



# VETERANS ASSISTANCE FOUNDATION

## THE ALLIANCE

VAF, 312 Superior Avenue, Tomah, WI 54660 866-823-8387 [www.vafvets.org](http://www.vafvets.org) Visit us on Twitter & Facebook  

Fall 2014

SERVING WISCONSIN'S AND THE NATION'S HOMELESS VETERANS FOR OVER 20 YEARS

### FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK



Entering my sixth month as part of the VAF team, I have to say that I am still very much honored to be in the unique position to do something I love and admire: helping fellow veterans in need. Every day I learn something new about our programs and our veterans and I continue to be amazed by the generosity of people in our great state.

Since I started in June, we have received amazing donations from groups like the Friends of Veterans of Tomah, Walker Stainless of New Lisbon, One Acchord Performance Company, Marine Corps League Det. 359 out of Beaver Dam and many, many more. Today, we received another great donation from Fairway Independent Mortgage out of Madison. The support is there and gaining for our program. Thank you to everyone I mentioned and also to those that I didn't specifically mention. We appreciate your support.

If you or your organization is interested in donating to VAF, there are countless ways to do so: Donate money directly to VAF with a check via mail or over the phone with credit card; Donate via our

website at [www.vafvets.org](http://www.vafvets.org) through PayPal. A minimum of 95% of all donations made directly to the program go toward services or programs that help our veterans. Another option is to review our veteran "wish list" on our website to see the items that are in greatest need and donate those items specifically. Have a car or boat that you want to get rid of, but don't know what to do with it? Check out the C.A.R.S. program on our website where you can donate your auto/boat/ATV and the proceeds are donated directly to VAF. For our government employee benefactors, you may also donate through the Combined Federal Campaign (our CFC number is 71109). For those who are members of Thrivent Financial, you may designate Thrivent Choice Dollars to go to the Veterans Assistance Foundation.

As we approach the holiday season, I would like to take a minute to recognize the entire staff of VAF for their hard work and contributions to helping our veterans in need. Our employees work efficiently and diligently at all of our sites: Tomah/Madison, King, Chippewa Falls and Union Grove. When an organization is scattered around the state, it is extremely difficult to have everyone gather in one place. Therefore, I would like to thank each member of our team for their outstanding efforts to serve our veterans. Thank you! Until our next issue, here's wishing you and your family a wonderful and safe holiday season!

### NEW OPPORTUNITIES – NEW FACES

In every organization, people come and go. Opportunities open and provide individuals the chance to step into new roles and offer their experience and skills to the organization. The Veterans Housing Program (VHP) in Chippewa has three new hires/transfers. The new Program Director is Michael Xiong, the new Case Manager is Melissia Pridgen and the new Administrative Assistant is Robyn R. Stahlbusch.

Melissia transferred from the Administrative Assistant position for the Veterans Housing Program. Prior to joining the Veterans Housing Program, Melissia was the Meal Site Coordinator for the Chippewa Falls free community meal through Agnes' Table and later transitioned to the Office Manager for Starting Points, Inc. Before working in the nonprofit field, Melissia was a restaurant manager for a variety of restaurants, which included the position as a Restaurant Guest Service Manager with Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida at The Magic Kingdom! Melissia is excited to move into her new position as Case Manager to better assist the veterans at the VHP in Chippewa Falls.

Michael Xiong is not a new face to the Veterans Assistance

Foundation. Prior to becoming the Program Director, he worked as a Case Manager for the Supportive Service for Veteran Families (SSVF) program for the Veterans Assistance Foundation. As a veteran himself, having served two tours in Iraq in 2004 and 2009,

Michael has a passion for working with veterans. Michael also worked in the Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation office while he was finishing his undergrad at UW-Eau Claire. Michael is excited to work with the new team at the Veterans Housing Program to assist veterans in need.

The Veterans Housing Program in Chippewa Falls welcomes Robyn as the new Administrative Assistant! Over the summer, Robyn was posted at our building as a security guard working under a private security company. As a single parent, working the security job didn't work out, but Robyn was happy to accept the Administrative Assistant position just a few months later.

