CALVET
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

NEWSLETTER
AUGUST 2012

All veterans are reminded that the fastest way to inquire and secure the benefits you have earned is by visiting your local County Veterans Service Office. A listing of these offices is available at www.cacvso.org or at www.calvet.ca.gov/resources/database.aspx.

Exceeding Goals—CalVet, USDVA Support Vet-Owned Businesses

The California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) is doing its part to support Disabled Veteran Business Enterprises (DVBE). In fact, in fiscal year 2011-2012, CalVet awarded more than $2 million in DVBE contracts, which accounts for more than 6 percent of the Department's total contract dollars. That is double the State DVBE goal of 3 percent and exceeds CalVet's own goal of 5 percent. "California should be a leader in Disabled Veteran Business Enterprises, and I'm proud of CalVet's leadership in this area." said CalVet Secretary Peter J. Gravett.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) exceeded by more than six times the Small Business Administration (SBA) goal of government procurements to Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSB) according to the SBA scorecard recently released. That total surpassed the combined procurements from the rest of the civilian agencies of the federal government.

USDVA has statutory responsibilities under Public Law 109-461 that place SDVOSB and Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (VOSB) first and second, respectively, in the hierarchy of its small business preferences.

In support of this policy, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki has established a department goal of 10 percent for SDVOSB procurements. USDVA continued to make SDVOSB its first priority even after it met its own expanded goal, resulting in the department nearly doubling its own SDVOSB goal. The USDVA awarded more than 18.3 percent of its procurement dollars to SDVOSB.

Secretary Shinseki also established a department goal of 12 percent for VOSB. In 2011, USDVA spent 20 percent of its procurement dollars with VOSB, again far exceeding its own goal.

At the National Veteran Small Business Conference in Detroit, the largest crowd of veteran businesses and government procurement decision makers gathered anywhere in the country this year, Secretary Shinseki announced additional

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Secretary's Message

I'll begin this month's message with some good news. To our surprise and delight, the recently-signed Governor's Budget augmented funding for the Veterans Homes in Fresno and Redding. That funding will allow the Homes to begin ramping up in anticipation of their openings. The funding is also a clear commitment on the part of the Legislature and the Governor that these Homes will open.

The not-so-good budget news is that most State employees are required to take off one day a month, without pay, through the end of June, 2013. Although these cuts have significant financial consequences for many employees and their absences will be an adjustment for all, CalVet remains committed to providing excellent service and support to veterans and their families.

On another note, I'm proud to announce that CalVet's recently-published Enterprise Strategic Plan is getting rave reviews. In fact, the USDVA is using it as a best practice example and sharing it with other states. USDVA recently shared our document with the incoming Arkansas Director of Veterans Affairs who was so impressed, she requested a digital copy of her own to use as a guideline for Arkansas' plan. A copy of the CalVet Enterprise Strategic Plan can be found at www.calvet.ca.gov/Files/AboutUs/StrategicPlan.pdf.

Looking forward, planning for the CalVet Secretary's Conference has already begun. The conference will be held at the U.C. Irvine Cross Cultural Center on October 26, 2012. Please save the date. If you would like to propose a conference agenda item relevant and important to the California veterans community, you may send your suggestion to PAO@calvet.ca.gov. Please understand that conference time constraints may preclude our addressing all agenda items proposed.

As you enjoy our summer months with family and friends, please join us in remembering our brave World War II veterans. This month marks the 67th anniversary of Victory over Japan Day—the day Japan surrendered, effectively ending the Second World War.

Sincerely,

Peter J. Gravett

Peter J. Gravett, Major General (Ret)
Secretary, California Department of Veterans Affairs

Augmented Funding for Fresno, Redding Homes

To the surprise of many, the recently signed Governor's Budget augmented funding for the Veterans Homes of California in Fresno and Redding. This funding will allow CalVet to begin ramping up in anticipation of the Homes' opening.

"We're surprised and delighted!" said CalVet Secretary Peter Gravett. "With the State in such dire economic straits and the funding for so many other worthwhile programs getting cut, this additional funding is a clear commitment on the part of the Governor and the Legislature that these Homes will open."

"The clear consensus by the Governor, CalVet, and the California Legislature is that veterans are indeed a priority was reflected in this funding," said Robin Umberg, Undersecretary, Veterans Homes of California. "The veterans and their families in these regions have waited a long time for these homes to open. We at CalVet must make sure we do all that we can to plan smartly in advance for a smooth and rapid opening of these Homes."

The additional funding will allow the Homes to begin staffing prior to their openings. Hiring will take place in the Spring of 2013 and the first residents should be admitted to the Fresno and Redding Homes in the Fall of 2013. In the meantime, CalVet will conduct testing for appropriate job classifications, solicit and review job applications, and do background checks for all new staff.

J.P. Tremblay, Deputy Secretary Communications and Legislation, acknowledges the frustration of some that the Homes will be open to only a few veterans at a time but said, "These are not hotels that can just throw their doors open and let everyone in at once. These are long term care medical facilities for seniors, many of whom have serious health issues. To care for these veterans properly, the Homes need to purchase specialized equipment, hire and train staff, and obtain licensing from the California Departments of Public Health, Social Services and HealthCare Services and from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. All that takes time.

