

All veterans are reminded that the fastest way to inquire and secure the benefits they have earned is by visiting their local County Veterans Service Office. A listing of these offices is available at www.cacvso.org.

APRIL 2013



In Kuwait from left to right: SSG Beth Kaplan, SPC Jenni Merrit; and SSG Veronica Badillo

WOMEN IN COMBAT IS NOTHING NEW

By Juliene Crisostomo

Just as Neil Armstrong took one small step for man, Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta took one giant leap for womankind on January 24, 2013 by redefining the roles of women in the military. After extensive research and uphill battles, Panetta repealed the archaic 1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule that prevented women from being assigned to units that primarily engaged in direct combat.

"This is a momentous occasion for all women who have bravely served and continue to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces. [This] means greater equality for women in the Armed Forces and formally recognizes the commitment and sacrifice they have made for this country," stated Lindsey Sin,

CalVet Deputy Secretary for Women Veterans Affairs.

Historically, women have braved enemy fire and dangerous situations, all the while receiving fewer awards, promotions, and recognition as their male counterparts moved into higher ranks and more powerful, prestigious assignments.

Veronica Badillo, U.S. Army veteran and currently serving soldier in the U.S. Army Reserves, was deployed three times as a medic to Talil, Kuwait; Camp Arifjan, Iraq; and Landstuhl, Germany in support of Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, and New Dawn.

Not only was Badillo's very presence evidence of loopholes the military used in order to have more women soldiers involved in the wars with

Iraq and Afghanistan, but she also witnessed many women injured or killed in combat. During her deployment to Landstuhl, where most soldiers were sent when critically wounded in Iraq or Afghanistan, she remembered an all-female Marine Special Forces team being flown in after a fatal improvised explosive device (IED) detonated during their mission on the streets of Iraq.

When Badillo asked one of the women how she can fight in such a violent and dangerous war, her response was, "You put your head down and do what you have to do to get it done and go home". For so long, women have endured gender barriers in the military and have reacted by simply pressing forward with the resources and tools available to them and, when necessary, innovatively created new ones to complete the mission.

WOMEN, page 3 >>

INSIDE

Veteran Health	p. 4
West LA's Heroes Golf Course	p. 9
10 Things You Should Know	p. 11
Honoring Korean War Veterans	p. 18

Secretary's Message

Greetings, this month I wish to highlight some exciting work being done by the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) Farm and Home Loan Program. By taking proactive steps and making some intelligent financial maneuvers, the Program has consistently reduced the mortgage rates on new loans to veterans from 5.75% down to 4.15% over the past year and a half. This new rate is now competitive in the market place, especially for some first-time-home buyers who don't have the appropriate credit scores and available cash to qualify for the low "kicker" rates advertised in the media. As additional incentives for veterans buying their first home, the Program also offers such things as no down payment to low down payment and home insurance benefits that are not available from private lending institutions. Additionally, the CalVet Farm and Home Loan Program does not use FICO credit scoring alone to determine the qualifications of a loan, but rather looks at the veteran's overall circumstances such as income, military service record, etc., when making a loan decision.

Other exciting news from the CalVet Program is a recently started new initiative to help place veterans into low-cost home ownership. Additionally, program staff has been meeting with cities, counties, non-profit organizations, private developers and other state agencies

to work toward new ways to provide affordable housing opportunities for veterans.

For example, since August 2012, through partnerships formed via the Interagency Council on Veterans, the Program has collaborated with Habitat for Humanity San Fernando/Santa Clarita Valley (Habitat) and the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) to fund and build approximately 100 homes, for which \$21 million has been set aside from our CalVet's funds for loans to qualifying veterans. These 100 homes are being provided to veterans who may not have had a chance to purchase a home in the current economic climate. The collaboration is unique because the Program can provide veterans a loan they may not have been able to qualify for in the private sector, while Habitat offers the veterans courses for budgeting and managing their credit. The veterans become stakeholders in these veteran communities by providing their own sweat equity in these projects.

We are also currently working with our partner state agencies HCD and the California Housing Finance Agency (CalHFA) on other possible programs to help veterans find affordable housing – including subsidized, supportive rental and home ownership options. This will likely require changes in state

law, but there is strong support for this effort to find ways to help our neediest veterans, especially those living on the streets or in substandard housing situations.

As you can see, the housing market may just be showing signs that it is recovering, but staff in the CalVet Farm and Home Loan Program has proactively been developing new and creative ways to help veterans get into a home. Until next month. So ruck up and keep moving forward.

Sincerely,



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

<< **WOMEN**

Women have served in combat since the inception of a military and currently make up about 15% of the U.S. military's population. In the current wars of Iraq and Afghanistan, women have been and are in the line of fire. Only now, after the repeal, can they have official recognition by the public that they served in a combat zone.

Direct combat, as defined by the 1994 Rule, referred to "engaging an enemy on the ground with individual or crew served weapons while being exposed to hostile fire and to a high probability of direct physical contact with the hostile force's personnel."

Badillo said that the repeal seems to realistically be for the general public and civilian sector. However, she stated that it is a great indicator that the U.S. Military is moving in the right direction. Badillo said, "For the longest time, when we think of 'soldier', we automatically envisioned a big, strong Alpha male, when the reality also includes skinny, tall, ol' me...a girl".

The stereotype is quickly changing to include the reality of the battlefield: women who put on a military uniform and voluntarily accept wherever the mission takes them, to include exposure to hostile fire and ceaseless enemy attacks.

