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1. 3D Mammograms Will Be Covered by TRICARE Starting This Month: TRICARE is expanding its breast cancer screening coverage this month. Starting May 29, 2020, TRICARE will cover Digital Breast Tomosynthesis — known as 3D mammography or DBT — under its provisional coverage program. “We are extremely happy to see TRICARE step up and ensure our women veterans have access to the best preventative breast cancer screening measures,” said VFW National Commander William “Doc” Schmitz. “Breast cancer remains very challenging to conquer but this is a major victory for our women veterans in hopes of one day defeating this deadly disease.” All women over the age of 40 are eligible for coverage. Annual coverage will also be available to women 30 and older who are deemed a high risk for developing breast cancer. TRICARE users are eligible for a reimbursement if they received a 3D mammogram between Jan. 1, 2020, and May 29, 2020. [Read more.](#)

2. A Week to Change Direction is Virtual This Year: VFW-partner, [Give An Hour](#), will be marking Mental Health Awareness Month by holding **A Week to Change Direction** virtually from May 18 – 24, 2020. This is a global event asking people to flood social media with posts showing how you are taking care of your emotional health and maintaining healthy habits using #Change Direction. The VFW urges everyone to learn more about mental health and to take part in changing the stigma around mental health care. [Learn more.](#)

3. Senate Passes National Suicide Hotline Bill: On Wednesday, the Senate passed S. 2661, the [National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020](#). This legislation would designate 9.8.8 as the telephone number for the national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline. The existing hotline, which can be reached by dialing 1.800.273.8255, is operated by the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) and through the [Veterans Crisis Line](#). Both hotlines offer confidential support from qualified responders 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Many of the

responders with the Veterans Crisis Line are veterans themselves. The VFW thanks Senator Cory Gardner (R-CO) and all original cosponsors for introducing this important legislation. [Learn more.](#)

4. TRICARE to Now Cover Telehealth Visits During COVID-19 Pandemic: On Tuesday, it was announced that TRICARE will now cover telehealth visits by telephone and eliminate patient copays and cost shares for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. These changes became effective on Thursday. Officials have also temporarily relaxed licensure requirements across state lines for health care providers, which will give military families access to more providers. This is in line with many states that have relaxed licensure requirements to allow providers to practice across state lines. This will especially help families in rural areas who may have limited numbers of health care providers. [Read more.](#)

5. GAO Seeking Input from Military Domestic Violence Survivors: The Government Accountability Office (GAO) is looking to speak with individuals who are survivors of abuse, to include neglect, physical, emotional, or sexual violence, while in a military relationship over the past six years. The survivors must have been either active duty, married to a service member, or an intimate partner of one. This effort is in response to the House Armed Services Committee ordering a report to Congress on the military services' efforts to prevent and respond to domestic violence in the ranks. GAO staff are interested in knowing of any barriers to access to resources and services the survivors may have faced following the abuse or after reporting it. Those who schedule a confidential conversation can select to speak to a male or female staff member during the interview. [Learn more.](#)

6. New Helpline Operational for Survivor Education Benefits: On Monday, VA announced that it opened a new helpline specifically for surviving family members who have questions relating to their education benefits. Military surviving dependents have access to two possible education benefits, [Dependents Education Assistance](#) or the [Marine Gunnery Sgt. John D. Fry Scholarship](#). This new helpline can assist with both programs as well as other VA survivor benefits. You can call the helpline at 888.442.4551 and select Option 5 from the menu. [Learn more.](#)

7. TAPS to Host First Virtual National Military Survivor Seminar: This week, leading up to Memorial Day, the [Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors](#) (TAPS) will be presenting a VIRTUAL National Military Survivor Seminar and Family Program as an online event available to everyone, at no cost. Historically, VFW members have supported this event by being Good Grief Camp mentors or volunteers through the week. The VFW encourages you to check out their exciting program of sessions, care groups, informational seminars, family programming, opportunities to memorialize our military survivors' loved ones, and special celebrity appearances. The program will begin on Tuesday, May 19, and go through Memorial Day. TAPS supports the spouses, children, parents, siblings, and battle buddies of those who have served and died. [Learn more.](#)

8. TRICARE Pharmacy Webinar: Next Thursday, May 21, TRICARE will present a webinar entitled, "Making the Most of Your TRICARE Pharmacy Benefits," from 1 p.m. – 2 p.m. EST. This webinar will discuss how to fill and manage prescriptions, as well as pharmacy covered

services, costs, and more. The event is completely virtual and will include a Q&A for beneficiaries to ask questions to Defense Health Agency pharmacy experts. [Register for the webinar.](#)

9. National Geographic Pays Tribute to the 75th Anniversary of V-E Day: On May 21, National Geographic will feature a full day of World War II programming underscored by two primetime original premieres, beginning at 8 p.m. EST. The specials combine thousands of hours of research, interviews, and original footage that give viewers an intimate account of the epic war told through historians as well as those who experienced the war firsthand. The first special, at 8 p.m. EST, is titled “*WWII In Europe: Voices From The Front,*” narrated by ABC News’ Bob Woodruff, featuring first-person accounts from some of the last surviving veterans of WWII. The second special, at 9 p.m. EST, is titled “*Heroes Of The Sky: The Mighty Eighth Air Force.*” This special introduces viewers to the courageous men of the legendary Eighth Air Force of the United States. For more information visit natgeotv.com or nationalgeographic.com.

10. MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced three new identifications for service members who have been missing and unaccounted-for from WWII and the Korean War. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

-- **Marine Corps Reserve Pfc. Thomas F. Johnson**, 18, was a member of Company B, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands, in an attempt to secure the island. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded, while the Japanese were virtually annihilated. Johnson died on the fourth day of battle, Nov. 23, 1943. Interment services are pending. [Read about Johnson.](#)

-- **Army Pvt. Charles Andrews**, 25, was assigned to Company K, 3rd Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 8th Infantry Division. His unit was engaged in battle with German forces near Brandenburg, Germany, in the Hürtgen Forest, when he was declared missing in action on Dec. 4, 1944. Andrews could not be recovered because of the on-going fighting, and his status was changed to killed in action on Jan. 29, 1945. Interment services are pending. [Read about Andrews.](#)

-- **Marine Corps Reserve Pvt. Howard E. Miller**, 22, was a member of Company A, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands, in an attempt to secure the island. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded, while the Japanese were virtually annihilated. Miller died on the third day of battle, Nov. 22, 1943. Interment services are pending. [Read about Miller.](#)

To sign up new veterans’ advocates, visit: <https://voterveice.net/VFW/register>.

As always, we want to hear your advocacy stories. To share your stories or photos with us, simply email them directly to vfwac@vfw.org.

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