

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](http://www.cacvso.org).

**MARCH 2013**



## GOV APPOINTS VETS SERVICES DEPUTY SECRETARY

Longtime veteran advocate and U.S. Army veteran Keith Boylan, of Winters, California was recently appointed by Governor Brown to serve as deputy secretary of veterans services at the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet).

On the job for less than two days, he was already interviewed by local media. How do veteran unemployment statistics compare

to those of the civilian population? What are the benefits of hiring veterans? What challenges do veteran job seekers face? Boylan had ready answers and appeared quite comfortable in front of the camera. His years of experience in the veteran arena was clear.

Before joining CalVet, Boylan had been government relations liaison at the California Association of Veteran Service Agencies (CAVSA) since 2012 and government relations and community education manager at the Institute for Veteran Policy since 2008. He was owner and operator of Boylan Window Fashions from 2004 to 2008 and gulf war program coordinator at Swords to Plowshares from 1998 to 2003. From 1989 to 1992, Boylan was an Army tactical fire specialist. He is a member of the American Legion and of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

“Keith brings a wealth of valuable experience to this position,” said CalVet Secretary Peter J. Gravett. “His work with CAVSA and the Institute for Veteran Policy will be especially helpful as the Department works to create additional avenues through which veterans and veteran families can connect with the benefits they are entitled to.”

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## WOMEN'S MILITARY HISTORY WEEK, MARCH 18-22

Every March, California recognizes the historical contributions of women to the state and nation. As part of that recognition the third week of the month is set aside to recognize the role of women in our state and nation's military history.

Women have been part of our nation's military history from the time of the revolution and up through today. Now, more than ever, with the recent repeal of the ban on women in combat, women are taking an increasing role in our military

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# Secretary's Message

Fellow Veterans  
and Esteemed Readers,

Happy Women's History Month. In honor of this month long celebration, I ask you to take a moment to reflect on the many positive contributions women have made to the history of our country and to the progress of our society. Women's rights and equality benefit all of us, not just the female gender. In honor of California's Women's Military History Week from March 18 – 24, I especially ask that you remember and honor the contributions women have made to our Armed Forces and in defense of this country. Women have bravely served in every major U.S. conflict and have been Prisoners of War and Purple Heart recipients revealing their dedication, patriotism and courage. They served in the American Revolution and in the U.S. Civil War, often dressed as men so that they would be allowed to fight.

Currently, women make up 14% of the active duty U.S. Armed Forces and 18% of the Guard and Reserves. Women also make up 8 percent of the total U.S. veterans population and 10 percent of the veterans population in California. Nationally and statewide, the women veteran population will continue to grow. Therefore, it is imperative that we remember to recognize and honor their service and contributions, as they often face unique challenges

when transitioning out of the military and back into our communities.

Unfortunately, instances of homelessness, single parenthood and military sexual assault are higher among women veterans than they are among male veterans. It is estimated that 10 percent of the national homeless veteran population is female and one in five women report military sexual assault or harassment to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

As a community of veterans and supporters, we must continue to raise awareness about women's service in the military. We must also create more programs that serve their needs to ensure their future success. Currently, CalVet is addressing the needs of women veterans by advocating for the continued expansion of programs and services that assist them, increasing outreach across the state and increasing their knowledge of state and federal benefits. We are also working with community based organizations and government agencies to collectively address the challenges of serving this underrepresented population.

Throughout March, there are several events planned throughout the state in honor of women in the military. Most are posted on our events calendar, so please spread the word! We also hope to see as many veterans and supporters at this

year's Women Veterans Leadership Conference in San Diego from September 25 – 27. To all of our veterans, thank you for your sacrifice and service. To volunteers and family members of veterans, thank you for your continued support of our nation's heroes.

Sincerely,



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



## << HISTORY WEEK

history. The Women's Military History Week is meant to highlight the achievements, sacrifices, challenges and contribution of women in all branches of the U.S. Military.

As part of that week's celebration and in partnership with the Commission on the Status of Women

and Girls, the California Research Bureau, the State Library and VHA Mather Field, CalVet will host a reception in celebration of Women's Military History Week on March 20th, 2013 at the California State Library from 5pm-8pm. CalVet will invite women veterans, community supporters and members of the California State Assembly and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees to attend the reception, which will include appetizers, women veteran speakers, an awards ceremony and the screening of the film, "Service: When Women Come Marching Home."