In preparation for the revolutionary idea of creating true equality in the Armed Forces, The U.S. Air Force, U.S. Army, U.S. Marine Corps, and U.S. Navy Chiefs identified three main

principles to guide them as they move through the integration and review process:

- Maintain America's effective fighting force.
- Set up a process that would give all service members the best chance to succeed.
- Preserve military readiness.

Badillo recalls being denied a deployment a few years ago to provide medical services to an exclusively select Special Forces team in the Army. The reason? She was a female. Because of the repeal, Badillo can now fight beside, "not next to", "attached to", or "in support of", her fellow soldiers by "doing a job [she] trained for extensively".

According to the memorandum signed by Defense Secretary Panetta and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Martin Dempsey, full and final implementation must be completed no later than January 1, 2016. The military departments must submit a detailed plan for execution by May 15, 2013. Any occupation or unit further closed to women must be personally approved by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense with no delegation authority.

As the new order is executed, some other concerns are raised. Although there are very tangible and obvious positives to allowing women into male dominated special combat units, some rippling effects must be considered. As the Armed Forces

faces rising incidents of sexual assault and harassment, some are concerned that allowing women into all-male units might result in a dramatic increase in those incidents.

Badillo warns that the repeal may have allowed women a severe disadvantage in protecting themselves. She questions, "What kind of message are we sending when there are no obvious stop guards or effective prevention tools in place?" Badillo fears that the repeal may create complacency or a distraction towards more aggressively effective ways to combat sexual assaults in the military. She adds, "Placing women into male exclusive units can endanger them further for [military sexual trauma]. The reality is that it happens and it happens in these male dominated units."

As with any major changes to cultures and lifestyles, the military is no exception as it encounters barriers, issues, and adverse feedback to the repeal. The Armed Forces has a significant undertaking ahead of them as they struggle with the new requirements and current problems facing women. While it is a momentous step forward in the right direction to recognize the reality of women in combat by repealing the 1994 Rule, it is in the implementation process that victory will be counted and skepticism appeased.

VETERAN HEALTH: A PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Military men and woman have suffered every manner of physical and emotional injury over the years. Those injuries have had significant long-term health consequences for millions of veterans.

Vietnam veterans exposed to Agent Orange now have increased rates of prostate, respiratory and other cancers, lymphoma, Type 2 diabetes, ischemic heart disease, nerve damage, and digestive and skin disorders. Their children sometimes are born with birth defects.

Gulf War veterans, exposed to chemical, environmental, radiation and other harmful exposures, have their own set of health challenges. Many are diagnosed with malaria, tuberculosis, salmonella, west Nile virus and a host of other infectious diseases. Some suffer from what is popularly known as “Gulf War Syndrome,” a cluster of medically unexplained chronic symptoms that can include fatigue, headaches, joint pain, indigestion, insomnia, dizziness, respiratory disorders and memory problems.

Veterans of every era frequently have back problems or suffer from tinnitus (a constant ringing in their ears) or from hearing loss related to their military service. For many veterans,



symptoms of service-connected injuries or illnesses worsen with age.

Military service can be such a significant factor in a veteran’s long-term health that veterans need to make sure their doctors are aware of their military history. Doctors need to consider military history whenever they evaluate, diagnose and treat a veteran patient.

“Health problems assumed to be the result of genetic, lifestyle or age risk factors may, in fact, be the result of lethal chemical exposures or other adverse conditions endured by the veteran while in service to this country,” said California Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Peter J. Gravett. “That’s why it’s so important for veterans to tell doctors about their military service.”

Ultimately, however, veterans need to take responsibility for their own health. They need to educate themselves about the service-related diseases and disorders their military service may have made them prone to. They need to learn about, be on the lookout for, and immediately

report to their doctor any symptoms associated with those diseases and disorders.

“CalVet strongly encourages veterans and veteran families of every era to learn about service-related health conditions, their symptoms, and their treatments,” said Gravett. “Early detection is a veteran’s best hope for cure or successful management of any disease or medical condition.” To learn about service-related health issues, visit www.va.gov/health/topics/index.asp.

Veterans may be entitled to monetary benefits, health care, physical and vocational rehabilitation services, and free assistive devices, such as hearing aids or wheelchairs, through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

If you have been diagnosed with any service-connected health condition, contact your County Veterans Service Office for help filing a benefits claim. To find the office nearest you, go to www.cacvso.org and click on “Contact Us.”

USDVA DISABILITY RATINGS

There are many benefits available to veterans from both state and federal agencies. Many of these benefits are only available to veterans with service-connected disabilities. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) determines the level of disability using a rating system. Veterans are rated at 0% to 100% disabled depending on the severity of their disabilities. As an example, a 0% disability rating for a mild hearing loss may qualify the dependents of a veteran for the California College Fee Waiver Program.

You must file a claim to receive a disability rating and can file a claim for disability at any time. It is recommended that service members file within the first year of discharge so all reasonable medical conditions that occurred during service can be identified as service-connected. These medical conditions may be rated at 0%, or may be considered a serious disability and receive a higher rating. Either way, they are now service-connected and if you have problems later in life, USDVA will provide medical care and possibly increase the disability rating.

If it has been more than a year since separation from military service, the task of establishing service-connection is a bit more difficult.



We have had veterans come into our office that were separated over fifty years ago and are able to build a case for benefits, and get it approved. We can and will assist you with your claim.

To get the claim completed as soon as possible, we need a copy of your discharge papers (DD214), a copy of your medical records, if you have them, and any additional statements from your doctor about your current medical conditions. If you don't have copies, we can order them. We can also issue a Veteran ID cards to honorably discharged veterans.

