



April/May 2026

Volume 6 Issue 8

**DEPARTMENT COMMANDER**  
**Patriot Michael Smaydy**

**Greetings Patriots,**



*Mike Smaydy*

I just returned home from the Department Convention where I was elected Department Commander for the 2026-2027 year.

We had an informal social gathering Friday night which I thought went off well for a night of camaraderie and it seemed to me that every 5 minutes we added another table to our group. To all that attended this event I thank you for the warm welcome and truly enjoyable evening.

The convention went well and business conducted was received with a lot of valuable information and input both from the guest speakers and the membership in attendance. To everyone who was elected or appointed to an officer position, thank you for stepping up. We still have some elected and appointed positions to fill and would like the membership to consider filling one of these positions that may interest you. I'm hoping to have patriots that when you call them are specific to any question you may have. The

Department is here for you and ready to assist you in any way we can. Just ask.

Also, if a chapter has an event, notify the Department and if possible, Department staff will attend it. I'm still trying for more exposure for the MOPH around the state so whenever feasible, wear your Purple Heart apparel to promote the organization.

For the members, if you have never attended a meeting, attend one in your area and see if there is something of interest for you. For those that have attended one in the past and didn't return, try attending one again to see if changes have been made to interest you. We need your ideas and thoughts on where improvement can be made. By being an active member, it relieves the workload for everyone involved.

Looking forward to working with all of you in the upcoming year

Respectfully yours in Patriotism,

Michael J. Smaydy  
Commander  
Department of Arizona  
Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH) of the U.S.A., Inc  
(928)445-3792

**DEPARTMENT SR. VICE-COMMANDER & DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT  
Patriot Larry Leighton**



*Larry Leighton*

**Congratulations to all the New Department Officers:** You are in the envious position of making the 2026-2027 year exciting and better for our Patriots and Families and all Veterans and families around the State.

- Commander Mike Smaydy (Chapter 691)
- Senior Vice Commander Larry Leighton (Chapter 691)
- Junior Vice Commander – John Moore (Chapter 442)
- Finance Officer Jim Starkman (Chapter 691)
- Inspector: Vacant
- Judge Advocate: Vacant
- Sergeant At Arms John Ballenger (Chapter 691)
- Chaplain Nan Salinas (Chapter 691)
- Americanism Officer Will Hunker (Chapter 691)
- Legislative Officer Chuck Byers (Chapter 2560)
- Fundraising Committee: Keith Gray, Will Hunker, Chuck Byers, Larry Leighton

**Installation of the newly elected officers:** Former Region VI Commander and Former Department Commander Ed "Mac" McGlynn administered the oath of office to the new officers.



*Mike Smaydy, Larry Leighton, John Ballenger, & Jim Starkman*

**Well the Convention is behind us for another year!** Please put **Saturday, May 15, 2027** on your calendars for next year's convention. The venue will be somewhere in the "North Phoenix area" but definitely not at the same hotel as this year.

**Department Patriot of the Year!** Commander Smaydy announced **Patriot Keith Gray** (Chapter 691) is the 2026 Department Patriot of the Year and presented Keith with his plaque. Keith has been nominated as the Region VI Patriot of the Year. Congratulations Keith.



*Keith Gray & Mike Smaydy*

**Jack Schanep and Kale Wilsford of Retirement Wealth Partners LLC** gave a great presentation about Financial Instability and Suicide in the Military. This is another “tool” we all can use to help spot folks that might be thinking about suicide and guide them where to get help.



*Jack Schanep & Kale Wilsford*



*Mike Smaydy & David Olsen*

**Honor Flight:** David Olsen with Honor Flight Arizona provided a short film about the history of the flight and what the Veterans on those flights would see and enjoy. He urged everyone to sign up. They are not yet taking anyone post-Vietnam Veterans yet. **The wait list for those already signed up is almost three years.**



**16th Arizona Coalition for Military Families Annual Statewide Symposium: John and Charlette Davison**

(Chapter 793) attended the 16th Arizona Coalition

for Military Families Annual Statewide Symposium and discussed details including some specifics about Veteran Standdowns around the State.



**Reminder - Events!** We try to keep the **Department Calendar** (<https://www.mophaz.org/events>) up to date with events that may be of interest to the members but I know we often miss some or get them posted late. If you know of any upcoming events you think might be pertinent, send me the essential details (fliers are acceptable) and we’ll try to let the Department know and post them to the calendar.

**Summer Schedule:** Many chapters are going to be “dark” over the summer months but that does not mean we truly hibernate. The Newsletter and [Purple Heart Magazine](#) will still be published. Let us know what you are doing or planning so we can share with fellow Patriots. Pictures and stories are how we can continue to improve how the Order and the allow the Public to learn about us around AZ. If you need assistance or have an idea to share contact your chapter and department officers. They are available.

**Remember our state is known for being hot.** We have already broken many temperature records in March and April. No one knows if that signals a generally hotter summer or not, but regardless of the records, it is up to you to be aware of heat related injuries and to take action to prevent them for yourself, your family, and your friends. There are lots of resouces on the internet you can use to learn about the types and symptoms heat related injuries as well as treatments. One of those sites is <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/heat-stress/about/illnesses.html>

**Be SAFE! Be as HEALTHY as you can! Have FUN! Call a Veteran today!**

Yours in Patriotism

Larry Leighton

Adjutant

[adjutant.mophaz@gmail.com](mailto:adjutant.mophaz@gmail.com)

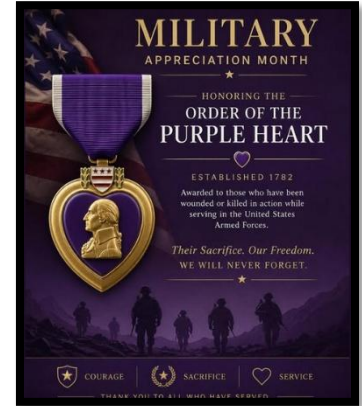
**JR. VICE-COMMANDER  
John Moore**

**Military Appreciation Month:**



*John Moore*

May is National Military Appreciation Month in the United States, established by Congress in 1999 to honor, recognize, and thank current and former members of the Armed Forces, including those who have died in service, as well as their families. The month features several key observances, including Military Spouse Appreciation Day, Armed Forces Day, and Memorial Day to name a few. Our Department and Chapters will participate in several activities around the state to honor



our veterans and our fallen.

**NATIONAL CONVENTION:** The 2026 National Convention will be in New Bern NC. The Dates are July 13th -July 17, 2025

To register use this

link: <https://www.purpleheart.org/NationalConvention>

Departments & Chapters If you would like to donate or if you know of an organization that is willing to be a sponsor please use this link:

<https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/sponsor-93rd-annual-national-convention?>



**National Purple Heart Patriot Project 2026:** I was honored to be the Arizona selectee for the Purple Heart Hall of Honor's 2026 Honor Mission. This was the trip of a lifetime. It was a humbling experience to be with 51 other Purple Heart recipients, one from each state and 1 national-at-large. We had vastly different experiences but easily bonded to share common experiences. It was rewarding to experience the gratitude of the nation for our service and sacrifice.



