

# The Read Board

## Yellow Medicine County

### Newly Minted Veteran Service Officer

Greetings! I am Kris Holien and am the newly hired Veteran Service Officer for Yellow Medicine County, replacing the venerated Michelle Gatz. Michelle provided a great turnover to get me started well! Nonetheless, there remains a lot to learn. Thanks to assistance from neighboring VSO's and the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs, I am ready, willing and able to provide assistance to the veterans in the county.

I grew up on farm located between Granite Falls and Sacred Heart. I graduated from what is now known as Renville County West in 1993 where I was active in wrestling and FFA. In 1997, I enlisted in the Navy as a Cryptologic Technician (Collection). This job is to provide Signals Intelligence to various local and national customers. I have been stationed in Japan, Colorado, Virginia, Afghanistan, and England. Some of my favorite assignments were serving on exchange duty with the Royal Navy in Portsmouth, England and as a tech-

nician while assigned to Naval Special Warfare (NSW). It was with NSW that I deployed with SEAL Team 10 to Afghanistan from 2011-2012. In 2017, I retired from the Navy as a Senior Chief (E8) and pursued a degree using the Post 9/11 GI Bill. This February, I graduated with a BA in Human Resource Management and hired as a VSO.

My wife, Ali, and I have four children ranging in age from 6 to 13. Children activities keep my off duty hours busy with Volleyball, judo, 4-H and various school clubs. When I do have free time, I enjoy being out on the firing line shooting everything that goes bang! My family and I love living in rural Minnesota and having the opportunity to live near family again. I am

also active in VFW Post 1639, located in Willmar and where I serve as Post adjutant.



Mark from Madison, MN, and I after a drive in Qalat, Afghanistan.



Sea and Anchor detail off the coast of Singapore.

### Special points of interest:

- To keep you informed, the Yellow Medicine County website is consistently updated with news impacting veterans due to the COVID-19 virus. It can be found at <https://www.co.ym.mn.gov/> under the Veterans Department tab.

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## COVID-19 Impacting VA Appointments

The national Covid-19 response has had a significant impact to all aspects of life and interactions, the Veterans Administration Medical system is no exception. In response to this crisis, the VA has shifted most outpatient care to telehealth or postponed elective and non-emergent procedures. This can

be frustrating for those who have been waiting for these appointments for a while. During this time it is important to stay in close communication with the VA regarding any upcoming appointments.

To ensure you are receiving the latest updates you can check

your VA center's webpage or sign up for Facebook or email notifications.

With physical access currently limited, it is a great time to look into telehealth! Look towards the virtual care article later in this newsletter for more information.

## County Offices Closed to Public

MARCH 17, 2020, GRANITE FALLS, MN – All Yellow Medicine County offices, with the exception of the Justice Center Main Door location for only essential appearances or business and County Board Meetings, are closed to the public effective immediately and until further notice. The decision was made by the Yellow Medicine County Board of Commissioners who held an emergency meeting in the County Board Room on Tuesday Morning, March 17th, 2020, to discuss appropriate prevention and protection measures in response to the expanding COVID-19 pandemic. This was done in consultation with Emergency Management Director Casey Namken. In taking these measures, Yellow Medicine County remains in line with guidance for social

distancing strategies recommended by both the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and Center for Disease Control (CDC) in addition to the Governor of Minnesota and the Commissioner of Health.

This action will also help protect staff and the general public from being exposed to potentially sick individuals and spreading the virus to our residents, friends and families.

While the offices will be closed to the public, normal county services and operations will continue to be provided to the community on the same schedule, through both phone and email. Many services can also be done online if necessary and citizens are encouraged to explore those options. A listing of department contacts can be

found on the county webpage ([www.co.ym.mn.gov](http://www.co.ym.mn.gov)) or by calling the Emergency Management Department at 320-313-3093 or County Administration at 320-564-5841.

Please refer to Countryside Public Health for updates on COVID-19 progression and prevention guidance at [countrysidepublichealth.org](http://countrysidepublichealth.org).

Thank You,

John Berends, Yellow Medicine County Board Chair

Casey Namken, Yellow Medicine County Emergency Management Director

## Telehealth

*“meet virtually, via phone or teleconferencing, with your health care provider for many routine tasks.”*

Telehealth is a new and more common feature for those who use the VA for health care. Telehealth is where you can meet virtually, via phone or teleconferencing, with your health care provider for many routine tasks. This can be done from your smart phone, tablet, or computer as long as the platform you are using has a webcam and microphone enabled. If you don't have access or don't feel comfortable conducting this from home, here in Yellow Medicine there is a telehealth kiosk available and free to use. This kiosk is located in an office that ensures patient privacy. Cur-

