



In Service to America

**Serving Veterans
and the
Community**

July, 2015

**Volume 24
Issue Number 07**



**Mailing Address
PO box 551
Indian Rocks Beach, FL
33785-0551**

Meeting Location

**VFW Post 4256
12901 Gulf Boulevard
Madeira Beach
Florida 33708**

www.vva522.org



**Vietnam Veterans of America
Pinellas County Chapter 522
"Five Double Deuce"**

"Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another."

Documenting Our Legacy

ATTENTION ALL MEMBERS OF CHAPTER 522

The hot, humid summer months are upon us in central Florida. Many of us are planning vacations and picnics, and maybe taking in a movie or baseball game. Chapter 522 normally has a limited agenda during the summer months so this month's newsletter includes several articles that may be of interest to everyone.

A few of us will be attending the VVA National Convention in July, and we have a few folks working on upcoming events such as the annual golf tournament in October and the Gold Star Mothers Dinner in September. In August we will begin moving all computer software and files for the monthly newsletter and the website to a new, more powerful desktop recently purchased by the chapter.

While we are in our slow period, I would like to make two requests of all members. If you visit our website, you will see a heading "Members" listed on the navigation bar. Under this heading are two pages - "Back In The Day" and "Member Photos." Each of these pages has sliders showing photos, names, and information about our members.



We have been trying for several months to obtain two sets of pictures from every member. The first set of pictures are member photos from Vietnam, or close to the time you were in Vietnam. If you are a Vietnam-era veteran, we would like a picture of you wherever you served. These pictures will be included on the "Back In The Day" page on our website.

The second set of pictures are member photos today. We have over 100 members but only a few photos. We would like this to be a part of our legacy that we pass on to future generations. Can you help us with this project?

Decorated Green Beret threatened with court martial for blowing whistle on 'dysfunctional' hostage recovery effort

By Jennifer Griffin, Lucas Tomlinson

Published June 12, 2015, FoxNews.com

Lt. Col. Jason Amerine, a decorated Green Beret who was among the first on the ground in Afghanistan after 9/11, is now under investigation by the U.S. Army and was threatened with court martial for sharing information with lawmakers about what he calls a "dysfunctional bureaucracy" preventing the recovery of American hostages held by Islamist terrorists.

"Warren Weinstein is dead. Colin Rutherford, Joshua Boyle, Caitlin Coleman and the child she bore in captivity remain hostages in Pakistan. I used every resource available but I failed them," Amerine told a Senate committee during a hearing on whistleblower protection Thursday, listing the names of American hostages.

"One of those resources was my constitutional right to speak to members of Congress." But he testified that "after I made protected disclosures to Congress, the Army suspended my clearance, removed me from my job, and sought to court martial me."

Amerine told lawmakers he is now being punished by the Army for speaking to members of Congress about his concerns over an incoherent U.S. hostage policy.

He said he reached out first to Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., because of his position on the House Armed Services Committee and because he wanted to repair a "broken" hostage recovery system.

"Here is someone who is trying to save lives and who puts it on his sleeve basically what he is doing and he got slammed for it by the Army," Hunter said in an interview with Fox News.

"So you have them doing a retaliatory investigation of a great soldier. This is the kind of guy we want in the Army. This is who we want out there fighting for us," Hunter said of Amerine, who received the Bronze Star with Valor for his actions in Afghanistan.

Hunter showed his support for Amerine Thursday by sitting behind the decorated soldier during the hearing on Capitol Hill as Amerine testified along with other whistleblowers who also had faced retaliation.

Five years ago, Amerine was tasked by Gen. John Campbell, currently the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, to find ways to bring home Taliban prisoner U.S. Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl after Army commanders realized there was no coherent plan to do so.

While working to free Bergdahl, Amerine realized there were other American hostages being held by Al Qaeda and Pakistan as well, but with all eyes on Bergdahl, the civilian hostages were forgotten and there was no plan to rescue them, he said.

Amerine believed a one to seven trade-off of the "Afghan Pablo Escobar," Haji Bashir Noorzai, currently serving a life sentence in the United States, for all the Americans was possible.

Instead, Bergdahl was traded for five senior Taliban leaders who had been serving indefinite sentences at the U.S. military's prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba -- a deal he said had been rejected by senior U.S. officials years ago.

