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Colleagues and friends,

I am happy to be welcoming in the month of February. It has been a long 12 months to get here, but things are looking up. We now have a number of approved, effective vaccines making their way across the United States and there is a light at the end of what has been a very long, dark, tiring, and heartbreaking tunnel. Thank you for your strength, flexibility, and goodwill toward others during this extended fight. We are nothing without each other.



February 11th is *Giving Hearts Day* and the week of February 14th is designated as the *National Salute to Veteran Patients Week*. I have a favor to ask of you - actually, maybe two favors depending on your ability to give during this time. The first favor is to act on the **Call to Action** this month (page 4). I am urging you to send a note (or valentine) of gratitude and support to a veteran at the Fargo VA Hospital (with a monetary or cloth mask donation if you can afford it). I can think of no better valentines to recognize than the veterans currently in the VA Hospital. Second, if you are so inclined to participate in the Giving Hearts Day event, I would encourage you to consider giving to a veteran-serving organization - you can see them here: [Giving Hearts—Veteran Support](#).

I wish you all a month filled with happiness and good health. Have a lovely Valentine's Day with those who are dear to you. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me or Jim Stoddard should any questions or issues arise. Thank you all for your commitment to VALOR and our student veterans at NDSU.

Carol Cwiak, J.D., Ph.D.
 VALOR Faculty Liaison

Did You Know...

- The National Association of Black Military Women (NABMW) hosts a great veteran resource page— see it [here](#).
- LinkedIn is offering eligible members of the military community one year of free access to LinkedIn Premium and LinkedIn Learning. The [site](#) also provides links for military spouses and employers who want to hire veterans.
- You can listen to Andrea Brett recite her moving poem, *I Am a Veteran*, [here](#).
- Veterans are sought to be part of [Team Rubicon's Greyshirts](#) who are currently working to aid in vaccine distribution and continue their rapid deployment to disaster sites.



VCO Update
Jim Stoddard

You can visit Jim on campus at the Veterans Educational Training Office in Ceres 329; or by phone at 701-231-9706; or by email at james.stoddard@ndsu.edu.

NDSU Resources

- Education benefits
ndsu.edu/veterans/
211 Ceres Hall
701-231-7985
- Tutoring
ndsu.edu/ace/tutoring/
Lower Level of the West Dining Center
701-231-5554
- Student Health
ndsu.edu/studenthealthservice/
1707 Centennial Blvd.
701-231-7331
- Counseling
ndsu.edu/counseling/
212 Ceres Hall
701-231-7671
- Registration
ndsu.edu/registrar/
110 Ceres Hall
701-231-7981

As many of you are aware, members of our National Guard have been activated over the past few months to assist with national emergencies and events, and this is expected to continue for a while. Many NDSU students serve in the National Guard, and so these short -notice taskings can be very stressful and disruptive to their personal lives, to include their college schedules.

It's NDSU policy to consider absences due to military duty as "excused", meaning the student must be given a reasonable amount of time to make up any missed work. Many faculty and students are comfortable coordinating this directly, and that's completely fine; you're all encouraged to keep doing it that way as long as it's working for both parties. If a faculty member desires some kind of supporting documentation, the student should be ready to provide that, and should always inform the faculty member as far in advance as possible, or as soon as reasonably possible.

As an option to streamline the notification process for both student and faculty, VALOR has coordinated with the Office of the Vice-Provost for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management (VP SAEM) so military students can simply provide their absence information to the VP SAEM office, who will then automatically send an Excused Absence Notification message to all the student's instructors. This process is available now, and more information is here: ndsu.edu/enrollmentmanagement/absence/. Students are still responsible for coordinating regarding missed work directly with their instructors.

Every situation is unique, and the timing of the events may compound the challenges. For extended or ill-timed unplanned absences due to military duty, students should consult with their advisor about possibly withdrawing, and with the Office of Military and Veterans Certification for advice regarding their course load and possible effects on their military education benefits: ndsu.edu/veterans/activation/.

So far, we've had two of our bi-weekly informal lunchtime Zoom meetings for the NDSU military community. Thanks to those who've participated! We'll continue to do these on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month this semester (11:30 – 12:30, drop in/out as needed) until we can safely meet in person for a similar event. No agenda; just a chance for students to meet with each other, and to chat informally with faculty and staff allies. February's meetings are on the 10th and 24th if you're able to drop in for a few minutes: <https://ndsu.zoom.us/j/96244525563?pwd=SnlVeTJZWXSjQlJnaUhwQ0FRaHVEEdz09>.