To learn about the state and federal veterans benefits you and your family may qualify for, contact your County Veterans Service Office. To find the office nearest you, go to www.cacvso.org and click on "Contact Us."

Joe Wright, retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer, is the Veterans Service Officer for Kings County. Send your questions to the Veterans Service Office.

COMBAT EXPERIENCE AND STRENGTH OF FAITH

A new study by U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs researchers explored the relationship of combat deaths to changes in strength of religious faith. Findings showed that veterans' experiences of killing others or failing to prevent a death weakened their religious faith. Faith was weakened both directly and through guilt. Weakened religious faith was related to greater use of mental health services. That was true regardless of severity of PTSD symptoms or limits in social support. This finding suggests that a primary motivation for veterans' continuing in treatment may be their search for a meaning and purpose in their traumatic experiences. The authors concluded, "This possibility raises the broader issue of whether spirituality should be more central to the treatment of PTSD, either in the form of a greater role for pastoral counseling or a wider inclusion of spiritual issues in traditional psychotherapy for PTSD."

SOURCE: The Clergy Connection Newsletter of the National VA Chaplain Center "Rural Clergy Training Program." For more information, contact: Jim Goalder, jim.goalder@gmail.com.

WORKING TO ELIMINATE CLAIMS BACKLOG

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) is working to eliminate the compensation and pension claims backlog so that veterans can receive benefits sooner.

Among other things, USDVA is eliminating the need for benefit recipients to complete an annual Eligibility Verification Report (EVR). A new process for confirming eligibility for benefits will reduce the burden on veterans, their families, and survivors and allow the department to redirect more than 100 employees that usually process EVRs to work on eliminating the claims backlog.

Historically, beneficiaries have been required to complete an EVR each year to ensure their pension benefits continued. Under the new initiative, USDVA will work with the Internal Revenue Service and the Social Security Administration to verify continued eligibility for pension benefits.

All beneficiaries currently receiving USDVA pension benefits will receive a letter from the department that explains these changes and provides instructions on how to continue to submit their unreimbursed medical expenses.

In addition to eliminating the EVR requirement, a nationwide transition to paperless processing of veterans' disability claims at USDVA regional benefits processing offices is underway. The Department believes its new Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS) is a lasting solution that will transform how USDVA eliminates the backlog in 2015.

USDVA regional offices have begun processing newly received compensation claims in an entirely digital format. The USDVA is on track for full deployment of the system to the remaining 38 regional offices in 2013.

The current backlog of claims is the result of increased demand, over a

decade of war with many veterans returning with severe, complex injuries, and increased outreach to veterans informing them of their benefits. USDVA Secretary Erik K. Shinseki also made important decisions to recognize medical conditions related to Agent Orange service in Southeast Asia, and to simplify the process to file claims for combat PTSD. These decisions expanded access to benefits for hundreds of thousands of veterans and brought significantly more claims into the system.

When VBMS is combined with other Transformation initiatives—including improved claims rater training, cross-functional claims handling teams, and prioritized lanes to speed processing based on type of claim—USDVA believe it will be positioned to meet Shinseki's priority goal of processing veterans' claims in 125 days or less, at 98 percent accuracy, by the end of 2015.

For more information on USDVA's transformation go to <http://benefits.va.gov/transformation/>.

HEART DISEASE AND WOMEN

Heart disease is the leading cause of death of American women and women veterans. It can also lead to disability and significantly decrease one's quality of life. Despite this,

many women do not recognize heart disease as their leading health threat, and many women fail to make the connection between risk factors, such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol, and their personal risk of developing heart disease. African-American and Hispanic women in particular are at risk, with high rates of obesity, physical inactivity, high blood pressure, and diabetes. Learn

more about ways to stay healthy and prevent cardiovascular disease visit the American Heart Association's website, www.goredforwomen.org.

To order free women veterans health posters and other education materials from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, go to www.womenshealth.va.gov/WOMENSHEALTH/campaigns.asp.



BURN PIT REGISTRY FOR VETERANS SIGNED INTO LAW

Legislation signed into law by President Obama in January requires the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) to establish a registry for veterans who lived and worked near open-air burn pits used to dispose waste in Iraq, Afghanistan and other places overseas. The USDVA is studying the possible health effects of exposure. The registry will help the department monitor the medical histories of these veterans and keep them informed about new studies and treatments related to burn pit-related diseases and disorders. USDVA will announce how to sign up once the registry is available.

The Dignified Burial and Other Veterans Benefits Improvement Act also:

- authorizes the USDVA to furnish a casket or urn for a deceased veteran with no known living kin;
- requires the USDVA to ensure that the expressed wishes of the next of kin are met with regards to memorial service, funeral or internment at a national cemetery in cases where family or the next of kin of a deceased veteran can be identified;
- requires the USDVA to obtain information from the relevant medical examiner, funeral director, service group or other entity regarding the steps taken to determine if the deceased has no next of kin;
- requires the USDVA to cooperate with veterans service organizations to assist entities in possession of unclaimed or abandoned remains of veterans, with the department authorized to determine whether such remains are eligible for burial in a national cemetery;

- authorizes the appropriation of \$5 million for site preparation and construction at the Clark Veterans Cemetery located in the Philippines. The bill would direct the American Battle Monuments Commission to restore and operate the cemetery once a cooperative agreement is reached with the government of the Philippines; and
- authorizes the USDVA to transport individuals to or from a department facility or other location in connection with required vocational, rehabilitation or counseling activities, or for the purpose of medical exams, treatments and care.