In addition, each veteran admitted needs to be fully evaluated to determine their health and appropriate level of care and to ensure they are able to adapt to their new surroundings. To be fiscally prudent, the Homes will hire staff incrementally as more and more residents are admitted.

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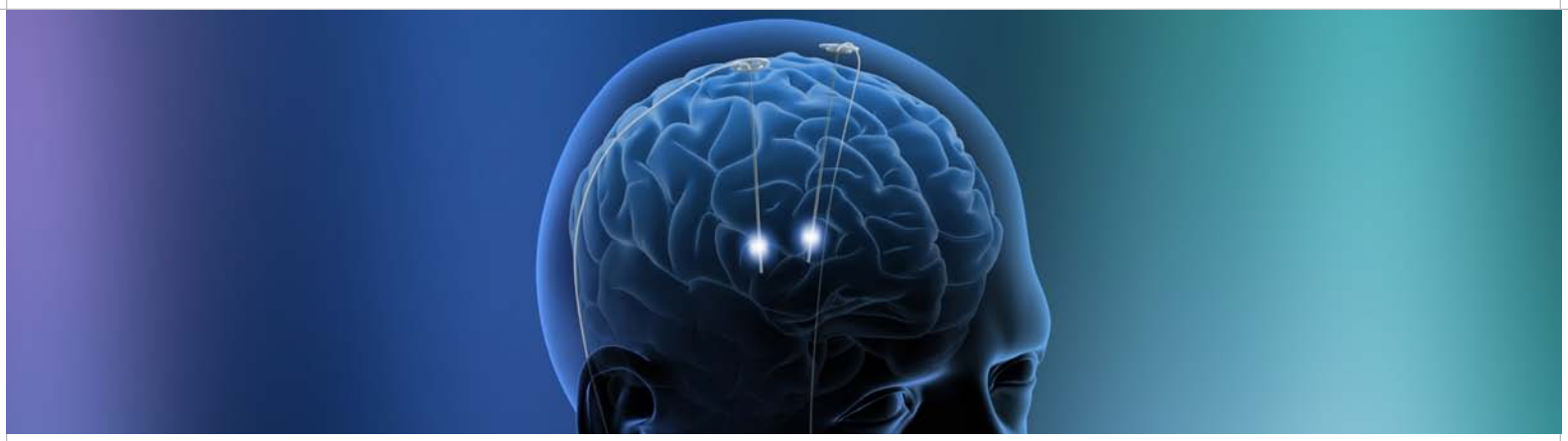
steps to ensure that USDVA meets its commitment to Veteran-owned businesses.

- Any contract not going to a Veteran-owned small business must be reviewed by a senior executive and concurred with by a senior contracting executive.
- All senior executive performance evaluations will include a small business performance metric.

For the first time, USDVA has established small business procurement goals all the way down to the lowest senior executive level that exercises procurement responsibilities; for instance, at a medical center or a regional office or a cemetery. Within overall departmental goals, senior executives are now accountable for specific goals.

For more information about USDVA's services for Veteran-owned small businesses, visit www.vetbiz.gov.

Source: CalVet and USDVA



Brain Stimulation Program Shown to Improve Parkinson's Symptoms

Patients with Parkinson's disease who undergo deep brain stimulation (DBS)—a treatment in which a pacemaker-like device sends pulses to electrodes implanted in the brain—can expect stable improvement in muscle symptoms for at least three years, according to a Department of Veterans Affairs study appearing in the most recent issue of the journal Neurology.

"VA was proud to partner with the National Institutes of Health in this research," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "Our research on Parkinson's helps ensure we continue to provide the best care possible for Veterans with this debilitating disease."

VA cares for some 40,000 Veterans with the condition. In DBS, surgeons implant electrodes in the brain and run thin wires under the skin to a pacemaker-like device placed at one of two locations in the brain. Electrical pulses from the battery-operated device jam the brain signals that cause muscle-related symptoms.

Thousands of Americans have seen successful results from the procedure since it was first introduced in the late 1990s. But questions have remained about which stimulation site in the brain yields better outcomes, and over how years the gains persist.

Based on the six-month outcomes of 255 patients, the researchers concluded that DBS is riskier than carefully managed drug therapy—because of the possibility of surgery complications—but may hold significant benefits for those with Parkinson's who no longer respond well to medication alone.

A new report, based on 36 months of follow-up on 159 patients from the original group, extends the previous findings: DBS produced marked improvements in motor function, and the gains lasted more than three years. Patients, on average, gained four to five hours a day free of troubling motor symptoms such as shaking, slowed movement, or stiffness. The effects were greatest at six months and leveled off slightly by three years.

According to VA Chief Research and Development Officer Joel Kupersmith, M.D., "This rigorously conducted clinical trial offers valuable guidance for doctors and patients in VA and throughout the world. As our veteran population and the general U.S. population grow older, this research and future studies on Parkinson's will play an important role in helping us optimize care."