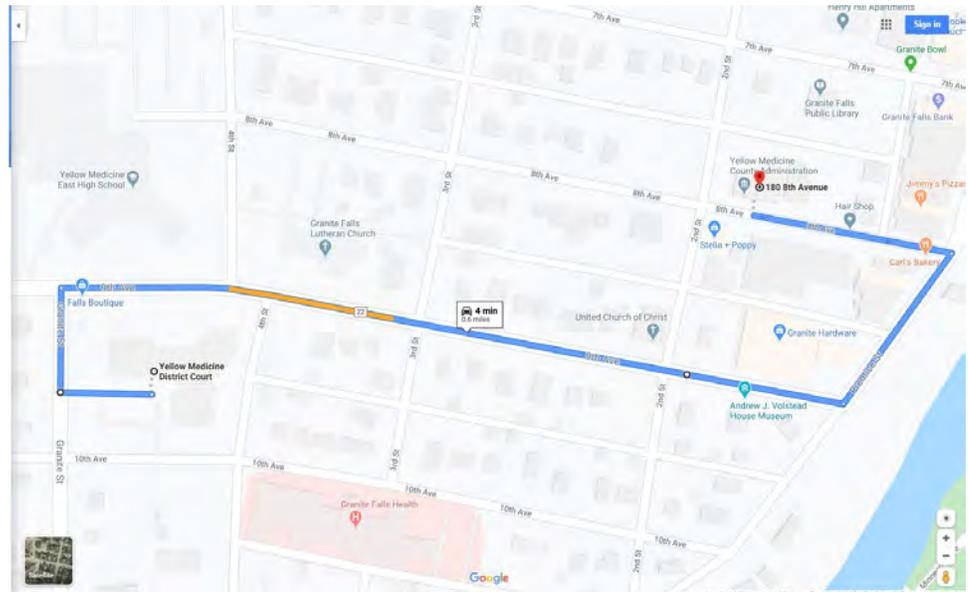
rently, county buildings are closed to the public; however, once this restriction is lifted simply coordinate a time with me and I can provide assistance.

**Telehealth...**  
*Bringing Health Care  
Closer to Home*



## VSO Office is Moving!

The Veterans Service office is moving to the Government Center, located downtown. This building was formerly a bank, but now houses various county services. The move was originally scheduled for the end of March, however, due to the implementation of measures to effectively deal with the corona virus, the move has been temporarily postponed. This location provides closer parking and a level entrance into the building. Upon arriving, just engage the front desk staff and they will provide further assistance. As yet a new date has not been set, so stay tuned!



## Stay Updated on the VA

The Veterans Administration is proactive in communicating with veterans. They regularly have video updates on YouTube, Facebook, as well as regular email updates. You can pick and choose what types of

updates to receive via their subscriber preferences.

The link to sign up for these updates is <https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/subscribe/>

These updates can help keep you in the loop regarding COVID-19 changes as well as a wide variety of other issues. I encourage you to check it out!

*Knowledge is power*

## Newly Available COVID-19 Grants

Governor Tim Walz and the Minnesota Legislature recently approved \$6.2 million to provide \$1,000 emergency grants to Minnesota Veterans financially affected by COVID-19.

Starting Monday, April 6 Veterans can apply for a Disaster Relief Grant, administered from the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA). In addition to the Disaster Relief Grant, Veterans who have experienced a more significant impact may also apply for an MDVA COVID-19 Special Needs Grant. Veterans should contact their County Veterans Service Officer for eligibility requirements and assistance with the

grant application process.

As one of the main points of contact for grant applications, County Veterans Service Officers also have access to a specially created portal to submit required documents and expedite the grant process. The Special Needs Grant must be filed through County Veteran Service Officer or MDVA, but the Disaster Relief Grant may be submitted directly by the Veteran or surviving spouse. Application materials will be made available at [www.MinnesotaVeteran.org/COVIDRelief](http://www.MinnesotaVeteran.org/COVIDRelief) on Monday, April 6 starting at 8 a.m.

For more information or to ap-

ply for one of these grants: [MinnesotaVeteran.org/COVIDRelief](http://MinnesotaVeteran.org/COVIDRelief) or contact your County Veterans Service Officer. Due to the current statewide stay-at-home order, Veterans and families should call or email their County Veteran Service Officer before visiting an office in person. A full directory of County Veterans Service Officers can be found at [www.MACVSO.org](http://www.MACVSO.org) or by calling 1-888-LinkVet (546-5838).