"My team had a difficult mission and I used all legal means available to recover the hostages. You, the Congress, were my last resort," he told lawmakers. "I am before you because I did my duty and you need to ensure all in uniform can go on doing their duty without fear of reprisal."

He said he is being retaliated against because the FBI and others were angry when Hunter revealed the Defense Department had tried to pay a ransom for Bergdahl, which is against U.S. law.

Amerine said he drew their ire when Hunter submitted a complaint to the Inspector General alleging an "illegal or questionable" ransom had been potentially paid in a failed attempt to free Bergdahl.

"There was a good deal of evidence that it occurred and a lot of questions as to how it occurred," Amerine told Senator Ron Johnson, R-Wisc, chairman of the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee.

Amerine accused the State Department, FBI and CIA of not sharing information with the military and described turf battles and bureaucratic "stove pipes" that he said have hindered the return of American hostages such as Caitlin Coleman, who recently gave birth in captivity in Pakistan, and Warren Weinstein, who was killed in a CIA

drone strike in January.

The Army denied there was any retaliation against the decorated Special Forces officer.

"As a matter of policy, we do not confirm the names of individuals who may or may not be under investigation to protect the integrity of a possible ongoing investigation, as well as the privacy rights of all involved. However, I note that both the law and Army policy would prohibit initiating an investigation based solely on a Soldier's protected communications with Congress," a spokeswoman for the U.S. Army said in a statement.

The FBI declined comment when contacted by Fox News.

Meanwhile, the Army has cancelled Amerine's planned retirement this summer.

Jennifer Griffin currently serves as a national security correspondent for FOX News Channel . She joined FNC in October 1999 as a Jerusalem-based correspondent.



**In the end it will not matter to us whether we fought with flails or reeds.
It will matter to us greatly on what side we fought.**

G.K. Chesterton

**Appeals Status in eBenefits and SEP
Importance: High**

Sent: Wed, Jun 10, 2015 7:31 pm

Please be advised:

As of June 11, 2015 the Appeals Status feature on eBenefits and SEP will be disabled to improve and enhance its features, which will be available online again in September 2015. The processing of appeals will not be affected while this feature is offline. To check the status of an appeal during this time, Veterans working with a VSO should contact their representative. Veterans without a representative should call the Veterans Benefits Administration at 1-800-827-1000. VSO representatives may call the VSO Hotline at 855-225-0709 for more information.

Semper Fi

Class of 1968 - 1972

India Co 3rd Battalion 9th Marines

3rd Marine Division FMF Vietnam

Etiam In Pugna. Brothers Forever

Dying Veteran Exposes Veterans Choice Card Problems

Benjamin Krause March 21, 2015

KARE 11 investigative reporter AJ Lagoe helped dying veteran Paul Walker expose Veterans Choice Card program problems, problems that provide many veterans with no choice at all. Coverage aired on Minneapolis' NBC last night, and what reporter AJ Lagoe uncovered will shock many Americans.

Disabled veteran Paul Walker just came face to face with that brutal reality of no choice after learning he was dying of stage 4 liver cancer. VA failed to provide timely assessment of Walker's condition and went on to refuse life saving surgery after telling him he had 3-6 months to live. If limited to VA health care, Paul Walker will be dead in 3-6 months.

KARE 11 VETERANS CHOICE INVESTIGATION BACKGROUND

To give some background, I am Paul Walker's attorney and am helping him help other veterans fight for access to health care by exposing this farce of a program called Veterans Choice. I generally represent veterans related to health care problems including lack of access to non-VA health care nationwide. A big part of my practice relates to this issue and helping veterans access non-VA health care even through non-VA channels such as through state funded programs.

In my presence at Minneapolis VA, Walker called Veterans Choice to see what options he may have for non-VA care. Previous to the call, I escorted Walker through Minneapolis VA to observe how VA staff treated him in person because of concerns he expressed about VA staff being adversarial toward him. Overall, most staff members that day were initially adversarial but later backed off once Walker explained he was dying of stage 4 cancer.

I find that veteran treatment is sometimes dependent on the kinds of clothes the veteran is wearing and grooming. That day, Walker looked similar to how he looked in the KARE 11 video linked above.