Filmmaker Marcia Rock and woman veteran, Alicia Thompson, who is featured in the film, will also be present to introduce the film and

answer questions. Disabled American Veterans is invited to host an informational table at the reception and speak as the presenting sponsor of the film. Space at this event is limited and the total expected attendance is approximately 100 people.

## << BOYLAN

With Boylan in place, Deputy Secretary for Minority Veterans Affairs Lee Gutierrez, who had also been Acting Deputy Secretary for Veterans Services, returns to devoting his time exclusively to minority veterans' issues.

## RECORD-BREAKING FEDERAL BENEFITS PAYMENTS TO VETERANS

Thanks to the efforts of the California County Veterans Service Officers (CVSOs), tens of thousands of California veterans are getting the federal benefits they've earned through their military service. In fact, during Fiscal Year 2011-2012, CVSOs set a new-veterans benefits record by garnering \$346,727,459 in benefit payments which are paid directly to qualifying veterans. That accomplishment bests the previous fiscal year's total by nearly 6%.

"The partnership between CalVet and the CVSOs is critical to the ability of each to effectively reach and assist California veterans and their families," said Secretary Peter J. Gravett. "Besides improving the lives of families, the dollars veterans benefits bring into the State improve local communities as well. We appreciate the work the CVSOs do and congratulate them on their steadily increasing benefit payment numbers."

State and federal veterans benefits, available to everyone honorably discharged from the U.S. military, include disability compensation and pension payments, healthcare, money for education and training, housing, home loans, and many others. Unlike Social Security, veterans' benefits must be applied for individually. The CVSOs are trained, accredited professionals located in each county who help veterans and their families navigate the complex and often frustrating benefit application processes. By law, this service is provided at no cost to the veterans.

For a list of County Veterans Service Offices in California, go to [www.cacvso.org](http://www.cacvso.org) and click on Contact Us.



## INCREASING LICENSE PLATE SALES SUPPORT VET SERVICES

The California Veterans License Plate Program provided County Veteran Services Offices statewide with nearly a \$740,000 in additional resources last year that was used to reach out to veterans and educate them about the benefits and services available to them.

The California Veteran License Plate Program offers specially-designed plates to California veterans and to those who want to honor them. In 2012, the sale of "Veteran" and "Honoring Veterans" plates generated more than \$734,000, nearly \$56,000 more than the year before. Since its inception in 1995, the program has generated more than \$8 million. That money helps support a network of 58 County Veteran Services Offices statewide.

"The money generated by the license plate program provides

much-needed support for the County Veterans Services Offices which is where the rubber meets the road for veterans who want to claim the benefits they've earned through military service," said CalVet Secretary Peter J. Gravett. "The CVSOs answer all manner of benefit-related questions for veterans and their families and help them navigate the complex and often frustrating benefit application processes."

California Veteran License Plates are made possible through a partnership between the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) and the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). These specialty plates can be customized with the armed forces or veterans service organization logo or emblem of choice.

State and federal veterans benefits, available to everyone honorably discharged from the U.S. military, include disability compensation and pension payments, healthcare, money for education and training, housing, home loans, and many others. The CVSOs are trained, accredited professionals located in each county who help veterans and their families access those benefits. By law, this service is provided at no cost to the veterans.

To learn more or order a specialty license plate, visit the DMV website at [www.dmv.ca.gov/online/elp/elp.htm](http://www.dmv.ca.gov/online/elp/elp.htm). To find the County Veterans Service Offices in your area, go to [www.cacvso.org](http://www.cacvso.org) and click on Contact Us.

## WOMEN VETS TEAM-BUILDING CHALLENGE

Join Veterans Cadre in supporting the women who will undertake the GORUCK Light Challenge in San Francisco this March 23, 2013. The GORUCK Light challenge is an introduction to similar team-based training found in Special Operations. Each challenge group consists of up to 30 participants and is led by an experienced member of Special Operations who will teach leadership as the class overcomes adversity to become a team. The GORUCK Light Challenge takes place over 4-5 hours and will cover an obstacle course roughly 7-10 miles.

The Veterans Cadre GORUCK Women Veterans group is currently made up of 21 women, most of whom are veterans and students living entirely off of their GI Bill benefits. The American Legion Post 620 has generously donated \$600 to get the group started. The group needs to raise an additional \$1,000 to help cover the cost of lodging, fuel and food. There is still room for an additional 9 women veterans who may wish to join in this challenge. For information on donating or to sign up for the GORUCK Women Veterans group, visit Veterans Cadre at [www.VeteransCadre.org](http://www.VeteransCadre.org) or contact Catherine J. Morris, M.S. at [cmorris@sierracollege.edu](mailto:cmorris@sierracollege.edu).

