

MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM THE RAO



BAYPOINTE IS ONCE AGAIN ABLE TO RECEIVE LETTERS OF AUTHORIZATION FROM VA: VA has notified us that they will once again be issuing LOA's for treatment at Baypointe. As always You must make an appointment at the facility and then notify VA and they will send you the LOA, this can be done via MYHEALTHY VET. BE SURE THAT WHATEVER YOU ARE TREATED FOR IS ENTIRELY SERVICE CONNECTED AND YOU HAVE BEEN RATED FOR IT.

EMBASSY VISIT: The Embassy has notified us they will hold an outreach on 7 December 2016, at the Best Western Hotel onboard SBMA. It is located about 100 yards past Baypointe Hospital on the opposite side of the road. See the Embassy website for more details.

RAO DUES: A reminder, renewal of dues for 2017 begins 1 Jan 2017. Due to an increase in operating costs there will be a small increase in dues next year. Currently it is \$72.00 per year, this will increase to \$75.00 per year effective 1 Jan 2017. We have been able to hold the line for 3 years now, but our costs have risen this year. The increase comes out to 25 cents a month, still a pretty good deal for all the services offered. Those paying prior to the 1st of Jan will still pay the \$72.00 fee.

VISA RIP OFFS CONTINUE: A few issues ago I talked about being careful how and where you get your visa renewed. Once again this ugly snake has reared its head. A member told me he was having trouble getting his visa renewed, and the people doing it were continuously making excuses and delays. It appears he used one of the travel agencies with a tropical tree name. He had been using them for Visa renewal for better than a year, paying a few thousand pesos every 2 months. He had forgotten about his visa a few months and was in an overstay status, and realized it when he started making plans to make a trip back to the states. He was concerned because they told him he would have to pay P47,000 for the renewal and it would take a few weeks to get it to Manila and back. This had been going on since May. We computed his costs and included penalties and found he was being charged over P24000 more than he should need to pay. I advised him to get his passport back and I could refer him to someone who has integrity and get it taken care of quickly. He tried and was told the passport was in manila, my friend checked and immigration never had it. After much delay and excuses, He was then told he could go to Manila and meet someone from the agency and get it back. He eventually met my friend at Manila and together they got the Passport back. When it was presented to immigration he was shocked when told he was close to a year and a half out of status. All the renewals he had paid for were not in the passport and he now owed more than P60,000. The agency he used has been the recipient of many complaints and even some law suits. Not long ago a member paid \$4000 for plane tickets to the U.S. and got to the airport only to find the airline had never heard of him. He had to fly so he paid again. To date he hasn't been able to get his money back. I'm also told of 5 passports being lost by the agency. Please pass the word so these people are not able to continue to prey on our veteran community. If you need assistance with your visa come to the RAO and we can help or refer you to someone with integrity. As a retired U S immigration officer I am very familiar with both countrys immigration laws and can assist you. Anyone who has used an agency and has been waiting for awhile for the Visa, you are probably in the process of getting ripped off, come in soon as you can.

ON A MUCH LIGHTER NOTE: The RAO would like to thank all who generously contributed to the Christmas For Kids fund. Over 400 children from local organizations for differently abled persons, a center for abused girls and an Aeta School in Subic will be treated to a Christmas party at the Arizona Resort and will receive a meal and gifts from Santa. A special thanks to Dynamite Dick, Norman Tuzon, Arizona Resort (Red, Jazmin and Gavin) and the Fraternal Order of Teufel Hunden for making this happen. It's not too late, you can still donate!

NEW U.S. Secretary of Defense: As the new U.S. President elect works on filling his cabinet, one of his possible selections should bring a true sense of pride to the Veterans community. Gen Mattis, former Commandant of the Marine Corps, is being considered for the Secretary of Defense position. You may not know a lot about him, but the following story gives a little insight to the type of leader he is.

General Mattis is being considered to be the Secretary of Defense. What a great way to start rebuilding our military. His nickname is Mad Dog Mattis

General Krulak, the former Commandant of the Marine Corps, now the chair of the Naval Academy Board of Visitors, tells a Jim Mattis story.

General Krulak said, when he was Commandant of the Marine Corps, every year, starting about a week before Christmas, he and his wife would bake hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of Christmas cookies. They would package them in small bundles. Then on Christmas day, he would load his vehicle. At about 4 a.m., General Krulak would drive himself to every Marine guard post in the Washington-Annapolis-Baltimore area and deliver a small package of Christmas cookies to whatever Marines were pulling guard duty that day. He said that one year, he had gone down to Quantico as one of his stops to deliver Christmas cookies to the Marines on guard duty. He went to the command center and gave a package to the lance corporal who was on duty.

He asked, Who's the officer of the day? The lance corporal said, Sir, it's Brigadier General Mattis. And General Krulak said, No, no, no. I know who General Mattis is. I mean, who's the officer of the day today, Christmas day? The lance corporal, feeling a little anxious, said, Sir, it is Brigadier General Mattis.

General Krulak said that, about that time, he spotted in the back room a cot, or a daybed. He said, No, Lance Corporal. Who slept in that bed last night? The lance corporal said, Sir, it was Brigadier General Mattis.

About that time, General Krulak said that General Mattis came in, in a duty uniform with a sword, and General Krulak said, Jim, what are you doing here on Christmas day? Why do you have duty? General Mattis told him that the young officer who was scheduled to have duty on Christmas day had a family, and General Mattis decided it was better for the young officer to spend Christmas Day with his family, and so he chose to have duty on Christmas Day.

General Krulak said, That's the kind of officer that Jim Mattis is.

RAO CLOSURE: The RAO will be closed on 30 November in observance of Bonafacio Day.

NEW LEADERSHIP TAKES OVER AMERICAN CITIZEN SERVICES AND VA CLINIC: New leaders have been appointed at the ACS and VA Clinic. At ACS we welcome Tonya Gendin. From our first meeting it was easy to see, this is a lady with a strong desire to improve the ACS, and make it much more user friendly. We will soon see many well thought out changes, and great ways to improve even the best run Embassy in the world. She is a total people person and not only one who enjoys her job, but does it with gusto with customer service at the forefront always!

At the Clinic, we have suffered a true loss, with the reassignment of Ryma Nelson. She has been transferred to the Phoenix office, to get it back on track. If you remember that is the office where most of the ills of the VA were discovered. Ryma brought so many great changes to the Clinic that resulted in a smooth and efficient way of doing business. Many of the changes she perfected have been adopted by the National Office of the VA. One in particular is the Teleconferences held monthly. This provides a format for the service organization leaders to present your concerns and complaints and makes for a closer working relationship for all. There have been quite a few really good changes brought about by ideas exchanged during these teleconferences. This is really a case of our loss is their gain. The good news is she had some very capable people under her who will carry on her people first attitude. With Mary and Vicki, at the helm we couldn't be in better hands and the Clinic will continue to be the showcase around the world for the VA.

May all have a very merry and blessed Christmas and a very happy New Year. We are truly blessed having you as friends and fellow heroes.