On the phone with a VA operator, Walker explained his situation and why he wanted Veterans Choice, i.e. non-VA care. Unfortunately, he was denied at the time despite living more than 40 miles from his primary care center.

Instead, the VA operator informed Walker that since he lived 16 miles from a VA dental clinic, that he was not eligible for non-VA care for his liver cancer. When Walker asked for a letter documenting his denial, VA refused to provide written documentation.

Walker immediately reached out to KARE 11 News to investigate. Investigative reporter AJ Lagoe was quick to contact Walker and me. He offered to help us expose the very real lack of choice Walker faced in getting treatment for his deadly cancer.

Nationally, VA has recently claimed veterans refuse to use the Veterans Choice program because they love VA health care versus non-VA health care. Their argument continues that since so few veterans choose to use the program that the funds should be diverted to other parts of VA.

This claim is most certainly a public relations spin on reality to manipulate the public into believing veterans only want VA health care. Do you think most veterans truly want only VA health care?

RELATED: VA plots to gut Veterans Choice Program

A couple weeks after we contacted the press and with KARE 11 in the room, Walker again contacted Veterans Choice with a slightly different scenario. By that time, his condition was fully diagnosed, VA prescribed him heavy painkillers that prevented him from driving, and he was informed of his death sentence of 3-6 months to live. Still, VA refused to allow him to seek non-VA care in his community despite his inability to drive and being near death.

Walker wanted to show KARE 11 what happened when he tried using the Choice Card Veterans Affairs sent him, so he called the number on his card while Investigative Reporter A.J. Lagoë watched. "I want to see about getting preauthorization to get cancer treatment at a facility closer to me," Walker told the operator. But he was told he was not eligible under the 40 mile rule because the Northwest Metro VA Clinic in Ramsey is only 20 miles from his home. The frustrated veteran told the woman handling his Choice Card call that the Ramsey clinic does not offer the cancer treatment he needs. "All they do is dental work there and eye work and some basic kinds of different minor things," he told her. "But I have cancer stage 4." Paul's reasoning that the clinic near him doesn't offer the treatment he needs got him nowhere. "I don't get a choice. I get to die. So, to me that's not a choice," he said.

KARE 11 News inquired about veterans' stories across the country, and I had the displeasure of explaining that Paul Walker was not alone in being refused Veterans Choice.

"I've been hearing this across the country," said Benjamin Krause, a disabled vet and Twin Cities-based attorney focusing on veterans' issues. Krause is representing Paul Walker and had harsh words for the choice program.

"The supposed VA choice is nothing more than a bill of goods that they sold us," he said.

Krause points to the fact the VA is now claiming that since so few veterans are using the Choice Card program, the billions of dollars sitting there to fund Veterans Choice could be better spent.

"Now they're trying to justify the fact veterans are not using this choice, which is really no choice at all, as a means to defund the program and move the money elsewhere," said Krause.

Reporter AJ Lagoë requested feedback from VA through a FOIA to see how many veterans have been allowed to use Veterans Choice and how many veterans have been turned down. It may come as no surprise that VA does not count veterans turned down for the program using incredibly squirrely logic:

"No veteran is turned down. They either meet the criteria which is >40 miles from a VA facility or >30 days for an appointment, or they do not."

RELATED: See VA FOIA response on Veterans Choice

How have you been affected by Veterans Choice? Did you get a choice? Do you think VA needs to change its 40-mile criteria?

Source: <http://www.kare11.com/media/cinematic/video/24744681/kare-investigates-mn-veterans-denied/>

<http://www.kare11.com/longform/news/investigations/2015/03/10/mn-veterans-denied-new-medical-choice-program/24712177/>

All opinions expressed in this article are the author's and do not necessarily reflect those of Military.com.

Benjamin Krause is a lawyer, investigative reporter and award winning veterans advocate. He is author of the book *Voc Rehab Survival Guide for Veterans* and writes every weekday on his website, DisabledVeterans.org.

Veterans Alternative Therapy Center Plans Grand Opening

Carl Orth | Suncoast News

Published: May 23, 2015

HOLIDAY — With help from U.S. Rep. Gus Bilirakis and other leaders, Veterans Alternative Therapy Center will mark its grand opening on Memorial Day.

The festivities will take place 5-7 p.m. Monday, May 25, at the center, 1750 Arcadia Road.