# MORTGAGE-FREE HOMES AWARDED TO QUALIFIED VETERANS

Fans of Country Western singing Superstar George Strait got an additional treat at concerts in Sacramento and Fresno recently. They got to see veterans get keys to their brand new, mortgage-free homes. The lucky individuals won the homes by applying to the Military Warriors Support Foundation, which, in partnership with Chase Bank, gives homes to combat-wounded veterans and Gold Star spouses. To ensure homeownership success, the families will also receive three years of family and financial mentoring.

To be eligible to apply for the program, a veteran must have been injured during combat in Iraq or Afghanistan; must be retired or already separated from the military; and must be mortgage-free. Those with compelling situations, who are less than 30 days from retirement or separation, may be considered.

The program's first priority is to place families who currently live at an Operation Homefront Village, which provides transitional housing for wounded warrior families.

Operation Homefront Village SoCal, the only location in California, is located in Oceanside and serves



primarily Balboa Hospital and Camp Pendleton.

Other wounded warriors, surviving single spouses of those killed-in-action, and post-9/11 disabled veterans also receive priority consideration under the program. Any veteran of any era, regardless of wounded or disability status, will be eligible to apply.

To view program eligibility requirements and a list of homes currently available, go to <http://militarywarriors.org/openhomes>. New homes are added every week.

Don't see a home you are interested in? Fill out an Open Application at [www.militarywarriors.org/openapplication](http://www.militarywarriors.org/openapplication). Specify up to four locations in which you would like to live. The Foundation will contact you when a home within 50 miles of your location becomes available.

# BECOME A VET-FRIENDLY EMPLOYER

The significant tax breaks and other incentives available to employers that hire veterans have inspired many to increase their veteran recruitment efforts. Some companies have even begun to advertise themselves as "veteran friendly." But there's more to being a veteran-friendly employer than just a company's willingness to hire veterans. Following are steps companies can take to ensure job-seeking veterans respond to recruitment efforts and feel welcomed once hired.

Understand that military service is an important part of a candidate's background and can be a strong predictor of his or her ability to receive and respond to supervision and training.

Become knowledgeable about the types of jobs and levels of responsibilities a veteran or transitioning service member may have had while in the military. In simple terms, commissioned officers plan, enlisted personnel execute, and non-commissioned officers supervise with the commissioned officer's plan in mind. Warrant officers serve as subject matter experts.

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## << EMPLOYER

Take advantage of the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Information Network (O\*NET). This system can help translate military occupational classification codes and military titles into civilian equivalents so you can better evaluate a veteran job seeker's qualifications.

Learn something about military culture. Though created specifically for behavioral health psychologists, the Center for Deployment Psychology offers a free online tutorial, Military Cultural Competence. This Web-based training course is a quick and easy way to gain a better perspective on military culture.

Consider making someone who is familiar with military experience and culture available to help veterans and wounded warriors with the employment process, if necessary.

Review your company's Employee Assistance Program. Make sure it is equipped to offer the full spectrum of behavioral health issues that affect some veterans.

Encourage your EAP personnel to develop partnerships with local veterans service organizations, County Veterans Service Offices and the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) so you can stay connected and updated on new resources. Small businesses that do not offer EAP services may be able to join with other small businesses to form a consortium to do so.



Understand your responsibilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Facts about the ADA's reasonable accommodation can be found in a variety of sources, including ADA's National Network of Disability Business Technical Assistance Centers. There are several sources for financial assistance and tax incentives to help employers (including small employers) make accommodations and comply with the requirements of the ADA.

Make assistive technology available to those who need it. The National Assistive Technology Technical Assistance Partnership provides technical assistance regarding funding of assistive technology. Funding may be available through the State Assistive Technology Act.

Promote an inclusive workplace to retain veteran employees. Most employees want to know and feel they are appreciated, respected and worthwhile to the team. There are, however, specific things you can do to enhance your veteran-focused retention efforts.

- Develop and promote peer mentorships in the workplace - Vet to Vet
- Practice Veterans appreciation and promote a Veteran-friendly workplace
- Recognize that military families may have different needs than civilian families
- Consider participating in local Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Programs

Help veterans and their families get connected to the state and federal benefits they have earned through military service by referring them to the CalVet website, [www.calvet.ca.gov](http://www.calvet.ca.gov) or to their County Veterans Service Office. To find the CVSO nearest you, visit [www.cacvso.org](http://www.cacvso.org) and click on Contact Us.