"VITAL" (Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership) is a VA program that sponsors free informative webinars designed to give campus staff and faculty insight into the student veteran experience and to help better meet their unique needs. This semester's webinars should be in February and March. The exact dates and topics have not yet been announced. I'll send the meeting info when I have it. If you're not able to attend the live event, I will try to get a recording of the webinar and materials posted on the VET website: ndsu.edu/vet/ally_training_and_information/.

Later this month is the Symposium on Military-Connected Students (SMCS). This is an annual event hosted by NASPA, the professional association for the Student Affairs field, and the purpose is to share knowledge and research on best practices for supporting veteran and military-affiliated college students. This year's event will be virtual, and I'll be "attending". Topics covered will be relevant to many areas that support military students: Career Services, Admissions and Recruiting, Counseling, Financial Aid, Determining College Credit for Military Training and Experience, Starting and Operating Effective Campus Veterans Centers, Alumni and Community Engagement, Grants, Data Collection and Use, and Student Integration and Retention. I'll post as many of the shareable materials as I can [here](#) (last year's materials are there as well).



Veteran's Voice

Craig Schwinden

VALOR Student Veteran Representative

Hello Student Veterans...as I write this article, we are headed into our second month of classes in calendar year 2021. It is almost getting to be normal that we are conducting most of our business virtually, wearing masks, and staying home for the most part. I have been on the campus a few times this semester and it is still quiet. While it is hopeful to see the numbers in North Dakota going in the direction they are, I think it is too early to be ending mask mandates. We will see what happens.

You may remember I mentioned, in the January issue of VALOR's news-

letter, that Congress passed the National Defense Authorization Act, but former President Trump vetoed it. Well, while I rarely have anything nice to say about our Congress, I must give them credit for working together to override the veto and make the FY '21 NDAA law.

As someone who is working on a History minor, I truly understand the passions and power behind both sides of the argument regarding using the names of Confederate generals/heroes to name military bases. However, there is just too many good things in this law that rights some important wrongs. Especially for our women warriors. Thank you, Congress!

With a new administration in Washington, there are some new faces in the veterans' leadership at the Veterans Administration (VA). President Biden nominated Dennis McDonough to head the VA and he wrapped up his testifying just yesterday (as I write this). From all accounts I have read, he did well.

Let's hope we have a good man to lead this important department.

Back on campus, now that we are into February, you should be well into your schedules and classes. I hope everything is going well for you. If it is not, and you need some help (any kind of help), make sure you are taking advantage of the many sources of support here on campus. Don't forget about the Bison Student Veterans (BSV) meetings and their monthly virtual hangouts. You can find more information on their organization at: [facebook.com/BisonVeterans](https://www.facebook.com/BisonVeterans).

As we are nearly one year into this pandemic, the VA and their education programs continue to adjust to the challenges of COVID. There are no updates to these programs at this time, but I will continue to monitor that and other actions over at the VA. As always, if you have any ideas for articles for this newsletter, please do not hesitate to contact me at craig.schwinden@ndsu.edu. Keep up the good work and thanks again for your service!

"There is no exercise better for the heart than reaching down and lifting people up."

~ John Holmes

A message about Student Veteran Support Partnership (SVSP):

As you know, we are in unprecedented times. College is stressful, especially for non-traditional students, even when we aren't in the middle of a pandemic. The uncertainty of the pandemic increases anxiety and stress that can affect our wellbeing, productivity, and success.

Maintaining connection with others is essential to our ability to deal with the many challenges the pandemic presents. VALOR is committed to helping you build and maintain connections at NDSU and in the community within the veteran network. The Student Veteran Support Partnership (SVSP) initiative is designed to connect student veterans with other veterans, military-connected staff and faculty, and community organizations for the purpose of guidance, support, mentoring, and friendship.

If you would like to participate in the SVSP initiative (to be a connection, seek a connection, or both), please complete the confidential SVSP initiative form (find the form here: https://ndstate.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_b10NMPvW4VuHgdD). The SVSP will create pairings on a rolling basis as requests come in. If you have an urgent need to connect with a veteran or VALOR resources - call Jim Stoddard at 701-231-9706 or Carol Cwiak at 701-231-5847 or 701-261-8025. Let's help get each other through this - connect today.

