

VFW Health Fairs Have Saved Lives

Held annually at VFW's national convention, this event offers vital screenings, health education and information at no cost

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There are several memorable individuals among the thousands of veterans and their spouses who have visited the health fairs at VFW national conventions for more than 20 years.

James Moss, who helps coordinate the annual events, shared the story of an individual's noteworthy visit to a previous health fair.

"During a blood pressure screening performed on a veteran's spouse, it was discovered to be extremely high," said Moss, assistant director for Veterans Health Policy, National Veterans Service and VFW Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service national representative.

"The spouse had complained of a headache, and it was suggested [she] go directly to the emergency room for treatment. The end result is, if the spouse had waited a few hours longer, she would have been at a higher risk of having a stroke. As a result of the screening, a life was saved."

The health fair has been offered at the VFW National Convention since 1997. The fair, which includes screenings as well as information and education, will be available from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. July 20-23 at the 120th VFW National Convention in Orlando, Fla.

Participation in the informational sessions and health screenings is free to all veterans and their spouses or guests.

The four-day event will feature screenings for conditions such as eye or ear problems, hypertension and prostate cancer. Moss said he plans to provide information and presentations about addiction/substance-abuse treatment, Medicare program benefits, environmental/airborne-hazards exposure, health-prevention programs, mental health/suicide awareness, telehealth and the VA's Whole Health initiative.

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Another example of the health fair's success took place during screenings for abdominal aortic aneurysms, conducted by AAAneurysm Outreach at the 118th annual convention in 2017 in New Orleans.

"It was found that out of 1,000 screened individuals, 16 were given directions to see their doctors immediately upon returning home," Moss shared.

For the third year in a row, Humana will sponsor the health fair.

Last year's health fair, held during the convention in Kansas City, Mo., featured 32 vendors.

Examples of screenings taking place at Kansas City included 653 aneurysm checks and 137 hearing tests, as well as 1,226 visits and 526 screenings at the KC Mobile Vet Center.

That health fair also included informational exhibits and instructional sessions such as how Alzheimer's disease impacts veterans, fitness for people age 65 and older, nutrition and how playing the harmonica can help people with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder (an umbrella term used to describe progressive lung diseases).

In addition to Humana's partnership this year, other sponsors include AbbVie, Phillips and Walgreens, as well as a number of other exhibitors, Moss said.

The annual health fair adds another dimension to VFW national conventions, Moss said. It encourages veterans and spouses to be proactive in assessing their health and wellness.

"The information provided to them through participating exhibitors and vendors helps them make informed choices about how they can better live their lives," he said. "And VFW is glad to be part of this as it does make a difference, and it supports our motto — 'No One Does More For Veterans.'"

This article is featured in the 2019 June/July issue of [VFW magazine](#), and was written by Janice Phelan. Janice Phelan is a freelance writer based in Lee's Summit, Mo.