Create a page on your website or intranet that offers information and resources specifically for veterans and their families. For help, contact Carolyn Ballou at the California Department of Veterans Affairs, [carolyn.ballou@calvet.ca.gov](mailto:carolyn.ballou@calvet.ca.gov).

For more information visit the America's Heroes at Work website at [www.americasheroesatwork.gov](http://www.americasheroesatwork.gov).

## VETS RETRAINING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM DEADLINE LOOMS

Veterans wanting to take advantage of the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP) must enroll in school by this month to receive the full 12 months of education benefits.

VRAP gives unemployed veterans who do not have any U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) educational benefits 12 months of Montgomery GI Bill benefits (\$1,564/month) for training towards a high-demand occupation. After completing the program, veterans receive employment assistance.

VRAP is a joint effort of the USDVA and U.S. Department of Labor. Nationally, the program is limited to 99,000 participants. As of early February, 2013, the USDVA had received over 94,000 applications, and had approved 77,000 Certificates of Eligibility. However, just over 27,000 of those eligible had begun using their benefit.

To qualify, a veteran must:

- Be at least 35 but not more than 60 years old;
- Be unemployed on the day of application;
- Have an other-than-dishonorable discharge;
- Not be eligible for any other USDVA education program (e.g., the Post-9/11 GI Bill, Montgomery GI Bill, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Assistance);
- Not be in receipt of USDVA compensation due to un-employability and not be enrolled in a federal or state job training program;
- Pursue a program that leads to employment in a high-demand occupation.

For more information and to apply for the VRAP benefit, go to [www.benefits.va.gov/VOW/education.htm](http://www.benefits.va.gov/VOW/education.htm).

If you are a veteran who got a VRAP Certificate of Eligibility but does not intend to go to school, please contact the USDVA as soon as possible to cancel your enrollment so another veteran can take advantage of this valuable benefit.

## WORKING LUNCHES FOR SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS

The Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz) is pleased to announce working lunches for small business owners. The programs will provide information on healthcare compliance, workforce training funds and resources to help grow your business. Veteran small business owners and Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise owners are encouraged to attend.

The next Working Lunch is scheduled for March 14, 2013 at the Hyatt House, 5800 Shellmound Street, Emeryville. Learn how the new health care law affects small businesses, how to qualify for employee training funds, and what GO-Biz can do for your business.

For more information, to register for this event, or to learn about future events, visit [www.baydevco.com/brownbag](http://www.baydevco.com/brownbag).

For more information about GO-Biz, visit [www.business.ca.gov](http://www.business.ca.gov).



## WEST LA HOME RESIDENTS HELP TROOPS OVERSEAS

By Jeanne Bonfilio

As part of Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment's "Operation Skyfall" event and in partnership with "Operation Gratitude," West Los Angeles Veterans Home residents stuffed goodie boxes and care packages for troops overseas. "Operation Skyfall" is the latest in the series of James Bond movies.

The event was held last month at the National Guard Armory in Van Nuys where "Operation Gratitude" has been coordinating the packing and shipping of packages for active-duty military and veterans for years.

Activity Coordinators Annicka Sanders and Teri Fukushima coordinated West Los Veterans Home

residents' participation -- and with Sanders, Veterans Home volunteer Barbara Bohlman was on-site for support. Members of the media were also on hand to cover the event during which at least 120 volunteers created more than 1,200 goodie boxes and care packages, which will be delivered to active-duty military serving overseas.

"It was amazing to see the way this event was coordinated, and how nice and generous event staff were to me and to our Veterans," said Sanders. "It made me so happy to be a part of this wonderful event!"

Event staff helped to accommodate wheelchair-bound residents who were excited to help out. In addition, a beautiful, chartered bus was sent directly to the Veterans Home to provide transportation. The bus arrived with a television, beverages and a wonderful driver who was patient and kind to residents and Veterans Home staff. "Overall it was an amazing experience and we can't wait to return in the future," added Sanders. "Residents were so excited and they are still talking about it! We were truly grateful to be a part of this awesome deed for our troops overseas!"

"The packages included useful toiletries troops could use along with a copy of the DVD of SKYFALL," added event coordinator Michelle Madrid, representing Awestruck Entertainment. "The event was a huge success and Veterans were grateful to have been part of this feel-good event!"