*John Moore on the project's poster*

We had a full agenda for the week. On day 1 we visited the New York City Vietnam Veterans memorial, and each of us placed a purple carnation in honor of the 1,744 New Yorkers who lost their lives in that conflict. Several Vietnam Purple Heart recipients spoke at the memorial. We also



*At the NYC Vietnam Veterans' Memorial*

visited the September 11 Memorial and again each of us placed a purple carnation at the memorial to honor the victims of 9/11 and those who served and sacrificed in

the Global War on Terror. Several of our GWOT Purple Heart recipients spoke at the memorial. We were treated to a lunch cruise on a yacht around New York harbor which included a water cannon salute from the FDNY Marine Unit.

On day 2 we toured the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor in Newburgh, NY. We got to view our own Hall of Honor Induction Pages on the kiosks at the museum. We then toured Stewart Air National Guard Base and was briefed on their equipment and mission by the 105<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing Command. That evening we had a formal banquet at the Powelton Club, a country club in Newburgh, NY.

On day 3 we spent the day touring the United States Military Academy at West Point. We visited the Visitors Center and the USMA Museum. We had lunch at the West Point Club and were joined by first year cadets for lunch. The cadets offered a toast to our service and sacrifice. After lunch we visited the barracks area, the chapel, and the West Point Cemetery.



*Lunch with West Point Cadets.*



*Introduction at the Concert for Heroes*

The Purple Heart Honor Mission concluded with an outstanding patriotic concert salute to our Nation's Heroes, featuring the MidAtlantic Philharmonic Orchestra and vocalist Mary Kay Messenger. Each of the 51 Purple Heart Honor Mission Honorees was introduced individually on stage at the start of the concert.

This was a rewarding and humbling experience. The Purple Heart recipients that I know do not think of ourselves as heroes. It was an appreciated honor to represent Arizona at this National Event.

**DEPARTMENT CALENDAR:** Event details are at other locations in the newsletter. Not all events are listed here. The full calendar is online at this [link](#).

- May 1 > Silver Star Banner Day
- May 5 > Chapter 691 Meeting Surprise, AZ
- May 8 > Military Spouse Appreciation Day
- May 8 > Victory in Europe Day
- May 13 > Children of Fallen Patriots Day
- May 15 > High Country Standdown – Flagstaff, AZ
- May 16 > Armed Forces Day
- May 18 > Chapter 442 Meeting Tucson
- May 20 > Chapter 442 PH Luncheon
- May 22 > Place Flags on Graves, Tucson
- May 25 > Memorial Day
- May 25 > Cider Corps Ruck March Mesa, AZ
- May 28 > Chapter 472 Meeting Mesa, AZ

Yours in Patriotism  
John R. Moore  
Jr. Vice-Cdr

**AMERICANISM OFFICER**  
**William Hunker**

## Department Americanism Report

The Department Americanism Program continues to move forward with strength, purpose, and outstanding support from our Chapters. We are now tracking 80 schools, with 75 schools having presenters for their awards ceremonies. We are still proudly presenting the Military Order of the Purple Heart Leadership Award through the month of May, and it has been truly



*Will Hunker*

inspiring to see the dedication, coordination, and hard work of our Chapter Americanism Officers. Their efforts are what make this mission possible, and I want to personally say thank you to everyone who has helped represent the Military Order of the Purple Heart with professionalism and pride.

As we move into the “Dark Months,” I will be forming a small committee to help complete tracking and reporting for the many other youth programs we continue to support throughout the Department. This will help us better capture the full impact of our Americanism mission and ensure that the work being done across our Chapters is properly recorded and recognized.

Our program continues to strengthen

relationships with schools, ROTC and JROTC programs, educators, cadets, families, and local communities. These relationships matter because they help keep our mission visible and connected to the next generation of leaders.

The biggest message moving forward is the need for more Patriot Volunteers. The demand is there, the schools are calling, and the mission is growing. We need more members willing to stand beside us, attend ceremonies, present awards, and help recognize these deserving students. Americanism is one of the Department’s most visible missions. Every time we show up at a school, we are not only honoring students, but we are also keeping patriotism, service, sacrifice, and remembrance alive for the next generation.



*Patriot Hunker with Awardee Michelle Luna.  
Top of her class at Maryvale High School. Cadet  
Luna will be attending ASU*

Respectfully,

REV. SFC (RET) William E. Hunker (Will)  
Department Americanism JROTC/ROTC Officer  
Email: [hunkermoph@icloud.com](mailto:hunkermoph@icloud.com)  
Phone: 623-688-3142

## DEPARTMENT OFFICERS

**ELECTED OFFICERS:** These are the Department Officers for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.

- Commander - Mike Smaydy 928.445.3792; [michaelism@hotmail.com](mailto:michaelism@hotmail.com)
- Senior Vice Commander – Larry Leighton 623.776.5443; [adjutant.mophaz@gmail.com](mailto:adjutant.mophaz@gmail.com)
- Jr. Vice Commander –John Moore 520.744.9768; [mophchapter442@comcast.net](mailto:mophchapter442@comcast.net)

**APPOINTED OFFICERS:**

- Adjutant - Larry Leighton 623.776.5443; [adjutant.mophaz@gmail.com](mailto:adjutant.mophaz@gmail.com)
- Americanism Officer - Will Hunker 910.644.7742; [william.hunker@icloud.com](mailto:william.hunker@icloud.com)
- Legislative Officer – Chuck Byers (480) 258-7105; [seagb@cox.net](mailto:seagb@cox.net)
- Chaplain - Nan Salinas (623) 466-6070; [nansalinas46@gmail.com](mailto:nansalinas46@gmail.com)

- Finance Officer – [Jim Starkman](#) 708.638.2321; [karen4357@att.net](mailto:karen4357@att.net)
- Sergeant At Arms – [John Ballenger](#) 602.245.0437; [cjballenger22@msn.com](mailto:cjballenger22@msn.com)

**VACANT POSITIONS:** If you would like to fill one of these positions let us know.

- Judge Advocate – elected
- Inspector - Elected

**FORT LOWELL CHAPTER 442 – TUCSON, AZ**  
**Commander Cody Phipps**

**Patriots of Chapter 442,**

Let me first thank our Chapter Officers who volunteered to present 13 JROTC/ROTC awards to 13 schools in Tucson and southern Arizona. A special thanks goes to Sr. Vice-Commander Dave Bertagnoli who presented 6 of these awards. I am grateful for your time and effort as we serve the Tucson community.



*Cody Phipps*

Chapter 442 continues to do what we are good at, which is helping Veterans. From financial crises like rent, and emergency shelter for a Veteran whose home flooded. We continue to partner with National Community Health Partners to grow our Veteran Empowerment Plan to combat Veteran Suicide. This month in partnership with National Community Health Partners we helped get a veteran transportation so that he can safely get to work and avoid homelessness.

