



# Caregiver Support Quarterly Newsletter

## Advance Care Planning

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) delivers support to Caregivers and Veterans in planning for unexpected medical emergencies through advance care planning. VA encourages Caregivers and Veterans to be proactive with documenting their health care wishes and deciding who will speak on their behalf if the Caregiver or the Veteran becomes critically ill or injured. VA understands that this process can be difficult or uncomfortable, but we are here to help navigate those challenging conversations and decision-making paths.

VA Advance Directives are crucial documents for Veterans to ensure their medical and mental health care preferences are respected, even if they are unable to communicate them directly. These directives typically include two important components:

- **Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care:** This section enables Veterans to designate a trusted individual as their Health Care Agent. This person would be authorized to make medical decisions on their behalf if they become incapacitated and unable to communicate their wishes.

- **Living Will:** Here, Veterans can outline their treatment preferences and specify the medical interventions they do or do not want. This may include decisions regarding resuscitation, mechanical ventilation (use of a breathing machine), and the use of a feeding tube.

### Benefits of VA Advance Care Planning:

- Allows you and the Veteran you care for to proactively improve quality of life
- Offers enhanced ability to support the Veteran you care for and be supported in a sudden medical crises
- Promotes Caregiver- and Veteran-centered care
- Reduces burden and eliminates uncertainty with medical decision-making
- Ensures you and the Veteran receive care consistent with your preferences
- Improves the bereavement experience of families and loved ones

### What do we do with advance directives after I fill it out?

Put the original files in a safe and easy-to-access place. Put a note on the copies about where the originals are kept, and then give copies to the health care provider, Health Care Agent, and a family member. Although advance directives do not expire, it's crucial to review them periodically and update them as needed, considering changes in health, support systems, or medical treatments.

### Non-VA Advance Directives

VA accepts state-authorized and Department of Defense advance directives. Your state may also have a separate Mental Health advance directive. If your loved one completes a VA advance directive, a separate mental health advance directive may not be necessary, as mental health preferences can be recorded on the VA advance directive.

## IN THIS ISSUE:

Hero Miles – 2

Book Club & Swap – 3  
Welcome Ana – 3

Park Pass – 4  
Educational Calls – 4

PTSD Family Education – 5  
Planning for the Future – 5  
Bismarck Support Group – 5

Current Offerings - 6

### Advance Directive Clinic

Fargo VA Room 1C-90

Monday - Friday 11:00am – 12:00pm.

Offered in-person, phone, or virtually.

Contact Ann @ 701-239-3700  
ext. 4166

Walk-in or pre-register!

## Understanding the Fisher House Foundation's Hero Miles

### A One-Time Travel Assistance Respite Resource for Primary Family Caregivers

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Caregiver Support Program (CSP) and Fisher House Foundation are proud to partner in assisting approved Primary Family Caregivers enrolled in the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC). Hero Miles provides one-time travel assistance to family members and/or friends to provide a short-term break for the Primary Family Caregiver.

#### What are Hero Miles?

Hero Miles are frequent flyer miles generously donated by passengers from partner airlines. Family members and/or friends of Primary Family Caregivers can use the donated miles to receive roundtrip travel assistance to the Veteran's home to provide the Primary Family Caregiver with temporary relief, or respite, from their caregiving role. Hero Miles can be utilized once per lifetime per eligible Veteran.

#### Who is eligible for Hero Miles?

- Current approved Primary Family Caregivers in PCAFC are eligible to use Hero Miles to assist family members and/or friends with travel to the Veteran's home. Discharged PCAFC participants are not eligible for Hero Miles.
- Adult family members and/or friends (18 years of age or older) of the Primary Family Caregiver participating in PCAFC are eligible. Children under the age of two may fly on an adult's lap.
- Passengers flying within the continental United States, Alaska, Hawaii, U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico are eligible. Hero Miles does not offer international travel.

#### How do Primary Family Caregivers request airline tickets through Hero Miles?

A Primary Family Caregiver must submit an application to their local CSP team to request travel. Application forms are available through your local CSP team. Completed applications may be submitted by mail, email, or fax.

