

VETERANS NEWS & INFORMATION

"Aid and Attendance"

Regardless of your personal status, consider passing this along to all veterans, families of veterans or individuals with veterans in their family.

"Aid and Attendance" is an underutilized special monthly pension benefit offered by the Veterans Administration for veterans and surviving spouses who require in-home care or live in nursing home s.

To qualify, a veteran (includes the surviving spouse) must have served at least 90 days of active military service, one day of which is during a period of war, and must be discharged under conditions other than dishonorable.

The veteran's benefit is \$18,234 annually (paid monthly) and increases to \$21,615 if a veteran has one dependent. The surviving spouse alone is \$11,715 annually.

For more information, call 1-800-827-1000 Visit <http://www.va.gov> < <http://www.va.gov/> > (type "Aid and Attendance" in the search block), or contact your local VA office.

Apply on-line at <http://vabenfits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/main.asp> < <http://vabenfits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/main.asp> > _____

A little-known veterans' benefit
BY PAULA BURKES
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A little-known veterans' benefit for long-term care expenses is available to wartime veterans and their spouses. But the benefit is being overlooked by thousands of families, industry observers say.

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The Special Pension for Veterans' Aid and Attendance pays up to \$1,644 a month, \$19,736 annually, toward assisted living, nursing homes or in-home care for veterans 65 and older who served at least 90 days and one day during wartime - stateside or overseas. Veterans and their spouses can receive up to \$23,396 annually and spouses of deceased veterans, \$12,681.

Yet, an estimated \$22 billion a year goes unclaimed, said Don Soard <

<http://newsok.com/keysearch/?er=1&CANONICAL=Don+Soard&CATEGORY=PERSON> > , a volunteer with Operation Veteran Aid in Oklahoma City <

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In 2007, only 134,000 seniors nationwide received the benefit, which was established in 1952. "Literally hundreds of thousands don't even know about it," Soard said. "Due to incomplete information, many disqualify themselves on income or assets or find the paperwork too burdensome."

Streamlined process -

Soard helps families complete the necessary forms, so that approval comes in four to six months. The process is streamlined for vets who are blind or have memory issues and widows with medical needs, he said. Most applicants qualify and payments are retroactive, Soard said. The few who are denied on excessive liquid assets can seek financial advice to qualify, he said. Soard started his volunteer mission two years ago, following the deaths of two family members who served in WWII. "If they'd known about this benefit, they'd have a much better quality of life in later years," he said. "Without it, many vets are forced to go on Medicaid <

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Oklahoma <

<http://newsok.com/keysearch/?er=1&CANONICAL=Oklahoma&CATEGORY=STATE> > is one of nine states where the welfare program doesn't cover assisted living costs.

Assisted living often can be an alternative to a nursing home when 24-hour skilled care is not an absolute need, said Willie Ferguson <

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, executive director of Legend at Rivendell in Oklahoma City ... "But if someone just has Social Security and a small pension, it's not enough to live here," Ferguson said. According to a 2008 MetLife <

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NY > survey, assisted living in Oklahoma averages \$2,346 a month, while nursing homes cost \$153 a day for a private room. Of 73 Legend residents, nine receive the veterans' special pension, including Tom Bowen <

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77, of Moore .. Until I toured this operation, I had no idea the benefit was available," said Bowen, a retired engineer technician from the Federal Aviation Administration <

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ATEGORY=ORGANIZATION > who served stateside during the Korean Conflict.

Bowen recently moved into the Legend facility following several mini strokes and a diagnosis of short-term memory loss. "It's been pretty hard trying

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handle expenses on my own and being able to replace savings," said Marie Bowen <

<http://newsok.com/keysearch/?er=1&CANONICAL=Marie+Bowen&CATEGORY=PERSON> > , his wife of

57 years. Finding a nearby facility and learning about the special veterans' pension has been a godsend, she said.