"It's been an incredible transformation and now it's time to celebrate," Veterans Alternative owners Brian Anderson and Janel Norton wrote in a flyer.

Demonstrations will show off the center's confidence course, FCS kali martial art, yoga and more. Glory Days Grill is donating food. The pool will be open.

The firm aims to transform post-traumatic stress into post-traumatic growth by offering research-proven, alternative therapies such as Accelerated Resolution Therapy, Integrative Resolution and camaraderie-building programs.

"It is a fantastic project and the Congressman is a strong supporter of the work being done there," Ian Martorana, communications director for Biliarkis, wrote in an email.

Biliarkis, R-Palm Harbor is the sponsor of the proposed Creating Options for Veterans Expedited Recovery Act, which passed a subcommittee last week and was due for a committee vote this week. Martorana predicts the legislation could soon go to the U.S. House floor for a final vote.

Bilirakis is vice chairman of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs.

The COVER Act would set up a commission to explore options and recommend any funding.

"The Congressman believes that one size does not fit all, especially when it comes to an issue as sensitive as the mental health needs of our veterans," Martorana said. "He wants to make sure that all Veterans have access to the treatments they need in order to successfully transition into civilian life.

"While this bill doesn't allot a specific amount of money for these treatments, it represents significant progress in changing the way the mental health needs of our veterans are handled. It is definitely a step in the right direction in addressing the serious gaps that exist in caring for the invisible wounds of our nation's heroes."

For more information about the Monday event, call the Veterans Alternative Therapy Center at (727)-939-VETS.

corth@suncoastnews.com (727) 815-1068

Some people try to turn back their odometers. Not me; I want people to know 'why' I look this way. I've traveled a long way, and some of the roads weren't paved.

Will Rogers

Important Dates

**(Bay Pines) Bill Young VA Medical Center
Open House for Summer Volunteer Workers
Sunday, June 28th**

**July Monthly Meeting
Monday, June 6th, 1900 hours
12901 Gulf Boulevard, Madeira Beach, FL 33708
Election for Chapter Secretary if Quorum Present**

**Grouper Tuesday
Sponsored by Chapter 522 & VFW
Tuesday, July 7th, 1200 hours VFW
12901 Gulf Boulevard, Madeira Beach, FL 33708**

**VVA National Convention
July 21-23, 2015
Hilton Hotel, Springfield, Illinois**

**First Friday Fundraiser
Friday, September 4th 1700 hours
2nd Avenue, St. Petersburg, FL
Sponsor Optimist Club of St. Petersburg**

**Gold Star Mothers Dinner
Sunday, September 20th
Time and Place TBD**

**Gold Star Mothers Day Ceremonies
Sunday, September 27th Time TBD
Oldsmar Veterans Park
Chapter Color Guard**

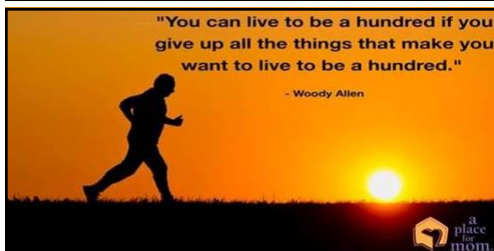


Texas Tan Line

Lschles, ifunny.mobi



IF EVERYTHING IS BLOWING UP AROUND YOU, THAT'S PROBABLY US



"You can live to be a hundred if you give up all the things that make you want to live to be a hundred."

- Woody Allen



Join the Air Force

We have hot chicks

You Are The Best

by Andy Rooney

If you will take the time to read these, I promise you'll come away with an enlightened perspective. The subjects covered affect us all on a daily basis. They were written by the late Andy Rooney, a man who had the gift of saying so much with so few words.

I've learned that

The best classroom in the world is at the feet of an elderly person.

When you're in love, it shows.

Just one person saying to me, 'You've made my day!' makes my day.

Having a child fall asleep in your arms is one of the most peaceful feelings in the world.

Being kind is more important than being right.

You should never say no to a gift from a child.

I can always pray for someone when I don't have the strength to help him in some other way.

No matter how serious your life requires you to be, everyone needs a friend to act goofy with.

Sometimes all a person needs is a hand to hold and a heart to understand.

Simple walks with my father around the block on summer nights when I was a child did wonders for me as an adult.