#### How far in advance can a Hero Miles ticket be requested?

A request for Hero Miles one-time travel assistance should be submitted to your local CSP team at least six weeks prior to the requested travel date. Trips must be a minimum of five consecutive days.

#### Flight Restrictions

Hero Miles tickets are not limited to select airlines, flight times, airports, or seat options. Hero Miles can be used to book flights on any airline that can meet the travel needs.

#### Does Hero Miles provide assistance with transportation to and from the airport?

Hero Miles does not provide transportation to and from the airport. Travelers are responsible for transportation costs.

#### Are there travel date restrictions when using Hero Miles?

Flights are not available during the holiday season from November 15th through January 6th.

#### How often can Hero Miles be used for travel?

Hero Miles can be used once per lifetime, per eligible Veteran even if there have been changes to the Primary Family Caregiver.

#### Costs and Fees Not Covered

Hero Miles does not cover the following:

- Transportation to and from the airport
- Baggage fees
- Miscellaneous costs (meals, gratuity)



## Caregiver Book Club

Book club provides an opportunity for Caregivers to share their love of reading with one another. Please join us for lively discussion via a virtual format!

Our Caregivers' upcoming selections are as follows:

**May:**

*Mad Honey*

by Jodi Picoult & Jennifer Finney Boylan

**June:**

*Lessons in Chemistry*

by Bonnie Garmus

**July:**

*All the Light We Cannot See*

by Anthony Doerr

**August:**

*The Magnificent Lives of Marjorie Post*

by Allison Pataki

**When:** the first Thursday of the month

**Time:** 3:00-4:00pm CST

To register, obtain the virtual link, or for any questions, please contact us at:

Caregiver Support Program  
701-239-3700 ext. 4399  
[vhafarcaregiversupport@va.gov](mailto:vhafarcaregiversupport@va.gov)



## Welcome Ana!

Ana Geray, LMSW joined the Fargo VA Caregiver Support Program (CSP) in March 2024. She will be working within the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC), specifically providing case management services and assisting Veterans and Caregivers applying for PCAFC. Prior to joining the Caregiver Support Program, Ana was a social worker on the medical inpatient unit at the Fargo VA for three years.

Ana was born and raised in Grand Forks, ND. She moved to the Fargo area for college and has been here since, now living with her husband and their dog, Sweet Tea. She loves to try new hobbies whether it is water coloring, gardening, crocheting, doing jigsaw puzzles, or playing board games. Ana looks forward to getting to know and serve our Veteran and Caregiver population. Welcome Ana!



welcome

## Book Swap

August 1, 2024 at 12:00-2:00pm  
Heartland Park, Park Rapids, MN

The Caregiver Support Book Club will host the annual book swap in conjunction with the August meeting. We will meet in-person at Heartland Park in Park Rapids, MN on August 1, 2024 at 12:00 pm. Please bring a snack to share if you wish, as well as any books to swap. Any remaining books will be donated or taken back home.



The August book selection “The Magnificent Lives of Marjorie Post” by Allison Pataki will be discussed. Whether you have read the book or not, we encourage you to come and meet other caregivers who share the love of reading. If you have questions, please call 701-239-3700 ext. 4399 or email [vhafarcaregiversupport@va.gov](mailto:vhafarcaregiversupport@va.gov).

### Fun Facts:

- Caregiver Support Book Club started in December 2020
- Monthly selections are chosen by Caregivers
- Five Caregivers attend on average
- Over 40+ books have been read!

## Explore Nature this Summer

Did you know that State & National Parks offer discounted permits for Veterans? Before exploring nearby parks this season, check to see if these benefits may apply to you.

### North Dakota:

Disabled Veterans and Prisoners of War (POW): ND Veterans with a 50% or greater service-related disability and formers POWs are eligible for a free annual lifetime pass. All other ND Veterans with service-related disabilities may purchase an annual permit for \$28. Requires a Summary of Benefits letters from the VA for proof of disability. Acceptable proof of POW includes DD214. Contact [parkrec@nd.gov](mailto:parkrec@nd.gov) for more information.