Join us for our chapter meeting on May 18<sup>th</sup> and at our monthly Purple Heart Luncheon on May 20<sup>th</sup>.

Thank you from my heart for your service and for your continued service to our Nation's Veterans.

Yours in Patriotism,  
Cody Phipps  
Commander

**Commander** Cody Phipps – [cody.phipps@outlook.com](mailto:cody.phipps@outlook.com)  
**Sr. Vice-Cdr** Dave Bertagnoli – [dbertagnoli@Q.com](mailto:dbertagnoli@Q.com)  
**Jr. Vice-Cdr:** Mike Dyer – [mrdyer@comcast.net](mailto:mrdyer@comcast.net)  
**Chaplain:** Danny Lemon – [ddlemon@outlook.com](mailto:ddlemon@outlook.com)  
**Adjutant:** John Moore – [mophchapter442@comcast.net](mailto:mophchapter442@comcast.net)  
**Website:** <https://442.mophaz.org/>  
**Facebook:** [Chapter 442 Facebook Page](#)  
**Donate online:** [Donations Appreciated](#)

**Meeting date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday (no meetings June, July, or August). **Time:** 5:00 PM. **Meeting location:** Bridge Church at 8150 N Sandy Desert Trail,

**MONTHLY PURPLE HEART LUNCHEON:** Chapter 442 will hold its monthly Purple Heart luncheon on May 20<sup>th</sup> at noon. Location will be announced by email and on Facebook.

**JROTC Award Ceremonies:** Chapter 442 presents the MOPH leadership award to 10 high school JROTC programs in Tucson and southern Arizona. In addition to the MOPH Leadership Medal and Certificate the chapter provides the cadet with a \$100 leadership stipend.

Patriot **Danny Lemon** presented the MOPH JROTC leadership award to Cadet **Bryan**

Tucson, AZ 85741. This is just off I10 & Cortaro Farms Rd. Go east on Cortaro Farms Rd to N. Sandy Desert Trail.

**BINGO AT TUCSON VA Hospital:** Ft. Lowell Chapter 442 hosted bingo for the patients at the Tucson VA Hospital on April 25<sup>th</sup>. Thank you to **Patriot Dave Bertagnoli, Patriot Cody Phipps, & Patriot Danny Lemon**, who conducted bingo and to volunteers **Cherie Stallman, & Sam Phipps**, who helped the patients. The grand prize was a beautiful handmade quilt from the ladies at Canyon Del Oro Bible Church.



*Grand Prize winner & Patriot Lemon*



*Sam Phipps & Cdr Phipps display grand prize*

**CAMP CORRAL:** Ft. Lowell Chapter 442 donated \$500 to our local Golden Corral to support sending 6 kids to Camp Corral this year. **Patriot John Moore** presented the check to **Tim Peeler**, the manager at the Thornydale Golden Corral. The mission of Camp Corral is to transform the lives of children of wounded, ill, and fallen military heroes by providing camp, advocacy, and enrichment programs. Stop in at the Thornydale Golden Corral

**Villanueva-Vasquez** at the **Desert View High School** awards ceremony. Congratulations Bryan!



*Patriot Lemon & Cadet Villanueva-Vasquez*

Patriot **Dave Bertagnoli** presented the MOPH JROTC leadership award to **Cadet Christopher Chavoya** at the **Cholla High School** awards ceremony. Congratulations Cadet Chavoya!



*Cadet Chavoya & Patriot Bertagnoli*

**Finance Officer, James Zimmerman**, presented the MOPH JROTC Leadership Award to **Cadet Ray Felix** at **Rico High School**, Rio Rico, AZ.



*Patriot Zimmerman & Cadet Felix*

and purchase raffle tickets to help raise funds for Camp Corral.



*Tim Peeler & Patriot Moore*

**ROTC Award Ceremonies:** Chapter 442 presents the MOPH leadership medal and award to 3 university ROTC programs at the University of Arizona, Tucson.

**Patriot Dave Bertagnoli** presented the MOPH ROTC leadership award to **Cadet Colin Murphy Navy ROTC at the University of Arizona**, Tucson. Congratulations Colin!



*Cadet Murphy & Patriot Bertagnoli*

Chapter 442 **Senior Vice-Commander, Dave Bertagnoli**, presented the MOPH ROTC Leadership Award to **Cadet Sarah Castillo-Masengill** of the **University of Arizona Army ROTC Detachment**. The ceremony took place on campus in front of the "Old Main" building. Congratulations Sarah!

Congratulations Ray!

**Chapter Commander Cody Phipps** presented the Purple Heart Leadership award to Cadet Major **Maddie Willey** at **Tombstone High School**, Tombstone, AZ. After receiving her leadership award, Cadet MAJ Willey took command of the program for the next school year. Congratulations Maddie!



*Patriot Phipps & Cadet Willey*

**Patriot Danny Lemon** presented the MOPH JROTC Leadership award to **Cadet Larry Wadsworth** at **Flowing Wells High School** Tucson, AZ. Congratulations Cadet Wadsworth.



*Cadet Wadsworth & Patriot Lemon*

**National Community Health Partners - NCHP** and Chapter **Commander Cody Phipps** and the board of officers of Chapter 442 helped a Tucson Veteran maintain his transportation. The Veteran's e-bike needs repair so he can get to and from work. Our board approved the request from NCHP. **Jr Vice Commander Mike Dyer** suggested we increase the



*Patriot Bertagnoli & Cadet Castillo-Masengill*

**Sr. Vice-Cdr Dave Bertagnoli** presented the MOPH ROTC Leadership Award to **Cadet Ashton Russell** of **Air Force ROTC Detachment 20 University of Arizona** at the detachment's formal dining-in. The ceremony & dining-in were held at the Lodge of the Desert in Tucson. Congratulations Cadet Russell.



*Patriot Bertagnoli & Cadet Russell*

**THE BRIDGE CHURCH:** Fort Lowell Chapter 442 thanked **Pastor Jake McAllister** of the **Bridge Church** for the support the church has provided to the chapter. Bridge Church has provided us a meeting room for chapter the past 6 years. They also provided a larger meeting room for our Suicide Prevention Training. They provided the auditorium when we have had special meeting needs. The Knitting Ladies and God's Girls groups provide Christmas gift bags every year for the AZ State Veterans Home. And the ladies make great cookies. 😊 We sincerely appreciate the support provided by

donation to give the Veteran an emergency fund next time his bike has issues. Thank you to Hayley Reyes, NCHP, the Chapter Officers, Ben's Bikes, and all who donate to our organizations. We help Veterans and their families. **Commander Phipps** presented the check to NCHP-Tucson.



*Hayley Reyes & Commander Phipps.*

**CHAPTER MEETING:**

Thank you to the guests who attended our chapter meeting this month. First and most importantly **Bradley**, arguably the most adorable supporter of our chapter, and his Veteran, **Patriot Bryan Kelsey**. Bryan spoke to us about **One Veteran Foundation** for service dogs and about **Hyperbaric Chamber Treatment** for veterans.