Life is like a roll of toilet paper. The closer it gets to the end, the faster it goes.

We should be glad God doesn't give us everything we ask for.

Money doesn't buy class.

It's those small daily happenings that make life so spectacular.

Under everyone's hard shell is someone who wants to be appreciated and loved.

To ignore the facts does not change the facts.

When you plan to get even with someone, you are only letting that person continue to hurt you.

Love, not time, heals all wounds.

The easiest way for me to grow as a person is to surround myself with people smarter than I am.

Everyone you meet deserves to be greeted with a smile.

No one is perfect until you fall in love with them.

Life is tough, but I'm tougher.

Opportunities are never lost; someone will take the ones you miss.

When you harbour bitterness, happiness will dock elsewhere.

I wish I could have told my Mom that I love her one more time before she passed away.

One should keep his words both soft and tender, because tomorrow he may have to eat them.

A smile is an inexpensive way to improve your looks.

When your newly born grandchild holds your little finger in his little fist, that you're hooked for life.

Everyone wants to live on top of the mountain, but all the happiness and growth occurs while you're climbing it.

The less time I have to work with, the more things I get done.

The Man With the Rifle Knows

This poem was hanging on the wall at the jump school in Ft. Benning. I remember reading it when I was there in the summer of 1963. It says the author is unknown but

I'll bet he was a Sky Soldier.

Rick Jerman HHC/2/503d

(Author Unknown)

Men may argue forever on what wins their wars
and welter on cons and pros.

And seek their answers at history's doors,
but the Man With the Rifle Knows.

He must stand on the ground
on his own two feet,

and he's never in doubt when it's won.

If it's won he is there, if he's not it's defeat.

That's his test when the fighting is done.

When he carries the fight it's not with a roar
of armoured wings spitting death.

It's creep and crawl on the earthen floor,
butt down and holding his breath.

Saving his strength for the last low rush,
grenade throw and bayonet thrust;

And the whispered prayer before he goes in,
of a man who does what he must.

And when he's attacked, he can't zoom away,
when the shells fill the world with their sound.

He stays where he is, loosens his spade,
and digs his defense in the ground.

That ground isn't ours till he's there in the flesh,
not a gadget, or a bomb, but a man.

He's the answer to theories which start afresh
with each peace since war began.

So let the wild circle of argument rage
on what wins as war comes and goes.

Many new theories may hold the stage,
BUT THE MAN WITH THE RIFLE KNOWS.



Eight Remaining Female Candidates Fail First Phase of Ranger School

Published June 01, 2015 FoxNews.com

The remaining eight female Ranger School candidates failed the first phase of the U.S. Army's elite infantry program, the Army said in a statement late Friday.

Of the eight women, five were kicked out of training. Three others will be allowed to start over from the beginning of the first phase of Ranger School. Those three will start class on June 21.

The Army said in a statement that 29 students failed to meet the standards of phase one, also known as the Darby Phase. A vast majority of the students who are being dropped from the course were unable to successfully lead a patrol. All students received multiple opportunities to lead a patrol as a squad or team leader, the Army said.

"Each Ranger student, whether successful or unsuccessful, learned more about themselves, leadership and small unit tactics, and returns to the Army a better trained Soldier and leader," said Colonel David G. Fivecoat, Commander of the Airborne and Ranger Training Brigade.

This was the first time women were allowed to participate in Ranger School.

The Darby Phase is followed by a mountain phase which is then followed by a swamp or Florida phase. The next phase of Ranger School will start June 25.

A total of 60 women were originally slated to participate in Ranger Assessment Phase (RAP), according to the Pentagon in January. The Army Times reported in February that 100 women went into the pre-training phase, and in April, 19 women qualified for the Darby Phase.

The training for Ranger School is notoriously difficult. The Darby Phase consists of 15 days of intensive squad training and operations in field environment at Fort Benning, Georgia. The students get at least two days where they are counseled on their performance during the phase.

"The key is to ensure we have the right standard for the occupation," a defense official told Fox News earlier this month. "Our goal is to ensure that the mission is carried out by the best qualified and the most capable service members, regardless of gender."

The Rangers also note that 33 percent of the soldiers who graduate Ranger School are typically "recycled," meaning they have failed the course at least once before.