The research took place at several VA and university medical centers and was supported by VA's Cooperative Studies Program and the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, part of the National Institutes of Health. The largest integrated health care system in the country, VA also has one of the largest medical research programs.

Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Bill to Help Vets Find Jobs Signed by the President

Legislation introduced by U.S. Representative Jeff Denham (R-Turlock) and co-sponsored by Rep. Tim Walz (D-MN) to make it easier for veterans to find jobs using skills acquired through military training passed the U.S. Senate with unanimous support and was signed into law by the President on July 23, 2012.

Earlier this year, Denham introduced H.R. 4155, the *Veteran Skills to Jobs Act*, to address the unacceptably high rate of veteran unemployment by streamlining the federal certification process and cutting through the bureaucratic red tape, making it easier for veterans to utilize the skills they acquired in the military to find work at home. The legislation which passed the House of Representatives earlier in the year has become Public Law 112-47.

Rather than going through the process of redundant trainings for jobs they are already qualified for, Denham's legislation directs the head of each federal department and agency to treat relevant military training as sufficient to satisfy training or certification requirements for federal license. Veterans with the relevant training would be eligible to receive a federal license and get back to work immediately. Companion legislation was subsequently introduced by Sen. Bill Nelson (D-FL) in the Senate as S. 2239, *The Veterans Skills to Jobs Act of 2012*.

Rep. Denham and other bipartisan cosponsors have received widespread support and praise for the *Veteran Skills to Jobs Act* from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the American Legion, the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America and several other Veteran Service Organizations.

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Always on the go?

Get connected to your benefits!

CalVet mobile app now available for iPhone and Android devices.

www.calvet.ca.gov

The Barstow Veterans Home is Currently Accepting Applications for Residency in the Independent Living (Domiciliary), and Intermediate Nursing Levels of Care

The Veterans Home of California—Barstow is a 400-bed, long-term care facility located on 22 acres with a panoramic view of the Mojave River Valley. The high desert atmosphere offers a climate that is healthful, quiet and safe with very low air pollution. The Veterans Home provides California veterans with a living environment that protects their dignity and contributes to their feeling of self-reliance and self-worth. It offers three levels of care that provide continuity in the lives of residents in an atmosphere of dignity and respect.

1. Domiciliary Care (Independent living) for veterans who are self-sufficient and do not require assistance with activities of daily living. Non-nursing staff provides minimal supervision. Residents at this level of care have access to other levels of care and medical services.
2. Intermediate Nursing Care for veterans requiring some nursing assistance to perform activities of daily living. Licensed nursing staff assist veterans with medications and treatments.
3. Skilled Nursing Care for veterans who require a higher level of nursing care and require assistance with many activities of daily living.

Although this Veterans Home offers three levels of care, space is primarily available in the Independent Living (Domiciliary), and Intermediate Nursing levels of care.

Amenities include:

- Room and board – three meals plus snacks
- Medical care and medications
- Optical care, dental care and podiatry services
- Transportation services to all medical appointments and off-campus activities
- Additional professional services include a beauty/barber shop, multi-purpose room and limited banking services
- Opportunities for worship for all denominations through the Chaplaincy Program
- A modern fitness center and exercise classes
- Library, cable television, and wireless Internet
- Housekeeping and laundry services
- Caring and compassionate staff, and
- Variety of community outings and an enhanced activity program

The Veterans Home of California—Barstow enjoys the strong support from the local community as well as camaraderie from the neighboring Marine Corps Logistics Base and the National Training Center at Fort Irwin.

Veterans Homes of California are also located in Chula Vista, Lancaster, Ventura, West Los Angeles, and Yountville. Veterans Homes are currently under construction in Fresno and Redding. Veterans considering assisted living are encouraged to apply to any of the Veterans Homes of California. Spouses are also eligible to apply with the veteran.

For admission information, contact:

Veterans Home of California—Barstow
100 E. Veterans Parkway
Barstow, CA 92311
(800) 746-0606, ext. 1

California Gets USDVA Grant to Help Vets Find Housing

California will receive nearly $15.7 million to help veterans find and secure housing according to an announcement by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) earlier this week. This is part of the USDVA's nearly $100 million in grants that will help approximately 42,000 homeless and at-risk veterans and their families. These grants are being distributed to 151 community agencies in 49 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. California will receive $2,975,174 in new grants and $12,686,712 in renewal grants for a total of $15,661,886.

"We are very happy that California will receive almost $3 million in additional funding to help veterans break the cycle of homelessness," said Peter J. Gravett, Secretary of the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet). "These new funds will help more than 500 veteran households secure housing. In addition, the Golden State will receive more than $12.7 million in renewed awards to community-based organizations already working toward helping veterans find and secure housing."

"We are committed to ending veteran homelessness in America," said U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "These grants will help the USDVA and community organizations reach out and prevent at-risk veterans from losing their homes."

Under the Supportive Services for Veteran Families program, the USDVA is awarding grants to private non-profit organizations and consumer cooperatives that provide services to very low-income veteran families living in—or transitioning to—permanent housing. Those community organizations provide a range of services that promote housing stability among eligible very low income veteran families.