We had some new Veteran faces joined us as well. Thank you, **Sue Ritz** and her husband **George Sullivan**. Sue served a long, distinguished career in the National Guard. George is a 2-time Purple Heart recipient having served in Vietnam. That's a lot of courage and sacrifice in one family! Thank you Sue and George for your service and for joining our chapter meeting.



*Sue Ritz & George Sullivan*

the church and their concern for veterans' needs. **Commander Phipps** thanked **Pastor McAllister** and presented him with a certificate of appreciation and a chapter challenge coin.



*Pastor McAllister & Commander Phipps*

**Missing in America Project:** Thank you to our chapter members, veterans' groups, and the community that came out on April 18th to honor the burial of 13 veterans and 1 spouse. These were the remains of either homeless veterans or of veterans who were unclaimed by family.



**AMERICA 250 MURAL:** Tucson is well known for its many cultural themed murals. **Fort Lowell Chapter 442** in partnership with the **Daughters of the American Revolution, Legion Post 36**, and other veterans' organizations is helping to fund a large-scale military themed mural for America250. The mural will be painted by renown mural artist, **Bill Singleton**. The mural will include seals of all six Service branches, a Betsy Ross flag, American Eagle, Colonial Soldier, & a present day Soldier. The location is Legion Post 36 on 22nd St. 1.8 miles from Davis-Monthan Air Force Base and will be fully visible from the road. Chapter 442 is a founding patron. The **Commander Phipps** presented **Vice Regent Dawn Graffam** of the DAR with a \$1000 donation for the mural. The mural should be completed in March 2027.



*Commander Phipps & Vice-Regent Graffam*



TRI-CITIES CHAPTER 472 – MESA, AZ  
Commander Stephan Bobby

Fellow Patriots,



*Stephan Bobby*

Welcome to Chapter 472. Our meetings are on the last Thursday of the month at 10:00 AM at the American Legion Post 26. Come and join us!

Commander: Stephan Bobby > [veteranairborne@yahoo.com](mailto:veteranairborne@yahoo.com)

Sr. Vice-Commander: Ramiero Del Rio > (602) 818-0796

Finance: James Pomush > [landipomush@gmail.com](mailto:landipomush@gmail.com)

Adjutant: Stephan Bobby > [veteranairborne@yahoo.com](mailto:veteranairborne@yahoo.com)

Sgt-At-Arms: Lorenzo Longoria > [Longo1836@gmail.com](mailto:Longo1836@gmail.com)

**Meeting date:** Last Thursday of the month (No meetings: Jun, Jul & Aug)

**Meeting time:** 10:00 AM

**Meeting location:** American Legion Post 26  
505 W 2nd Avenue, Mesa, AZ 85210-1202

Yours in Patriotism  
Stephan Bobby  
Commander Chapter 472

**PURPLE HEART BRICK PROGRAM: Patriot Stephan Bobby**, Chapter 472 oversees the Purple Heart Memorial Brick Program for the Department. The bricks are installed at the **Purple Heart Memorial at Wesley Bolin Plaza** at the state capital. **Three newly ordered bricks will be installed at the plaza on Purple Heart Day, August 7<sup>th</sup>.** Order a 4" x 8" Purple Heart Brick to commemorate being a Purple Heart recipient or order one to commemorate a family member or friend who received the Award. The cost of the brick, engraving, and placement costs are: **\$35 Purple Heart recipients** and **\$40 for other veterans**.



Checks, along with a copy of your order form,

**CIDER CORPS:** Cider Corps is a veteran own business in Mesa, AZ owned by Patriot Jason Duren and his brother. On Memorial Day they will host their **5th annual Memorial Ruck**.

Cider Corps will close on Memorial Day to honor the men and women who gave their lives in service to this country. Many of them answered the call because they believed in something bigger than themselves. A truth profoundly written in the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."



should be made out to MOPH AZ & sent to:

**Patriot Stephan Bobby**  
MOPH AZ PH Brick Coordinator  
4543 E. County Down Dr.  
Chandler, AZ 85249-7339  
Download Order Form: [PH ORDER FORM](#)



*Wesley Bolin Memorial Plaza*

**MESA VET CENTER:** Mesa Vet Center is located at 1303 South Longmore, Suite 5, Mesa, AZ 85202. The hours are 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM. Phone # is 480-610-6727.



Those words were never free. They came with a cost. For some, it was their life. For others, the battle continued long after they came home.

Memorial Day has always carried two emotions for me. Gratitude and heartbreak. A celebration of the lives, courage, and sacrifice of those who gave everything to others. And as a painful reminder of the weight so many carried along the way. Five years ago, we started this Memorial Day Ruck to reflect on what it truly means to serve. To be walking beside the people, I love. To carry weight in remembrance of those who no longer can.

Since then, it has become much bigger than I ever expected. Every year, more people show up. More stories are shared. More people realize they are not alone. Because this has never really been about fitness. It's about remembrance. It's about gratitude. It's about community. And it's about showing up for each other when life feels heavy.

If you've been struggling silently... If you've been carrying more than people realize... If life feels heavier than it should right now... I see you. You are loved. And you do not have to carry it alone.

So again, this Memorial Day, we walk together. To honor the fallen. To celebrate their lives, that they lived. And to remind each other that even in darkness, nobody was meant to walk alone.

Patriot Jason Duren  
Member Chapter 472

**MICHAEL E. MAHONEY CHAPTER 691 – SURPRISE, AZ**  
**Commander William Hunker**

**Patriots, Brothers, Sisters, and Supporters,**



*Will Hunker*

Chapter 691 continues to move forward with strength, purpose, and momentum. I am proud to report that our recent participation at **VetFest in Surprise was a great success**. We were honored to be invited **by Mayor Kevin Sartor**, and the event gave us another opportunity to stand proudly in the community, represent the Military Order of the Purple Heart, and remind everyone that our mission of service is still alive and active. We also recently attended the Department Convention, where many important topics were discussed and there was a very positive outlook for the future of our

Department. One of the most exciting developments is the movement toward forming a Department Auxiliary, which will help expand our reach, strengthen our support system, and bring more family members and supporters into the mission. I want to personally thank every Patriot who attended the Convention and represented Chapter 691. You showed up, stood strong, and proved once again that Chapter 691 is leading the way.

Our upcoming **Lake Pleasant Cruise** is a tremendous success even before it has set sail. The cruise sold out six weeks before our **sailing date of May 24**, along with the tickets to Dillon's BBQ. This shows the strength of our Chapter, the support of our community, and the excitement surrounding the events we are building together.



As we continue to grow, we will also begin forming committees to help carry the workload and expand our impact. These will include committees for fundraising, future events, and a **new Care Program** through our **Chapter 691 Chaplain, Nan Salidas**. This program will help us better support our Patriots and their families when they need us most.

