium Howard Gutman.

During the Battle of the Bulge, Chiwy treated Soldiers at the 10th Armored Division's aid station and even out on the battlefield.

Chiwy was also given a Letter of Appreciation from the Department of the Army and the 101st Airborne Association for services rendered as a civilian nurse giving aid to U.S. Soldiers during the Battle of the Bulge.

In June, she received Belgium's highest honor, the "Knights Order of the Crown," which is why she is addressed as Lady Augusta Chiwy. Men who earn the title of Knight are addressed as Sir, before their name.

During the Battle of the Bulge, the largest battle of World War II, it was a cold, winter night when then Brig. Gen. Anthony C. McAuliffe, acting commander of the 101st Airborne Division, received a letter from the German forces Dec. 22, 1944, requesting the surrender of all American troops under his command near the town of Bastogne, Belgium.

McAuliffe replied to the German commander with one simple word: "Nuts!"

To this day, the country of Belgium still honors McAuliffe and the 101st Airborne Division.

TEPP Program Offers Help for the Hard-of-Hearing

A ringing telephone can bring an array of emotions - excitement, anticipation, curiosity or hope. But when you are suffering from hearing loss, the ringing telephone might incite feelings of panic, fear and frustration. The latter was the case for John Gavol, 76, of Wausau who for the past 20 years has suffered from hearing loss. That loss kept him from communicating over the telephone, which left his wife to pick up the slack. "John has a sister in Baraboo, and she calls about twice a week just to talk," said John's wife, Lois Gavol, 72. "After her phone calls, John would have to ask me what she said. It was very bad."

About six months ago, the Gavols came across a newspaper article discussing a free program run by the state of Wisconsin called the Telephone Equipment Purchase Program (TEPP) which offers hearing-aid compatible, amplified phones for residents struggling with hearing loss. They decided to give it a shot. The Gavols received their phone several weeks later, and their lives have been changed ever since.

"John's whole world has changed because he can hear on the phone now," Lois said. "It's remarkable the difference it's made. It's made him so independent. He feels confident." The TEPP program is making a difference in the lives of seniors just like the Gavols across the state.

"The technology of the phones and the sound quality is superb," said Paul Klocko, owner and operator of ElderCom, a Wisconsin-based company specializing in facilitating the TEPP application process. "The focus is on quality." These amplified phones work to improve the use of basic telephone services for the hard of hearing with features such as enriched tone controls, extra-large keypads, loud ringer volume choices and unique speed-dialing features. "The phones are hearing-aid compatible, which is different than simply being amplified," Klocko said. "They work with the hearing aid to achieve the proper volume as well as the best sound quality."

One of Lois's favorite features is the selection of personalized ring tones included with the phones.

"You can make it play a tune when it rings," she said. "We picked out a circus song, like a calliope, when the animals come into the ring. We liked that one because it's so unusual." The TEPP program is administered through the Public Service Commission and funded by the Wisconsin telephone user fee called the Universal Service Fund, which is charged on every resident's monthly phone bill.

To obtain a free voucher, Wisconsin residents must voluntarily declare hearing loss and have no receipt of TEPP funding within the last three years. There are no age or income restrictions. "These phones and this program give seniors a new lease on life," Klocko said. "If they have questions, we have a conversation and that's all they need to do. I do all the paperwork for them."

TEPP recipients may reapply every few years to receive technologically updated phones and equipment to meet changing needs. For senior citizens like the Gavols, the newfound independence and confidence brought about by the ability to communicate has been life-changing.

"For us who can hear, we don't realize what it's like for those who can't," Lois said. "Especially on the phone you want to be able to carry on a conversation. It's hard to describe.

It's changed our lives completely."

For more information and to begin the application process, contact Paul Klocko of ElderCom at 715-241-6940 .

You can also visit the official Public Service Commission of Wisconsin website at:
<http://psc.wi.gov/consumerinfo/assistanceprograms/tepp/tepp-ind.htm>

Or you can complete the online accessible mail-in voucher application at
<http://psc.wi.gov/consumerInfo/assistancePrograms/tepp/documents/teppApp.pdf>

Four Things You Might Not Know About Your Cell Phone

For all the folks with cell phones, this should be printed and kept in your car, purse, and wallet.