Under the grants, homeless providers will offer veterans and their family members outreach, case management, assistance in obtaining USDVA benefits and assistance in getting other public benefits. Community-based groups can offer temporary financial assistance on behalf of veterans for rent payments, utility payments, security deposits and moving costs.

This is the program's second year. Last year, the USDVA provided about $60 million to assist 22,000 veterans and family members nationally.

In 2009, President Obama and Secretary Shinseki announced the federal government's goal to end veteran homelessness by 2015. The grants are intended to help accomplish that goal. According to the 2011 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report to Congress, homelessness among Veterans has declined 12 percent since January 2010.

Through the homeless veterans initiative, the USDVA committed

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U.S. Army Conducting Hypertension Study

The U.S. Army Chemical Corps is conducting a study to learn if high blood pressure (hypertension) and some chronic respiratory diseases are related to herbicide exposure during the Vietnam War.

The study follows a request by U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) to conduct research on the association between herbicide exposure and high blood pressure (hypertension), as a basis for understanding if hypertension is related to military service in Vietnam. USDVA is also interested in learning more about the relationship between herbicide exposure and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). The study is a follow-up of a similar study conducted between 1999-2000.

Researchers have two questions:

1. Is the risk of high blood pressure (hypertension) related to Agent Orange exposure during service in Vietnam?
2. Is the risk of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), including chronic bronchitis and emphysema, related to Agent Orange exposure during service in Vietnam?

Researchers are asking approximately 4,000 veterans who served in the U.S. Army Chemical Corps sometime during the Vietnam era (1965-1973) to participate in this study. Army Chemical Corps personnel were responsible for the maintenance and distribution or application of chemicals for military operations. Army Chemical Corps personnel who served in Vietnam during the Vietnam War constitute the largest group of Army Vietnam Veterans who were thought to have had the greatest potential exposure to herbicides.

Researchers have already selected participants from earlier Army Chemical Corps study rosters and cannot accept volunteers for this study. Each veteran selected for this study represents other Veterans with similar characteristics.

The study will involve conducting telephone interviews, reviewing medical records, and measuring the blood pressure and lung function of selected veterans.

Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

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$800 million in Fiscal Year 2011 to strengthen programs that prevent and end homelessness among veterans. The USDVA provides a range of services to homeless veterans, including health care, housing, job training, and education.

More information about the USDVA's homeless programs can be found at www.va.gov/homeless. Details about the Supportive Services for Veteran Families program is available at www.va.gov/homeless/ssvf.asp.

For California-specific information, visit CalVet's web site at www.calvet.ca.gov and click on the "Vet Services" tab at the top of the Home page or call (877) 741-8532 toll-free.

Restaurant Discounts for Veterans

Thanks-a-Bunch™ and Military.com have come together to offer a unique opportunity that makes saying "thanks" to our American heroes and their families easy. By providing them with a $50 Thanks-a-Bunch gift card which you can purchase for just $10 (tax deductible), you can help a veteran pay for a nice meal out with family and friends.

Go the Thanks-a-Bunch™ web site at www.thanksabunch.org to purchase a card for yourself or another active military member, veteran or veteran family. Have the gift card sent directly to you to present with your own personal expression of thanks or purchase the card and request one of the Thanks-a-Bunch nonprofit military alliance partners to present the card on your behalf.

The cards can be redeemed for $50.00 at any one of more than 18,000 participating restaurants nationwide. To find participating restaurants near you, go to www.restaurant.com/theidealmeal/listing/findrestaurants. Certain terms and conditions may apply.

USDVA BRIEFS

VA EXTENDS VERIFICATION TERM FOR VETERAN ENTREPRENEURS

The Department of Veterans Affairs is doubling the amount of time before the owners of service-disabled, Veteran-owned small businesses (SDVOSB) and Veteran-owned small businesses (VOSB) must re-verify with VA that they are, in fact, owned and operated by qualified Veterans and other legal requirements. http://1.usa.gov/NirWZy

STATES' ATTORNEYS GENERAL ACTION A VICTORY FOR VETERANS AND THE GI BILL

Officials of the Department of Veterans Affairs applauded a decision by the attorneys general of several states to give VA the rights to use the GIBill.Com website, after the website's original owners QuinStreet Inc. agreed to give up the internet site to settle a lawsuit by the states. http://1.usa.gov/MVq7BV

GO RED TO FIGHT HEART DISEASE

VA and the American Heart Association are raising awareness of heart disease in women Veterans. Through the Go Red Heart Match database, women Veterans can connect with other female Veterans/service members who have experienced heart disease. http://www.womenshealth.va.gov/

VA DEPLOYS NEW PROCESSING MODEL FOR COMPENSATION CLAIMS

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today it is deploying a new model for processing compensation benefits claims at 16 VA regional offices. http://1.usa.gov/LOS5x8

IMPACT OF VBA'S NEW CHALLENGE TRAINING PROGRAM

The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) has developed a comprehensive and integrated Transformation Campaign Plan to achieve our 2015 goal of eliminating the disability claims backlog and processing all claims at a 98 percent quality level. Along with improved processes and technologies, investment in our people is a key component of VBA's transformation to a 21st Century organization. http://1.usa.gov/RYDxOM

CalVet, USDVA Reach Out Using Social Media

In an effort to reach and assist more veterans, the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) is using social media. "Technology is getting more and more sophisticated, and it's important to keep up," said CalVet Secretary, Peter J. Gravett. "It's great putting information out through Facebook and Twitter and knowing that it's getting to the veterans who need it."