Robyn is the mother of a happy, energetic, intelligent 6-year-old boy named Braden. Robyn and her son moved from Minnesota to Wisconsin in 2009 and have since become proud residents of the Chippewa Valley area. Robyn recently obtained an Associate's degree



*Three new hires: Melissia, Michael and Robyn.*

*NEW OPPORTUNITIES, continued on page 2*

in the Criminal Justice-Law Enforcement program, along with a Law Enforcement certification this past May from Chippewa Valley Technical College. In her spare time, Robyn enjoys reading, running, going on weekend trips with her son and spending

time with family and friends. Robyn comes to VHP with over 16 years of customer service and administrative assistant combined experience. Robyn enjoys all aspects related to administrative duties and looks forward to all that lies ahead.

## **RACINE COUNTY STAND DOWN**

On Saturday October 11, 2014 the annual Racine County Veterans Stand Down was held at the Gateway College in Racine. The event kicked off at 8:00 a.m. and continued through 2:00 p.m. Approximately 150 Veterans attended the event seeking assistance with various items. The Stand Down once again focused on providing information and services to those Veterans who are homeless or who are at risk of becoming homeless.

Vendors providing services to our Veterans were: Veterans Assistance Foundation, Inc. (VAF), Legal Action of Wisconsin, Racine and Kenosha County Veteran Service Officers, Wisconsin Department Of Veterans Affairs (WDVA), US Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA), USDVA HUD VASH staff, Department of Workforce Development, Center for Veterans Issues, Assurance Wireless, Heat For Hero's, Veterans Outreach of Wisconsin as well as several other organizations. Also present were representative from the Veterans for Foreign Wars, Korean War Veterans and the American Legion. The attending organizations provided information regarding educational and health care benefits, legal assistance, pension claims and housing options.

A Resource Room was available to assist homeless Veterans with items such as sleeping bags, winter coats, hats, gloves,

boots, undergarments, shirts, pants, hand warmers, flashlights and personal hygiene items. Eye examinations were performed by University of Wisconsin Parkside and the health screenings were completed by staff from the Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center in Milwaukee. The health screenings included flu shots, glucose testing, and blood pressure checks.

Racine Mayor John T. Dickert attended the Stand Down event and spoke with vendors about a new Veterans Housing Program he is looking at implementing for the City of Racine. The morning breakfast was prepared by the Korean War Veterans with assistance from Veterans in the Veterans Housing Program (VHP) in Union Grove. Lunch was provided by the Veterans Assistance Foundation (VAF) and was prepared by the Veterans in the program.

Once again VAF, thru staff member Melissa Taggart, was honored to be on the committee organizing this event. Melissa, Site Director for the Union Grove VHP, along with VHP staff members Celeste Balcer, Westley Sikich and Kathleen Burnett were on hand to speak to and assist any Veterans in need of assistance. They were accompanied by interns Shelly and Mark who helped in any way they could. Also present was Scott Radack who provided services from the VAF Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program.

## **SOME HALLOWEEN FUN AT VHP IN CHIPPEWA!**

Reveling in the Halloween spirit, the morning of October 29, 2014 was spent a little differently at the VHP in Chippewa Falls. Tables were set up with plastic, sharpies and carving tools. VHP's Food Manager, Colleen and her husband graciously donated 12 pumpkins so when our residents were called to the 10 a.m. surprise meeting...pumpkins were ready to be carved!

Several VHP residents and staff used their creative skills to craft their own pumpkin masterpiece! Carvings ranged from a



symbolization of peace to spooky faces, dedicated Green Bay Packers fan to minion characters out of the popular kid's movie *Despicable Me* and *Despicable Me 2*, and even Case Manager Dana carved an 8-point buck. Everyone here at VHP had a wonderful time!

Afterward, the works of art were placed on the ledge outside Klein Hall and a group photo was taken. Staff received positive feedback from residents and were told that several look forward to working on similar creative projects in the future!

## **HAULING ON DOWN THE ROAD**



The VAF has purchased a 5' x 8' enclosed trailer, courtesy of the Friends of Veterans.

Last summer after their annual fundraiser, the club donated a very generous check for \$10,000.00 to VAF, with part of it going to the purchase of a much-needed enclosed trailer. This trailer will allow us to help move our veterans into permanent housing after completing their program and also help us accept larger donations of furniture.

Our thanks go to FOV for making this purchase possible and for your continued loyalty to VAF.

