



# GREAT PLAINS

VETERANS SERVICES CENTER

**GPVSC**



GREAT PLAINS VETERANS SERVICES CENTER

*Wishing you and yours  
a very blessed and*

**HAPPY  
NEW YEAR**

**A NEW YEAR IS  
LIKE A BOOK**

In this book you are the Author and It has  
12 chapters and a total of 365 pages.

This year may you write the most  
beautiful story possible for yourself.

**2024**

**January  
2024**

**NEWSLETTER**

# G.P.V.S.C STAFF

Executive Director  
Chauncey Parker

Administrative Manager  
John Gardipee, Sr.

Veterans Transportation Manager  
Francois Nelis

Communications Specialist  
Becky Lewis

VCO Administrative Assistant  
Jalissa Parker

Finance Manager  
Marianne Capellen

Veterans Outreach Case Managers  
Rocky Boy Office

John Gardipee, Jr.  
Jeffery Jones

Veterans Outreach Case Managers  
Browning Office

Patrick Calf Looking  
Ryan Hoyt

Veterans Service Driver  
Rocky Boy Office

Keith Billy

Veterans  
Support Services Manager  
Browning Office  
Leland Crawford

VSS Administrative Assistant  
Rocky Boy Office  
Dominic Pullin

Veterans Transportation Supervisor  
Browning Office  
Shane Sinclair

Veterans Service Drivers  
Browning Office  
Matt Webber  
Louis Pollock

Veterans Service Driver  
Rocky Boy / Ft. Belknap  
Weston Sutherland

Veterans Outreach Case Manager  
Ft. Belknap Office  
Marcia Buchman

Food Service Operator  
Rocky Boy Office  
Brian Jones

Graphic Designer  
Amber Lewis

# G.P.V.S.C BOARD MEMBERS

Jon Monteaux  
Board President

Robert Belcourt  
Board Vice President

Joseph Eagleman  
Board Treasurer

Darrell Sun Child  
Member-at-Large

Marlene Kay Azure  
Member-at-Large

Brandi King  
Member-at-Large

## CHECK OUT OUR FACEBOOK PAGE FOR UPCOMING BBQ'S AND OTHER EVENTS.



## American Legion Post 67 Meeting

At Northern Winz Casino  
11275 US-87, Box Elder, MT 59521

# Tuesday January 9th 6:00pm

## Support the Great Plains Veterans Services Center and Donate



Non-Veteran-  
\$19.00

Veteran-  
\$18.00

American Legion Post Member-  