Costs of the new law would be offset by extending the existing authority of the USDVA to limit pension benefits for veterans who reside in Medicaid-funded nursing homes through November 30, 2016. That authority is currently scheduled to expire two months earlier, on September 30, 2016.



GREEN TECHNOLOGY TRAINING PROGRAM FOR VETS

The California Conservation Corps (CCC) invites military veterans to apply for a demanding job that combines hands-on work experience and skill training in basic construction, lighting, electricity, and resource work.

Successful candidates will work on energy-efficiency projects with the Department of Motor Vehicles and other state agencies. Employees will work on both commercial and residential construction projects,

landscaping, and tree work. Prior to completing the program, CCC employees will work with Sierra College (in Rocklin, CA) and Veterans Green Jobs in the areas of resume development, interviewing skills, job searching, and job placement with veteran-friendly companies.

Qualifications:

- Honorable Discharge or General Discharge under Honorable Conditions;

- 18-28 years of age;
- Not on parole or formal or supervised probation;
- Free from convictions for violent offenses or drug crimes;
- Able to pass background check, drug test, physical exam and training;
- Willing to work outdoor in all types of weather and conditions;
- Willing to participate in education programs;

For the residential program in Auburn, CA, some projects will require 10-day work stints away from home and center locations.

Benefits include paid training with employment assistance, basic health and life insurance, and the advantage of working for a state agency to build a resume.

For more information, contact Tina Ratcliff at (916) 341-3123 or email tina.ratcliff@ccc.ca.gov.

LIFE TECHNOLOGIES IS RECRUITING VETS

Life Technologies, which bills itself as a global biotech leader, produces an extensive range of products and services for customers in more than 160 countries, and the company is recruiting veterans.

“Life Technologies is so serious about hiring veterans and transitioning military personnel that they hired me to find the best talent,” said retired Marine Corps Mustang Officer John Engstrom. “We’ve got three great

ways to help: jobs, job shadowing, and paid internships.”

According to Engstrom, the company has lots of positions that would be well-suited to transitioning military and veterans, including finance, operations, IT, maintenance, manufacturing, marketing, safety and security. In fact, the company recently posted 30 open

RECRUITING, page 9 >>

WEST LA'S HEROES GOLF COURSE

By Ernie Hernandez

Did you know there is a golf course in Southern California called the Heroes Golf Course? It's nestled in the far-east corner of the West Los Angeles VA facility and hospital grounds. Seven gorgeous acres of pristine beauty encircle a 9-hole par 3 golf course.

Established in 1946, this historic piece of land has always been and always will be available for veterans and their families and for the general public to enjoy thanks to the generosity of the Bandini and Jones families. In 1888, the Brandini family,

along with Senator John Percival Jones, donated 300 acres of land to be permanently maintained as a soldier's home. That property is now the West Los Angeles VA Facility.

Management of the Heroes Golf Course was awarded to the Brandini Foundation in the summer of 2011. The cost to play the course ranges from \$4 to \$10 per round, sunrise to sundown, year round. There are no tee times. Golfers tee up on a first come, first served basis.

The Brandini Foundation/Heroes Golf Course supports the VA's Rehabilitation and Recreational Therapy Program by providing veterans both physical and psychological therapies. These VA programs have provided significant help for those men and women suffering from post-traumatic symptoms as well as many other medical conditions.



The Heroes Golf Course is located at 11301 Wilshire Boulevard, West Los Angeles. For more information, call (310) 405-7277.

<< RECRUITING

manufacturing positions at its Pleasanton, CA location alone. Similar positions are available in other parts of the country.

In addition to job openings, Life Technologies has job shadow opportunities in its Carlsbad, CA location. If a veteran or transitioning service member sees an occupational area on the website they want to learn more about, the company may be able to provide the opportunity to shadow an employee in that area for a full day. That gives the job seeker

the chance to see whether the job and the company would be a good fit for them. The job shadow events are scheduled monthly.

The company also has paid intern employment opportunities throughout the U.S. Intern candidates must be currently enrolled in an accredited college or university, pursuing a Bachelor's, Master's or Ph.D. degree.

For more information or to apply, to go www.lifetechnologies.com/careers.

"Once a veteran or transitioning service member applies for a position online, they should let me know, Engstrom said. "I'll ensure the recruiter for that position sees their resume."

"Take him up on his offer," advises CalVet Deputy Secretary for Minority Affairs Lee Gutierrez. "I met with John, and he really is passionate about hiring veterans." John Engstrom can be reached at john.engstrom@lifetech.com.



TREATMENT FOR VETS WITH GULF WAR SYNDROME

According to a new report from the Institute of Medicine (IOM), there is no single therapy or universal treatment approach that will help all veterans experiencing chronic multi-symptom illness (CMI). The report recommends the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) customize veteran care with an array of therapies tailored to each former service member's needs.

Written as part of IOM's congressionally mandated Gulf War and Health series, the report presents a comprehensive evaluation of the various treatments for CMI and recommends the best approaches to managing veterans' care. The committee that wrote the report defined CMI as the presence of a spectrum of chronic symptoms in at least two of six categories—fatigue, mood and cognition, musculoskeletal, gastrointestinal,

respiratory, and neurologic—experienced for at least six months.

CMI shares characteristics with other conditions marked by chronic, medically unexplained symptoms, but its symptoms are not fully captured by other recognized syndromes. Formerly dubbed Gulf War Syndrome, CMI affects roughly one-third of veterans of the 1991 Persian Gulf War. Many personnel who served in the more recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have reported similar symptoms. The cause or causes of CMI probably will never be fully determined, the committee said, but this does not undermine the legitimacy of veterans' reports of symptoms.