The California Department of Veterans Affairs would like to thank Michelle Madrid, Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment and "Operation Gratitude" for reaching out to the West Los Angeles Veterans Home residents and including them in this great event—and for honoring our Nation's military and Veterans.

## WAR PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBIT COMES TO LOS ANGELES

*WAR/PHOTOGRAPHY: Images of Armed Conflict and Its Aftermath* will open at the Annenberg Space for Photography in Los Angeles on March 23, 2013 and run through June 2, 2013.

*WAR/PHOTOGRAPHY* encompasses over 150 images going as far back as 1887 through present-day and is arranged by themes presenting both the military and civilian point of view including the advent of war, daily routines, the fight itself, the aftermath, medical care, prisoners of war, refugees, executions, memorials, remembrance and more.

The exhibit includes the work of award-winning portrait

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photographers and photojournalists, military photographers, amateurs and artists including iconic images such as Joe Rosenthal's Old Glory Goes Up on Mount Suribachi, Iwo Jima and Alfred Eisenstaedt's V-J Day, Times Square, New York. Recognizable from news coverage is Eddie Adams' image of the execution of a Viet Cong prisoner on the streets of Saigon.

Specific to the Los Angeles exhibit will be the Annenberg Space for Photography's original short

documentary film and digital image presentation. Both the documentary and digital gallery will feature over 500 photographs exclusive to the Photography Space from six acclaimed contemporary conflict photographers: Alexandra Avakian, Carolyn Cole, Ashley Gilbertson, Edouard H.R. Glück, David Hume Kennerly and Joao Silva.

In interviews in the film, these six photographers share their experiences, including life-threatening situations faced by their subjects and themselves. Photographer Joao Silva revisits sites

in his native South Africa, recalling the violence that led up to that country's first democratic election in 1994. Ashley Gilbertson is filmed in Midland, Texas, on the final shoot for his book, *Bedrooms of the Fallen*, which examines the bedrooms of young soldiers who never returned home from war.

This exhibition has been organized by The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. For more information about this and other Annenberg Space exhibits, visit [www.annenberg.space.for.photography.org](http://www.annenberg.space.for.photography.org).

## 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,

# MILITARY- CONNECTION WRITERS' CIRCLE

Do you have story to tell or an issue you are passionate about? Do you want to let others know about your program or how you are making a difference? If so, you are invited to participate in the MilitaryConnection Writers' Circle. The Writers' Circle



features guest writers who want to share their thoughts, deeds and ideas with our audience.

To be included, your article must be 300-600 words of original content, not copy written, and

non-political. Your articles will be featured in the Writers' Circle of the [MilitaryConnection.com](http://MilitaryConnection.com) website. Some articles will be featured in upcoming newsletters. For admission consideration, e-mail your article to [info@militaryconnection.com](mailto:info@militaryconnection.com).

# VETERANS UNITED SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The ever-increasing cost of a post-secondary degree is one of the greatest challenges facing many of our nation's finest. Despite the aid of veterans benefits like the Montgomery GI Bill, the financial burden of college can seem insurmountable and may discourage some veterans from even applying to attend.

In an effort to address this need, Veterans United Foundation has established the Veterans United Scholarship Program. This program aims to assist veterans, military service members and their families by awarding five bi-annual \$2,000 scholarships to help pay for tuition and books.

To qualify, applicants must be pursuing a post-secondary degree at an accredited college or university and have a connection to the military by being one of the following:

- Active-duty service member
- Veteran
- Spouse of military member or veteran
- Surviving spouse of a fallen soldier
- Child of a military member or veteran

Eligibility also requires that applicants be either currently enrolled in a post-secondary school or planning to attend a post-secondary school the following year. This includes high school seniors. Eligible applicants must submit transcripts reflecting a minimum 2.5 grade point average on 4.0 scale.

Applicants must also submit an essay no longer than 750 words based on one of three prompts made available in the spring and fall by Veterans United Scholarship Program. Spring essays will be accepted April 1-30, 2013 and scholarship recipients will be announced by May 15, 2013.

For more information, visit [www.veteransunited.com/about/scholarships](http://www.veteransunited.com/about/scholarships) and [www.enhancelives.com](http://www.enhancelives.com), respectively.

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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](http://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](http://www.organtransplants.org/understanding).



## WILDLAND FIREFIGHTER PROGRAM

Veteran Meikell Lamarr was considering his options after leaving military service when a California Conservation Corps veterans program caught his eye. In partnership with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), the program combines hands-on work experience with skills training that prepares veterans to work as wildland firefighters. They learn chain saw and tool use, safety, crew organization, and firefighting techniques. They also work on fuel reduction, forestry and wildfire education projects.