\$17.00

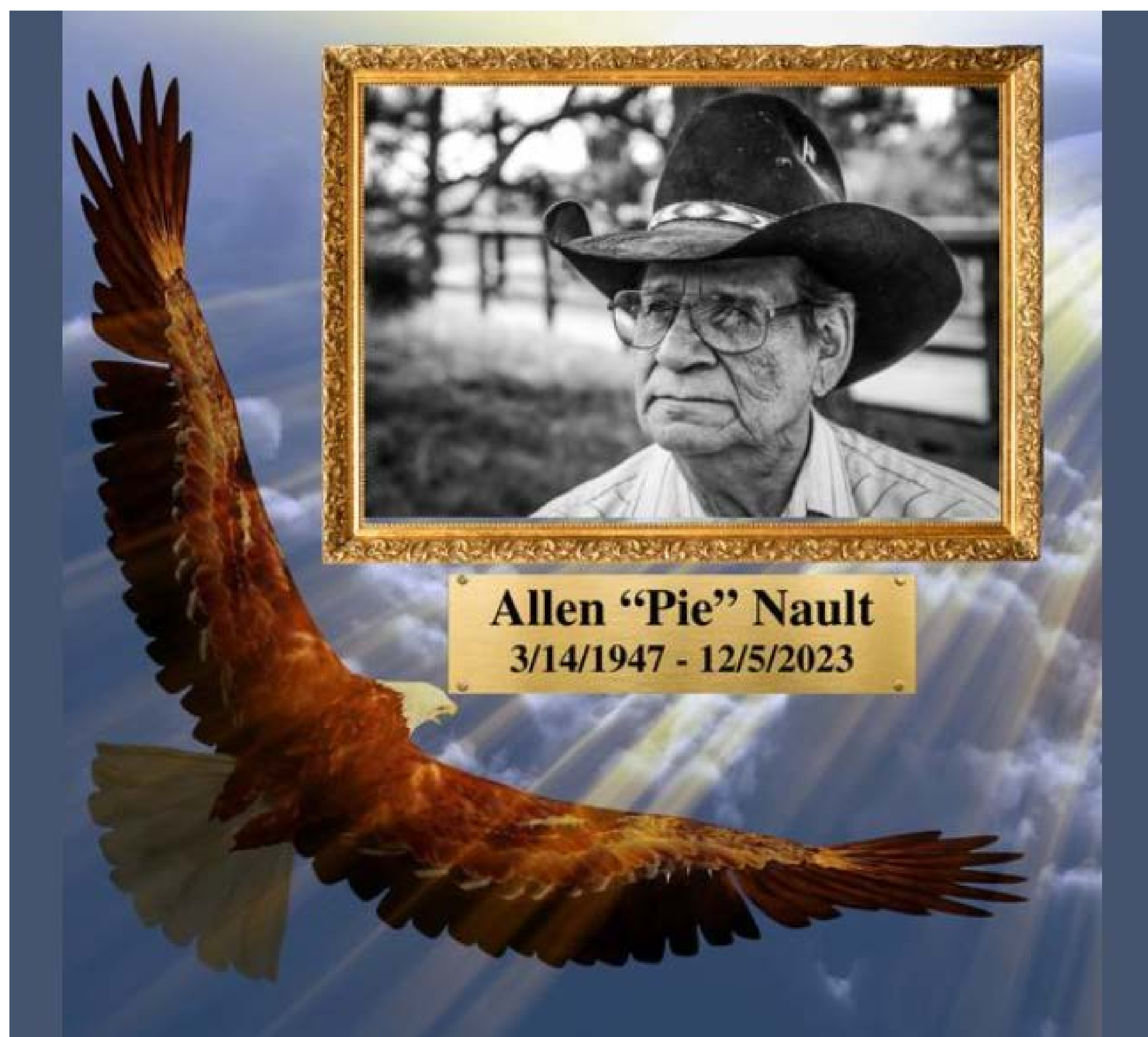


Follow us on Social Media



visit our website at [www.greatplainsveterans.org](http://www.greatplainsveterans.org)





# WARRIORS CURRENTLY SERVING IN THE ARMED FORCES

ARMY

AIRFORCE

Royce Bird  
 Forest Doney  
 Richard Lujan  
 Justin Murphy Small  
 Orion Wolf Chief  
 Shane Ketchum  
 Leo Johnson

Trey Henderson  
 Maia Henderson

NATIONAL GUARD/RESERVE

NAVY

Dominic Pullin

Jessica Stump

We are saddened to report the passing of our fellow Veteran and a proud member of the American Legion Post 67, Army Veteran Allen "Pie" Nault. Pie was an original honor guard member and served with John Gardipee and Chauncey Parker since 2010. He could always be counted on, even on a moments notice. He was willing to participate at pow-wows, parades, color guard events, and welcome home ceremonies of returning Warriors held by the American Legion Post 67. Pie will be deeply missed at the Great Plains Veterans Services Center. Please keep Pie's family and friends in your thoughts and prayers. His funeral was held at 11 a.m. Thursday, December 7, 2023, at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Rocky Boy. His burial followed at the Warriors' Burial Grounds with full military honors.

## ATTENTION!!!!

Guard and Active Duty members or family members please contact the GPVSC to update your status.



# MILITARY QUALITY OF LIFE A KEY FOCUS OF CONGRESS IN 2024



At a Nov. 15 event hosted by the political action group With Honor, Bacon and Houlahan said they are considering a host of proposals to add into next year's defense authorization bill debate, including military sabbaticals for outside job opportunities or family care, more tax exemptions for military pay, and more flexibility for troops in their future duty assignments.

They also are upset over continued reports of housing problems at bases across the country. Bacon blamed some of the problems on a lack of accountability for the issue among senior leaders.