The study was sponsored by the USDVA. For more information, visit <http://national-academies.org> or <http://iom.edu>.

USDVA BRIEFS

CARE AND BENEFITS FOR VETERANS STRENGTHENED BY \$153 BILLION VA BUDGET

Continuing the transformation of the Department of Veterans Affairs into a 21st century organization, the President has proposed a \$152.7 billion budget, a 10.2 percent increase over Fiscal Year 2013, that will support VA's goals to expand access to health care and other benefits, eliminate the disability claims backlog, and end homelessness among Veterans. The budget includes \$66.5 billion in discretionary spending, largely for healthcare, and \$86.1 billion for mandatory programs – mostly disability compensation and pensions for Veterans. <http://1.usa.gov/ZKSfRW>

NEW AUTOMATION PROCESS CUTS POST-9/11 GI BILL CLAIMS PROCESSING TIMES BY MORE THAN HALF

As part of its ongoing transformation from paper-based to electronic claims processing, the Department of Veterans Affairs has continued to improve the automated payment of benefits for Veterans participating in the Post-9/11 GI Bill education program. As a result, VA is now providing benefit payments to currently enrolled students in an average of six days – cutting by more than half the processing time experienced during the spring enrollment period last year. <http://1.usa.gov/Y8RvPK>

VA WILL USE 'PRELIMINARY FINDINGS' TO REDUCE VERIFICATION DENIALS

To speed eligibility determinations of Veteran-owned small businesses for Department of Veterans Affairs' "Veterans First" contracts, VA will allow applicants the opportunity to correct minor deficiencies before an initial denial is issued. Starting May 1, VA will begin providing preliminary findings to applicants before completing a comprehensive review of their submissions. This is expected to greatly reduce the number of VA's initial denials and subsequent requests for reconsideration from companies. <http://1.usa.gov/Zfk4P3>



10 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT HEALTHY FAMILY FUNCTIONING

By James Goalder, PhD

1. Loving relationships promote physical health. How we manage our relationships is related to how healthy we feel, how quickly we recover from injury, and even how long we live. The negative impact of social isolation on health is comparable to that of cigarette smoking.
2. Loving relationships promote mental health. Better marital quality protects against serious psychological problems, like depression, and enhances social and work functioning.
3. In healthy relationships, family members turn to each other for care and comfort when they feel upset. When adults are secure in their relationships, they are more confident and better adjusted, as are their children. Diminishing affection and emotional connection threaten the stability of marriage.
4. Conflict in families is normal. Healthy conflict involves respecting the needs of both oneself and others, and the ability to “mend” bonds following disagreements. Healthy conflict is free of criticism, hostility, belligerence, contempt, and withdrawal.
5. Supportive family environments are important for the recovery from mental health problems, such as PTSD, and are protective against relapses.
6. Major life events, even positive ones such as the birth of a child, put a lot of stress on families. Increased mutual support, communication, and sensitivity are needed during such times.
7. Marital problems ripple throughout the whole family. Improving marital functioning can enhance children’s emotional, social, and academic development.
8. Research shows that couple therapy improves relationship quality. Unfortunately, most unhappy couples do not seek help. Unhappy couples who seek couple therapy have better relationship outcomes than those that do not.
9. Couple therapy or couple education, both offered by the VA, can help with a wide range of relationship and individual problems. Common reasons for seeking treatment are communication problems, frequent arguing or tension, low emotional closeness, to prevent separation, and intimacy and trust concerns. Even happy couples can choose to use couple therapy or education to further strengthen bonds.
10. Over 400 U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs chaplains, social workers, psychologists and nurses have been certified by the PAIRS (Practical Application of Intimate Relationship Skills) program to lead “From Warrior to Soul Mate” retreats for veterans and their spouses. For more information about the PAIRS program for Veterans, visit www.veterans.pairs.com or contact Chaplain Dick Millspaugh at dick.millspaugh@va.gov.

Acknowledgement: “10 Things You Should Know” is produced by the USDVA San Diego Healthcare System in partnership with Chaplains Caring for Veterans and Families.

“GI BILL” NOW A REGISTERED TRADEMARK

In April of last year, President Obama signed an Executive Order directing the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA), Department of Defense and Department of Education to undertake a number of measures that would stop deceptive and misleading promotional efforts that target the GI Bill educational benefits of servicemembers,

veterans, and eligible family members and survivors.

One of the key components of the order was registration of the term “GI Bill” as a trademark with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Registration would help to protect individuals and ensure they are directed to the right resources to make informed decisions. In another effort to eliminate fraudulent marketing and recruiting practices, the USDVA obtained the rights to the GIBill.com website after the original owner agreed to give up the site. USDVA will issue terms of use for “GI Bill” within the next six months.

Since August 2009, USDVA has paid more than \$23.8 billion in Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to more than 866,000 veterans, servicemembers, and dependents. USDVA received more than 478,000 Fall 2012 enrollments for Post-9/11 GI Bill.

For more information about GI Bill programs, visit www.gibill.va.gov or contact your County Veterans Service Office. To locate the office nearest you, go to www.cacvso.org and click on Contact Us.

CONTRACT AWARDED FOR HOME FOR CHRONICALLY HOMELESS VETS

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) has selected to contractor to seismically upgrade and renovate Building 209 on the north end of the VA Greater Los Angeles Health Care System, West Los Angeles campus.