THE SPOTLIGHT

Name: Dane Fischer

Major/Minor: Mechanical Engineering

Originally from: Bismarck, ND

Current city: Fargo

Career plans after college: I am currently exploring all options with my military career but my contract is up in October 2021. I graduate in May and am currently looking for mechanical engineering jobs. If anyone is looking to hire an entry level Mechanical Engineer in Bismarck or Fargo, let me know.



Dane Fischer

Military Service/Awards: I joined the ND Army National Guard in 2013 while still in high school and have been given many opportunities because of it. I've competed in Best Warrior competitions, Adjutant General Shooting matches, completed Air Assault school, and plenty of other Army training. I deployed to Iraq last year with a small team where we developed and trained the Iraqi Army in fixed bridge reconnaissance and construction. I returned in May 2020 only to be quarantined in a desert near Fort Bliss and experience the world of COVID stateside. I have since returned to my home unit, 957 EN CO (MRBC), where I serve as a Staff Sergeant.

NDSU activities/engagement: Member of Bison Student Veterans

Community activities/engagement: Member of 701 CrossFit, Knights of Columbus

College scholarships and awards: Dean's List

An interesting tidbit about the veteran: I wrestled for 3 years at the University of Mary in Bismarck and am an avid University of Iowa wrestling fan today. I know its blasphemy to say this.. but GO HAWKEYES! I enjoy most things outdoors: snowboarding, hiking, fishing, hunting; although it seems that I never get out as much as I like to.

Favorite experience/memories at NDSU: I don't really have a singular favorite memory. I am just grateful to have time to study, to better myself and set up a definite career path. This is something not everyone gets the opportunity to do.

CALL TO ACTION: **NATIONAL SALUTE TO VETERAN PATIENTS** (Week of February 14th)

One simple request for you this month: provide a salute to veteran patients in our area by sending a monetary or cloth mask donation, along with a note of gratitude and support to a veteran, to the Fargo VA Hospital. Your note of gratitude can be on a valentine, a letter, or a sticky note - whatever works for you. Just make sure that you send something the week of February 14th to let the veteran patients currently at the VA Hospital know that you are thinking of them. Your notes and donations can be delivered (or mailed) to: **Fargo VA, 2101 Elm St N, Fargo, ND 58102; Attn: Voluntary Service**. If you have any questions about donating masks or dropping items off, call the Fargo VA Voluntary Service Department at 701-239-3700 extension 3395. There is a mask mandate at this facility, so please wear a mask if you do drop off a donation in person. Also, please send your notes early, there may need for them to sit a couple of days before they can be shared.



The Drop Zone: Delivering BSV news “on-time, on-target”

Chase Tozer, BSV Vice President

I hope that everybody has now settled into some groove or routine, as that is where we can feel most comfortable. January has started out strong and the thought of spring can help us get through these dark and wintry days. We know that it can get overwhelming, especially in the dynamic world we live in, but we are here to serve you. Our National Guard members have been busy recently with tasking commitments by our state leaders. While their focus is split between work and education, BSV’s focus is solely on supporting them. As always, we have your “six” and can help in any capacity.



Chase Tozer

January was slow in terms of events, but now that classes are in full swing, BSV is looking towards multiple fundraising opportunities around the Fargo-Moorhead area. Be on the lookout and please get out and support us! Your donations and help will go towards our attendance at SVA’s National Convention. The 2021 National Convention is taking place February 19-20 virtually. This is the first year that BSV is attending and we are hoping to overwhelm them with our motivation and inspiration. We have a couple members and officers signed up, but we are always looking for more! If you need financial assistance with your registration, let us know.

Lastly, our FY22 budget was approved! If you have any suggestions or ideas on how to utilize some of this money, please reach out. Our officers will be meeting with our PRSSA counterparts before the first meeting about upcoming events, promotional material, and hopefully some flashy new social media! We will keep you updated on our plans with them and hopefully they will pop into our meeting to say hi and introduce themselves. Remember to stay positive, keep moving forward, and buy a coin!