There are a few things that can be done in times of grave emergencies. Your mobile phone can actually be a life saver or an emergency tool for survival. Check out these features:

Emergency:

The Emergency Number worldwide for Mobile is 112. If you find yourself out of the coverage area of your mobile network and there is an Emergency, dial 112 and the mobile will search any existing network to establish the emergency number for you, and interestingly, this number 112 can be dialed even if the keypad is locked. Try it out.

Hidden Battery Power:

Imagine your cell battery is very low. To activate, press the keys: *3370#. Your cell phone will then restart with this reserve and the instrument will show a 50% increase in battery. This reserve will get recharged when the next time you charge the phone.

How to disable a STOLEN mobile phone:

To check your Mobile phone's serial number, key in the following on your phone: *#06#. A 15-digit code will appear on the screen. This number is unique to your handset. Write it down and keep it somewhere safe.

If your phone is stolen, you can phone your service provider and give them this code. They will then be able to block your handset so even if the thief changes the SIM card, your phone will be totally useless. You probably won't get your phone back, but at least you know that whoever stole it can't use/sell it either. If everybody does this, there would be no point in people stealing mobile phones.

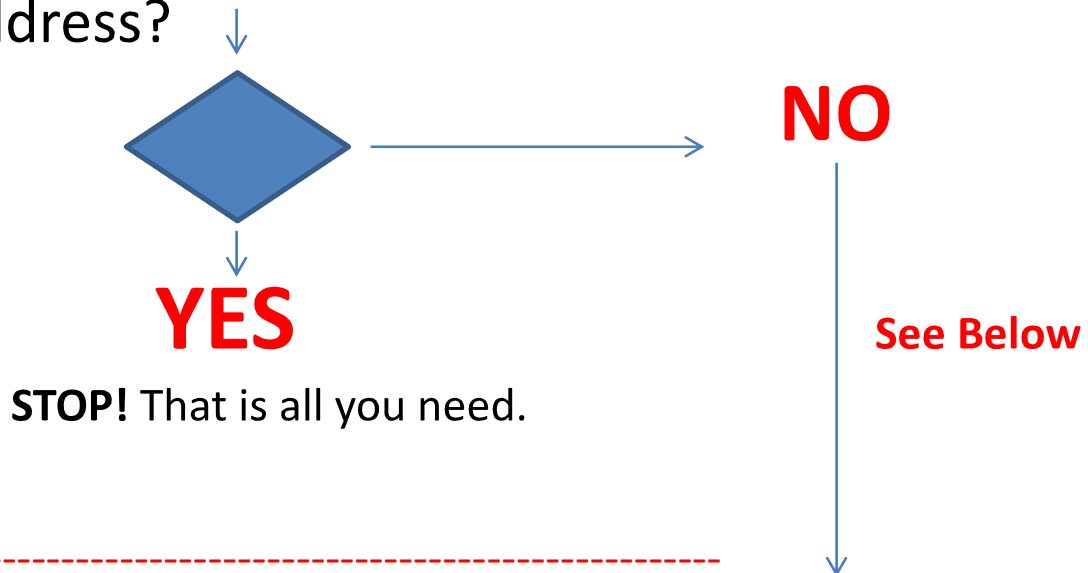
Free Directory Service for Cells:

Cell phone companies are charging us \$1.00 to \$1.75 or more for 411 information calls when they don't have to. Most of us do not carry a telephone directory in our vehicle, which makes this situation even more of a problem. When you need to use the 411 information option, simply dial: (800) FREE411, or (800) 373-3411, without incurring any charge, at all. Program this into your cell phone now.

HOW DO I VOTE IN WISCONSIN IN 2012?

YOU ARE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE A PHOTO ID and PROOF OF RESIDENCY TO VOTE

- Do you have a valid WI Drivers License with the correct address?



- Expired WI drivers license (even if driving privileges are revoked or suspended)
 - May be used if expiration date occurred after 11/2/2010
- Expired WI DOT ID Card, Military ID, or U.S. Passport
 - May be used if expiration date occurred after 11/2/2010
- Address incorrect on WI drivers license or other acceptable photo ID
 - Bring a utility bill, bank statement, paycheck, residential lease, WI ID, tax bill or license issued by a WI governmental body if 28 days old or older

Other acceptable photo ID

- Certificate of naturalization
- Unexpired driving receipt issued by WI DOT
- Unexpired ID card receipt issued by WI DOT
- ID card issued by federally recognized Indian tribe in WI
- Unexpired ID card issued by WI accredited university or college that shows date of issuance, signature of student, and expiration date