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is engaged in social networking as well. All 152 of the USDVA's medical centers are now actively represented on Facebook, the world's largest social networking site.

The process that began with a single Veterans Health Administration Facebook page in 2008 has now produced more than 150 Facebook pages, 64 Twitter feeds, a YouTube channel, a Flickr page, and the VAntage Point blog. A year ago, USDVA produced a Department-wide social media policy that provides guidelines for communicating with veterans online. The overarching strategy is designed to help break down long-perceived barriers between the Department and its stakeholders.

"Veterans of all eras are depending on us to get the right information to the right person at the right time," said Brandon Friedman, USDVA's director of online communications, and a veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan. "With more troops returning home, we also have a responsibility to connect with the thousands of Service-members who have been—and will be—entering our system. They're using social media, so that's where we need to be. Facebook helps us do that."

USDVA clinicians can't discuss the specific health concerns of individual veterans on Facebook, but that doesn't prevent staff from monitoring USDVA's sites closely each day—and providing helpful information to veterans when they can. In the last year, for instance, USDVA's Crisis Line counselors have successfully intervened on Facebook in cases where veterans have suggested suicidal thoughts or presented with other emotional crises.

"Facebook's mission is to make the world more open and connected and we are excited to see Government agencies using our service to better connect with citizens, provide information, and deliver services," said Don Faul, Facebook's Vice President of Online Operations, a former U.S. Marine and a veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan. "We want to do all we can to support Veterans, so we're pleased to see the Department of Veterans Affairs using Facebook to connect with Veterans in an authentic and engaging way."

The Department's main Facebook page has over 221,000 fans. The Department plans to continue expanding its Facebook presence while also focusing on bringing Twitter to every USDVA medical center as well.

For a directory of all USDVA social media sites, go to www.va.gov/opa/socialmedia.asp. To follow CalVet on Facebook, go to www.facebook.com/MyCalVet. To follow CalVet on Twitter, go to www.twitter.com/MyCalVet.

Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Military-Friendly Franchises List Released

G.I. Jobs has released the 2012 Military Friendly Franchises® list. The list honors the top 10 percent of franchises doing the most to recruit and train America's veterans as business owners. The list satisfies veterans' need to know which franchise they should pursue, which ones give them the best financial incentives and training, and which franchises have the highest number of veteran franchisees.

Franchises on the list range from restaurants to tax services and home-based opportunities. The common bond is their shared priority of recruiting owner-operators with military experience.

"Those of us who have lived and worked in a military environment are used to 'following a system,' so we put a great emphasis on introducing veterans to franchising," said Jon Rucker, director of Snap-on's Military Veteran Program. "A veteran-owned franchise business is a good fit for the long-term success of both the veteran and the franchise."

"The list was created three years ago out of demand from military veterans, many of whom want to start or own their own business but are unclear where to begin," said Sean Collins, General Manager for G.I. Jobs. "Military veterans can execute a plan, lead employees, and are trained to overcome adversity. Combine this background and work ethic with an established franchise system and you have greatly increased the odds of the business succeeding."

The full list of Military Friendly Franchises® is available at www.MilitaryFranchising.com, a web tool that helps veterans decide which franchise to choose. Additional resources are posted on the Military Friendly Franchises® Facebook page: www.facebook.com/MilitaryFranchising.

Source: GIJobs.com

The annual CalVet Women's Conference will be held on

THURSDAY OCTOBER 4, 2012

at the **Double Tree Hotel** in Sacramento

CONTACT
womenveterans@calvet.ca.gov
or (916) 653-2327

Veteran Emergency Care

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) recently announced a change in regulations regarding payments for emergency care provided to eligible veterans in non-USDVA facilities. The new regulation extends USDVA's authority to pay for emergency care provided to eligible veterans at non-USDVA facilities until the veterans can be safely transferred to a USDVA medical facility. Non-USDVA care is medical care provided to eligible veterans outside of the USDVA when USDVA facilities are not available.

All medical centers can use this program when needed. The use of the non-USDVA care program is governed by federal laws containing eligibility criteria and other policies specifying when and why it can be used. A pre-authorization for treatment in the community is required for non-USDVA care—unless the medical event is an emergency. Emergency events may be reimbursed on behalf of the veteran in certain cases.

There are five categories of non-USDVA care programs:

- Pre-authorized Outpatient Care (www.nonvacare.va.gov/preauthout.asp)
- Pre-authorized Inpatient Care (www.nonvacare.va.gov/preauthinpt.asp)
- Emergency Care of Service-Connected Conditions (www.nonvacare.va.gov/unauth.asp)
- Emergency Care of Non-Service-Connected Conditions (www.nonvacare.va.gov/ecnsc.asp)
- State Home Per Diem Program (www.nonvacare.va.gov/state-homes.asp)

Non-USDVA care is used when USDVA medical facilities are not "feasibly available." The local USDVA medical facility has criteria to determine whether non-USDVA care may be used.

