



VETERANS ASSISTANCE FOUNDATION

THE ALLIANCE

VAF, P.O. Box 610, Tomah, WI 54660 608-372-1280 www.veteransassistance.org

Spring 2010

SERVING WISCONSIN'S AND THE NATION'S HOMELESS VETERANS FOR OVER 15 YEARS

UPDATES FROM THE PRESIDENT

It has been a busy spring so far and we have many projects, either in the works or already completed.

Our Wisconsin Board of Directors had its first meeting in April and welcomed aboard our newest member, Chris Hanson, a Navy veteran that is still serving in the

WELCOME, VERN



My name is Vern Tranberg, and I am the newest Program Assistant in HVRP. When I received the call that I got the job to work for the Foundation, I was very excited. As a fellow veteran it makes me very proud to help and assist them here, and make a difference.

I was born and raised in Blair, Wisconsin. I joined the USMC in 1982, where I spent four years. After being out for 11 months, I joined the U.S. Army where I spent 17 more years and retired. During my time in the service, my travels took me to Hawaii, Germany, Alaska and several other states. I spent 10 years in the Infantry and 11 years in recruiting. After retiring in 2003, I bought a house in West Salem. I have been happily married for over 26 years and have one son.

In my spare time, I enjoy visiting with other veterans and I enjoy playing a variety of sports like basketball, softball and volleyball. One of my favorite pastimes is bowling and if I had the time, I would bowl year 'round.

As a fellow veteran myself, it is truly rewarding to be able to assist those that have served our country. I look forward to sharing my knowledge and experience while providing value to the organization. I feel extremely proud to be working with such a dedicated staff assisting in making people's lives better.

Welcome aboard, Vern! We are always excited to have a new employee join the VAF team. Your knowledge and experience working with veterans should be a perfect fit for those we serve. We are looking forward to getting to know you and working with you.

Reserves. Also in April we had our annual Single Audit, and wrote a Department of Labor grant (Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program) seeking another three years of funding to assist our veterans in preparing for, obtaining and maintaining employment.

Some of our veterans, as well as staff, have already made the first "Adopt A Highway" clean-up of the year and they did a

wonderful job. Like I said, it has been a busy spring, but there's no time for rest just yet, things are just getting started. I don't want to tell you everything that we've been up to in just the first article; you'll have to keep reading. Until next time, take care and stay safe.

Semper Fidelis,
Colin Moten, VAF President

NATIONAL VETERANS CREATIVE ARTS FESTIVAL

Every year VA hospitals, VA outpatient clinics and State Veterans homes across the country hold a creative arts competition called the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. Each year, over 3,000 veterans representing more than 100 VA medical centers enter the National Veterans Creative Arts Competition.

Once a Veteran has earned first place at their VA Medical Center, VA Outpatient Clinic or State Veterans' Home, their entry of art, music, dance, drama or creative writing is then submitted to the national level of competition. The judges review the entries and award a 1st, 2nd and 3rd Place for each of the over 50 categories that make up five different divisions. Approximately 130 of the medal-winning veterans will earn an invitation to participate in the weeklong festival, which showcases and celebrates the artistic

achievements of U. S. Veterans.

The Festival, which is held in a different city every year, generates national, regional and community interest and support. This year, the Tomah VA Medical Center will host the festival in the city of La Crosse, Wisconsin. The festival will run from October 18-25, 2010. It will receive significant media attention, which is key in promoting the message of the healing power of the arts in the lives of our veterans.

Again this year, several current and prior residents of the Veterans Assistance Foundation entered the competition. Of the current residents who entered, we have six individuals who placed at the local level and several of them will be having their entries judged at the national level in June.

CREATIVE ARTS, continued on page 2

Awards were handed out by J. Molnar, Tomah VMAC Director; Kristina Smaby, Miss Wisconsin; P. Flanders, ALA Rep.; and G. Busby, HHV Rep, all pictured with the winning residents.



"Hands of Time on my Hands," by Scott S.



"Purrfect Moment," by Reggie L.



"The Arrival of Jesus Christ" and "Last Supper" by Theo L.

STEPPING UP TO NEW POSITION



Hey there! It's me again...Tina at the Veterans Assistance Foundation.

In January 2010, I got this brainy idea to apply for the case manager position for the Tomah/Madison Step-Up housing program.

Guess Dawn thought it was a good idea as well, and off I went.

I am so happy I did. I have found that it is such a rewarding position for me. I get to work with the Veterans that have left the 407 program and are transitioning back into the world on their own, through our Step-Up program. I currently have 12 Veterans in the houses that are supplied by VAF in Tomah and Madison, and I am working on getting more veterans in the future.

I look forward to working more with each and every one of them.

Tina Sime

CREATIVE ARTS, continued from page 1

They are as follows:

Visual Arts:

1st Place	Acrylic Painting	"Rodeo Family"	Walt K.
1st Place	Monochromatic Drawing	"Hands of Time on my Hands"	Scott S.
2nd Place	Monochromatic Drawing	"Purrfect Moment"	Reggie L.
1st Place	Fine Art-Mixed Media	"Money to Burn"	Walt K.
1st Place	Glazed Ceramics	"The Arrival of Jesus Christ"	Theo L.
3rd Place	Wood Building Kits	"Freedom Clock"	Theo L.
1st Place	Transfer/Engraving Kits	"Last Supper"	Theo L.
People's Choice		"Hands of Time on my Hands"	Scott S.