**Minnesota**  
Department of Veterans Affairs

## Contact Information

### NEWS & VIEWS

Army Times: [www.armytimes.com](http://www.armytimes.com)

Navy Times: [www.navytimes.com](http://www.navytimes.com)

Marine Times: [www.marinecorpstimes.com](http://www.marinecorpstimes.com)

Air Force Times: [www.airforcetimes.com](http://www.airforcetimes.com)

Military Times: [www.militarytimes.com](http://www.militarytimes.com)

Military.COM: [www.military.com](http://www.military.com)

SOFREP News: <https://sofrep.com/news/>

### BENEFITS & OTHER INTERST

U.S. Veterans Affairs: [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

MN Dept. of Vet Affairs: <https://mn.gov/mdva/>

My Health-e Vet: [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)

### SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

American Legion: [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org)

MN American Legion: [www.mnlegion.org](http://www.mnlegion.org)

Veterans of Foreign Wars: [www.VFW.org](http://www.VFW.org)

Disabled American Vets: [www.DAV.org](http://www.DAV.org)

AMVETS: <http://amvetsnsf.org>

Vietnam Vets of America: <https://vva.org/>

Military Order of Purple Heart: <https://moph.org>

### MILITARY SERVICE BRANCHES

US Army: [www.goarmy.com](http://www.goarmy.com)

US Marine Corps: [www.marines.mil](http://www.marines.mil)

US Navy: [www.navy.mil](http://www.navy.mil)

US Air Force: [www.airforce.com](http://www.airforce.com)

US Coast Guard: [www.uscg.mil](http://www.uscg.mil)

National Guard (Army/Air): [www.nationalguard.com](http://www.nationalguard.com)

### MILITARY RETIREES

TRICARE Health: [www.tricare.com](http://www.tricare.com)

DFAS MyPay (Finance): <https://mypay.dfas.mil>

Military Officers Assn: [www.moaa.org](http://www.moaa.org)

DoD Lodging Site: [www.dodlodging.net](http://www.dodlodging.net)

America's Warrior: [americaswarriorpartnership.org](http://americaswarriorpartnership.org)

Dental & Vision – FEDVIP: [www.benefeds.com](http://www.benefeds.com)

### OTHER LINKS

Nat'l Archives (Records): <https://archives.gov/>

MACV (Financial/Legal): [www.mac-v.org](http://www.mac-v.org)

Minnesota LinkVet: <https://minnesotaveteran.org>

Senior Linkage Line: [www.seniorlinkageline.com](http://www.seniorlinkageline.com)

Wounded Warrior: [www.woundedwarriorproject.org](http://www.woundedwarriorproject.org)

Make the Connection: [www.MakeTheConnection.net](http://www.MakeTheConnection.net)

MN Military & Vet Exch: [www.mnme.us](http://www.mnme.us)

Minnesota Help: <https://mnhelp.info/>

Ctr for Disease Control: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

### CONTACT NUMBERS

VAMC, St. Cloud (800) 247-1739

(320) 252-1670

Patient Advocate (320) 255-6353

Pharmacy Refill (855) 560-1724

VAMC, Sioux Falls (800) 336-3230

Telephone Triage x7140

Patient Advocate x6688

CBOC, Montevideo (320) 269-2222

CBOC, Watertown (605) 884-2420

Delta Dental (855) 370-3303

VA Regional Office (800) 827-1000

MACV, Mankato Office (507) 345-8258

MDVA SW MN Higher Ed Coord (507) 537-7213

MDVA Tribal VSO, SW MN (507) 637-1534

DFAS (888) 332-7411

ID cards/DEERS (320) 269-9284

(320) 269-5180

*If you have other  
good to know  
numbers, let me  
know and I will  
add them to the  
list!*

### Important Numbers to Know

National Suicide Prevention Hotline

**1-800-273-8255**

NATIONAL PROBLEM GAMBLING HELPLINE

1-800-522-4700





**Mission Statement:** *“The mission of the Yellow Medicine County Veterans Service is to improve conditions for Yellow Medicine County veterans and their families. Our primary goal is to provide prompt, courteous and effective assistance to all Yellow Medicine County veterans and their families. Further to act as a liaison for veterans to other counties, state and federal agencies, as well as increasing public awareness of the conditions and situations unique to veterans and their family.”*

## Dates to Remember

**March 29** - Vietnam War Veteran's day

**April 1** - Rank of the US Navy Chief established.

**April 5** - Gold Star Spouses Day – A day dedicated to those whose spouses gave their lives while serving in the U.S. military or as a result of service-connected injuries or illness.

**April 9** - National Former POW Recognition Day

**April 14** - Air Force Reserve Birthday

**April 23** - Army Reserve Birthday

**May 1** - Silver Star Banner Day an “Official Day to honor wounded, ill, and injured Veterans”.

**May 8** - Military Spouse Appreciation Day – This date recognizes the service and sacrifices of military spouses.

**May 13** - Children of Fallen Patriots Day – A day to honor the children left behind by the brave men and women who gave their lives while defending our freedom.

**May 16** - Armed Forces Day Observed on the third Saturday every May, this is a day dedicated to paying tribute to men and women currently serving in the U.S. Armed Forces.

**May 25** - Memorial Day A solemn occasion to honor the men and women who died while serving in the military.





*Kristofor M Holien*  
*County Veteran Service Officer*

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Granite, Falls

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**Serving those who have served!**

We are on the web!

<https://www.co.ym.mn.gov/>

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