COMING UP

February

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Four Chaplains Day | February 3 |
| USO Birthday | February 4 |
| National Salute to Veteran Patients | Week of February 14 |
| President’s Day | February 17 |
| Coast Guard Reserve Birthday | February 19 |

March

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------|
| Navy Reserve Birthday | March 3 |
| Hug a GI Day | March 4 |
| Seabee Birthday | March 5 |
| K9 Veterans Day | March 13 |
| American Legion Birthday | March 15 |
| Rosie The Riveter Day | March 21 |
| Medal of Honor Day | March 25 |
| National Vietnam War Veterans Day | March 29 |

April

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| Month of the Military Child | Month of April |
| Military Saves Month | Month of April |
| Gold Star Spouses Day | April 5 |
| National Former POW Recognition Day | April 9 |
| Air Force Reserve Birthday | April 14 |
| Purple Up! Day | April 15 |
| Army Reserve Birthday | April 23 |
| National Military Brats Day | April 30 |



Thank you members of the National Guard for all you do to keep our states and nation safe.



Warriors of the North

Great news! The Warriors of the North project that was planned for Veteran's Day 2020 and postponed due to COVID is back on for Veteran's Day 2021! Check out the details about upcoming opportunities and engagements below.

Fargo Veterans Affairs (VA) Health Care System and the Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County in Moorhead, MN, in a joint effort, are partnering on a creative art exhibit with a series of public events featuring local veterans' journey in trauma recovery in the fall and winter of 2021 and 2022. They are recruiting veterans who may be interested in becoming involved in one or more of several projects:

- A four-session virtual veterans writing workshop series, led by veteran facilitator Wendell Affield will be held in August (exact dates have yet to be determined). Veterans interested in participating in this opportunity should contact Amy Tichy at (218) 766-8795 or via email at amy.tichy@gmail.com.
- A local veteran artist is recruiting for veterans from all wars who have experienced military trauma and would be willing to sit for a photo shoot, while sharing their military experiences. Veterans interested in participating in this opportunity should call Dr. Ken Andersen at (701) 371-4735 or via email at k.andersen.studio@gmail.com.
- A local veteran musician is looking for veterans interested in being paired with local songwriters, and local musicians who would like to be paired with a veteran to assist in putting a difficult military experience or trauma to words and music. Veterans interested in participating in this opportunity should call Dan Hudson at (701) 306-6870 or via email at dthuddy73@gmail.com.

VA Approves Fargo Fisher House Site

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) approved 12 VA medical centers as new priority sites for future Fisher Houses to keep Veterans' loved ones together during medical care. These homes provide short-term accommodations for families and caregivers of hospitalized active-duty or retired military members and Veterans who do not live within commuting distance of a hospital.

"Fisher Houses help enhance VA's services and resources, providing Veterans, their families and caregivers a comforting space to reside during potentially stressful times of recovery and rehabilitation," said Acting VA Secretary Dat Tran. "The new priority sites will expand the VA Fisher House footprint to 76 homes. These homes sit on VA hospital campuses and are free to our Veterans, families and caregivers."

In addition to 15 houses in various stages of construction planning, the Fisher House Foundation has donated and built 49 Fisher Houses for VA and 42 for the Department of Defense (DOD). Upon completion of a Fisher House, VA and DOD assume responsibility for their operation, maintenance, upkeep and staffing. In 2019 and 2020, VA Fisher Houses accommodated more than 47,401 families, saving guests more than \$32 million in lodging expenses. Individuals may request Fisher House accommodations by contacting the Fisher House directly or their assigned VA social worker. (<https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=5611>)

Local Community Veteran Organizations

NDDVA

[facebook.com/NDDVA/](https://www.facebook.com/NDDVA/)

DAV North Dakota

[facebook.com/davnorthdakota/](https://www.facebook.com/davnorthdakota/)

Fargo VFW Post 762

[facebook.com/fargovfwclub/](https://www.facebook.com/fargovfwclub/)

American Legion Post 21

[facebook.com/legionpost21/](https://www.facebook.com/legionpost21/)



North Dakota American Legion

[facebook.com/NDAmericanLegion/](https://www.facebook.com/NDAmericanLegion/)

Dilworth VFW Post 1223

[facebook.com/VFW-Post-1223-106022496155155/](https://www.facebook.com/VFW-Post-1223-106022496155155/)

American Legion Post 2

[facebook.com/americanlegionpost2/](https://www.facebook.com/americanlegionpost2/)