Source: [www.parkrec.nd.gov](http://www.parkrec.nd.gov)

### Minnesota:

Purple Heart recipients and Veterans with a service-related disability are eligible for a free year-round vehicle permit that provides unlimited access to all Minnesota state parks and recreation areas.

You will need one of the following documents to prove eligibility:

- A copy of your determination letter or Veterans Affairs Healthcare ID indicating a service-connected disability, plus a photo ID.

To get the discount, you will need to first show your documents to DNR staff. You can do this at the DNR license center in St. Paul, or at any staffed and open Minnesota state park office - be sure to bring your paperwork with you! Keep in mind that not every park office is staffed seven days a week.

If you have questions, leave a voicemail for the permit fulfillment center at 218-595-7118. Be sure to mention "military discount" in your message.

Source: [www.dnr.state.mn.us](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us)

### National Parks:

A free lifetime Military Pass is available for US military veterans. The pass provides free access to more than 2,000 federal recreation areas, including national parks, wildlife refuges, and forests.

There is no application or form to fill out to receive the Military Lifetime Pass. Simply present one of the following forms of identification to get the Interagency Military Lifetime Pass when entering a national park:

- Unexpired Department of Defense Identification Card (DD Form 2, DD Form 2765, or Next Generation USID replacement)
- Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC)
- Veteran ID Card
- Veterans designation on a state-issued US driver's license or identification card

Source: <https://www.nps.gov/planyourvisit>

## Upcoming Caregiver Support Line Education Calls:

### May – “Burn Out? Okay, Now What?”

Tuesday, May 7<sup>th</sup> at 9am CST  
 Wednesday, May 15<sup>th</sup> at 6pm CST  
 Wednesday, May 22<sup>nd</sup> at 2pm CST

### June – Self-Care when Caregiving for a Loved One with Mental Health Concerns”

Tuesday, June 4<sup>h</sup> at 9am CST  
 Wednesday, June 12<sup>th</sup> at 6pm CST  
 Wednesday, June 26<sup>th</sup> at 2pm CST

### July – Dual Caregivers: Surviving & Conquering the Challenges

Tuesday, July 9<sup>th</sup> at 9am CST  
 Wednesday, July 17<sup>th</sup> at 6pm CST  
 Wednesday, July 24<sup>th</sup> at 2pm CST

At the scheduled time of the call, please dial: 1-347-566-4838.

When prompted, enter the following Conference ID: 521 546 087#

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## Fargo VA Caregiver Support Team

Contact Us:  
 (701) 239-3700 ext. 4399  
[vhafarcaregiversupport@va.gov](mailto:vhafarcaregiversupport@va.gov)



# June is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Month

## Post Traumatic Stress Recovery PTSD Family Education Series

This group is an opportunity to increase family awareness of and involvement in PTSD care. Meetings are held monthly from 9:00 -10:30am CST through VA Video Connect (VVC). Veterans, along with their loved ones, can attend one or as many groups as they would like.

This is an opportunity to meet and connect with other Veterans and family members who may be facing struggles similar to your own. Listed below are the remaining 2024 dates for the PTSD family education class:

- |             |            |
|-------------|------------|
| May 1       | June 5     |
| July 3      | August 7   |
| September 4 | October 2  |
| November 6  | December 4 |

Please contact the Fargo VAMC mental health department at (701) 239-3700 ext. 3150 for further details & referral information.

### Planning for the Future Assisted Living & Nursing Home Options

Fargo VA social workers offer an in-person class to provide education about types of senior housing, how to identify when more assistance is needed and to prepare for those changes. Discussion also includes information about resources for aging in place, State Veterans Homes, different levels of care, how to find the appropriate facility, and the necessary documents to have on hand.

Dates for upcoming classes:

May 16, 2024  
Time: 1:30 – 3:30pm CST  
BA-69

Victory elevator to basement, follow signs to room.