Just how many of those ideas can advance into actual legislation remains to be seen. Senior Republican leaders said the quality of life changes will be key in recruiting and retention efforts. But they also spent most of 2023 focused on social issues in the personnel section of the annual defense budget bill.

Bacon and Houlahan are likely to be key voices throughout the spring in hearings on the quality of life topics. A draft of the authorization bill — including any possible recommendations from the panel — is expected in May or June.

Rep. Don Bacon, R-Neb., chairs the House Armed Services Committee's special panel on quality of life issues in the military. (J. Scott Applewhite/AP)

Lawmakers on the House Armed Services Committee's special military quality of life panel hope to have a slate of recommendations on new housing, daycare and support programs by the start of February. After that, it'll be up to the rest of the committee to turn them into law.

evaluate military policies and shortfalls that may be discouraging individuals from reenlisting.

Over the last nine months, the panel held a host of roundtables with Pentagon leaders, military families and outside advocates on ways to address those concerns. That included a briefing in late November on base daycare options.

The quality of life panel — led by Rep. Don Bacon, R-Neb., and Rep. Chrissy Houlahan, D-Pa. — was formed in early 2023 as a way to

## JUNIOR ENLISTED PAY TO BE KEY CONGRESSIONAL FOCUS IN 2024



Lawmakers are more likely to keep the 4.5% raise mark and instead focus on targeted increases for troops with high-demand skills and junior enlisted personnel, a group whose annual base pay typically does not top \$30,000.

Last summer, House Republicans advanced legislation to guarantee that even the lowest-ranking service members make at least \$31,000. But the legislation was opposed by the White House, in part because of questions surrounding the cost and the other compensation those troops receive — things like housing stipends and enlistment bonuses.

Rep. Don Bacon, R-Neb., chairman of the House Armed Services Committee's special military quality of life panel, has said he plans to make the junior enlisted pay issue a key focus of the committee's work on the annual defense authorization bill this summer.

Pentagon leaders have pushed to postpone the debate until they complete their Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation, a periodic review of troops' pay and benefits. But work from that group isn't expected to be finished until January 2025. Bacon has said the issue needs to be addressed sooner.

Work on the authorization bill is expected to start in February, but delays in Congress passing a full federal budget for fiscal 2024 could delay some of those hearings and debates.

Military pay will be a key focus of Congress in 2024, with conversations centered not only on the size of future raises for all troops but also whether junior enlisted personnel should see even higher hikes.

Lawmakers earlier this year backed plans for a 5.2% pay raise for all service members on Jan. 1, the largest annual pay raise in 22 years. The boost is not a result of congressional or executive branch generosity, but instead reflects the federal formula tying military salaries to civilian pay trends.

By that formula, the 2025 pay raise for troops should be 4.5%, the third consecutive year of pay hikes above 4% for military members.

White House officials or members of Congress could change that increase in their budget battles over coming months, either raising it to make up for higher cost-of-living concerns or dropping it to save money for other military priorities. But that has not happened since the early 2010s.

# HOW MANY VETS WILL BE IN CONGRESS AFTER THE ELECTION?



Rep. Brian Mast, R-Fla., an Army veteran who served in Afghanistan, walks through the Capitol building on Oct. 12, 2023. (Mariam Zuhaib/AP)

Congress hasn't had at least 100 members of the House and Senate with military backgrounds since 2017. But the veterans caucus in the legislature right now is close enough to challenge that mark in the 2024 elections.

The number of veterans in Congress has steadily declined since the 1970s, a shift which mostly reflects the change to the all-volunteer force and the dwindling number of Americans who enlist annually.

But veterans advocates have worried that decline has also taken away valuable insight for lawmakers as they craft national security policy, veterans support plans and defense budget proposals.

In 1973, the total number of veterans serving in House and Senate seats was 401 — 75% of all the seats in both chambers. By 1995, that

number was down to 213 seats. It dropped below 100 for the first time in 2013.

Breaking the numbers down in the 118th Congress, the new session of Congress opens with 97 members who have military experience. A total of 97 lawmakers with military backgrounds were elected in 2022, 80 in the House and 17 in the Senate. That was up five veterans from the previous congressional elections, and only the fourth time in the last 50 years there has been any increase at all in the total veterans elected.

