



VETERANS ASSISTANCE FOUNDATION THE ALLIANCE

Winter 2008 – Issue 1

VETERANS HELPING VETERANS

Dear Reader,

We would like to introduce ourselves to those of you who are not familiar with the Veterans Assistance Foundation (VAF) and reintroduce ourselves to those who already know who we are. The VAF was incorporated in January of 1994, as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, recognized by the United States Veterans Affairs (USDVA) as an accredited National Veterans Service Organization.

Our purpose then and now is to provide much needed services to Wisconsin and the Nation's homeless and at risk of becoming homeless veterans. Our program goal is to break the cycle of homelessness by determining what personal needs each veteran has and then addressing those needs before he/she can complete the program and re-enter back into society's mainstream.

Our 60 bed program, which is drug and alcohol free, is located in building 407 on the beautiful grounds of the VA Medical

Center in Tomah, WI. In addition to the above mentioned site, we also have several houses that are in our Step-Up Program. These houses are for residents who have completed the program successfully and need a little more time to adjust and also to save money before going out on their own. In the Step-Up Program, we currently have a seven-bed house in Madison, one three-bed house and one six-bed duplex in Tomah. Also, a three-bed house will be coming to the La Crosse area in the near future. In the past several years, VAF has also branched out to Bakersfield, California, where we presently have a 40-bed program in two apartment complexes and also three Step-Up houses with a total of nine-beds.

Since our inception, VAF has been of service to countless veterans serving from WWII through to the present war. It is very important that we continue to help all deserving veterans from past conflicts, but it is of utmost importance

that we need to assist our newest heroes that are returning home, before they begin to enter into a cycle of chronic homelessness, which is a very difficult cycle to break once it is established. These vets deserve all the help they can get to obtain whatever it takes to get them back on track, and VAF will be there to help them find their way. VAF has been there to help our nation's heroes in the past and will be there for them in the future to offer a "hand up and not a hand out." We are not a soup kitchen or an emergency shelter; we are a program that offers real assistance to those veterans who are serious about changing their lives and their futures.

Please feel free to contact me directly with any questions or comments you may have @ 866-VAF-VETS, (866-823-8387) or visit our Web site, www.veteransassistance.org

Robert R. Piaro, VAF President



MEET THE VAF STAFF

Back row from left to right: Deborah Johnson, Executive Director; Chris King, Case Manager and Faye Rainey, Operations Director. Front row from left to right: Russ Kreuger, Case Manager, Dawn Ollendick, Programs Specialist and Colin Moten, Programs Director. Not pictured Helena Brunnelson, Training Specialist and Renee Pierce, Operations Assistant.

HIGHLIGHT A VETERAN



I entered the program on 9-17-04 after having been living on the streets with no place to call home and no money to support myself. I had basically given up on myself, I had only one desire, and that was to continue my addiction; it was the only thing I knew. I found out about a homeless program at the VA in Tomah, from another person living on the streets, when I was at a free lunch at the Salvation Army in La Crosse, WI. I had been trying to obtain money by working day labor jobs, and I managed to save enough to purchase a cheap bicycle from the Goodwill. I rode my bike to Tomah as it was my only means of transportation.

When I arrived at the VAF program, I was given a referral by Deborah who politely suggested I considered seeking AODA treatment. I did not know at that time such a program even existed, and thought to myself, this just might be what I needed. I then met my assigned Case Manager Dawn who seemed to have an endless supply of papers that needed to be signed. She was very patient with me in explaining what these were all for, and how our files and records were used for our advantage. She gave me clean linens, hygiene items, and showed me where I could bunk.

To make a long story short, I entered the VA's AODA program and successfully completed it. After that I entered the VA CWT program, where I was able to work from a beginning pay of \$6.00-\$8.00 and was able to save \$5,000.00 during that time. I also worked with the VA counselors in after care, and I was finally able to obtain a drivers license.

In 2005 I submitted an application for a position with the VAF, and I was given the job and the title of Case Manager. This has been a true learning experience for me. I thank God everyday for giving me this great opportunity to now assist other veterans who are in similar situations that I was and know there is a way out.

Russell Kreuger, VAF Case Manager

ARTS & CRAFTS EXHIBITION

Several months ago, the VA held an award show for the National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans, "Arts and Crafts Exhibition." The VAF is very proud of several residents that won prizes for their amazing art work.