We will also be instituting a **Buddy-Check Program**, where each Patriot will be given five fellow Patriots to call and check on. This is one of the most important things we can do as a Chapter. A simple phone call can remind someone that they are not forgotten that they are still part of this family, and that their service and sacrifice still matter.

Thank you to every Patriot, supporter, volunteer, and family member who continues to help move Chapter 691 forward. We are building something strong, meaningful, and lasting. Together, we will continue to serve our wounded combat veterans, honor the Purple Heart, and lead from the front.

Respectfully,

REV. SFC (RET) William E. Hunker (Will)

Commander of Arizona Local Chapter #691 Military Order of the Purple Heart

E-mail: [commander691moph@gmail.com](mailto:commander691moph@gmail.com)

Department Americanism JROTC/ROTC Officer Military Order of the Purple Heart

Email: [hunkermoph@icloud.com](mailto:hunkermoph@icloud.com)

Phone: 623-688-3142

"Strong leaders correct behavior. Weak leaders vent emotion and call it leadership."

Cdr: William Hunker - 623-688-3142

[commander691moph@gmail.com](mailto:commander691moph@gmail.com)

Sr. Vice-Cdr: James Starkman - (708) 638-2321

[karen4357@att.net](mailto:karen4357@att.net)

Jr. Vice-Cdr: Sal Salinas - [salsalido@gmail.com](mailto:salsalido@gmail.com)

Chaplain: Nan Salinas – (623) 466-6070

[nansalinas46@gmail.com](mailto:nansalinas46@gmail.com)

Americanism Officer: Karen Starkman-

[karen4357@att.net](mailto:karen4357@att.net)

Trustee: Ron Capek - (623) 979-9389

[ronluccap@gmail.com](mailto:ronluccap@gmail.com)

Sgt-at-Arms: John Ballenger - (602) 245-0437

[cjballenger22@msn.com](mailto:cjballenger22@msn.com)

**Meeting date:** 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday

**Meeting time:** 10:00 AM

**Meeting location:** Sands Chevrolet Surprise Conference Room (16991 W Waddell Rd, Surprise, AZ 85388) Enter parking lot from N Cotton Lane.

**Note:** Meetings will also be via **Zoom**. Enter the meeting ID (ID: 815 5957 0914) and the password (328403). By phone, call 253-205-0468 and enter the id/password.

**Website:** <http://691.mophaz.org/>

**Facebook:** [Chapter 691 Facebook](#)

**VOA NORTHERN ROCKIES:** VOA Northern Rockies is offering "FREE" Veteran "Moral Injury Retreats with dates such as: 'June- 5-7, 12-14, 26-28: July- 24-26: Sept- 25-27 is a Women's Only Weekend. Go to this link to apply or get more information. <https://www.voanr.org/services/mi-retreats/>

**VETERAN RELATED ITEMS:**

- Fry's Community Rewards Program [www.frysfood.com/o/store-services/community-rewards/frys](http://www.frysfood.com/o/store-services/community-rewards/frys)
  - Million Veteran Program (MVP) [www.mvp.va.gov/pwa](http://www.mvp.va.gov/pwa)
  - The Veterans Crisis Line: call 988 and then press 1 or 1-800-273-8255 and Press #1, text #838255, or chat [VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](http://VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat)  
-- VA One Number: 1-800-MyVA411 (800-698-2411)
  - Honor Flight Arizona [honorflightaz.org](http://honorflightaz.org) (928-377-1020)
  - Veterans Affinity [veteransaffinity.org](http://veteransaffinity.org).  
Coffee 0900-1300
- > First Tuesday: Goodyear Recreation & Parks Office, 420 S. Estrella Pkwy, Goodyear, AZ 85338  
> First Wednesday: Surprise Funeral Care, 16063 W Bell Rd, Surprise, AZ 85374  
> Second Tuesday: Sunland Memorial, 15826 N Del Webb Blvd, Sun City, AZ 85351  
> Third Tuesday: Phoenix Memorial Park & Mortuary, 200 W. Beardsley Rd, Phoenix, AZ 85027  
> Monthly Veterans Breakfast – Third Sunday, 0900; Richi's Diner 15609 W Bell Rd #100, Surprise, AZ 85374  
-- Purple Heart Vehicle Registration Tax Fee waived for one vehicle.  
-- Those that are 100% have the ability to have their property taxes waived.



**2026 Glendale Military Induction Ceremony:**

**Commander Will Hunker** with Chapter 691 attended the 2026 Glendale Military Induction Ceremony on May 8th, and more than 500 High School and College Students were sworn in their branch of choice.

While at the Induction Ceremony I was approached by Miguel and was asked about who we were as an organization. Miguel then told me about being a 'Gold Star Son' and his heart is so loving. Their mother (Apache Pilot CWO3 Army KIA) was shot down, but if that wasn't enough, three months later their father was killed (CWO3 Army KIA) due to Drone Strike in Port Shaiba, Kuwait. Even as they are 'orphans' now, this boy was 'not' sad but had radiated hope asking to hand out our Flags to the children as they were coming in for the Ceremony, to spread his love and resilience. Let his smile warm your heart as well. Best wishes and prayers to these boys, who 'FAR TOO SOON' had to become men. Pictured here is Miguel Lopez (holding flags, age 9, Gold Star Son) and his older brother Manuel Lopez (to the left, age 17, Gold Star Son).



*Commander Hunker*



*Miguel Lopez (center, age 9, Gold Star Son) and his older brother Manuel Lopez (to the left, age 17, Gold Star Son)*



**DALE E. CRICK CHAPTER 793 – FLAGSTAFF, AZ**  
**Commander Rodger Ely**

Fellow Patriots,



*Rodger Ely*

Welcome to Chapter 793. Our chapter participates in patriotic and welfare activities throughout Northern Arizona. Chapter 793 supports Northern Arizona Stand Downs in several Northern Arizona communities. Several Northern Arizona communities became Purple Heart entities this past year. Thank you, Page Arizona, Tuba City Arizona, Nazlini Arizona, Ft. Defiance & White Cone, Arizona (Navajo Nation). In March, we participated in the Verde Valley Standdown.

You are always welcome to join us at our meetings or any of our activities!

Commander  
Rodger Ely

**Commander:** Rodger Ely - [juggy64@aol.com](mailto:juggy64@aol.com)

**Sr. Vice-Cdr:** Daniel Reich -  
[daniel\\_r\\_reich@msn.com](mailto:daniel_r_reich@msn.com)

**Jr. Vice-Cdr:** Elmer Sangster -  
[sangster333@hotmail.com](mailto:sangster333@hotmail.com)

**Adjutant:** William Weldon -  
[baseballbillpaul@npgcable.com](mailto:baseballbillpaul@npgcable.com)

**Chaplain:** Rupert Osequeda – [rupert@swiftaz.net](mailto:rupert@swiftaz.net)

**Facebook:** [Chapter 793 Facebook](#)

**Next Meeting** – contact the chapter

**Meeting time:** 11:30 AM

**Meeting location:** VFW Post 1709  
409 W Santa Fe Ave, Flagstaff, AZ 86001

**Meeting date:** Bi-monthly on 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday.

**BILLY WELDON BUST CEREMONY:** Chapter 793 and community members attended the unveiling of the Patriot Billy Weldon Bronze Bust at



Marshall Elementary School, 755 N. Bonito St., Flagstaff on April 10<sup>th</sup> in the school's front courtyard. The bust was dedicated to Patriot Billy Weldon who has

been a long-time crossing guard at the school.

