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VetNet

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CVO NEWSLETTER

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Bruce Parry, Past Chair and current Treasurer of CVO, passes the gavel to the new CVO Chair, Dr. Willie Mack. The gavel is inscribed with the "CVO" and Dr. Mack's name.

The Choice Program: Let's Clear Up the Rumors

by Larry E. Nazimek

There have been many rumors concerning the VA's Choice Program, so it's time to examine it to see what it does and does not do for us. You may have heard someone say, "You can use this card to get your health care wherever you want, and the VA will pay the bills." Of course, if this were true, it would be the "mother of all insurance cards." As the saying goes, "If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is."

If you are eligible for VA Healthcare, you should have been sent this card. If you haven't received one, call the program at 866-606-8198. When you call this number, you will reach a call center in one of several U. S. locations, so you won't hear, "May I know your name?"

The program provides for care for veterans (again, those
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Hari Jones: Dynamic & Educational

Hard Jones is an expert on the history of African American Veterans throughout American history from the Revolutionary War to the present. He is currently curating a World War I exhibit on African Americans in that war at the DuSable Museum of African American History. He has taught at the U.S. Naval Academy and held a number of other prestigious positions in his career. He served in the U.S. Marine Corps.

But the bottom line is that he not only entertained, but educated the January meeting of CVO with history from the American Revolution, the War of 1812, the Civil War and World Wars I and II. He dispelled the lies that had been told and exposed the intentional bias of professional historians to exclude the African American from military history. His use of primary sources gives his narrative the power and authority to challenge the status quo within the professional academic community.

The power of his presentation lies in the reality that African Americans, from the very first shots that defined what is now the U.S., were as central to the military history as soldiers and sailors of distinction and valor, as African Americans are to the entire history of this country.



Above: Hari Jones, presenter at the January CVO meeting.

Below: Group shot of the January CVO meeting.





Bill Luna on Latino Soldiers at the November Meeting

Bill Luna has a different approach to teaching the history of minority soldiers, but is just about as enthusiastic in discussing the history of Latino/a's as anyone could be. He emphasized that he has been doing this for 30 years and has dozens of display boards to prove it. He presented the reality of the Latino/a military experience – with particular emphasis on Mexicans and Mexican Americans. Many of us forget that one third of the U.S. – the Southwest – was once Mexico and many Mexicans became Americans solely due to the border changes. But Bill brought forth examples from virtually every war, including the often forgotten war with Mexico from 1846 to 1848. He has promised to return to bring even more information. As you can see from the picture, Bill was in the U.S. Army Special Forces.

Left: Bill Luna. Below left: Larry Nazimek, CVO Vice Chair, Dr. Col (Ret) Connie Edwards, CVO Recording Secretary, and Dr. Willie Mack, CVO Chair. Below Right: A shot of the November meeting conducting business.



Join CVO!

We are a 501(c)3 organization dedicated to educating veterans and the public about issues of concern to veterans and their families. We are advocates who work to improve the lives of all veterans and those who depend on them. Join our organization!

Visit us at www.CoalitionofVets.org.

Clearing Up the Choice Rumors

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eligible for VA Healthcare), outside of the Dept. of Veterans Affairs, for those who live over 40 miles from a VA facility, and for those who get their care at a VA facility, but who need to see a specialist that is not available at that VA facility. Obviously, a vet who lives in a rural area, far from a VA facility, will use the card far more than one who lives close to one.

When you get treatment under this program, you must get your treatment by a provider that has been approved under the program. It is easy to find a provider by going to the program's website, where you input your address, the type of specialty you seek, and the distance from this address, such as a five mile radius. <https://www.va.gov/opa/apps/locator/index.html>. Of course, you can call Health Net (the company that makes the arrangements for your care under the program), and they will help you find a provider.

If you know of a provider who you would like to see, but who has not been approved, it should be a simple matter for that provider to get approved. That provider should call Health Net for instructions on how to get approved. A provider who wants to be on the list of approved providers should get approved when he can, because it may take time to get this approval, but if approval is obtained before a vet seeks treatment, it only makes things go a lot faster when treatment is sought.

