



VETERAN TALON



USI Dental Clinic Sets Veteran Days for Spring 2018

The University of Southern Indiana Dental Hygiene Clinic will provide free dental cleaning, fluoride and X-rays for military veterans from March 12-15, 2018. This is the first time this program has been offered for this many days.

“There is an increasing demand for dental care in the veteran community and we have increased these dates in an effort to meet that demand” said Joel Matherly, Assistant Director of the USI Veteran Military and Family Resource Center.

This schedule includes morning, afternoon and evening hours to serve more veterans.

“In the past, these dental cleaning appointments have booked very quickly,” said Matherly. “The huge response points to the need in our community for veterans to have



access to this type of care. We appreciate how the USI Dental Hygiene Clinic has responded to the veterans.”

The USI Dental Hygiene Program collaborates with

SouthwestIndiana Area Health Education Center (SWI-AHEC) and USI's Veteran, Military and Family Resource Center to offer the special clinic hours for veterans. USI Dental Hygiene faculty will supervise the students who will be working in the clinic.

Appointments are required and can be made by calling 812-464-1706. Proof of military affiliation and a picture identification is required.

The USI Dental Hygiene Clinic is located on the USI campus in the Health Professions Center Room 1040.

USI Student Veterans Challenge ROTC and UE Vets in 2nd Annual Cook-off for Ronald McDonald House

The gauntlet was thrown down the second year as the USI Student Veterans Association challenged the Army ROTC Cadets and fellow student veterans from the University of Evansville to a chili cook off at the Ronald McDonald House.

The February 16th event benefited both local and regional families who are staying at the Ronald McDonald House while their loved ones are treated at St. Vincent Hospital.

“This event provided us an opportunity for camaraderie while filling a need in our community. This challenge came about after we discovered the need for volunteer meals at the Ronald McDonald House and decided that this contest could not only

be a way of giving back to our community, but also serve as an inspiration for other community groups to challenge each other in a similar way” said Joel Matherly, Assistant Director of the Veteran Military and Family



Resource Center.

The Ronald McDonald House gathered community judges that was used in this year's competition. Army ROTC took the title for Best Chili for 2018

taking the title from the former champion, USI SVA.

The Ronald McDonald House is constantly in need of volunteers to buy and prepare meals for sick residents and their families and has three kitchens fully equipped so you can even make meals there.

“This is an opportunity to provide a service and easing the minds of those who spend a majority of their day at the bedside of their loved ones”, said Matherly.

This will be an annual competition with a traveling trophy. For more information, contact Rebecca Durnell at radurnell@eagles.usi.edu.



Mr. Joel Matherly
Assistant Director
(812) 461-5302
jsmatherly@usi.edu



Mrs. Debra Mabern
Veteran and Military Services Supervisor
(812) 461-1857
dlmabern@usi.edu

REMINDER: Applicable Fees for VA Consideration for Ch 33

When you are on Chapter 33, Post 9/11 benefits, one of the items that can be paid are fees. However, not all fees qualify to VA coverage.

In order for fees to qualify, they must meet one of three (3) criteria:

1. Must be class related
2. Must be required for graduation
3. Must apply to all students without

the possibility of refund

The semester fees that appear on students bills that fall under that criteria include lab fees assigned to any class, University Services, Enrollment, Application, Transportation and Parking, Distance Education and Nursing Pinning.

Student Activities Fee will not be paid by the VA. The Student Activities Fee (\$50) is placed on every account until the student requests a refund. Because this is a refundable fee, it can not be billed toward the VA.

As USI enrollment grows, the cost of providing student programs and activities also increases. The new student activity fee assures that present programs and services can continue and that significant new programs and services can be introduced.

For answers to questions you may have, contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 812/464-1862.

To apply for a refund on the Student Activities fee, you can request this on-line at: <https://www.usi.edu/deanofstudents/student-activity-fee>.

Once you request a refund, it will be removed from your bill from that point until you re-instate it. This request must be made at the start of the semester.

If you receive a debt letter from the VA as a result of an over paid fee, you will need to follow the instructions on the letter.

Student Veterans Offered FREE Suits for Success

Local professionals have donated clean high quality interview clothes and shoes they no longer need. Career Services and Internships in the lower level of the Orr Center is pleased to offer free business attire for students.

USI students in need of professional clothing for an upcoming interview can visit and select free business wear from the Suits for Student Success Closet.