Ricky W. won first prize for his paint by number masterpiece, "The Lone Wolf." Speaking of how he felt after winning, Ricky humbly stated, "A lot of people helped me win, and a good friend helped me pick out the frame that fit nicely." In addition, Pstwanwa R. took first prize in the string art competition with her beautiful piece of Native American handiwork, entitled "Native American Bone Choker." Finally Daniel G. was awarded first prize in the leather category with an intricately designed pair of moccasins. Daniel also

took third place in the woodworking group for his design of a "Packer Bear," which was a bear in Green Bay Packer clothing.

For those who won 1st place prizes, their artwork will go on to be judged in the regional round, with work from veterans living and working at the VAs throughout the area. If they are fortunate enough to win at that venue, they will have earned the right to attend a national award show in St. Louis, Missouri. In the national round they will also experience a six day, all expenses covered, vacation in St. Louis, where they will attend multiple art classes and have the opportunity to show and talk about their art.

**Chris King,
VAF Case Manager**

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

We, the undersigned residents of the VAF are filing this official grievance to our treatment while residing here at the VAF.

For some time now, the staff has inexplicably ruined the reputation of many perfectly despicable ex-military Personnel. The overly cheery attitude around the VAF has even caused some veterans to begin smiling, laughing, etc. This is an unforeseen and inexcusable problem. I, personally, have heard rumors of veterans receiving haircuts, glasses, showers, and even false teeth. These are luxuries which are sure to ruin even the most hardened GI's façade. Not only are they cleaning up their persons, their personal lives are falling apart as well. I spoke to a Vietnam Era veteran the other day, and he claimed he had not drunk a drop of alcohol in almost

a year! This is a travesty, one that must surely be rectified. These men and women spent many of the best years of their lives learning how to be our military's finest; and as I see it, the VAF is ruining all of the worst habits these fine veterans have picked up over the years.

So, therefore, the residents of the VAF request a formal inquiry into why the staff here is so darn good at what they do. I fear that if we follow our current course, we will surely be mistaken for fine, civilized human beings, even worthwhile citizens of our respective communities. This simply cannot occur!

Thank You for your quick attention in this matter,

EMJ & Residents of VAF, Tomah, WI

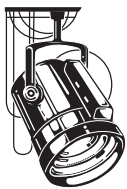
S.P.A.C. NEWS (SPECIAL PROJECTS ACTION COMMITTEE)

In August 2006, during the VAF Board of Directors meeting in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, a new committee was formed to help meet the ever growing needs of our homeless veterans. A small but dedicated group of women got together to assist the VAF BOD in their endeavors and to also give wings to some of our own ideas to make VAF all it can be. Over the past months, we have been working to get our first project going, this newsletter. Once we have the newsletter running smoothly, we will be ready to tackle our next project, a liv-

ing skills guide for our veterans and possibly to use as a VAF fundraiser. This guide will include cooking and cleaning tips, easy recipes and other topics to help build skills for everyday life.

Other possible activities for the future were also discussed that could increase local awareness and involvement in supporting our veterans.

**Kris Moten
S.P.A.C. Chair**



SPOTLIGHT ON "FRIENDS OF VETERANS"

Long term success of any organization depends on the capabilities of staff, volunteers and contributors. The Veterans Assistance Foundation is no exception. For each newsletter, I would like to talk about different individuals and/or organizations that have been vital to our programs. For this edition I would like to put the spotlight on FOV "Friends of Veterans."

Friends of Veterans was established by a Vietnam veteran named Larry "Moss" Dahn. He belongs to numerous organizations that support and assist veterans; however, he wanted to do something different. This organization was established to assist the Veterans Assistance Foundation's transitional housing programs by hosting an annual "Poker Run" which raises funds specifically for VAF. In 2007 they contributed \$4,058.55 from this event alone.

Moss was also elected for a Green Bay Packer Quarterback Award through the Green Bay Packer organization that contributed \$2,000 to VAF. The funny thing is Moss is a Vikings fan but tolerated the award and all the teasing he received because of it.

Throughout the year FOV donates personal hygiene items, clothing, furniture or just about anything else that President Ronesa Revels can get her hands on. For Thanksgiving the members cooked a meal and catered it in to the VAF program located in Tomah. The veterans thought that was the best Thanksgiving meal that they ever had.

In addition several members work at Toro which has a volunteer contribution program. Employees that work at least 30 volunteer hours for the Poker Run get \$200.00 to donate to a non-profit organization. In December VAF received a check for \$3,600.00 for the 18 employees of Toro who donated hours to provide funds for the veterans.