In April of 2012, Meikell was accepted into the CCC program and assigned to the Placer Center's fire crew in Auburn. He received Hazmat, flood, mechanical operations, emergency camp support and basic fire training. Later that month, the CCC and USFS held a four-day training and recruitment event for the four veterans fire crews throughout the

state, during which his crew and others received rigorous training to sharpen their firefighting skills.

"By the beginning of June, most of our crew had been picked up for seasonal fire crew employment with either the USFS or the Bureau of Land Management. By the end of June, all but one veteran had been picked up," said Meikell. "All in all, the program was one of the best experiences of my life, and now I'm qualified to fight fire for the rest of my life."

Those veterans successfully completing the CCC/USFS program, that includes fire training and 4-6 months of forestry work experience, are eligible to enter the USFS Wildland Fire Apprenticeship Program. That program provides education, training and work experience for up to four years, after which the apprentice reaches

journey-level status as a wildland firefighter.

Program Qualifications:

- Honorable Discharge or General Discharge under Honorable Conditions;
- 18-25 years of age;
- Not on parole or formal or supervised probation;
- No conviction for violent offenses or drug crimes;
- Able to pass background check, drug test, physical exam and training;
- Willing to work outdoors in all types of weather and conditions;
- Willing to respond to emergencies;
- Willing to participate in education programs.

Residential programs are available in Lake Tahoe and Auburn. Non-residential programs are available in San Diego and San Bernardino.

To learn more about the program or to apply, contact Meikell Lamarr, (916) 341-3200, meikell.lamarr@ccc.ca.gov. **The application deadline is March 25, 2012.**

# TRUCK DRIVERS' RIDE FOR PRIDE

By Eleanor Boudreau, NPR

After Dave Carter retired from the Air Force, he started driving an 18-wheeler. When Carter is on the road (which is most of the time now), he sleeps behind the steering on a twin bed in the small cab of the truck, and it reminds him of his time in the military.

"A lot of veterans are attracted to this line of work, because the living conditions sometimes are austere, Spartan in some degree, and for vets, it's like being deployed," Carter said. Carter drives a distinctive big-rig emblazoned with symbols of patriotism for one of the largest trucking companies in the country, Schneider National. Carter pointed to a spot on his fender where the words 'In Memoriam to Deceased Veterans' were printed, "It's called the 'Ride of Pride.' There are four of them in the U.S., one in Canada," Carter said, "They are commemorating active duty folks and veterans."

The mobile-memorial is also a rolling-advertisement geared to make former military members aware of jobs at Schneider National. Despite the fact that millions of Americans are looking for work, ninety percent of trucking companies say they can't find enough drivers. Long hours and many nights spent away from home make the driver's seat difficult to fill, so trucking companies are targeting



a group they believe has the skill-set to handle a tough job—veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan. Like other large trucking companies, Schneider National has ramped-up its efforts to recruit veterans since 2001.

Vice President of recruiting at Schneider Mike Hinz says close to 15 percent of his approximately 13,000 drivers are veterans and he still wants more. "They're fit, drug-free, well-experienced, typically very emotionally mature, wake up on time and work their tails off to do a great job," Hinz said.

Many former soldiers also have experience driving big vehicles. Thirty two states waive the driving portion of the commercial driver's license test for veterans.\* Most military vehicles have automatic transmissions, whereas most commercial vehicles have manual transmissions, so even an experienced military driver may need a few lessons before heading across the Rocky Mountains with a full trailer.

Vets who obtain a commercial license and stick to trucking can reportedly make upwards of \$50,000 annually by the end of their first year.

*\*A federal law allowing this waiver went into effect on January 1, 2013. The new law authorizes the California Department of Motor Vehicles to waive the driving skills test required by federal regulations for a commercial motor vehicle driver with military commercial motor vehicle experience who is currently licensed with the United States Armed Forces at the time of his or her application for a commercial driver's license, and whose driving record in combination with his or her driving experience meets, at a minimum, specified conditions required by federal law.*

# USDVA IN-VITRO FERTILIZATION COVERAGE?

Wounded veterans and their spouses who want to have children could get the government to pay for treatments such as in-vitro fertilization (IVF) under proposed federal legislation. If signed into law, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) would provide medical coverage for one of the signature wounds of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan: trauma to a soldier's reproductive organs. It is estimated that as many as 3,500 people a

year would be eligible to receive fertilization assistance.