Of that group, 58 veterans (60%) served at least part of their enlistment after 2001. Advocates are hopeful that the younger generation of veterans will help push that number back up, albeit to a much lower level than the past historic marks. But doing so will require some luck at the ballot box. Already, the Senate is scheduled to lose one veteran

next year. Sen. Tom Carper, D-Del., the last Vietnam veteran serving in the chamber, has announced his plans to retire from Congress.

Two veterans in the House — Ohio Republican Reps. Brad Wenstrup and Bill Johnson — have also announced plans to leave Congress.

That means at least three new candidates with military experience will need to win state races in order to keep the number of veterans in Congress steady.

Most primary battles for House and Senate seats will be decided later this spring, giving candidates the summer to campaign for the general election. By early summer, advocates should have a clearer idea whether the number of veterans aiming for those seats is increasing or on the downturn again.

# YOU ARE NEVER ALONE

# SURVIVE AND THRIVE

YOU MATTER • YOU ARE NOT ALONE • HELP IS AVAILABLE

Veterans  
Crisis Line



DIAL 988 then  
PRESS 1

## STAFF SGT FOX SUICIDE PREVENTION GRANT COLUMN: CALLS TO VETERANS SUICIDE HOTLINE SPIKED OVER NEW YEAR'S HOLIDAY



The Veteran's Crisis Line — available to veterans, troops and their families — operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week and can also be accessed by dialing 988. (Zachary Hada/Air Force)

VA benefits issues — by pressing 1 after dialing. VA leaders said the crisis line has handled more than 200,000 calls since the start of the fiscal year in October 2022.

Department leaders said the average wait time on the hotline is less than 10 seconds. During the holiday weekend, 99.2% of calls were answered within two minutes and the remaining fraction were contacted after call problems were resolved.

The debut of the 988 hotline was accompanied by public efforts by VA officials encouraging veterans to seek help. That includes the “Don’t Wait, Reach Out” campaign with the Ad Council which focuses on contacting VA before personal challenges reach a crisis point.

The number of veterans suicides in America fell to just under 17 a day in 2020, the latest year for which data is available. Officials have noted that its the lowest level since 2006 but also equates to about 6,000 preventable veteran deaths annually.

Veterans experiencing a mental health emergency can contact the Veteran Crisis Line through 988 or at 1-800-273-8255. Callers should select option 1 for a VA staffer. Veterans, troops or their family members can also text 838255 or visit [VeteransCrisisLine.net](https://VeteransCrisisLine.net) for assistance.

Great Plains Veterans Services Center also continues to offer support for veterans struggling including ones struggling with thoughts of suicide. Call and speak to a staff member to see the services available to you from our local office.

The number of calls from veterans and their family members to the Veterans Affairs suicide prevention hotline spiked over the New Year’s holiday, news that department officials are saying shows increase awareness and accessibility of the emergency service.

Over the two-day weekend, the Veterans Crisis Line fielded 3,869 calls, up almost 19% from typical weekend levels so far this fiscal year, according to data released by department officials.

Compared to the last few New Years, the call volume each day was up almost 30%. Chat interactions were up 25% from a year ago, and text conversations with crisis line operators were up 75% from the previous New Year’s holiday. In a statement, VA Secretary Denis McDonough said the increased usage is an encouraging sign that more veterans know of and are open to contacting the mental health counselors.

“We want all veterans to know that caring, qualified responders are always here for them and ready to help even in times of particularly high stress and high demand like the holiday season,” he said. “You can reach the Veterans Crisis Line at any time by calling 988, then press 1. Don’t wait, reach out.”

Officials credited the three-digit 988 dialing option as a major factor in increased usage of the crisis line in recent months.

Under the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020, federal officials established the 988 number for mental health crisis assistance. The number went into effect on July 16, 2022.

Veterans who dial the number can access the Veterans Crisis Line — run by the Department of Veterans Affairs, with staff who can lend assistance on a host of

# Instructions:

Sudoku puzzles require you to find the missing numbers in a 9x9 grid, with that grid itself divided into 9 square grids of 3x3.

