



# COLUMBIA VOYAGER

<http://www.TriCitiesMOAA.org>

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May 2023

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## Mustangs helping veterans



Our May meeting will be an evening dinner, returning to Clover Island Inn.

It will feature speakers Wendy Davies and Sierra Shiplet, founders of Mustang Forces, an Equine Assisted Therapy program targeting Veterans and First Responders struggling with PTSD. An estimated 30 percent of veterans and first responders develop PTSD or other behavioral health conditions. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, more than 20 veterans die by suicide each day.

The relationship between man and horse is deeply rooted in history, having been man's working companion for thousands of years. Horses are very social and their ability to read human emotions and mirror those emotions is well documented. They are an excellent choice to give those struggling with PTSD a chance to reflect on their inner self without any judgment

and help to develop coping skills. Working with such a large animal can also force people to step out of their comfort zones.

Mustang Forces will be using horses that are a good fit for the program, regardless of their breed or history; the heart of the program will be centered around mustangs. Since mustangs need to learn to accept human interaction, where domesticated horses do not, it allows an opportunity to start with a blank slate and create a bond. Due to this, mustangs require a lot more patience and work to build that trust and once earned, the bond is incredibly strong.

A study performed by researchers at Rutgers's University, involving Equine-Assisted Activities and Therapies with Veteran PTSD patients determined the "symptoms of PTSD did change significantly in the veterans who participated in this study."

Wendy and Sierra will talk about their experiences and plans for the Benton City facility.

### Membership update

After the dues renewal effort, we currently have 28 members, including 4 honorary/widow members.

### Rod Coler memorial

The memorial service for Rod Coler will be held at  
St Paul's Episcopal Church  
1609 W. 10th  
Kennewick

The service will be a 2 p.m. on May 27. Rod, an honorary member, was a corporal in World War II, and was our last veteran of that war.

### **HqMOAA sends . . . White House Pledges Caregiver Support, But Future of VA Program Still Unclear**

The program provides stipends to family members of some veterans with service-connected injuries that limit their ability to live independently. The payouts generally hover around \$3,000 a month for the most severely wounded individuals, and about \$1,800 for others with less catastrophic injuries. About 30,000 families receive benefits through the program; however, Nationwide, an estimated 5.5 million individuals are providing caregiver services to injured service members and veterans, often giving up their own careers to provide around-the-clock medical and emotional support.

On April 18, President Joe Biden signed a new executive order promising to expand caregiver services for veterans, but some advocates say the move does not clear up uncertainty surrounding Veterans Affairs' long-term support for those families. Biden said the new order on caregiver services included 50

separate actions by federal agencies designed to aid "childcare workers, nurses, home care workers and family caregivers." But the moves do not include a new timeline for new rules regarding VA caregiver support eligibility, an issue that has been looming over the program for more than a year.

### **VA to Cover New Drug for Early Stage Alzheimer's Disease**

The Department of Veterans Affairs has agreed to cover a new biologic treatment for some veteran patients with Alzheimer's disease.

The VA will cover Leqembi, a monoclonal antibody therapy made by pharmaceutical companies Eisai and Biogen, for veterans in the disease's early stages, making the department the first and largest health program in the country to endorse the treatment.

The VA treats roughly 168,000 veterans with Alzheimer's, a portion of whom are in the early stages of the illness. VA officials said Tuesday that its formulary committee made the decision to cover Leqembi because its members believed that there are patients in the VA system who could benefit from the drug.

### **How TRICARE FOR LIFE came about...**

*(Shamelessly copied from the Kitsap  
chapter newsletter)*

Before TFL, military retirees lost all TRICARE coverage when they became entitled to Medicare. Military retirees believed they were short-changed after promises of "medical care for life". Congress established TRICARE For Life, a Medicare supplement to ease out-of-pocket Medicare costs. Military retirees over age 65 pay Part B premiums, and TFL is the second payer after Medicare. What precipitated Congress's action? According to the MOAA web page: "Oct 2021 marked the 20th anniversary of TRICARE For Life (TFL), one of the largest expansions of the military health care benefit and a huge win for MOAA and other military advocates who worked tirelessly to secure a robust health care benefit for Medicare-eligible military retirees. We (MOAA) worked hard to highlight the shameful situation that the military was the only large employer in America that provided its 65-and-older retirees no employer-paid coverage beyond Medicare. Enactment of TFL and associated pharmacy benefits transformed military retirees' medical coverage to one of the very best."

Clover Island Inn  
Clover Island  
Kennewick

Social hour: 6:30  
Dinner: 7:00  
\$32.50 per person

*A reservation made  
is a reservation paid*

### **May Meeting** Tuesday, May 16

Reservations by  
**Thursday** May 11 to  
Bob Allen  
(509) 554-6992 voice or text  
moaa.tricities@charter.net

### **Menu**

Sliced Prime Rib  
Baby Red Potatoes  
Steamed Vegetable Medley  
Tossed salad with assorted  
toppings & dressings  
Pasta Salad  
Warm rolls with butter  
Fresh cookies  
Coffee, Decaf, Tea or Milk