**FLAGSTAFF VA CLINIC:**

1300 West University Ave, Suite 200  
Flagstaff, AZ 86001

Phone: 928-226-1056

Mental Health Phone: 928-445-4860, ext 7500

Website: [Flagstaff VA Clinic](#)

**Ft. Defiance AZ is a Purple Heart Community:**

Chapter 793 assisted Ft. Defiance, AZ in becoming a Purple Heart Community. Commander Ely, Patriot Billy Weldon & other chapter members attended the ceremony in April.



*Patriot Weldon. PH Banner & Chapter 793 member*

Patriot Weldon is a former Department Commander and Region VI MOPH Commander.



*Patriot Weldon (center)*



*Patriot Weldon*

**Elementary School Visit:** Commander Rodger Ely had a great time speaking to these 5th grade students. As a class project the class will be writing a book about my Marine Corps experiences.



*Patriot Ely (center)*

**FLAGSTAFF VETERANS VBOC:** Flagstaff Veterans VBOC is held every first Tuesday of the month, 10:00am to 3:00pm. The VBOC will have a VA representative to help with various VA issues & claims.




*Tribal leaders & Patriot Weldon on the right*

**HIGH COUNTRY STANDDOWN:** The High Country Standdown is on May 15<sup>th</sup> at the Arizona State Veterans' Home in Flagstaff from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM. The standdown is held in memory of SGT Lance Davison, USMC.



**Jimmie Preston Navajo Code Talker Memorial Bridge:** On April 20<sup>th</sup> the Jimmie Preston Navajo Code Talker Memorial Bridge was dedicated in Cameron, AZ. PFC Jimmie Preston (1922–1966) was a respected Navajo Code Talker and U.S. Marine veteran who served with the 1st Marine Parachute Regiment and 5th Marine Division in World War II.





Bringing VA Benefits to you  
**Veteran Benefits Services**  
 Speak with a VA representative, get answers to VA disability compensation/pension claim and benefit questions, and file your disability claim.

Contact: 1-800-827-1000

Location: Flagstaff VA CBOC  
 1300 West University Ave. Ste 200  
 Flagstaff, AZ 86001

When: Every 1<sup>st</sup>  
 Tuesday of the month  
 1000 a.m. – 1400 p.m.  
 Beginning: October 1, 2025

**Sacred Mountain Gourd Dance:** A Sacred Mountain Gourd Dance will be held June 7<sup>th</sup> in Flagstaff, AZ. See flyer for details.

**Sacred Mountain Gourd Dance**

**Saturday June 6th Flagstaff AZ  
 Marshal Elementary School  
 850 N Bonito St. Flagstaff Az  
 "Location Subject to Change"**

Lead Singer - Mario Tenequer  
 MC - Steve Darden

All Gourd Dancers & Society's Welcome  
 Meal Provided for All Singers & Dancers  
 Bring Your own Chairs & Shades  
 Public Welcome - Free Admission  
 Drug and Alcohol Use Not Allowed

Sponsored by Reztoration  
 Contact - Bill Gowey  
 928-380-0871




**Veterans  
 Crisis Line**  
 DIAL 988 then **PRESS 1**



**PURPLE HEART**  
 Some gave all All gave some

**BOB STUMP VA MEDICAL CENTER:**

500 Hwy 89 North  
 Prescott, AZ 86313  
 Phone: 928-445-4806  
 Mental Health Phone: 928-445-4860, ext 7500  
 Website: [Bob Stump VA Medical Center](http://Bob Stump VA Medical Center)

**PHYSICAL THERAPY AT NAVAHCS:** Walk ins are available daily from 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM.



**SAME DAY PHYSICAL THERAPY**

**DON'T LET PAIN STOP YOU!**

PROVIDING YOU THE RIGHT CARE WHEN YOU NEED IT MOST!

**PACT PT BEST SERVES PATIENTS WHO:**

- Back and neck pain
- Joint pain
- Muscle strains
- Dizziness
- Mobility issues
- Falls
- Headaches
- Mobility equipment needs
- Recent D/C from SNF/Hospital

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

928-445-4860 ext 6087  
 Northern Arizona Veterans Affairs  
 500 HWY 89 North  
 Prescott, AZ 86313  
 Walk-In Clinic Bldg 117 Room 102

**HOW TO GET PHYSICAL THERAPY AT NAVAHCS**

Check in Building 117 (Regio) entrance  
 Room 102

We seen before or after your primary care visit

Discuss with your PACT team if PT is PACT eligible for you or the walk-in.

**NORTHERN ARIZONA STANDDOWNS:**

- High Country StandDown**  
 Friday, May 15, 2026  
 ASVH-FLG Flagstaff, AZ
- Williams StandDown**  
 Friday, September 11, 2026  
 Williams Recreation Center, Williams, AZ.
- Twin Arrows StandDown**  
 Friday, October 2, 2026  
 Twin Arrows Navajo Resort, Flagstaff



**ARMED FORCES WEEK**  
 ★ MAY 11 – MAY 16, 2026 ★



Alex Gualdoni

**Cdr:** Alex Gualdoni > [alex.gualdoni84@gmail.com](mailto:alex.gualdoni84@gmail.com)

**Sr. Vice Cdr:** Mike Overmeyer > [moverme48@gmail.com](mailto:moverme48@gmail.com)

**Jr. Vice Cdr:** Chuck Byers > [seagb@cox.net](mailto:seagb@cox.net)

**Adjutant:** Sandra King [kingjs6@live.com](mailto:kingjs6@live.com)

**Chaplain:** Frank Sonntag Jr. [sfcfrank2003@yahoo.com](mailto:sfcfrank2003@yahoo.com)

**Meeting date:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the month.

**Meeting time:** 10:00 AM

**Meeting location:** Mesa Buckhorn Elk Lodge #2656 at 6718 E Avalon St, Mesa, AZ 85205

Yours in Patriotism

Alex Gualdoni

Commander Chapter 2560

**CHAPTER 2560 WEBSITE:** Our website is at [2560.mophaz.org](http://2560.mophaz.org). Make sure you bookmark the address in your web browser.

