

Membership News

129th AHA Membership

CCMS Ed Boddington, Membership Director

In 1997 past members of the 129th Rescue Wing under the urging and support of then Wing Commander, Col. Steven C. Speer organized our 129th Alumni and Heritage Association. Our name originated from the alumni, persons who had belonged to the 129th RQW or predecessor organizations over the years, and the heritage, persons who belong to the 129th Rescue Wing now and who will carry on our association for future generations.

During this past year the AHA has grown to over 320 members. This growth was accomplished through your support and participation in events such as the Ol' Timers' Luncheon, scholarship program, Wing family day, and your continued communication with past and present members of the 129th Rescue Wing and other California Air National Guard units. Spreading the word about our AHA has been a tremendous asset to our membership growth. (Good Job, Gang!)

During the past year, we have lost a number of our Alumni and Heritage members. This is a fact of life. They will be missed but not forgotten.

To keep our association growing we need to increase our efforts to recruit new members from our younger heritage side of the 129th Wing. With this in mind, your board of directors has requested that a page in the Wing's Rescue West publication be dedicated to our association. Getting the word out on the AHA, what we stand for, who can belong, the support we give the Unit, hopefully will stimulate increased membership from current active Wing personnel. Also, our president spoke at the Family Day awards ceremony informing all unit members present about our AHA program.

If you as part of our membership have any ideas or comments on how we can increase our AHA membership, please feel free to contact any of our officers or directors with your thoughts. We would really appreciate your input.

Many thanks for all your support of the AHA in 2005. Your membership is both needed and truly valued by all of the board. Let's make 2006 another great year for the 129th Rescue Wing and our AHA.

DoD to restrict cell phone use on military bases

By Sgt. Sara Wood, USA

American Forces Press Service

Defense Department installations have begun implementing new cell phone restrictions for drivers on military bases.

The new regulation, published in the Federal Register in April 2005, states that anyone driving a motor vehicle on a DoD installation cannot use a cell phone unless the vehicle is safely parked or the driver is using a hands-free device.

Many installations already have implemented the new restrictions, and the rest will implement the rules on their own schedule. There is no deadline for installations to implement the restrictions, but most will do so this year.

The law enforcement policy offices for each military department are putting together policies and procedures for the implementation and enforcement of the restrictions. This regulation is a minimum requirement, and installation commanders still have the authority to put stricter rules in place. Each installation will determine the punishment for violation of the rules.

As the installations implement the restrictions, they have a responsibility to notify the public by putting up signs or putting notices in base newspapers. Many installations are allowing a grace period in which motorists in violation of the rule will be warned and not ticketed.

The DoD regulation follows suit with many regulations that states and cities have already imposed. Currently only Connecticut, New York, New Jersey and the District of Columbia ban hand-held cell phones for drivers, but many cities have imposed their own rules, according to the Governors Highway Safety Association.

Annual pay statements and tax forms available to myPay users

Retiree and annuitant pay statements and tax forms are now available on the Internet for myPay users.

myPay is an automated system that puts the pay recipient in control of processing certain discretionary pay data items without using paper forms. They can also get pay statements, tax forms and information.

To access a retiree or annuitant pay account, or to learn more about myPay, eligible users are encouraged to visit the Web site at <https://mypay.dfas.mil>.

Retired members and annuitants who have not done so but who wish to establish a myPay account can do so at the same web site by clicking on get a new PIN.

The GI Bill pays for OJT!

Most Guard and Reservists know they can use the G.I. Bill to pay for the costs of education. But did you know that you can also receive up to **\$12,000** in tax-free benefits for training twenty-four months in an On-The-Job or Apprenticeship training program?

That means that **VA will pay you up to \$753 a month (\$216 for Reserve GI Bill)** tax-free, on top of your regular salary!

Here's how the GI Bill On-The-Job training program works for you!

If you are a veteran or currently in the guard or reserve the On-The-Job Training (OJT) Program offers you an alternative way to use your VA (G.I. Bill) education and training benefits. While training, you can receive monthly training benefits from the Veterans Affairs in addition to your regular salary.

OJT programs may be approved in a wide variety of occupations. Some in trades that may relate to your military occupation, but many that don't. Currently approved programs range from law enforcement officers to mechanics to electricians.