There are guidelines that each student must adhere to:

1. Students will need to bring their USI student ID card when visiting the closet.
2. USI students may choose one free outfit from the Suits for Student Success Closet per calendar year.
3. An outfit consists of one pair of slacks or skirt, one blouse or shirt, one jacket, one pair of shoes.
4. Outfits are donated from the business community, so we may not have sizes or styles available to fit all students needs



at any given time.

5. Students can choose to take only one part of an outfit if they don't need the whole outfit or if their sizes /style are not currently available.

6. A fitting room is available in Career Services to try on suits.

7. Students are invited to keep the professional clothing for their use for interviews or future jobs.

8. If a student wishes to return the clothing to the Suits for Student Success Closet, it must first be clean and hung neatly.

Career and Internships is open

Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and is closed on school holidays. They are located in the Orr Center, Room 074

If you have suits or interview attire to donate contact Career Services and Internships with any questions at 812-464-1865.

The H&P Veterans Helping Veterans Scholarships

The disability attorneys at Hill & Ponton are honored to represent veterans. To give back even more, they are now offering four \$1,000 scholarships to help veterans further their education and enter a career field that would, in turn, help other veterans.

To get the latest information on the 2018 Hill & Ponton Veterans' Scholarships, like us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter.

2018 Scholarships

1. Four \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded
2. Two scholarships will be awarded in the fall, two in the spring

3. Application Deadline: May 1st and November 1st
4. Awards will be announced June 15th and December 15th

How to Apply

Applicants must be veterans of the armed forces and must plan to use their education to help fellow veterans. Applicants must provide their personal information and a statement of 300 words or fewer on how the applicant plans to use his or her education toward helping veterans.

Visit <https://www.hillandponton.com/veterans-scholarship/> for more

YOUR DD214 - WHAT is It and WHY is It Important

When you were discharged from the Active Component, you were furnished a DD214 Discharge Certificate. Of all the documents you have presented to you, no one is more important than your DD214.

This single piece of evidence is all that exists when you leave the service and is the only document most entities, like the Department of Veterans Affairs, will accept to enroll you in their programs.

We are often amazed at how many of our students are unaware of not only what this document is, but also its importance and role.



Recently, we assisted a Veteran family with a request for a service members records after their Veteran was found to have cancer. Not only could this Veteran not receive VA care, but he also could not receive funeral honors that was afforded to him for his years of service simply because he nor his family could produce his DD214.

If your Drill Sergeant never told you, we are telling you now. Guard this document the best way you can. This includes natural disasters, theft and fire. To do this, the Vanderburgh County Recorders Office will file your DD214 for FREE.

As the official repository for Veteran Discharge Documents, the County Recorder's office has

a unique ability to preserve one of the most valued possessions of your membership, separation documents. The Chief Deputy Debbie Stucki, of the Vanderburgh County Recorder's Office would like to encourage you to record your discharge papers. Again, it is a free service.

The documents are restricted and available only to appropriately accredited personnel.

Often times, it is forgotten that certified copies of this paperwork plays a role in key benefits such as burial rights.

As an added incentive to record DD214s, their office has also created another free service for our Veterans known as Honor Rewards. Veterans can participate by recording their documents and signing up for the program at www.honorrewards.com.

They will issue an Honor Rewards Identification card. This card qualifies you for discounts and incentives at participating businesses in our community. To date, in 2017 we had 50 veterans sign up for an Honors Reward Card. We currently have 25 businesses offering a discount.

For more information, please contact Shirley Reeder or Shannon Edwards, Vanderburgh County Chief Deputy Recorder at 1 NW Martin Luther King Jr Blvd, Rm 231 Evansville IN 47708 or call 812.435.5215.

VETERAN HOLDS—Veteran holds are placed on the Monday following the 100% drop/add period and run until priority registration. They are reestablished after the PR period ends and will come off during finals.

PRIORITY REGISTRATION—If you are currently using VA Benefits (GI Bill), you qualify for priority registration regardless your academic alignment (Freshman—Senior). Plan your next semester before this date and schedule an appointment with your advisor.

VA CERTIFICATE OF ENROLLMENT FORM DUE EACH SEMESTER you plan to use benefits. Find this form at <http://www.usi.edu/reg/ssl/vaformlogin.asp>. Complete yours as soon as you register for classes.