If a veteran is eligible for certain medical care, the USDVA hospital or clinic should provide it as the first option. If they can't—due to a lack of available specialists, long wait times, or extraordinary distances from the veteran's home—the USDVA may consider non-USDVA care in the veteran's community. Non-USDVA care is not an entitlement program or a permanent treatment option.

USDVA operates 121 emergency departments across the country, which provide resuscitative therapy and stabilization in life-threatening situations. They operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week. USDVA also has 46 urgent care units, which provide care for patients without scheduled appointments who need immediate medical or psychiatric attention.

For more information about emergency are in non-USDVA facilities, go to www.nonvacare.va.gov.

Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

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WEST LOS ANGELES

The West Los Angeles Veterans Home is Currently Accepting Applications for Residency in the Assisted Living Level of Care

The Veterans Home of California—West Los Angeles is a 396-bed, long-term care facility located adjacent to the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System in West Los Angeles.

Although two levels of care are offered, immediate space is primarily available in the Assisted Living Unit.

The Veterans Home provides California veterans with a living environment that protects their dignity and contributes to their feeling of self-reliance and self-worth.

The Veterans Home of California—West Los Angeles offers two levels of care that provide continuity in the lives of residents in a homelike atmosphere of dignity and respect.

Assisted Living: Residents at this level of care require minimal assistance and supervision with some activities of daily living. Services may include care by licensed nurses.

Skilled Nursing Care: Residents at this level of care are provided 24-hour services of licensed nurses and certified nursing assistants. Skilled nursing residents have greater access to rehabilitation therapies, nursing care, pharmacy management, structured activities and clinical dietary services. A memory care program within this level of care provides a supervised environment for veterans with symptoms of confusion, memory loss, difficulty making decisions, solving problems or participating in conversations. These levels of care will be available in 2012.

Amenities include:

- Room and board – three meals plus snacks
- Medical care and medications
- Optical care, dental care and podiatry services
- Transportation services to all medical appointments and off-campus activities
- Additional services include a beauty/barber shop, multi-purpose room and limited banking services
- Opportunities for worship for all denominations through the Chaplaincy Program
- A modern fitness room and exercise classes
- Library and cable television
- Restorative Therapy Center
- Housekeeping and laundry services
- Caring and compassionate staff, and
- Variety of community outings and an enhanced activity program

The Veterans Home of California—West Los Angeles enjoys the strong support from the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System, the local community as well as camaraderie from the neighboring Los Angeles Air Force Base and many local Veterans organizations. Veterans Homes of California are also located in Chula Vista, Lancaster, Ventura, Barstow and Yountville.

For admission information, contact:

Veterans Home of California—West Los Angeles
11500 Nimitz Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90049
(424) 832-8202
(424) 832-8203
Toll Free: (877) 605-1332
www.calvet.ca.gov

DVBE Networking Success Story

It all came together quite organically. Jim Robinson met Ron Mitchell at a Disabled Veterans Business Enterprise (DVBE) networking event and, in time, introduced him to Don Rich. The results were amazing!

Jim Robinson is President of Artkos, Inc., an electrical contracting company that specializes in low voltage systems, gates, doors, and activating devices. Ron Mitchell works for Hensel Phelps, a 75-year-old construction company, which was the prime contractor for the new Veterans Home of California in Fresno. While chatting together at the DVBE event, Jim learned that the Hensel Phelps contract with the Home had a requirement for garden structures on its grounds. Jim immediately thought of Don Rich, a well-respected metal artist whose previous work, among other things, includes a veterans memorial in Alamo, California. Jim arranged a meeting between Ron and Don and a tour of the veterans memorial Don created.

"NOW THAT'S DVBE NETWORKING AT ITS BEST!" -Stewart MacKenzie

Ron liked what he saw! Ultimately, Hensel Phelps, the Department of General Services and CalVet approved the bronze sculpture and fountain concept proposed by Don. Ron's company awarded Jim's company a contract to source the sculptures from Don and to oversee the design, creation, and installation of the art pieces and fountains. These art pieces are now in place at the Fresno Veterans Home and can be viewed at www.dropbox.com/sh/rm9gjwcftj3jcbl/0z32hlzB2Q.

"Now that's DVBE Networking at its best!" said Stewart MacKenzie, Special Programs Manager, CalVet Veterans Services Division.

But wait, there's more! In addition to the sculptures and fountains, Don presented a concept to Hensel Phelps for original bronze plaques on the walls at the Home's parade ground flag area. Even though the plaques were not in the budget or the contract, at the urging of Jim, Hensel Phelps donated the $48,000 needed for the plaques to be created and installed. The plaques are currently in production and are expected to be in place at the Home later this month.

Changing the Face of PTSD

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) is trying to change the face of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Once perceived as a condition for which there is no effective treatment, the National Center for PTSD (www.ptsd.va.gov) is working to tell a different kind of story through its website, AboutFace.