## **ELDERON AUXILIARY 8068 DONATION**



*The members of the Elderon Auxiliary 8068 donated a Piggly Wiggly Gift Certificate in the amount of \$100.00 to the King Veterans Housing Program. Pictured making the presentation are, L-R: Darla Oppen, Miki Matteson (Auxiliary President), Denise Wendlandt-Trempe (Site Director), Mary Hart, Betty Elliott, Sharon Cornell and Christina Dockins. Thank you Auxiliary Ladies for the donation. It is much appreciated!*



## ONE ACCORD PERFORMANCE COMPANY DONATION



On October 11, VAF was the recipient of a \$1,000 donation from a local Tomah performance group, One Accord Performance Company.

Last December, One Accord put on a production called "A Soldier's Christmas" directed by Lisa Giertych. The performance was the 10th annual Christmas show preformed by the group. Each year they present local nonprofits with donations of the proceeds.

Giertych, whose father was a veteran, dedicated the performance to her father and all others who have served or are currently serving in the U.S. military. The original musical was the brainchild of Giertych and features each song as a flashback to different times in the life of the main character, Charlie. Charlie relives each of his previous holidays through old letters and possessions that he keeps in his old footlocker.

Thanks so much for your most generous donation. It was deeply appreciated!

## THANK YOU, MARINE CORPS LEAGUE



The Marines of the Marine Corps League Detachment 359 delivered donated clothing, boots, hygiene items and other VAF

wish list items on Saturday, October 25th to the VAF program in Tomah.

On this beautiful fall day, they also grilled up a great meal for the program residents, patients and VAF staff.

Thank you, Det. 359 for the donations, the great meal and especially your camaraderie!



## AND 2ND PLACE GOES TO...

The 42nd annual Warrens Cranberry Festival was held September 26-28 in Warrens, Wisconsin. It is the world's largest cranberry festival and hosts the largest band parade in Wisconsin. Approximately 120,000 visitors gather to experience the unique offerings at over 1,300 booths of Arts and Crafts, Antique, Farm and Sports memorabilia and flea market.

A plethora of food and beverage vendors were on hand to make the three miles of shopping and carnival atmosphere extremely enjoyable. And... of course...you can't have a Cranberry Festival without cranberries! You could find fresh and processed cranberry products and juice for sample and sale all throughout the festival area.

The Veterans Assistance Foundation



has participated in the Sunday afternoon parade for the last four years. Veterans from the programs (as well as staff members and their children) have volunteered their time to participate in this event.

The VAF Float (made to look like a Military vehicle) entered in the parade was designed and created by former residents of VAF. Every year there are additional creative touches added to the float. Maybe next year we will have a driver and passengers painted onto the float – we will have to see what we can do about that. This year, all the effort and teamwork were rewarded as the VAF received 2nd Place in the Adult Non-Profit category for our float during the judging of the parade. Way to go, team!

## FLAG DAY IN APPLETON, WISCONSIN



Several Veterans residing in the King Veterans Housing Program in King, Wisconsin were invited to participate in the June 14th Flag Day Parade in Appleton, Wisconsin by the Grand Chute Lions Club. Those who participated had a fun-filled day and enjoyed the recognition from the community for being Veterans.

The Grand Chute Lions Club also invited them to a dinner and recognition ceremony that was held on October 16th in Grand



Chute, Wisconsin. The Veterans who attended these events were: Russ B., Tim K., Otto W., Michael L., Gary J. and Larry C.

A big thank you Grand Chute Lions Club for treating our Veterans to an enjoyable Flag Day and a great dinner and recognition ceremony.

## SSVF CASE MANAGERS ATTEND RENT SMART CLASS

On August 15, the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Case Managers were given the opportunity to attend training provided by Consumer Credit Counseling Service Staff on their Rent Smart class. This class was design to provide practical information on finding and maintaining affordable housing.

The University of Wisconsin Extension Office developed the curriculum in partnership with the Wisconsin Apartment Association and the Apartment Association

of Southeast Wisconsin, along with modification from the Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Sheboygan. The training covers several topics relating to housing such as the following: understanding and establishing credit, consumer rights, money management, the importance of checking out the rental and Landlord, how to communicate effectively with a Landlord, understanding rental agreements, tenant rights, and how to maintain a safe and clean place to live.

## UNION GROVE VETERANS HOUSING PROGRAM SAYS "THANK YOU"

The Veterans Housing Program in Union Grove would like to give a huge thank you to all of the groups and individuals that generously donate to our program throughout the year.