The USDVA currently covers a range of medical treatment for veterans, including some infertility care, but the legislation specifically authorizes the USDVA to cover IVF and to pay for procedures now provided for some critically injured active-duty soldiers.

The legislation, estimated to cost \$568 million over five years, would be covered through savings from scaling down military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

# KINGS COUNTY VETERANS JOB, RESOURCE FAIR

The Kings County Veterans Employment Committee is planning a job and resource fair for veterans, military, National Guard, reservists and their dependents and survivors. The Event will be held on May 2, 2013 at West Hills College in Lemoore.

If you are an employer looking to hire or a veterans-resource provider and would like to participate, please contact James Bradford at (559) 852-2121 or [james.bradford@edd.ca.gov](mailto:james.bradford@edd.ca.gov) for more information.

## USDVA BRIEFS

### VA HIRES MORE MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced that it has made significant progress in providing increased access to mental health care services for our Nation's Veterans by hiring new mental health professionals. <http://1.usa.gov/14OnERw>

### VA ISSUES NEW REPORT ON SUICIDE DATA

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today released a comprehensive report on Veterans who die by suicide. In the past, data on Veterans who died by suicide was only available for those who had sought VA health care services. Today's report also includes state data for Veterans who had not received health care services from VA, which will help VA

strengthen its aggressive suicide prevention activities. <http://1.usa.gov/YIMMcH>

### NEW MEMBERS APPOINTED TO VA ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON MINORITY VETERANS

The Department of Veterans Affairs has announced the appointment of six new members to the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans. The committee advises the Secretary of Veterans Affairs regarding the needs of minority Veterans with respect to compensation, health care, rehabilitation, outreach, and other benefits and programs administered by the VA. <http://1.usa.gov/11nEjHW>

### DISABILITY CLAIMS INITIATIVE REDUCES PROCESSING TIME, ADDS CONVENIENCE

The Department of Veterans Affairs has launched a new initiative that could eliminate

the requirement for an in person medical examination for some Veterans and shorten the time it takes to process Veterans' disability compensation claims. The initiative, called Acceptable Clinical Evidence (ACE), was developed to provide a Veteran centric approach for disability examinations. <http://1.usa.gov/Wi4BNs>

### VETERANS AFFAIRS INFLUENZA SELF ASSESSMENT TOOL

The VA website now has a tool to help veterans and their caregivers decide whether to see a doctor for symptoms that might be caused by the flu. It is provided for information purposes only and should not be used as a substitute for evaluation and treatment by a healthcare professional. <http://1.usa.gov/X04KnX>

# 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:

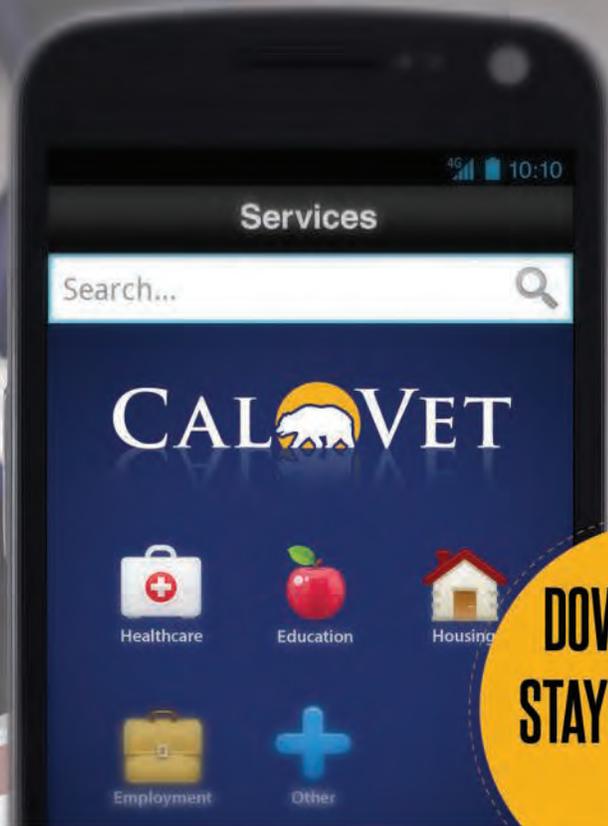
**Veterans Home of California—Barstow**  
**100 E. Veterans Parkway**  
**Barstow, CA 92311**  
**(800) 746-0606, ext. 1**

[www.calvet.ca.gov](http://www.calvet.ca.gov)

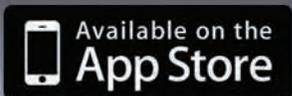
# ★ Veterans! ★

Getting the benefits you've earned?