The Pentagon lifted its ban on women in combat in 2012 and while they would not have been able to become full members of the Rangers, this would have given them their first foray into all-male Special Operations. Typically attached to combat units, at least 130 women were killed and 800 wounded in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Many were "non-combat" in name only and involved in front line operations all the same.

Peer evaluations are held periodically in Ranger School, but a defense official could not confirm if those evaluations contributed to the women not completing the first phase of training.

According to statistics, only 3 percent of the U.S. Army is Ranger-qualified. *Fox News' Lucas Tomlinson contributed to this report*

Obtaining Veteran Service Documents

By U.S. Army Human Resources Command - April 20, 2012

FORT KNOX, Ky. -- Army veterans who served on active duty or in the Army Reserve, and the family members of those veterans, are eligible to receive service-related documents for free through a number of official sources.

Soldiers who separated in October 2002 or later can submit a signed Standard Form 180/ Request Pertaining to Military Records (www.archives.gov/research/order/standard-form-180.pdf) to the U.S. Army Human Resources Command using one of the following methods: a signed request can be scanned and emailed to askhrc.army@us.army.mil, or mailed to:

U.S. Army Human Resources Command
ATTN: AHRC-PDR-V/ Department 420
1600 Spearhead Division Ave.
Fort Knox, KY 40122-5402.

Soldiers who separated prior to October 2002 should submit a signed SF 180 to the National Archives and Records Administration's National Personnel Records Center at:

National Personnel Records Center
1 Archives Drive
St. Louis, MO 63132-1002
or call the NPRC at 314-801-0800.

National Guard Soldiers are encouraged to contact their State Adjutant General. Contact information for each State National Guard Agency can be found at <http://www.nationalguard.mil/resources/states.aspx>.

Veterans can also access their information directly through a joint partnership between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense known as eBenefits. For more information about eBenefits, visit <http://www.ebenefits.va.gov>.

The Army Human Resources Command also provides veterans with services such as creating DD Form 215s, updating retirement points for Reserve Component Soldiers, verifying veterans' service for VA home loans, and providing statements of service for veterans employment verification. You can contact HRC directly by calling 1-888-ARMYHRC (276-9472).

Many "for profit" third-party commercial businesses are charging for the services described above, often advertising that they can expedite processing or delivery times for documents. These claims are false, because no increased levels of service or access to veteran records are provided to these commercial entities. By requesting these documents directly through the government agencies listed, you can eliminate the middle man, saving yourself time and money.



PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

You Never Know For Sure Until You Try

BYZDESIGN.COM



ZOMBIES

The US Army is preparing for the Zombie apocalypse - are you?

VVA Chapter 522 Contact Information

<i>Position</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Telephone</i>	<i>E-Mail Address</i>
<i>President</i>	<i>Mike Boucher</i>	<i>813-917-2688</i>	<i>mikro76@msn.com</i>
<i>Vice President</i>	<i>Dick Ammon</i>	<i>727-816-9080</i>	<i>daranger@verizon.net</i>
<i>Secretary</i>	<i>Alan G. Thompson</i>	<i>727-278-4111</i>	<i>alangthomp@aol.com</i>
<i>Treasurer</i>	<i>Jack Meyers</i>	<i>727-776-9341</i>	<i>jackmimiparadise@yahoo.com</i>
<i>Chaplain</i>	<i>Larry Lee</i>	<i>727-365-7400</i>	<i>cashequity@aol.com</i>

<i>Director</i>	<i>Bruce Witham</i>	<i>Newsletter Publisher</i>	<i>Mike Boucher</i>
<i>Director</i>	<i>Rick Goodfellow</i>	<i>Newsletter Editor</i>	<i>Dick Ammon</i>
<i>Director</i>	<i>Joe Ellenberger</i>	<i>Website Administrator</i>	<i>Dick Ammon</i>

For additional information, please visit our website at www.vva522.org.

Disclosure Statements

"100% of your gift/donation will be used by VVA, Chapter 522 of Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc., Pinellas County, Florida. Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Registration Number CH11513."

Registration does not imply endorsement, approval or recommendation by the state. Call 1-800-HELPFLA (1-800-435-7352) for a copy of the official registration and financial information.

Disclaimer

The views or opinions expressed within this publication are not necessarily the opinions of the publishers, advertisers, members, National Headquarters or that of Pinellas County Chapter 522.

