



COLUMBIA VOYAGER

<http://www.TriCitiesMOAA.org>

chapter@TriCitiesMOAA.org

March 2018

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A different kind of flying

The March 20 meeting will be at the CG Public House, formerly the Country Gentleman. Our speaker, Dan Robertson, will talk about something a bit unusual: raptors and falconry.



Dan Robertson with Lucy, a 2-year-old peregrine falcon

Falconry – the hunting of wild quarry in its natural state and habitat by means of a trained bird of prey – is not a common hobby, in part because of the commitment it takes. Dan figures there are about a dozen practicing falconers living in the Tri-Cities.

He embraced the sport more than 40 years ago after his mother, a Cub Scout leader, invited a falconer to speak to the boys about his hobby. He became the man's apprentice, and his interest never wavered while growing up in Salt Lake City and then Spokane.

He's been living in the Tri-Cities since joining the Waste Treatment Plant (WTP) project in early 2002, where he does dangerous waste permitting for the Low Activity Waste Facility, the Analytical Laboratory and a set of 23 support facilities.

Reservations by Thursday, March 15, to Bob Allen.

Last Call for Membership Renewal

Those who have not renewed their membership by the end of March will be dropped from the chapter. A friendly reminder to non-renewers will go out soon. Bring your dues of \$25 to the March meeting, or mail a check made out to "L & C Chapter" to

Paul Seipt
232 Somerset Street
Richland WA 99354

Hq MOAA sends . . .

[Editor's note: Not clear if this applies to TRICARE for Life]

Recent reforms of the Military Health System included plans to reduce TRICARE regions from three to two. The objective was to reduce federal spending while decreasing administrative hassles for military beneficiaries, who tend to move between regions frequently. This part has worked out well.

What has not worked so well for beneficiaries have been numerous issues caused by the change in TRICARE contractors Jan. 1. MOAA has received an earful from members describing billing and claims problems, referral and authorization issues, dropped enrollments, poor customer experience, lack of provider networks resulting in higher cost shares, and many other concerns. We met with TRICARE officials this week to discuss these problems, find out if the Defense Health Agency was aware of them and, if so, learn what they are doing to solve them.

We were happy to find the DHA is very aware of these issues and is taking action to hold the new contractors accountable. Both managed care support contractors, Humana Government

Business and Health Net Federal Services, have experienced early challenges with customer call centers, websites, etc. Humana is compliant with all major requirements except provider directory accuracy. Unfortunately, Health Net - which has TRICARE's West region - remains noncompliant with several major requirements and has been placed on a corrective action plan to fix key issues, including:

- Customer Service - failure to meet multiple contract standards, call center standards, etc.
- Referral and Utilization Management - more than 70,000 backlogged referrals
- Provider network adequacy - failure to meet targets (85% coverage is required)
- Provider directory accuracy - multiple issues
- Medical management - multiple issues with web-based systems

Needless to say, these are serious issues affecting beneficiaries right now. To address them, the DHA has put out guidance, effective immediately through March 18, allowing Health Net to waive its usual authorization process for TRICARE Prime referrals in the West Region as well as addressing specialty care referrals, enrollment applications, and call center wait times.

MOAA appreciates the oversight efforts by the DHA and would like to see the needle move in the right

direction on these issues as quickly as possible. These issues have resulted in more out-of-pocket costs for many beneficiaries, which is totally unacceptable.

Are we losing our will to fight?

Our nation seems to be losing the will to fight; there are several tell-tale signs. Our youth have a declining ability or propensity to serve, and more than half of parents would not recommend military service to their children. Congress has consistently been unable as a body to fully fund our national defense. Pockets of staunch support are not enough to sway the collective will. Stopgap measures under continuing resolutions are more symbolic than substantive; while they keep the government open for business, they fail to fulfill our nation's need to organize, train, and equip our forces. Because appropriations define the will of Congress, and the power of the purse validates their priorities, the scale of will is tipping more toward "somewhat interested" versus "all in."

Thankfully, our defense leaders have not wavered on their will to fight — they remain all in. Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis clearly stated in his introduction that his "enduring mission is to provide combat-credible military forces needed to deter war and protect the security of our nation."

Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson said, "We have got a lot of work to do under the guidance of Secretary of Defense Mattis, and with the support of the United States Congress, we will restore the readiness of the force so that we can win any fight, anytime, anywhere."

Navy Secretary Richard V. Spencer stated, "Our priorities center on People, Capabilities, and Processes. ... Readiness, lethality, and modernization are the requirements driving these priorities."

Army Secretary Mark T. Esper wrote, "As I return to duty, I want you to know that my first priority is Readiness—ensuring the Total Army is ready to deploy, fight and win across the entire spectrum of conflict."

The Chair of the House Armed Services Committee said in a Feb. 1 speech: "We lost 23 servicemembers to hostile actions in 2017. We lost four times more than that to training-related accidents. This budget dysfunction has a human cost, and our military is bearing the brunt of it."

American Voters are more inclined to support military funding today than they were in 2008, according to Gallup. When asked in 2008, 55 % of those polled said military funding was just right or too little. In 2017, that figure jumped to 65 %. And it is worth noting Gallup once again confirmed our nation thinks highest of our military among societal institutions, ranking it No. 1 each year since 1998.

March Meeting Tuesday, March 20

CG Public House
9221 W. Clearwater Ave
Kennewick

Social hour at 6:30
Dinner at 7:00
\$30.00 per person

A reservation made
is a reservation paid.

Reservations by
Thursday, March 15 to
Bob Allen
627-6226
moaa.tricities@charter.net

Menu

Meat Lasagna
Penne white sauce
Green salad
2 dressings
Garlic bread
Seasonal vegetables
Assorted Dessert Bars