VFW 1114 Dining Room Open to Public—Friday, Saturday, Sunday Brunch
Breakfast \$6.00 1st/3rd Saturday
Prime Rib 1st/3rd Saturday
Buffet Friday Night \$9.95

File Your DD214 for FREE:
Vanderburgh County Chief Deputy Recorder at 1 NW Martin Luther King Jr Blvd, Rm 231
Evansville IN 47708
812.435.5215



Veterans with other than honorable (OTH) discharges – also known as “bad paper” discharges – do not qualify for VA benefits and services. However, it is clear that many OTH discharges can be attributed to undiagnosed post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury symptoms. Congress instructed the Department of Defense (DoD) to create a process through which these discharges can be appealed and, possibly, reversed.

Through a joint initiative, DoD and VA launched an online tool (www.vets.gov/discharge-upgrade-instructions) to help veterans with the discharge recharacterization process.

The site will ask veterans a few questions. By answering them, the veteran will know which board they need to go to, what form to fill out, any special guidance applicable to their case, where to send their application, and helpful tips for appealing their discharge.

President signs bill easing CDL rules for active-duty troops, reservists

On Jan. 8, President Trump signed into law **Public Law 115-105**, the Jobs for Our Heroes Act, which clarifies eligibility rules for active-duty servicemembers and reservists applying for commercial driver’s licenses (CDLs) under U.S. Department of Transportation programs.

Previously, lawmakers had created a special program for veterans seeking CDLs, which allowed them to skip driving tests and some certification requirements if they had previous applicable experience from their time in the military. But those provisions did not include reservists who have not yet separated from the military or active-duty troops planning ahead for their post-service careers. Transportation officials created a two-year exemption to cover those groups, but the new legislation makes those changes permanent.

In addition, the new law also allows more VA medical professionals to perform required federal health examinations for the licensing processes. Because of current rules, only a small number of VA staffers meet the requirements for administering those tests.

President issues executive order addressing veteran suicide

On Jan. 9, Trump signed an executive order that instructed the DoD, VA and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to develop a joint plan addressing veterans suicide, especially in the first year after leaving military service. The departments have 60 days to develop a plan and must report on its implementation and effectiveness within 180 days of the signing date.

The order specifies that the plan should work to streamline access to mental health services throughout an individual’s transition to civilian life and across the DoD and VA. The inclusion of the DHS means that the Coast Guard will be covered by

12 WEEKS FOCUSING ON THE SPIRITUAL ASPECTS OF COMBAT RECOVERY

EVANSVILLE, IN

REGISTER AT REBOOTRECOVERY.COM

Join us starting on Monday, February 26th at 5:30pm for two hours a week for 12 weeks, focusing on the spiritual aspects of combat recovery.

We are a free course - not a support group - providing practical help for veterans, service members and families dealing with after effects of combat. You won't find shortcuts or easy answers, but instead you'll find solutions that last. Dinner and childcare provided.

Register at rebootrecovery.com/join

Non-Profit Careers

March 13, 2018

3-4:30 p.m.

Carter Hall—UC West

Panel Presentation



Interested in working for a Non-Profit Organization?

Local professionals who work for non-profit organizations will be on campus to speak about career options in their field. They will discuss, job and internship opportunities and the organizations they work for. The Panel Presentation will be followed by audience questions and light refreshments.

Presented by

UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN INDIANA
Career Services and Internships

812-464-1865 USI.edu/careerservices

VFW Offers a Stage for Student Veterans - *By Dave Spiva*



As part of its commitment, to education and legislative activism, VFW collaborates with Student Veterans of America (SVA) to provide 10 student veterans a fellowship opportunity each year. The VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship is a semester-long academic experience that involves research, action, reporting and advocating for veterans' policies.

Karthik Venkatraj was one of the 10 fellows selected for the third fellowship class in 2016. He enlisted in the Army National Guard in 2007 and is currently service as a Captain. In 2015, he was a targeting officer with the Colorado National Guard attached to 3rd Sqdn, 6th Cav 1st Armored Division in support of Operation Inherent Resolve

in Iraq.

As a VFW-SVA fellow, Venkatraj, a member of VFW Post 1 in Denver, met with lawmakers to discuss issues regarding the VA. Venkatraj also became the first fellow to have his proposal become law. His plan will provide highly qualified candidates from the public and private sectors for the VA's top management positions. The proposal was given to the House Committee on Veteran Affairs and later added to a bill which was passed by Congress and signed into law in August 2017.

Venkatraj said he is glad to be a part of the fellowship because it makes him a part of VFW's "legacy".

