



Saint Louis County

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NEWS RELEASE

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St. Louis County Veterans Services to host two town hall meetings

St. Louis County is home to more than 16,000 veterans. Yet many of them have never visited one of the County's four Veterans Service Offices, or have not visited one lately, and as a result are not receiving the benefits they've earned and deserve.

In an effort to reach out to more veterans and their families throughout the County, the Veterans Service Office will hold town hall meetings next month in Hibbing and Duluth. The forums will also include representatives from the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA), Vet Center, Twin Ports Clinic, Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV) and Senator Al Franken's office, plus higher education programs and employment services for vets. Free lunch will be served. Meeting dates and locations are as follows:

April 10, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Memorial Building

400 East 23rd Street, Hibbing

April 11, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

American Legion Post 71

5814 Grand Avenue, Duluth

A wide range of assistance is available to vets, including compensation for service connected disabilities, non-service connected pensions for veterans who served during war time, education benefits, eligibility certificates for home loan guarantee, aid and attendance benefits for veterans and widows in nursing homes, medical treatment through VA clinics, plus benefits for widows and other

qualified recipients. Staff at the County’s Veterans Service Offices act as a liaison, advocate and advisor for veterans and their spouses and dependents, helping to identify a client’s eligibility for benefits, and then assisting him or her through the process to receive those benefits.

“Laws and rules change, and so do the benefits” said Sherry Rodriguez, Director of St. Louis County’s Veterans Service Offices. “I encourage all veterans and their family members to set up an appointment with us, even if you’ve been denied in the past. We are here to serve all who have served, as well as their spouses and family members.”

It’s not just veterans, but also the region’s economy that benefits from this assistance. In 2011, for instance, veterans in St. Louis County received a total of \$93 million in various forms of VA benefits. Following last summer’s flood, the Veterans Service Office successfully helped affected vets receive \$81,000 in grants to help with flood recovery.

“There are many forms of assistance available, but often people avoid even trying to apply for it because they don’t want to deal with the paperwork or they think it shows weakness,” said Rodriguez. “We tell veterans they’ve earned these benefits, and our job is to help them through the process to receive them.

“We’ve had great success helping veterans,” added Rodriguez, who is a veteran herself. “We explain what benefits are available and what’s needed to apply, and then we walk them through the process. We’ve helped vets receive compensation for physical and mental disabilities that didn’t surface until years after their military service – from hearing loss to post-traumatic stress disorder.”

The County’s Veterans Service Office was established in 1946 to assist veterans and their eligible dependents in obtaining benefits and services accrued through military service. St. Louis County offers four Veterans Service Offices – in Duluth, Hibbing, Virginia and Ely. For more information about the town hall meetings, services for veterans or to schedule an appointment with a Veterans Service Officer, call (218) 725-5285 or visit stlouiscountymn.gov/veterans.

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