Qualifying Jobs:

To qualify, your job must meet the following criteria:

- You must be supervised at least 50% of the time.
- Job training must lead to an entry level position. (Management training programs do not qualify)
- You must be a full-time paid employee, not on commission.
- Your training must be documented and reported.
- You cannot be already qualified for the Job by previous experience.
- You must be recently hired (within one to two years).
- The Job must require at least six months training to become fully trained.
- The Employer may be private; local or state government

The GI Bill pays for OJT! (continued)

Eligibility:

You may be eligible if you are otherwise [eligible for the GI Bill](#) (<http://www.military.com/Resources/ResourcesContent/0,13964,32675--1,00.html>) either under the Active Duty (Veteran) or Reserve GI Bill programs and:

- You are no longer on Active Duty;
- You were recently hired or promoted;
- It's been less than 10 years since you left the service; or
- You are currently a member of the Guard or Reserve (Reserve GI Bill).

So if you are qualified for the GI Bill and you have started a new job or apprenticeship program, you need to apply for this little known GI Bill benefit. This is in addition to your take home pay. In some cases VA will even pay retroactively for OJT from the past 12 months.

Note: You may not receive GI Bill OJT benefits at the same time you are receiving the GI Bill education benefits.

[Click here](#) for the latest information on the exact amounts the GI Bill will pay.

(<http://www.military.com/Resources/ResourcesContent/0,13964,32673--1,00.html>)

The next step:

Your next step should be to contact your [Regional VA office](#) (http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre/regional_offices.htm) or local [State Approving Agency \(SAA\)](#) (<http://www.gibill.va.gov/education/SAA.htm>). They will help you get started on the process and answer any questions you may have.

Remember: If you have decided to pursue your education, many schools offer free information packets they will mail you. You can request information from multiple schools at once by filling out a form on Military.com. With no obligation or cost, learning about different schools is a great way to take the first step. [Click here to request information.](#)

(http://tracking.military.com/cgi-bin/outlog.cgi?url=http%3A/www.military.com/Education/Lead1&code=EDU_MYSTERY082003)

Notes and Updates from Military.com

VA Compensation and Pensions Increase

The Department of Veterans Affairs has released the 2006 payment charts for veterans retirees who are receiving either monthly disability compensation or disability pension payments. Visit

http://www.military.com/VA/Dis_Pension for more information and links to the updated 2006 payment charts.

2005 Retirement Tax Statements

Retired and annuitant account statements and 1099-R tax statements will be mailed throughout the latter half of December. DFAS officials remind pay recipients that the account statement and tax form will be mailed in the same envelope. While the exact mailing schedule is unknown, DFAS will provide completed statements and forms to the printing and mailing contractor by December 14, 2005, for incremental mailings. For retirees, the RAS will reflect changes due to the cost-of-living increase, the Veterans Administration (VA) Legislative increase and changes to the Federal Income Tax Withholding rates. Due to the VA legislative increase, recipients of Combat Related Special Compensation (CRSC) will also receive an increase to their CRSC amount. This amount will affect the December 2005 entitlement scheduled for the payment on Jan. 3, 2006. Retirees who do not have a myPay account will not receive a CRSC pay statement. Also, during December, retired members entitled to receive either CRSC or Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay (CRDP) will be provided with an election form as part of the annual open season. During the open season, affected retirees will have the opportunity to elect to receive either CRDP or CRSC for the next year. In order for the entitlement to change, the form must be received and processed by Jan. 31, 2006. Based on the election, the change will take effect on the payment dated Feb. 1, 2006. In addition, as a result of the phased in CRDP, the amount retirees will receive for CRDP will increase effective January 2006 and will be reflected in the payment dated Feb. 1, 2006. The Annuitant Account Statement will reflect changes due to the cost-of-living increase, changes to the VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) amounts and changes to Federal Income Tax Withholding rates.

FY 2006 GI Bill Payment Rates

VA has readjusted the GI Bill Basic Payment rate to reflect the increased cost of education tuition and other expenses associated with pursuing a college degree. The Active Duty GI Bill will increase from \$1004 a month for a full-time student to \$1034 a month. The Selective Reserve (S.R.) GI Bill will go from \$288 a month to \$297. The Activated Reserve GI Bill is will be up to \$827 depending on the length of activation. The GI Bill OJT and Apprenticeship program jumps from \$753 (\$216 for S.R.) to \$878.90 (\$252.45 for S.R.) The DEA rate increases to \$827 a month. Use the [Military.com School Finder](#) to contact military-friendly schools who offer programs tailored for service members.