**Point One Recruiting** planned an end of summer cookout. There were approximately 20 of their employees that came out to the facility and made a chicken and filet dinner on the grill. They also brought music and yard games for the Veterans to enjoy.

**Veterans of America Motorcycle Club** generously donated a gift card for us to use. We decided to throw a Packer vs. Bears Football Party. The Veterans enjoyed fried chicken along with an array of other foods and snacks while they enjoyed the game.

**Community Baptist Church** of Honey Creek brought in a turkey dinner with all the fixings. The Veterans enjoyed the food and their company.

**Yorkville United Methodist Church** brought in a barbeque dinner. There was approximately 15 members of the church that came to spend time with the Veterans. They spent the evening enjoying music, talking and playing games.

*With the holiday season approaching, we would like to thank all the groups and/or individuals that think of our Veterans at this time of year and throughout the year. Without the generous donations by the organizations and individuals within our community, this program would not be what it is or be able to assist the Veterans in the ways that we do. Thank You!*

### WISH LIST

*We are looking for an outside 30' heavy duty, one-piece flagpole and American flag; an inside American flag and stand; 32" flat screen TV and TV wall mount system; and a picnic table.*

#### Personal Care Items:

Toothbrushes/Holders, Toothpaste, Dental Floss, Toilet Paper, Foot powder, Shampoo, Conditioner, Brushes, Combs, Disposable Shavers, Shaving Cream, Lotion, Bar Soap, Liquid Hand Soap, Baby Oil, Kleenex, Denture-Bath/Cleaner/Adhesive, Deodorant, Vaseline, Bath Towels/Washcloths, Fingernail/Toenail Clippers, Bar Soap Holder/Container, \*\*Body Wash

#### Laundry Items:

Fabric Softener Sheets, Laundry Bags (mesh type), Sewing Kits, Laundry Detergent (Powder), Plastic Clothes Hangers

#### Recreational Items:

Model Kits, Craft Kits, Phone Cards, Board Games, Movies, Crossword Puzzles, Pens, Pencils, Envelopes, Stamps, Pool Sticks and Red Chalk, Nine Ball Rack, Pool Stick Repair Kit, Stationery, Books, Greeting Cards, Exercise Mats, Bicycles (26"), Bicycle Tire Repair Kits, 26" Tire Tubes for Bikes, Bicycle Racks, DVD Movies

**Clothing:** *Used clothing, in good condition, is also acceptable.*

House Slippers (Sizes 8-13), T-shirts (sizes S-4XL), Tennis Shoes, Underwear (Sizes S-4XL), Socks – Athletic (Sizes 8-13), Winter Hats, Gloves, Boots, Coats, Men's jeans (Waist sizes 32 to 48), Shower shoes/flip flops (M, L, XL), Men's Robes, Men's Pajamas

**Female Clothing:** Cash donations preferred due to limited storage space and size requirements.

#### Household Supplies:

Sugar and/or Sugar Substitute, Coffee mugs (plastic), Pillows, Pillow Protectors

*While donations of any kind are always welcome, please call the Center at 608-372-VETS (8387) before making any donations. Cash donations are always needed and welcomed. As always, the residents and staff thank you for your kind thoughts and generous support.*

### WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP?

*Providing services takes money; foundations and corporations fight hard for a share of big federal and state grants. The Veterans Assistance Foundation relies on the generosity of people like you to help end the national disgrace of homeless veterans who are (MIA) Missing in America.*

Please send your tax-deductible donations to:  
**Veterans Assistance Foundation, Inc.**  
312 Superior Ave.  
Tomah, WI 54660

*Please help us to continue our efforts to help those veterans who need a "Handup and not a hand-out."*

### VAF MISSION STATEMENT

*To serve veterans and other individuals and their families who are homeless, at risk and low income.  
To restore and improve lives by alleviating homelessness through information, advocacy and service.*

### TIME WILL EASE THE HURT

In Memory of:

Terry V.

US Army

07/11/56 – 08/18/14

Robert D.

US Army

01/25/55 – 08/31/14

Richard T.

US Marines

07/11/47 – 10/16/14

Earl S.

US Army

04/29/48 – 10/17/14

William G.

US Navy

10/11/55 – 10/25/14

*The above named Veterans were either past or present residents of VAF*

**HAPPY HALLOWEEN  
FROM THE STAFF AT  
THE KING VAP SITE!**