When the renovation is complete, Building 209 will be used for a compensated work therapy transitional residence program for approximately sixty-five homeless veterans for whom previous recovery attempts have failed.

Veterans will be enrolled in the Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) program to promote job-readiness

and improve functional status. The program will focus on providing resident veterans with training in daily life skills necessary to live effectively among others, to obtain and maintain gainful employment, to care for themselves in a healthy way, and to meet the veterans’ reasonable life goals. The ultimate goal of the program is to transition participants into independent permanent housing in the community (i.e., their own apartments). Once veterans are placed in permanent housing in the community, USDVA will continue providing active case management and additional services (mental health, medical, employment, and benefits).



Veterans will live in a mix of studio and one-bedroom units during their treatment. One wing of the building has been specifically designed for women under treatment. Training planned for the resident veterans includes life skills such as cooking, shopping, and traveling to appointments.

This initiative is part of the USDVA’s program for infrastructure improvements for the veterans healthcare system.



RELATIONSHIP RETREATS: FROM WARRIORS TO SOUL MATES

HELPING VETERANS STRENGTHEN THEIR MOST SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS

"I wish you could have been present to see the...the tears, bonding and joy, the healing for so many." VA Chaplain Dick Millspaugh is talking about the Veterans and loved ones who attend relationship-bonding retreats.

The Department of Veterans Affairs is trying a new path to caring for and healing the nation's wounded Veterans. Now, in addition to repairing their damaged bodies and minds, VA is going one step further and helping to repair their crumbling intimate relationships.

The retreats are conducted by VA chaplains, social workers, psychologists, and nurses. They are PAIRS-certified instructors, teaching better communication skills, relationship skills, and emotional literacy skills to couples. PAIRS stands for: Practical Application of Intimate Relationship Skills.

"Research shows that 70 percent of our combat Veterans are experiencing marital problems," said VA Chaplain Ron Craddock. "Twenty percent of them decide to divorce before they even return from theatre. This is staggering. The toll on the individual Veteran is staggering. The toll on his family is staggering."

"They taught us how to listen to each other," say Michelle, wife of an Army Veteran. "When that happens, it brings you closer together. It feels really, really good."

Chaplain Millspaugh has dozens of quotes like that.

The VA retreats, called "From Warrior to Soul Mate," are based on a program created by the nonprofit PAIRS Foundation which, for over a quarter century, has provided educational programs that deliver practical skills to strengthen

marriages and families.

The retreats take place in a group setting, with instructors, often over a Friday evening, Saturday and Sunday, or in several class sessions.

Instructors are skilled, perceptive, effective facilitators from various disciplines. They have been trained and certified.

The retreats of 30-60 people are conducted with an open invitation for participants to ask questions and offer contributions from their unique life experiences. After introductions, instructors outline ground rules for discussion, and then explore an understanding of how learning and relationships evolve. Soon participants are introduced to practical communication tools and invited to practice those skills with their partners.

An example of one of the sessions at a weekend retreat:

PAIRS Relationship Roadmap — The conversation begins with an exploration of the root causes of pain and pleasure, considering symptoms and signs of happiness and unhappiness and their connection to the deprivation or fulfillment of biologically-based needs, including the human need for bonding.

Here's a complete overview of what happens at the retreats and a look at the syllabus.

The vision to move the "From Warrior to Soul Mate" initiative from a local

RELATIONSHIPS, page 14 >>

<< RELATIONSHIPS

effort to a VA nationwide program has been an outstanding success. Since 2011:

- Nine “Train the Trainer” workshops have certified over 400 PAIRS facilitators at VA locations around the country.
- Multiple enrichment retreats have been held at 26 different sites to the benefit of hundreds of couples.
- Partnerships have been set up with the faith community, the American Red Cross, the Border Patrol and organizations serving Active Duty personnel.

Participants’ evaluations revealed that many Vets and their partners felt that “everyone in the military should be required to attend” such retreats, that the retreats helped with the problems of multiple deployments, PTSD, and other challenges of military service and transition.

“I would like to say thank you for PAIRS couples retreat. It helped my husband and I see that our relationship is still worth fighting for.”

In a lengthy report filled with important statistics, Chaplain Millspaugh reflected, “How can one measure the lives literally saved from suicide, the children not touched by divorce, the costs not

incurred by stress borne illnesses or homelessness?”

From Warrior to Soul Mate has been a unique and important program to help so many of America’s Veterans strengthen the health of their families.

For more information about the PAIRS program for Veterans, visit www.veterans.pairs.com or contact Chaplain Dick Millspaugh at dick.millspaugh@va.gov.

Source: USDVA

GOT YOUR 6 AND GIVE AN HOUR™ WORK TOGETHER FOR VETS

As many of you know, “Got your six” is a military expression that means “I’ve got your back, and you’ve got mine.” The six o’clock position or “six” is the designation of the rear of a military formation. “Got Your 6” is a campaign led by the entertainment industry to bridge the civilian-military divide.

Give an Hour™, a national nonprofit organization provides free and confidential mental health services



GOT YOUR SIX

to members of the military, veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, their loved ones, and their communities. The organization is now serving as the lead “activation partner” for the health pillar of the entertainment industry’s Got Your 6 campaign, which aims to connect ordinary Americans with veterans and military families to better enable military veterans to succeed in civilian life.

As part of this effort, Give an Hour™ is launching a website to house a wealth of educational materials on the mental health issues specific to the military and on military culture.