West Fargo VFW Post 7564

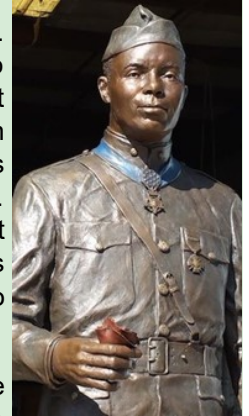
[facebook.com/VFW7564.org/](https://www.facebook.com/VFW7564.org/)

African Americans Serve Their Country with Honor and Distinction

Craig Schwinden

As we once again celebrate Black History Month in America, we recognize that Black Americans have done more than their fair share of contributing to our society. This is especially true in military service. The history of African Americans in the military starts as early as the arrival of the first enslaved Africans and reaches to the present day. African Americans have participated in every conflict from the Revolutionary War to Afghanistan, to include some smaller conflicts in-between. They have served with distinction and honor. We honor three of them here.

Corporal Freddie Stowers is the first African American to win the Congressional Medal of Honor. Cpl. Stowers, a native of South Carolina, was drafted into the Army in 1917. He was assigned to Company C, 1st Battalion of the segregated U.S. 371st Infantry Regiment. This was one of the first units of African Americans allowed into actual combat, but the unit was commanded by foreign officers. Stowers was killed in action on Cote 188 in the Ardennes on September 28, 1918. He was awarded the medal due to his actions in leading men up that hill despite being mortally wounded. The question remains as to whether his medal was not processed due to racism or the difficult criteria for the awarding of the Medal of Honor at the time. Regardless, he was not awarded his medal until 73 years after his death when President George H. W. Bush presented the award to Stowers' surviving sisters on April 24, 1991.



Cpl. Freddie Stowers statue located at Anderson University in South Carolina

(Photo courtesy of South Carolina Military Museum)



Gen. Daniel "Chappie" James Jr.

(Photo courtesy of Military Times)

Daniel "Chappie" James Jr. became the first African American to achieve the rank of four-star general. On September 1, 1975, James was promoted to the four-star rank of general (O-10), becoming the highest ranking African American in the history of the United States military to that date. He was assigned as commander in chief of NORAD/ADCOM at Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado. James spent World War II as a pilot instructor at Tuskegee Army Airfield in Alabama. In Korea, James flew 101 combat missions in the P-51 "Mustang" and the P-80 "Shooting Star" for the 67th Fighter Bomber Squadron, 12th Fighter Bomber Squadron, and 44th Fighter Bomber Squadron. In Vietnam, James flew 78 combat missions in the F4C "Phantom" while flying with the legendary Colonel Robin Olds in the also legendary 8th Tactical Fighter Wing (TFW). While these are distinguished accomplishments, James left his mark on race relations in the military when he participated in the Freeman Field Mutiny. These actions are generally regarded by race relation historians as a critical step toward the improvement of race relations in the military. "Chappie" James died of a heart attack on February 25th, 1978, just three weeks after retiring from the Air Force. He was buried with full honors at Arlington National Cemetery.

Lastly, African American women have played a role as well and have stepped up to the plate when their country has called. Sergeant Danyell E. Wilson became the first African American woman to earn the prestigious badge of honor guard for the Tomb of the Unknowns. Sgt. Wilson earned her badge on January 22, 1997 and made her first "walk" on January 27th of that same year. "I wanted to do something different and I figured this would be the highest honor as far as the Army goes, to guard the unknown soldier" stated Wilson (*NCO Trailblazers*, [The Washington Post](#)). The 22-year old from Montgomery, Alabama, enlisted in the Army in 1993. She trained and qualified as a military police officer. While she is the first African American woman to guard the Tombs, Sgt. Heather Lynn Johnson of Fremont, California was the first woman to earn the coveted assignment.



Sgt. Danyell E. Wilson walks her post at the Tomb of the Unknowns

(Photo Courtesy of Pinterest)

These three are an example of the outstanding accomplishments African American men and women have made to our nation's military. According to the [American Legion](#), there are approximately 2.1 million African American veterans. Also, as of 2016, 30.1% of the active-duty enlisted women and 17.1% of the active duty enlisted men were African Americans. We at VALOR tip our hats to all the brave African American men and women who have served our country. Learn more about African American military history at: [African American Heritage—Military History](#) and [National Association of Black Military Women \(NABMW\)](#).