VAF would like to acknowledge this organization, the members, Toro and all of the supporters of the Poker Run for the contributions to the programs we operate. It is amazing what the power of a few people who have a common cause can do!

By Deborah Johnson
VAF Executive Director



BINGO!!! Residents enjoying games and receiving gifts at the VAF annual Christmas party.



2007 Christmas party: VAF Staff & volunteers prepared and served an array of tasty foods for all the residents to enjoy.

HOMELESS VETERANS' REINTEGRATION PROGRAM

The Veterans Assistance Foundation is currently in its fourth year of administering the "Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program" better known as the HVRP grant. This grant is a comprehensive grant program administered by the Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) of the U.S. Department of Labor. As the first nationwide grant program focused on placing homeless veterans into jobs, the primary objectives of HVRP are:

- To provide services to assist in re-integrating homeless veterans into meaningful employment within the labor force; and
- To stimulate the development of effective service delivery systems that will address the complex problems facing homeless veterans.

The range of HVRP-funded employment and training services include:

1. Classroom training
2. Job search activities
3. Job preparation
4. Subsidized trial employment
5. On-the-job training
6. Job placement
7. Placement follow-up services
8. Vocational counseling

By administering this grant, VAF has been able to provide a large array of assistance and services to veterans. Here are some of the services provided:

- Obtaining birth certificates, identification cards and social security cards.
- Occupational clothing; uniforms, safety boots and glasses.
- Assistance in obtaining commercial drivers licenses and DOT physicals.
- Tools.
- Diesel Truck Driver Training through a certified school.
- Heavy Equipment Operator Training.
- Remedial education.
- GED assistance.
- And many other services.

Colin Moten
VAF Programs Director

WISH LIST

Personal Care Items:

Toothbrushes/Holders
Foot powder
Combs
Shaving Cream
Liquid Hand Soap
Bath Towels/Washcloths
Baby Oil

Toothpaste
Shampoo
Brushes
Bar Soap
Kleenex
Deodorant
Vaseline

Dental Floss
Conditioner
Disposable Shavers
Lotion
Fingernail/Toenail Clippers
Bar Soap Holder/Container
Denture – Bath, Cleaner, Adhesive

Laundry Items:

Fabric Softener Sheets Laundry bags (mesh type) Sewing Kits

Recreational Items:

Model Kits
Craft Kits
Board Games
Pens, pencils
Stationery
Exercise Mats

Phone Cards
Movies
Crossword Puzzles
Envelopes
Books
Bicycle Tire Repair Kits

Pool Sticks – Chalk
Pool Stick Repair Kit
Nine Ball Rack
Stamps
Greeting Cards
26" Tire Tubes for Bikes

Clothing: Good used clothing is fine.

House Slippers (Sizes 8-13)
Underwear (S, M, L, XL, 2XL)
Men's jeans (Waist sizes 32 to 42)
Tennis Shoes

T-shirts (S, M, L, XL, 2XL)
Socks – Athletic (Sizes 8-13)
Shower shoes/flip flops (M, L, XL)
Winter – Hats, Gloves, Boots, Coats

Household Supplies:

Sugar/Sugar Substitute Coffee Coffee mugs (plastic)
Pillows

While donations of any kind are always welcome, please call the Center at 608-372-1280 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.
P.O. Box 610
Tomah, WI 54660

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

VAF MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to help homeless veterans or at risk of becoming Homeless veterans regain, maintain, and improve their status in society by providing an alcohol and drug free, secure environment through which a wide array of human services can be accessed in an atmosphere of dignity and mutual concern.

WARRENS CRANBERRY FESTIVAL "SALUTE TO VETERANS"

The world's largest cranberry festival hosted the traveling Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall, a 1/4 scale replication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC for their celebration from September 27 to October 1, 2007. Veterans Assistance Foundation staff was instrumental in the success of this event by providing assistance setting up and tearing down the Wall as well as provid-

ing support to look up names on the Wall for the general public. A computer database with all of the names listed on the traveling wall was loaded on laptop computers that allowed volunteers an opportunity to provide information for those who were searching for information. VAF staff also participated in the 24-hour a day guard duty.



The traveling Vietnam Memorial Wall at the Cranberry Festival in Warren, WI.



Cranberry Festival: Pictured, Deborah Johnson along with other VAF staff assisted visitors to find names on the Wall Memorial and also answer any questions that they had.