Issues such as PTS, military sexual trauma, suicide, and TBI, as well as deployment, reintegration, family life, and military children, will be explored. The site provides resources for Mental Health Professionals and School Faculty and Administrators. In addition, students, whether in undergraduate or graduate programs, will have easy access to numerous research studies, reports, books, films, sites, video clips, and other interactive material. For more information, visit the Got Your 6/ Give an Hour™ website at <http://connected.giveanhour.org/got-your-6.shtml>.

USDVA MEDICAL TRANSPLANT PROGRAM

A heart transplant can save the life of someone whose own heart has been damaged by injury or compromised by disease. A bone marrow transplant can help someone walk pain-free for the first time in years. For some, the decision to donate organs or tissue comes easily. For others—especially those who donate on behalf of a newly deceased loved one—the decision can be gut wrenching. In either case, the gift of organ or tissue donation forever changes the life of receivers.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) National Transplant Program has been providing solid organ transplants to veterans since 1961 when doctors performed the organization's first kidney transplant in Denver. Since then, the Program has expanded services to provide veterans with heart transplant services in 1980, bone marrow 1982, liver in 1989, and lung in 1991.

Most transplants are performed in specific USDVA medical centers across the country. USDVA also utilizes several sharing agreements with University affiliates and local emergency contracts for critical heart and liver cases. Following is a list of transplant services and their locations:

- Heart: Palo Alto, CA; Salt Lake City, UT; Madison, WI; Nashville, TN; Richmond, VA
- Bone marrow: Seattle, WA; Nashville, TN; San Antonio, TX
- Kidney: Portland, OR; Iowa City, IA; Nashville, TN, Pittsburgh, PA; Birmingham, AL*; Miami, FL*
- Liver: Portland, OR; Madison, WI; Nashville, TN, Houston, TX; Pittsburgh, PA, Miami, FL*, Richmond, VA
- Lung: Seattle, WA; Madison, WI, Baltimore, MD*

*Indicates Veterans Health Administration-approved but not yet operational

Transplant candidates must undergo detailed physical, laboratory and psychological evaluations to ensure proper selection and therapy. Tests are done to confirm the diagnosis, and to assess the candidate's ability to tolerate surgery.

For more information about the USDVA National Transplant Program, contact your USDVA specialist, primary care provider, or nearest USDVA medical facility. For a directory of USDVA hospitals and clinics, visit www2.va.gov/directory/guide/division_flsh.asp?dnum=1.

To learn more about organ transplant, including how you can give the gift of life by becoming an organ donor, visit www.organtransplants.org/understanding.

KEEPING UP THE FAMILY TRADITION—SERVICE

Debbie Gregory, CEO of MilitaryConnection.com, grew up surrounded by wounded Veterans. For as long as she could remember, most of her free time was spent at the V.A. with her dad; Debbie's dad was in and out of the hospital for most of his life. He endured surgery after surgery due to his service-related disabilities, including losing an arm. This gave him the opportunity to dispense important life lessons to his daughter, the most important of which was that whatever hand you're dealt in life, you play it. Debbie doesn't ever remember her dad feeling sorry for himself. Her dad always managed to find something positive, every single day, in spite of his pain and other challenges. And Debbie doesn't remember him ever giving less than 100% to any task at hand. Perhaps that is a common trait amongst many of those who wear our nation's uniform.

Debbie's dad hailed from Pittsburgh, PA, one of ten brothers, and he was one of the ten self-appointed protectors of their only sister, the youngest in the family. When war

CALVET

VETERANS HOME OF CALIFORNIA
BARSTOW



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 in Fresno and Redding will begin admitting residents in the Fall of 2013. 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

www.calvet.ca.gov

★ Veterans! ★

Getting the benefits you've earned?

Aware of benefit changes? Know where to find services?



<< **GREGORY**

broke out, Debbie’s dad served at the same time as seven of his brothers, the ones who were able to go to war. One brother, Carl, was a medic in the Pacific. He fought in 19 battles and saved countless lives. The youngest brother, Mickey, built the ship on which Carl later served. Another brother was a bomber pilot, who had a well-known roommate-Clark Gable! Brother Alan liberated an American POW camp in Germany, where he found a friend from their Pittsburgh neighborhood. Another brother, who had the talent to become a concert pianist, almost lost his right arm to a German hand grenade. He told the doctor that if they took his arm, he would rather be dead. Although he came home with his arm partially paralyzed, he continued to play the piano, and perform until he died. One of Debbie’s two oldest uncles, who did not go to war, was a police officer on the home front. The other worked as an engineer on the first atomic bomb. Debbie’s grandparents set a record both for having eight sons deployed and for selling \$1,000,000 in war bonds, placing their names in the Congressional Record.

Serving America’s Veterans has become Debbie’s life work because she knows, first-hand, the sacrifices these brave men and women have made for our country. In addition to founding VAMBOA, the Veteran and Military Business Owners Association, she is also a Board Member for the Gold Coast Veterans Foundation. Debbie was an integral part in

opening the Gold Coast Military Veterans Service Center, a one-stop facility serving the needs of Veterans in the tri-county areas of Ventura, San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara. Debbie brought Cal-Vet and Habitat for Humanity together, resulting in a win/win partnership of building 100 affordable California homes for Veterans. Debbie also serves in the Employment area of California’s Interagency Council on Veterans.