### Chapter 2560 Assists Naval Academy

**Midshipman:** Chapter 2560 was contacted by



Midshipman Rosales

**Midshipman Jack Rosales** for assistance with payments on an Advance for Clothing and Equipment loan taken upon admission to the U.S. Naval Academy. Chapter 2560 voted to assist Midshipman Rosales, awarding \$1,000.00 toward repayment of this loan. The Department of Arizona generously voted to match

the award of the Chapter. Midshipman Rosales is a Queen Creek, Arizona resident and follows a long line of military service. One grandfather was a paratrooper, and another was a submariner. His mother was in the Navy. His father, David, was an LAV gunner in the Marine Corps and left the service as a Gunnery Sergeant. In January of 2005, then Sergeant David Rosales was wounded by an IED in Al Anbar Province, Iraq, for which he was awarded the Purple Heart. Midshipman Rosales hopes to carry on his family tradition of Patriotism by commissioning as an officer in the Marine Corps. His stated desire is to fly Cobras and "rain hell from above" while providing close air support. This summer, he will do rotations with a destroyer

**Wear Red on Fridays:** Patriots, including about a dozen Purple Heart recipients, meet for **Wear Red at Friday's breakfast.**

We wish you could have joined us to share the camaraderie of the Patriots attending the weekly Friday assemblies. We look forward to your presence on Fridays as we send a shout out to America's deployed service members. A buffet breakfast is served beginning at 7:30 AM (\$12 pp + gratuity), and the program starts promptly at 8:15 AM. See you on Fridays!! Bring a friend. American Legion Post 27, 1018 S. Meridian Rd., Apache Junction, AZ.



Join us EVERY Friday for Breakfast at 7:30am to 8:15am.  
Cost for breakfast is \$12.00 Meeting starts at 8:15am.  
Place: American Legion Post #27  
1018 S. Meridian Rd  
Apache Junction, AZ 85120  
  
We wear RED on Fridays to Remember Everyone Deployed  
Everyone is invited. Veterans, Spouses, Patriots and Guests  
No Membership required...  
YouTube.com: EastValleyR.E.D.FridayPatriots

### The Southwest Veterans Foundation 2026

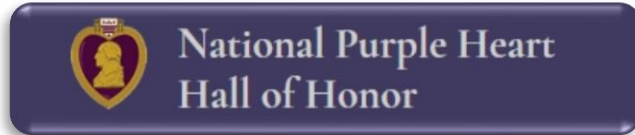
**Summer Adventures Auction:** The Southwest Veterans Foundation 2026 Summer Adventures Auction began Saturday, May 2, 2026, and ran through 7:00 pm Sunday, May 10th. It features 72 items, certainly something for everyone. 100% of your winning auction bid supported the Veteran

group on the east coast, with Marines at Camp Lejune, and on a submarine. Chapter 2560 wishes him well in his pursuits at the Naval Academy and in his service to the United States.

programs and operations of the Southwest Veterans Foundation and Chamber of Commerce Thank you for helping us.

## RELATED MOPH & VETERAN INFORMATION

**PURPLE HEART HALL OF HONOR:** Add your story to the Purple Heart Roll of Honor to help inspire future generations of citizens. Enroll at this [link](#).



**PURPLE HEART VEHICLE REGISTRATION FEES:** Vehicle license tax exemption is available for PH veterans. On registration of a vehicle, if the veteran submits satisfactory proof to ADOT that the person is a veteran and a bona fide Purple Heart medal recipient and has an honorable discharge **the registration tax fee is waived**. Can only be used on one vehicle. Specialty plate and personalization fees still apply.



**ARIZONA STANDDOWN ALLIANCE:** The Arizona Veterans StandDown Alliance (AVSA) holds resource fairs in 13 Arizona's counties. These events allow veterans and their families who are experiencing housing instability and homelessness to get and stay connected to housing and supportive services.

1. [Kingman StandDown](#)  
Friday May 8, 2026  
Kathryn Heidenreich Adult Center
2. [High Country SandDown](#)  
**Friday, May 15, 2026**  
ASVH-FLG
3. [Williams StandDown](#)  
Friday, September 11, 2026  
Williams Recreation Center
4. [Twin Arrows StandDown](#)  
Friday, October 2, 2026  
Twin Arrows Navajo Resort

**VA Trust Report:** Overall trust in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has reached an all-time high. In the first quarter of fiscal year 2026, [82% of Veterans](#) who used VA services—including health care, benefits, burials and memorials—reported that they trust VA to fulfill the nation's commitment to them.



**PURPLE HEART GEAR:** The Purple Heart Store is a company devoted to Honoring Purple Heart Recipients and their family members. It has served PH recipients for over 20 years and is a veteran owned business. Visit the [store](#) for hats, shirts, ties, etc.

**MYVA HOTLINE:** The MYVA Hotline is at 1-800-MyVA411 (698-2411) and is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to serve veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors

**VA HISA Grants:** **Home Improvements/Structural Alterations grants** is a benefit that provides medically necessary improvements and structural alterations to Veterans/Servicemembers' primary residence for the following purposes: Allowing entrance to or exit from the primary residence; Use of essential lavatory and sanitary facilities (e.g. roll in showers); Allowing accessibility to kitchen or bathroom sinks or counters (e.g. lowering counters/sinks); Improving entrance paths or driveways in immediate area of the home to

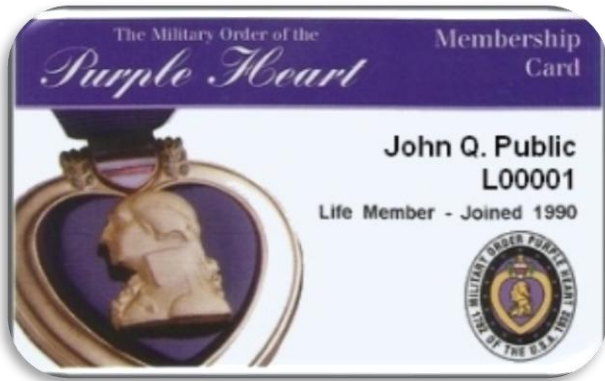


**Free VA Mental Health Courses Online:** Do you know a Veteran facing common challenges like managing anger, insomnia or substance use? Discover

**Knowledge is power:** Free online mental health courses

[VeteranTraining.va.gov](http://VeteranTraining.va.gov), VA's award-winning online mental health resource designed just for you. This innovative site offers a variety of self-help courses focused on practical issues such as problem-solving, parenting and healthy coping skills. Each course features videos and activities to make learning practical and enjoyable. All resources are free, confidential and available 24/7, so you can access support whenever and wherever you need it. Browse the course list on the site.

**MEMBERSHIP CARDS:** Replacement membership cards are available on the National Website you can login to your account and print a paper one or you can order plastic one at this [link](#).



facilitate access to the home through construction of permanent ramping; and Improving plumbing or electrical systems made necessary due to installation of home medical equipment.

## VA HISA GRANT

**HOME IMPROVEMENTS & STRUCTURAL ALTERATIONS**  
HELPING VETERANS LIVE SAFELY AND INDEPENDENTLY AT HOME

**WHAT IS THE HISA GRANT?**

The HISA Grant is a VA healthcare benefit that helps pay for medically necessary home modifications so veterans can live safely and functionally in their homes.