Aware of benefit changes? Know where to find services?



**DOWNLOAD &  
STAY INFORMED!**



# DISABLED VETERAN'S NON-PROFIT BRINGS BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY TO CAMP PENDLETON

With thousands of military men and women returning from serving their country—many disabled by multiple tours—finding a way to become financially independent isn't easy or clear to many. Dismal unemployment, misunderstanding and prejudice makes finding a job difficult, so becoming your own boss is a critical opportunity for many in a successful transition to civilian life.

The non-profit California Disabled Veteran Business Alliance is comprised of disabled veteran business owners who are reaching out to help service men and women find a way to get into business. Veterans and disabled veterans are urged to attend this important meeting.

The San Diego, Los Angeles & Orange County area CA DVB Alliance Chapters will hold their quarterly meeting at the Camp Pendleton Events Center to bring this important opportunity directly to the latest generation of troops; Monday, March 25 beginning at 11:30 AM. The Camp Pendleton Events Center is near the Main gate, Bldg. 202850 San Jacinto Rd.

Speakers and veteran business owners will help answer questions and identify avenues for creating new business opportunity. With mandated goals in purchasing goods

and services for State, Federal and many private industry companies seeking to support veteran-owned business, becoming your own boss is a real alternative to taking a job. For troops who often must take time away to attend counseling or medical appointments, owning your own business removes many of the obstacles to success in creating a new income.

DVBE Outreach and Education Coordinators from the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) will be at this event to answer questions about the State's Small Business (SB) and Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise (DVBE) Programs. CalVet looks forward to increasing the number of opportunities veterans have to provide goods and services to our headquarters and the eight Veterans Homes statewide.

CalVet is extremely supportive of SB and DVBE and actively seeks partnerships with them. Being certified by the State as a SB provides a 5 percent bid preference, and the State may also offer up to a 5 percent incentive for DVBE participation in the formal bid process. The friendly, professional people in the CalVet's Certified Business Advocate Program are ready to assist veterans in successfully participating in the State's procurement process.



Questions regarding the CalVet's Certified Business Advocate Program can be directed to Gloria Anderson, SB/DVBE Advocate, at (916) 651-3045 or [Gloria.Anderson@CalVet.ca.gov](mailto:Gloria.Anderson@CalVet.ca.gov).

For more information about the CA DVB Alliance or about the nation's largest disabled veteran business expo, "Keeping the Promise," May 13-14, 2013, visit [www.cadvbe.org](http://www.cadvbe.org) or [www.ktpexpo.org](http://www.ktpexpo.org), respectively.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## MARCH 12

### Medal of Honor Recipients Ceremony

8:15 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.  
Santos Manuel Student Union  
Events Center  
San Bernardino, CA  
*Preregistration required*  
Contact: (909) 537-5196

## MARCH 20

### California State Council Day at the State Capitol

Vietnam Veterans of America  
8:00 a.m.  
*Free breakfast and lunch provided to all VVA and AVVA members who register*  
Contact: pconaty@sbcglobal.net

## MARCH 22

### Women Veterans Seminar "Getting Yourself Back Into the Workforce"

8:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.  
Rancho Santiago Community  
College, Santa Ana  
Employment Development  
Department  
*RSVP by March 19*  
Contact: (714) 565-2624

## MARCH 26

### Women Veterans Networking Breakfast

9 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.  
Coco's Restaurant  
284 East Highland Ave.  
San Bernardino

### US Chamber "Hiring Our Heroes" Job Fairs

10 a.m. - 1 p.m.  
The Proud Bird Restaurant  
11022 Aviation Boulevard  
Los Angeles, CA 90045

## MARCH 27

### San Francisco Resource and Career Fair

County Fair Building  
1199 9th Avenue  
San Francisco

## MARCH 28

### US Chamber "Hiring Our Heroes" Job Fairs

10 a.m. - 1 p.m.  
VFW Hall Post 8900  
3585 N. Blythe Ave  
Fresno, CA 93722

**FOLLOW  
US!**



*NOTE: TO VIEW FULL CALENDAR, VISIT [WWW.CALVET.CA.GOV/FILES/EVENTS\\_CALENDAR.PDF](http://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