"People take the time to listen and understand our proposals because we are a part of the

VFW," Venkatraj said. "VFW has an incredible connection to legislators that is unparalleled. That is why I joined the VFW in the first place. It is a well-respected organization full of men and women whom I look up to."

Venkatraj said he would encourage other student veterans to apply for the VFW-SVA fellowship.

"I was the first to propose a policy that became law, and I know that I won't be the last," he said. "I want our success to continue through the other fellows."

Venkatraj completed law school in 2017 at the University of Colorado in Boulder, CO. After graduation, he moved to Washington D.C. and plans to work in the federal law enforcement community.

WHAT'S THE WORD: EDUCATION BENEFITS

QUESTIONS TO THE VMFRC - Student Q&A Passed to You!

Are VA Education Benefits Taxable?

No. Any veterans' benefits paid under any law administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) should not be reported as income to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). You will not receive a W-2 from the VA.

Per IRS Publication 970:

"Payments you receive for education, training, or subsistence under any law administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) are tax free. Do not include these payments as income on your federal tax return.

If you qualify for one or more of the education benefits discussed in chapters 2 through 13*, you may have to reduce the amount of education expenses qualifying for a specific benefit by part or all of your VA payments. This applies only to the part of your VA payments that is required to be used for education expenses.

Example.

You have returned to college and are receiving two education benefits under the latest GI Bill:

1. a \$1,534 monthly basic housing allowance (BAH) that is directly deposited to your checking account, and \$3,840 paid directly to your college for tuition.

Neither of these benefits is taxable and you do not report them on your tax return. You also want to claim an American opportunity credit on your return. You paid \$5,000 in qualified education expenses (explained in detail in (explained in detail here in IRS publication 970, chapter 2). To figure the amount of credit, you must first subtract the \$3,840 from your qualified education expenses because this payment under the GI Bill was

required to be used for education expenses. You do not subtract any amount of the BAH because it was paid to you and its use was not restricted."

*Chapters 2 through 13 are as follows:

- 2.American Opportunity Credit
- 3.Hope Credit
- 4.Lifetime Learning Credit
- 5.Student Loan Interest Deduction
- 6.Student Loan Cancellations and Repayment Assistance
- 7.Tuition and Fees Deduction
- 8.Coverdell Education Savings Account (ESA)
- 9.Qualified Tuition Program (QTP)
- 10.Education Exception to Additional Tax on Early IRA Distributions
- 11.Education Savings Bond Program
- 12.Employer-Provided Educational Assistance
- 13.Business Deduction for Work Related Education

For more information check with the IRS. This information was taken from IRS Publication 970: <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p970.pdf>

How is my housing allowance paid if I'm not a full-time student?

Under the Post-9/11 GI Bill, a Veteran enrolled at more than one-half time can qualify for a monthly housing allowance based on DoD's Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) rate for an E-5 with dependents. VA determines eligibility for housing allowance by calculating the rate of pursuit. Rate of pursuit is expressed in a percentage calculated by dividing the number of credits in which the student is enrolled by the number of credits considered to be full time. A student with a rate of pursuit greater than 50% can qualify for the housing allowance.

Undergraduate

For undergraduate enrollments, 12 semester or quarter hours are generally required for full-time training. The school submits the term dates and credit hours of the enrollment to VA and we calculate the rate of pursuit.

For example, if 12 credits is considered full-time, a course load of 6 credits yields a rate of pursuit of 50% ($6 \div 12 = .50$), whereas a course load of 7 credits yields a rate of pursuit of 58% ($7 \div 12 = .58$). In this scenario, a Veteran would need to enroll for at least 7 credits (such as two 3-credit classes and a 1-credit lab) in order to receive the housing allowance benefits.

Some schools offer classes in terms that are shorter than a standard length semester or quarter. This is especially true for online classes and summer enrollments, but some schools offer accelerated terms at brick-and-mortar campuses year round. In these cases, VA calculates weighted "equivalent credit hours" so that fewer credits are required for full-time (and more than half-time) training.

Graduate

Because graduate level programs vary in the amount of credits required for full-time training, the school provides the training time information to VA in addition to the term dates and credit hours of the enrollment.

Monthly Housing Allowance Payments

Once the training time is determined, the monthly housing allowance is paid at the nearest 10% level. For instance if your training time is determined to be 58% as calculated above you will be paid 60% of the applicable housing allowance. If your training time is calculated to be 84% you will be paid 80% of the applicable housing allowance.