Debbie’s website, MilitaryConnection.com, serves the needs of active duty military, Guard and Reserves, Veterans and their loved ones. Referred to as *the go to site* for jobs, news, information, education, benefits and more, Military Connection has grown to be one of the most popular online destinations on the Internet for military, Veterans and their families. The site is one of the most comprehensive online directories of military and Veteran resources, with thousands of pages, and something for everyone. Their newsletter, sent out every other Friday, contains events and information that benefit California’s Veterans and their families. The website has been named a “Top 100 Employment Web Site” by the International Association of Employment Web Sites every year for the last four years. When the next tour is back home, it’s on MilitaryConnection.com, *the go to site*. Please sign up to receive their newsletter, as well as access to all premium areas of the website by visiting www.militaryconnection.com.

**“FRIENDS OF
 KOREAN WAR
 VETERANS”
 HONOR KOREAN
 WAR VETERANS**

By Jeanne Bonfilio

Mr. H. M. Shim, President of the “Friends of Korean War Veterans,” along with their Coordinator Charles Kim, and other members, visited the West Los Angeles Veterans Home March 14 during their trip to the United States from Seoul, South Korea. Their visit had a very special meaning: to honor and thank Korean War Veterans.

With this year marking the 60th Anniversary of the Korean War, Mr. Shim personally gifted beautiful medals to each Korean War Veteran or family member to show their deep appreciation and admiration. They also donated a large plaque of honor and appreciation and \$500 to the residents’ general fund. “We thank you – all of you – for what you have done for our Country,” said Mr. Shim. “We will never forget you. Our Country will never forget you.” Mr. Kim also said they would be delighted to visit the West Los Angeles Veterans Home annually.

HONOR, page 19 >>

<< HONOR

In the United States, the Korean War was initially described by President Harry S. Truman as a “police action” as it was conducted under the auspices of the United Nations. It has also been referred to as “The Forgotten War” or “The Unknown War” because of the lack of public attention it received both during and after the war, and in relation to the global scale of World War II, which preceded it, and the Vietnam War, which succeeded it. The United States of America provided 88% of the 341,000 international soldiers which aided South Korean forces in repelling the invasion of North Korea, with twenty other countries of the United Nations offering assistance.

Engraved on granite blocks at the Korean War Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. next to a water pool at the east end of the monument are the casualty statistics for the U.S. soldiers who fought in the Korean War:

- Dead – United States: 54,246, United Nations: 628,833
- Wounded – United States: 103,284, United Nations: 1,064,453.
- Captured – United States: 7,140, United Nations: 92,970.
- Missing – United States: 8,177, United Nations: 470,267.

A plaque at the Memorial reads: “Our nation honors her sons and daughters who answered the call to



Mr. H. M. Shim, President of the “Friends of Korean War Veterans” (right) presents a plaque of honor and appreciation to Korean War Veterans at the West Los Angeles Veterans Home and gifted them with special medals and hats.

defend a country they never knew and a people they never met.”

The California Department of Veterans Affairs sends their most sincere appreciation to Mr. H. M. Shim, Mr. Charles Kim and all members of the “Friends of Korean War Veterans” for their visit, their beautiful gifts and for their friendship – and thanks all Korean War Veterans for their dedicated service and sacrifices in the name of freedom at home and around the world.



Fourteen Korean War Veterans at the West Los Angeles Veterans Home pose with Mr. H. M. Shim (back row wearing dark suit), President of the “Friends of Korean War Veterans.”



VETERANS HOME CELEBRATES 129TH BIRTHDAY

The Veterans Home of California at Yountville invites the public to attend its 129th Founders Day celebration on Thursday starting at 1:30 p.m. in Grant Hall.

Marcella McCormack, home director, will speak. Also participating are the Veterans Home Honor Guard, the Veterans Home Wheelchair Drill Team and the Dix Bruce Band.

The winner of this year's Hall of Fame award will be announced.

The Grand Army of the Republic, which was made up of veterans of the Mexican and Civil wars, founded the Veterans Home of California at Yountville in 1884.

Since the facility's inception, it has been home to approximately 50,000 veterans. Today it is the largest veterans home in the United States, with 1,000 veterans who come from a wide range of military ranks and civilian occupations.

Current home residents have military service that spans from World War II up to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Since 1900, the home has been owned and operated by the state of California.

UPCOMING EVENTS



APRIL 17

Hire our Heroes Newly Returned Veterans Job, Resource & Career Fair

10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
401 Van Ness Avenue, 2nd Floor
San Francisco, CA

APRIL 18

Financial Literacy Series: Neighborhood Community Centers

5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Fruitridge Community Center
4000 Fruitridge Road
Sacramento, CA
Contact: Susie.Low@asm.ca.gov

APRIL 26

CalVet Secretary's Conference

8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
California Emergency
Management Agency
3650 Schriever Avenue
Mather, CA 95655

APRIL 27

How Are Veterans Changing America?

1:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.
UCLA De Neve Auditorium
351 Charles E. Young Dr West
Los Angeles, CA
Contact: Jennifer Y. Lee
(424) 229-9493

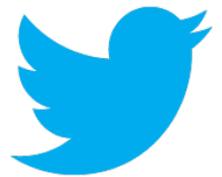
MAY 3

Retirement Dinner for
Dr. Brian J. O'Neill, MD
Director of the VA Northern
California Health Care System
5:30 p.m.
Fairfield, CA

MAY 27

Memorial Day

FOLLOW US!



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

CalVet News

1227 O Street, Room 300
Sacramento, CA 95814
P (916) 653-2192
F (916) 653-2611
pao@calvet.ca.gov

JP Tremblay

Deputy Secretary, Communications

Carolyn Ballou

Public Information Officer

Jaime Arteaga

Public Information Officer

Ron Brand

Public Information Officer

Thomas Moralez

Graphic Designer

Greg Nannini

Office Technician