**NOT a home upgrade program. It's a medical necessity program.**

**HOW MUCH CAN YOU GET?**

UP TO **\$6,800** LIFETIME MAX  
 Service-connected condition OR  
 Non-service-connected condition with at least 50% SC rating

UP TO **\$2,000** LIFETIME MAX  
 Non-service-connected condition only

ONE-TIME USE – LIFETIME CAP

**WHO QUALIFIES?**

- Enrolled in VA healthcare
- Have a medical condition
- VA doctor confirms the modification is medically necessary
- Service-connected condition OR Condition treated as if service-connected OR Non-service-connected condition with at least 50% SC rating

**WHAT DOES IT COVER?**

MEDICALLY NECESSARY MODIFICATIONS THAT IMPROVE ACCESS, SAFETY & MOBILITY

- Wheelchair ramps (permanent)
- Widening doorways
- Roll-in / walk-in showers
- Grab bars & handrails
- Lowering sinks & counters
- Adjusting electrical or plumbing for medical equipment

**WHAT DOES NOT COVER?**

NOT APPROVED IF IT'S NOT MEDICALLY NECESSARY

- Cosmetic remodels (tile, paint, upgrades)
- New home construction
- Decks or patios
- Hot tubs / spas / luxury items
- Portable or removable equipment

**IF IT'S NOT TIED TO A MEDICAL NEED → DENIED**

**HOW TO APPLY (STEP-BY-STEP)**

- 1 GET MEDICAL JUSTIFICATION  
VA doctor writes a prescription explaining your condition, limitation, and why the modification is necessary.
- 2 FILL OUT THE FORM  
Complete VA Form 10-1033 (HISA Application).
- 3 SUBMIT DOCUMENTS  
Doctor prescription, itemized contractor estimate, photos of the area, and landlord approval (if renting).
- 4 SUBMIT TO VA MEDICAL CENTER  
Goes through the Prosthetics & Sensory Aids Service (PSAS).
- 5 WAIT FOR APPROVAL  
Timeline varies by VA facility. Delays usually happen due to missing or incomplete info.

**★ THE SECRET TO APPROVAL ★**

The VA is **NOT** approving your contractor quote. They are approving your **MEDICAL NECESSITY**.

**PROBLEM (DOCTOR)**  
Doctor identifies your condition and functional limitation.

**SOLUTION (ESTIMATE)**  
Contractor provides detailed solution and cost.

**MUST MATCH PERFECTLY**  
Both must clearly connect the problem to the solution.

**HISA vs OTHER VA HOUSING GRANTS**

GRANT	AMOUNT	PURPOSE
HISA	\$6,800 max	Small, medical modifications
SHA	-\$25,000	Specific severe disabilities
SAH	-\$126,000	Major home adaptation/build

★ HISA = ENTRY-LEVEL, QUICK-ACCESS GRANT ★

**REAL EXAMPLES (APPROVED)**

- Cannot step over bathtub → fall risk → needs roll-in shower
- Wheelchair-bound → cannot access doorway → needs widening
- Limited grip strength → needs grab bars for safe transfers

**COMMON DENIAL REASONS**

- No medical justification
- Request is cosmetic, not medical
- Vague or incomplete estimate
- Condition not tied to functional limitation

DENIED

**THIS IS NOT A HOME UPGRADE BENEFIT... IT'S A MEDICAL SURVIVAL TOOL.**

**USE IT WISELY. YOU ONLY GET IT ONCE.**

**PURPLE HEART COMBAT WOUNDED VETERANS OF ARIZONA:**

The Purple Heart Combat Wounded Veterans of Arizona is our department 501c3 entity. If for tax purposes, you or a donor is required to donate to 501c3 use our online portal to make your donation. Funds designated for a chapter will go in their entirety to the chapter. Use the "Add/Write NOTE" field to specify the purpose of your donation. Thank you in advance for supporting Veterans! Donate Online: [Donations Appreciated](#)



**PURPLE HEART SCHOLARSHIPS:** Applications for the scholarship program closed on May 1<sup>st</sup>. Be ready for next year. Applications usually open in January or February. Program information is

**Happy Mothers' Day:** To our members, spouses, and daughters who are mothers and to our mothers we wish the very best for you on Mother's Day.



**Master Combat Infantryman Badge:** Last year the Army approved the award of the **Master Combat Infantryman Badge** for soldiers and veterans who have earned both the EIB and CIB. There is also **Master Medic Badge**. Soldiers and veterans who have previously earned both the Expert Infantryman Badge (EIB) and Combat Infantryman Badge (CIB) are authorized to wear the new Master Combat Infantryman Badge (MCIB). The MCIB, **introduced in early 2025 (retroactive to 1943)**, combines the two awards, featuring a **gold wreath to signify the recipient holds both** elite distinctions. **Eligibility:** Must possess permanent orders for both the CIB and EIB (or ESB/EFMB for other master combat badge versions). **Retroactive requests** for Veterans and Retirees should submit documents to Chief, Awards and Decorations Branch (AHRC-PDP-A), U.S. Army Human Resources Command, 1600 Spearhead Division Avenue, Fort Knox, KY 40122-5408



available at the Purple Heart Scholarship Program at this [link](#).



**RANGER - Your 24/7 Veterans Virtual Assistant:** Ranger is **Veterans' Voice of America's AI veterans advocate** — trained in VA benefits, disability claims, and veteran resources. He's an extension of our **Veterans' Voice of America's VSO team** and is available when our offices are closed, on weekends, and at 03:00 AM when the questions won't wait. Ranger is available at this link: <https://vvoaranger1.netlify.app/>



**FREE TUITION FOR VETERAN SPOUSES:** Spouses of honorably discharged veterans enrolled at an Arizona public university, or a participating community college are eligible to receive free tuition on a first-come, first-served basis. Learn more at the [AZ Board of Regents](#).



**NEWSLETTER INFORMATION:** Please send information & photos that you would like included in the newsletter to [mophchapter442@comcast.net](mailto:mophchapter442@comcast.net). We would like to get the newsletter out on the last day of the month. For the June issue **get news information & photos in by the 28<sup>th</sup> of** May. Thanks!

Yours in Patriotism,  
John R. Moore  
Jr. Vice-Commander

**Special Memorial Day Message 2026:** It is an honor and privilege for the Purple Heart recipients of the Department of Arizona to pay tribute to our nation's fallen heroes this coming Memorial Day, May 26th. Our members will attend and participate in ceremonies in various locations around the state. We, as a Nation, owe the deepest debt of gratitude to those who made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. Many if not most of those we honor on Memorial Day were awarded the Purple Heart. Purple Heart recipients are a living legacy for the fallen that were awarded the Purple heart. The members of the Military Order of the Purple Heart are honored to represent the sacrifices of those who have gone before us. All who have been decorated with the Purple Heart gave some, but those we honor on Memorial Day gave all.

Enjoy the Memorial Day weekend and stay safe!



# MEMORIAL DAY

CELEBRATE ★ HONOR ★ REMEMBER

WE WILL NEVER FORGET