AboutFace (www.ptsd.va.gov/public/about_face.html) educates veterans and their families about what PTSD is, how it affects the veteran, the impact it has on the veteran's family and, most importantly, treatment options that are available. The site allows vets to learn about PTSD by seeing the faces and hearing stories told by veterans who live with PTSD every day and have successfully regained control of their lives.

Service men and women are there for each other in the field. AboutFace is about using the shared bonds of military service to make life better and easier for vets and their families coping with PTSD. By using the powers of honesty and openness, vets can help each other begin the process of healing.

To hear stories from veterans who are successfully managing their PTSD, visit www.ptsd.va.gov/public/about_face.html.

Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Palo Alto Mental Health Center Now Open

The Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) recently opened a state-of-the-art, 80-bed acute mental health center in Palo Alto.

The new center, on the USDVA Palo Alto Health Care System campus, will provide a continuum of mental health services, from inpatient to outpatient, with an additional research component. The 90,000 square-foot facility will house four units, each with 20 inpatient acute psychiatric beds. The project also includes outdoor enclosed gardens for the patients, a separate mental health research and office pavilion and a utility building to service the complex. Most rooms are private, with some semi-private, and all have private bathrooms.

"This new facility is like day and night to the current one," said Christopher Hurt, 25, an Iraq War combat veteran and patient. "I've heard other people say they've never seen a facility this nice. It's bright, airy and just makes the healing process so much nicer. It even has a work-out room and basketball court. I love it."

The building's therapeutic design and healing environments were the result of collaboration with clinicians and considering the perspective of the veterans who will receive care in the facility. Features to enhance the treatment of veterans can be found throughout the project, including patient access to landscaped gardens, ample use of natural light in all internal patient and staff areas, views to landscaped areas from all patient bedrooms, color, texture and material palettes selected to aid in the healing process. To view the USDVA Palo Alto Mental Health Center visit www.paloalto.va.gov/construction_mhc.asp.

Last year, USDVA provided quality, specialty mental health services to 1.3 million veterans. Since 2009, USDVA has increased the mental health care budget by 39 percent. Since 2007, USDVA has seen a 35 percent increase in the number of veterans receiving mental health services, and a 41 percent increase in mental health staff.

In April, as part of an ongoing review of mental health operations, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced USDVA would add approximately 1,600 mental health clinicians as well as nearly 300 support staff to its existing workforce of 20,590 to help meet the increased demand for mental health services. The additional staff would include nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers.

Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

USDVA Disability Claims Process Simplified

The USDVA disability claims process just got a little bit easier and veterans now have greater control. With the Disability Benefits Questionnaire (DBQ), veterans have the option of visiting a private health care provider instead of a USDVA facility to complete their disability evaluation form.

Veterans can have their providers fill out any of the more than 70 DBQs that are appropriate for their conditions and submit them to the USDVA. It's that easy!

DBQ instruction pages are available:

- for veterans http://benefits.va.gov/TRANSFORMATION/dbqs/veteraninstruct.asp;
- for veteran service organizations http://benefits.va.gov/TRANSFORMATION/dbqs/vsoinstruct.asp; and
- for health care providers http://benefits.va.gov/TRANSFORMATION/dbqs/providerinstruct.asp.

DBQs are valuable for claims processing because they provide medical information that is directly relevant to determining a disability rating. When submitted with a fully developed claim, DBQs ensure the USDVA's ratings specialists have precisely the information they need to start processing the claim.

The USDVA plans to further simplify the process for clinicians by creating a secure portal by the end of 2012 for completing and submitting disability benefits questionnaires online.

For more information about DBQs, including a list of forms by name and a list of forms by symptom, and a list of DBQ frequently asked questions, go to http://benefits.va.gov/TRANSFORMATION/disabilityexams/index.asp.

Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Iraq War Exposures

Iraq War veterans may have been exposed to a range of environmental and chemical hazards that carry potential health risks. Those hazards include: sand, dust and other particulates; nine different infectious diseases; sulfur fire; occupational hazards (like chemicals and paint); burn pits; depleted uranium; chromium; and others.

The health effects of exposure to those hazards range from irritated eyes and skin to respiratory and cardiopulmonary problems and other more serious conditions, including cancer. A number of factors determine the health effects of a veteran's exposure, including:

- Size of particulate matter
- Chemical makeup
- Concentration levels
- Duration of exposure
- Human factors (age, health status, existing medical conditions, and genetics).

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Veterans with PTSD Need Better Access to Care and Monitoring of Treatments

Veterans and service personnel with PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) must have proper and prompt access to evidence-based care, and their treatments should be tracked, including their outcomes, says a new report from the Institute of Medicine (IoM) that was mandated by Congress. Programs on offer should be thoroughly researched to make sure they are effective, the authors added; their findings should become freely available to the public immediately. The report directed its message to the U.S. Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs.

As the U.S. winds down its military involvement in the Middle East, an increased number of returning veterans are expected to require PTSD services. Congress asked the Department of Defense, in consultation with Veterans Affairs, to sponsor an IoM study to assess the PTSD treatment programs and services with the two departments. The report is entitled Treatment for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Military and Veteran Populations: Initial Assessment.