June 12, 2024  
Time: 1:30 – 3:30pm CST  
Room 1D-42  
Primary Care Check-in

Virtual options are available on request. To register, please contact Vickie Ness, LBSW at 701-239-3700 ext. 3561 or email [vickie.ness@va.gov](mailto:vickie.ness@va.gov)

### Bismarck Support Group

The Caregiver Support Program is excited to offer an in-person monthly support group in Bismarck, starting May 15, 2024. The purpose is to provide an environment where Caregivers of Veterans can share their challenges and successes about their caregiving journey, coupled with education and encouragement of self-care.

Bismarck VA Clinic  
3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month  
1:00 – 2:30pm CST



Although the group is offered in-person, Caregivers can also attend via telephone or virtually through Webex.

For questions or to obtain the Webex link, contact:  
[vhafarcaregiversupport@va.gov](mailto:vhafarcaregiversupport@va.gov) or  
(701) 239-3700 ext. 4399



## Current Caregiver Support Program Offerings

### No Registration Required!

(though you may need to call to obtain the link)

#### Caregiver Support Groups:

Connect with other Caregivers to discuss challenges and share successes & experiences.

- First Tuesday of the month, 5:30-7:30pm. Virtual.
- Second Thursday of the month, 10:30am-12:00pm. In-person at the Fergus Falls Library.
- Third Wednesday of the month, 1:00-2:30pm. In-person at the Bismarck VA Clinic.

#### Book Club:

First Thursday of the month, 3:00-4:00pm. Virtual.

#### Caregiver Support Program 101:

Third Tuesday of the month, 1:00-1:30pm. Virtual. Informational session to learn what types of resources the CSP has to offer.

#### Caregiver Coffee Hour:

First Tuesday of the month, 10:00-11:30am. In-person, Fargo VA, Room 2E-25. Conversation, guest speakers, education, & coffee.

### Contact Us to Register:

(701)239-3700 ext. 4399

[vhafarcaregiversupport@va.gov](mailto:vhafarcaregiversupport@va.gov)

#### Caregivers FIRST:

Two in-person classes at the Bemidji VA clinic in May. Education on self-care, coping skills, communication, future planning, & problem solving, Registration closes on 5/7/24.

#### Caregiver Health & Wellbeing Coaching:

Meet with a coach to develop a personalized plan focusing on your health & wellbeing. Explore connections, values, & goals.

#### Annie Caregiver Text:

A text messaging service that sends tips, resources, and strategies to support Caregivers. Messages can be tailored for specific topics or diagnoses.

#### Tai Chi Chih:\*

Mondays, 9:30-10:30am. Virtual or in-person (Fargo VA, Whole Health Center 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor).

#### Tai Chi for Arthritis & Fall Prevention:\*

Second Thursday of the month, 9:30-10:15am. Virtual.  
Fourth Thursday of the month, 1:00-1:45pm. Virtual.

\*Call ext. 3990 to register

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## Grilled Chicken Breasts with Peach Glaze

#### Ingredients:

2 cups peach preserves or jam  
3 Tbsp olive oil, plus more for brushing  
2 Tbsp low sodium soy sauce  
1 Tbsp Dijon mustard  
1 Tbsp finely chopped garlic  
1 small jalapeno, finely chopped  
Salt & pepper  
8 frenched chicken breasts  
4 ripe peaches, cut in half and pitted

#### Directions:

1. Combine the peach preserves, olive oil, soy sauce, mustard, garlic and jalapeno in a medium bowl and season with salt and pepper. Reserve 1/2 cup.
2. Preheat the grill. Brush the chicken with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Place the chicken skin-side down and cook until golden brown, 6 to 7 minutes. Turn over and continue cooking for 5 to 6 minutes. Brush both sides with the peach glaze and continue cooking until done, an additional 4 to 5 minutes.
3. Place the peach halves cut side down on the grill and grill for 2 minutes. Turn over, brush with the reserved 1/2 cup of peach glaze and grill until the peaches are soft, 3 to 4 more minutes.