You can't just add any numbers though. There are rules that make solving the puzzle challenging.

To solve a Sudoku, look for open spaces where its row, column and square already have enough other numbers filled in to tell you the correct value. The more squares you fill in, the easier the puzzle is to finish!

**A number can only occur once in a row, column, or square.**

9	8	1	3	6	5	2	7	4
7	6	5	4	8	2	3	1	9
2	4	3	1	7	9	8	5	6
1	9	2	6	3	4	7	8	5
4	3	7	5	2	8	9	6	1
8	5	6	9	1	7	4	3	2
3	2	4	7	5	6	1	9	8
5	1	8	2	9	3	6	4	7
6	7	9	8	4	1	5	2	3

## December's Answers

1	3	5	6	7	4	9	8	2
4	7	6	8	2	9	5	1	3
2	8	9	5	1	3	7	6	4
6	2	4	1	9	5	8	3	7
8	9	7	2	3	6	1	4	5
3	5	1	7	4	8	6	2	9
5	4	3	9	6	1	2	7	8
9	1	2	4	8	7	3	5	6
7	6	8	3	5	2	4	9	1

# January 2024 Sudoku Puzzle

Answer in February's Newsletter

	9		6					5
	4			2	5		6	
7				4				3
	1		5					9
4				9				
5				7		6	3	
	8					3		
		1		8	3			9
9	3		4					8

## CHECK CASHING SERVICES

Unload Debit Card, Bill Pay, Buy Bitcoin



### DEBIT CARD SERVICES

Cash withdrawal fees:

Post 67 Member: \$1

Veterans: \$1.50

Non-Veteran: \$2.50



### CHECK CASHING SERVICES

Fees:

Post 67 Member: 1%

Veteran: 1.5%

Non-Veteran: 2%



### BILL PAY SERVICES

Fees

Veteran: FREE

Non-Veteran: \$3.50

Same Day Venders:

Hill County Electric

Triangle Communications

Other vendors allow 1-3 days posting time to your account

### CHECK CASHING POLICIES

- ✓ NO MONEY ORDERS
- ✓ WE CASH CANADIAN CHECKS UP TO \$500
- ✓ US GOVERNMENT CHECKS CAN ONLY BE CASHED BY THE INDIVIDUAL TO WHOM THE CHECK IS ISSUED

### CHECK CASHING HOURS:

MON-FRI: 8:30am - 4:00pm

SAT-SUN: CLOSED



MY ONE REASON FOR BUCKLING UP

“BECAUSE I WANT TO KEEP MY CULTURE AND TRADITIONS ALIVE”

- BREEANNA -

ALWAYS BUCKLE UP AND DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK OTHERS TO DO THE SAME

When you don't buckle up, you endanger more than just your own life. Drivers and passengers often don't consider how unbuckled occupants can be thrown at high speed during a crash and can cause serious harm or even death, not only to themselves but to others in the vehicle. That's why it's so important to buckle up and insist others do the same.



f /SafeOnAllRoads

GPVSC WISHES A

happy workiversary

to:

LOUIS POLLOCK

THANK YOU FOR YOUR DEDICATION AND HARD WORK

\$ GPVSC Weekly Raffle \$

**WIN!!!**  
**\$1,000 CASH**

SECOND CHANCE DRAWING  
**\$100 CASH**

**DRAWINGS**  
 FRIDAY @ 3PM

**@GREATPLAINSVETERANS**

# GPVSC BURGER BOX

Warrior Wednesdays: Meet 'n' Greet Barbeques, Donut Days, Haircuts by Gary, and Special Events are great way to enhance communication and foster bonds among Veterans and others in the community. They are a place to meet friends, find resources, and have fun with other Veterans and community members.

IF YOU HAVENT TRIED IT... YOU'RE MISSING OUT!

Follow us on Facebook @BURGERBOX\_RBFOODTRUCK For updates and menus

GPVSC OFFICE- 46 Veterans Park Rd.