The authors explained that approximately 40% of those who served in Afghanistan and Iraq and were screened positive for PTSD were referred to additional treatment or further evaluation, of whom about 65% did get further treatment.

The tracking of veterans' treatments and outcomes needs considerable improvement, the report explained, emphasizing that it is not just a question of broadening access to care.

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<< EXPOSURE

For more information about Iraq War exposures, visit www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/wars-operations/iraq-war.asp.

If you are concerned about exposure to environmental or chemical hazards during military service, talk to your health care provider or U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) Environmental Health Coordinator. To find a USDVA Environmental Health Coordinator near you, visit www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/coordinators.asp#California.

NOTE: For USDVA compensation purposes, Iraq War veterans with qualifying service are considered Gulf War veterans and may be eligible for disability compensation for Gulf War veterans' illnesses. USDVA offers eligible veterans a free Gulf War Registry health exam for possible long-term health problems related to Gulf War service, including during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn (www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar/registry_exam.asp).

Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Memorial Bricks on Sale to Fund F-100 Restoration

By Jeanne Bonfilio

In honor of its namesake and the aerospace community it serves, the William J. "Pete" Knight Veterans Home recently acquired the storied F-100 fighter plane for permanent display in front of the Home.

Memorial bricks, engraved with a personal, family or business name, are on sale now to help fund restoration of a Vietnam-era F-100 Super Saber fighter jet.

The engraved bricks will be placed in concrete that will support the plane. at the Home when restoration is complete.

The Board of Directors of the East Kern Airport District donated the surplus supersonic jet to the Lancaster Veterans Home after storing it at the Mojave Air & Space Port for over 35 years. A local volunteer group of aerospace enthusiasts, with financial assistance from the United States Air Power Museum in Fresno, is painstakingly restoring the aircraft. Directing the project is William Dietzel, the museum's Chief Executive Officer.

The fighter jet is being given camouflage paint so it will resemble those on the 223 Vietnam combat missions flown by the late Senator Knight. Later in his career, Knight flew as a United States Air Force and NASA project test pilot. In his memory and honor, the CalVet Veterans Home in Lancaster was given his name.

To purchase memorial engraved bricks to help fund the F-100 restoration, please call (661) 810-2047.

<< ACCESS

As is currently practiced in the Veterans Affairs (VA) system, screening for PTSD should be carried out at least once a year when primary care providers see military personnel at the Department of Defense (DoD) treatment centers or under TRICARE, the report added.

Committee chair Sandro Galea, professor and chair of the department of epidemiology, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University, New York City, said: "DoD and VA offer many programs for PTSD, but treatment isn't reaching everyone who needs it, and the departments aren't tracking which treatments are being used or evaluating how well they work in the long term. In addition, DoD has no information on the effectiveness of its programs to prevent PTSD."

The authors explained that they have now completed the first phase of a study that is looking into PSTD programs within the DoD and VA - the programs are aimed at preventing, identifying, and treating PTSD.

Many of the PTSD-related services on offer at the moment could not be assessed properly, because of insufficient data. Request for data is being made continuously, the authors wrote, regarding service members with PTSD, their treatments, outcomes and costs. They say their requests for more data, in some cases, have resulted in helpful responses from DoD and VA regarding how many military personnel and veterans have PTSD, what treatments are being offered and given, their costs, and outcomes.

Their findings and recommendations may be "refined" in the second phase of this study if additional data are received.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

CALVET
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

AUGUST 7

Social Security Benefits Workshop
Social Security Administration
VA Long Beach Healthcare System
5901 East 7th Street
Long Beach, CA 90802
Contact: Kay Kim (562) 826-5593
cailine.kim@va.gov

AUGUST 14

Employment Assistance Workshop
Project Hired
VA Long Beach Healthcare System
5901 East 7th Street
Long Beach, CA 90802
Contact: Kay Kim (562) 826-5593

Kings County Military & Veterans Coalition Meeting
Kings County Veterans Service Office
Government Center
1400 W. Lacey Blvd.
Hanford, CA 93230
Contact: (559) 852-2659
joe.wright@co.kings.ca.us

AUGUST 17 - 19

2nd Annual Orange County Stand Down
Army Reserve Center
1525 Mesa Verde Drive E.
Costa Mesa, CA 92626
Contact: (714) 547-0615
www.ocstanddown.org

AUGUST 18

Moffett Armed Forces Community Covenant
NASA Ames Research Center
Moffett Parade Field Building 17
Akron Road, Moffett Field
Contact:
moffettarmedforces@gmail.com
Carolann Wunderlin (650) 996-7929

AUGUST 21

Government Career Workshop
Expungement Workshop
VA Long Beach Healthcare System
5901 East 7th Street
Long Beach, CA 90822
Contact: Kay Kim (562) 826-5593
cailine.kim@va.gov

AUGUST 22

San Francisco Veterans Town Hall/ Collaborative
War Memorial Building
401 Van Ness, Room 207, San Francisco
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Contact:
maryellen_salzano@yahoo.com

NOTE: TO VIEW FULL CALENDAR, VISIT WWW.CALVET.CA.GOV/FILES/EVENTS_CALENDAR.PDF

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