New Benefits Guide To Be Released December

The Military Advantage: A Comprehensive Guide to Your Military & Veterans Benefits is an essential reference for service members, retirees and veterans detailing your benefits and includes helpful shortcuts, insider tips and answers to frequently asked questions. Order from Amazon.com.

Dondi's Mercantile Store

129th AHA Merchandise & Apparel

If you would like to order a 129th AHA jacket, we again have jackets in stock. Please contact Ken Moore for ordering information.

Want to own a really unique & distinctive shirt or cap to show your affiliation with the 129th AHA? Dondi's Mercantile Store has a healthy stock of 129th AHA related items. Jackets are customized with your name and rank.

All merchandise can be ordered by phone or on-line. Items and prices are shown at right. Shipping and handling are EXTRA.

Order from Ken Moore at:

(510) 656-1529

or online at sirsgtst@pacbell.net

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>COST</u>	<u>SIZES</u>
Logo Jacket!	\$70 - \$75	
Logo Polo Shirts	\$22	M, L, XL, & 2XL
Logo Baseball Cap w/ Embroidered Logo	\$10	
Logo Baseball Cap w/ Silk-screened Logo	\$5	
Large Jacket Patch	\$10	
Small Shirt / Hat Patch	\$5	
Logo Pin	\$5	
129 th Aircraft Collage	\$10	
129 th 50 th Anniversary Commemorative Coin	\$5	

All items can be shipped. Shipping and handling are EXTRA. All items are sent via U.S. Mail.

Have you moved? Know a former member of the 129th who isn't a member yet?

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / CHANGE OF INFORMATION FORM 2006 Dues \$10.00

NAME: _____ SPOUSE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ ST: _____ ZIP+4: _____ + _____

TELEPHONE: _____ E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

RANK: _____ 129TH SERVICE DATES FROM: _____ TO _____

Please complete the above information and mail to:
129th Alumni & Heritage Association
c/o Col John L. Ruppel, Jr. (ret)
6718 Zerillo Dr.
Riverbank, CA 95367-2122

**If your personal information has changed,
PLEASE USE THIS FORM AND NOTIFY US IMMEDIATELY!!**

New to the Gang

Our Newest Members

Elizabeth Coppin

MSgt Elton Walker

Welcome!

Do you know someone who has been affiliated with the 129th RQW or its predecessor organizations - and is not a member of the Association? Let's get them signed up!

Final Flyby

In Memoriam

We bid farewell to our members who have departed on their final journey.

SSgt Charles L Nobriga



AFA News

Higher limits extended in VA Home Loan Program

America's veterans and their families now have a greater chance to make their dreams of home ownership a reality, thanks to an increase in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) home loan guaranty limit.

Effective January 1, 2006, changes in the loan guaranty limits will mean veterans are able to get no-down payment loans up to \$417,000. The previous ceiling was \$359,650.

"For more than 60 years, VA has assisted our veterans to become home owners," said R. James Nicholson, secretary of Veterans Affairs. "This increase is another example of our commitment to ensure VA benefits keep pace with the needs of our veterans in today's housing market."

The Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2004 tied increases in the VA guaranty to increases in the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation's conforming loan limit. When this limit increases, VA guaranty limits also go up, allowing VA to keep pace with rising home values.

VA-guaranteed home loans are made by banks and mortgage companies to veterans, service members and reservists. With VA guaranteeing a portion of the loan, veterans can receive a competitive interest rate without making a down payment, making it easier to buy a home.

More information about VA home loan benefits is available on the Web at <http://www.homeloans.va.gov> or by calling 1 (800) 827-1000.

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AND
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Are You Missing in Action?

Dead Letter Department

Have you moved recently - or not so recently? Do we have your correct mail and e-mail addresses & phone number? Please let us know when you move.

The newsletter is mailed out with a request for address correction. The post office does not forward the newsletter to you. They return it to us - and charge us 39¢. Then we update your file, put your newsletter in an envelope, put a 39¢ stamp on the packet, and mail it out to you. Total additional cost to the association is nearly \$1.00 per returned newsletter.

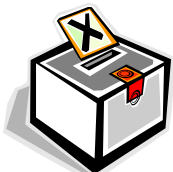
Please take a moment to remember the 129th AHA when you notify your correspondents of your new address. A member information form is included in every issue, and is available online at:

www.129AHA.org

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**Mail Your Ballot Today!!
See You at the OTL!!**