For those who get their care at a VA facility, if a doctor at that facility feels that you need treatment by a specialist that is not available at that facility, he will write up a referral. This referral will go to the Non-VA Care Office at that facility. That office will call you to collect/verify your information. That office will send the information to Health Net, and you will be instructed to call Health Net (again, that's 866-606-8198).

Health Net will ask you if you have a preference in providers. If you do not have a specific provider in mind, if your VA provider is affiliated with one of the local large hospitals, such as Northwestern Memorial Hospital (NMH), it would be a good idea to request someone at that Hospital, in order to make it easier for your VA provider to access the records and results from the specialist at his hospital.

Of course, mistakes can be made. A vet wanted to see a Gastroenterologist who could perform a certain test at NMH, but when he asked for one, Health Net was, at first, confused, because they had several different addresses for NMH, since it is such a large facility with several buildings. After clearing up that confusion, Health Net said that they would make the appointment and would send the vet the appointment

letter. When he received the letter, however, he saw that he was scheduled, not for NMH, but for the University of Illinois Hospital. He called Health Net to schedule the appointment for NMH, as they were supposed to have done, and they agreed. When he received the letter, however, he saw that while he was scheduled for NMH, that it was

for thoracic surgery. Eventually the matter was cleared up. In other words, mistakes can be made.

When a vet gets the referral for treatment under Choice, he has a deadline for making arrangements with Health Net. If he wants treatment by a provider who has not yet been approved, it may take some time for approval to be obtained. While the vet has a deadline for securing the provider, Health Net has no deadline for completing the approval of the provider.

If the deadline passes while the provider is waiting to be approved, Health Net will return the referral to the VA facility. The VA facility can resubmit the referral to Health Net, but they may also decide to make the appointment directly, as they could do prior to Choice, thereby bypassing Health Net.

The Choice Program, as it exists today, may be different from the one that will exist tomorrow. It is a "work in progress."

If you are eligible for VA Healthcare, you should have been sent a Choice card. If you haven't received one, call the program at 866-606-8198.

Demand Your Right to Heal Right to Heal Campaign Chicago

Right to Heal Chicago is a veteran led campaign dedicated to fighting for healthcare rights and access for the veteran community at the VA and beyond. Leaders of the campaign will be making a presentation at the February CVO meeting.

What we are for?

A fully funded and staffed VA. We find it unconscionable that the current administration allows thousands of positions nationwide to go unfilled at the VA. Our VA takes care of us, but it's impossible for the hard working individuals at the VA to safely do their jobs while they are not safely staffed. We demand safe staffing levels for the workers and patients alike.

We support organized labor and quality jobs for the public and veterans at the VA. The VA hospital is the largest hospital system in the country and 1/3 of its workforce are veterans. After serving, it's no secret many veterans have readjustment problems returning home. A quality job and healthcare goes a long way in providing veterans with the stability and care needed to heal from these experiences. We oppose the attacks to jobs and healthcare being made by the current administration.

We are for a fully funded and public VA and are strongly opposed to privatization measures. While there are problems at the VA, efforts to privatize the VA, thus making a profit off of veterans healthcare a priority, is not a solution. Our country's private health care system is broken, with highest cost in the world, record medical debt and a system where patients avoid seeking healthcare because of cost. We won't trade our fully integrated, comprehensive and cost efficient VA for private providers wanting to make money off veterans. Strengthen the VA, don't privatize it!

We believe in healthcare for all! The VA is an example of a single payer system that works for veterans that have access but we all know that our families and veterans regardless of discharge status need healthcare too. We believe in expanding access to the VA healthcare to all veterans, regardless of discharge, and to their families.

It will take all of us working together to ensure the VA remains a model for all those who demand greater access and affordability for all! Join the movement for the Right to Heal.

Find Out How You Can Help: Come to the February CVO Meeting!

Contact info:
RightToHealVA@gmail.com