**GREAT PLAINS**

**CENTER**

**VETERANS**

**BURGER BOX**  
 GRILL  
 SERVICES

FOLLOW US FOR NEWS AND UPDATES



WWW.GREATPLAINSVETERANS.ORG





**THE GREAT PLAINS VETERANS SERVICES CENTER IS PROUD TO BE IN PARTNERSHIP OF THESE FOUNDATIONS.**



**BlueCross BlueShield of Montana**





**POTLATCH FUND**



Help for Homeless Veterans  
**877-4AID-VET**  
 va.gov/homeless (877) 424-3838

# January

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
31 <b>All GPVSC OFFICES CLOSED FOR THE HOLIDAYS</b> New Year's Eve	1 New Year's Day	2	3	4	5 	6
7	8	9	10	11	12 	13
14	15 Martin Luther King Jr. Day	16	17	18	19 	20
21 HAPPY BIRTHDAY BRIAN	22 Chinese New Year	23	24	25	26 HAPPY BIRTHDAY LOUIS 	27
28	29	30	31	1	2	3

*Homemade*

## Community Events

CHECK OUR FACEBOOK PAGE FOR UPCOMING EVENTS.



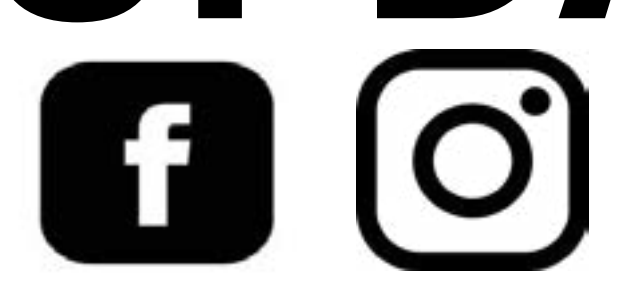
**UNTIL THEY ALL COME HOME**

A representative from the Great Falls Vet Center will be at the office a couple times a month to answer any VA related questions, aid in enrollment, and offer counselling services for eligible Veterans. The representative will also be available to answer questions about benefits and services.

For more information or to schedule and appointment Call Rich or Becky at (406) 452-9048

# FOLLOW US FOR NEWS AND UPDATES

[WWW.GREATPLAINSVETERANS.ORG](http://WWW.GREATPLAINSVETERANS.ORG)



# GPVSC'S U PICK 'EM FOOTBALL RAFFLE

**Regular season comes to an end January 1st 2024**

**THE FULL PLAYOFF SCHEDULE CAN BE FOUND BELOW.**

**WILDCARD ROUND: SATURDAY, JANUARY 13 2024 - MONDAY, JANUARY 15 2024**

**DIVISIONAL ROUND: SATURDAY, JANUARY 20 2024 - SUNDAY, JANUARY 21 2024**

**AFC CHAMPIONSHIP GAME: SUNDAY, JANUARY 28 2024**

**NFC CHAMPIONSHIP GAME: SUNDAY, JANUARY 28 2024**

**Check out our website for more info**

**STAY TUNED....**

**GPVSC SUPER BOWL RAFFLES TO COME.**



GPVSC hosted our annual food drive in December. With the Holidays, our hopes were to help our local Veterans. Food cost has gone up so much, people are still grappling with the higher cost of living. Our Veteran Support team delivered groceries to 12 Veteran families in Rocky Boy from the efforts of this food drive. To find out more or to help with future food drives, please contact Rebecca Lewis at (406) 395-5610.



**CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2023 CHRISTMAS RAFFLE WINNERS!!**

**Christmas Food Baskets**

- 174-Marianne Capellen
- 217-Allan Pat Oats
- 202-Natalie Demontiney
- 024-Darwin John Parker
- 239-Ted Russette III

**Gift Baskets**

- 088-Kiya Morsette
- 010-Helen Parker
- 025-Nolan Parker
- 235-Preston Oats
- 136-Melissa Stump

**\$1,000 WINNER**

038-Jessie Colliflower

**\$100 WINNER**

138-Joy Bridwell

**\$100 WINNER**

238-Louis WeaselBoy



**ARE YOU INTERESTED IN SUPPORTING AND ADVERTISING WITH GPVSC....**

**CONTACT REBECCA LEWIS FOR DETAILS**

**406-395-5610**