Performing Arts:

Vocal Music:	1st Place	Solo-Rock	Derek E.
Instrumental Music:	1st Place	Solo-Jazz/Rhythm & Blues	Matt N.
	1st Place	Solo-Classical	Matt N.
	1st Place	Solo-Original	Matt N.
Creative Writing:	1st Place	Poetry-Other	Scott S.

The following is the 1st Place entry in the Creative Writing, Poetry-Other category submitted by VAF's Scott S. He states that this poem is about second chances.

A New Day By Scott S.

*As I sit near this window, late into the night,
To peer through its darkness, black with no light,
My mind fills with thoughts of times I have missed,
Yet long for tomorrow and the lights' gentle kiss,
Her presence holds me captive like the dark blankets the night,
Her touch sends me spinning like an out of control kite,
I can't help but think when I look into her eyes,
That it's quite possible she fell from the skies,
They shine with a brightness unmistakably gleaming,
Only my breathing is a reminder that I am not dreaming,
She deserves such a name, that I deem appropriate,
Nothing fake or false nor to equivocate,
I'll choose something bright, something true and not denied,
For this is all for real, I'll call her "SUNSHINE."*

For further information about the 2010 National Veterans Creative Arts Competition and Festival contact:

Jean Calhoun, MT-BC

2010 NVCAF Host Site Coordinator – Tomah VA Medical Center

500 E. Veterans Street, 117M, Tomah, WI 54660

Phone: 608-372-1262 • Fax: 608-372-1662 • E-mail: Jean.Calhoun@va.gov

ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY SPRING CLEANING

On Tuesday, April 13th, VAF case managers Peggy Engen-Koresh and Teresa Smith took a group of nine Veterans and completed the first Adopt-A-Highway clean up of the year.

The Veterans Assistance Foundation sponsors a section of Highway 21, heading west away from Tomah towards Fort McCoy. Three times a year, the staff and veterans of the VAF undertake the task of cleaning up the roadsides on this stretch of highway in an effort to keep the area clean and safe.

The weather was cooler which made it a more comfortable, pleasant experience for all involved. They collected approximately 14 bags of trash, some of which had to be double-bagged because of the amount of items they put into them. According to Peggy, along with the trash pickup, they also found various dead "critters" that included a rat, a raccoon and a skunk (she said thankfully the skunk had been there long enough to no longer be giving off its "known-for" aroma).

The case managers said that everyone worked well together and they believe that everyone enjoyed themselves (although they don't think any of them would admit to it). Peggy spoke to a few of the Veterans the next day and they admitted to being a little stiff and sore – *the section of highway sponsored by the VAF contains a large hill over which individuals need to walk in order to complete the clean up.*



Paul P., Jeff S. and R. Voiles preparing to start the clean up.



Paul D., Wendell L., John Y. and Dan O. pose by the VAF sign part way through the clean up process.

HIGHLIGHT A VETERAN



Today, I'm writing in appreciation of the Veterans Assistance Foundation and all of the staff.

When I entered the program on July 5, 2009, I was homeless, unemployed, had very little sobriety, was buried in debt and hadn't done my taxes for three years. I was behind in child support for \$33,000 and getting deeper in debt by the week, not to mention the expectations or the hope my family had for me to get better. By better, I mean, getting back to a semi-normal lifestyle. I had just about lost purpose for even existing.

Since coming into the program I was given the opportunity to straighten out a lot of areas in my life, or at least get things rolling towards some kind of balance, stability and hope for better things to come. If there was a scale of 1 to 10 on what has been given in time, effort and hope, I would have to say it's been a 20!

I know it's time to step out into the world again, hopefully to achieve the goals I have for myself and my future sobriety, employment, school, financial freedom and service to the community.

I have to say I'll miss this place and all who make it work: staff and residents.

Thank you,
Tim E.



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The following organization/individuals are recognized for their special contributions to the Veterans residing in VAF-operated programs in Wisconsin:

MECA SPORTSWEAR

MECA Sportswear of Tomah, through the efforts of Lee Zebro organizing and coordinating with Tom Bramwell, CEO and President of MECA, have made generous donations to the Veterans in the VAF program.

Zebro saw a Veteran around Tomah wearing a light jacket in the middle of winter and suggested the need to Bramwell for donating winter coats and boots. In January, MECA made contact with staff of the VAF to get the

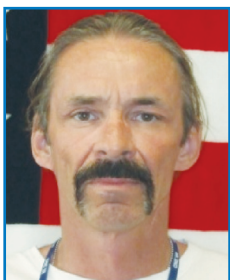
correct clothing sizes for all of the Veterans currently residing in the program.

They boxed up 61 individual packages, one for each Veteran, consisting of items such as a winter coat, a spring coat, a T-shirt, a sweat-shirt, a hat and gloves. Also in February, they delivered a pair of boots for each Veteran. A heartfelt thank you to Lee Zebro, Tom Bramwell and MECA Sportswear of Tomah for everything you have done for our Veterans.



VAF residents, kneeling: Mark B. and standing behind him, L-R: Ron T., Lance M., Jeff S. and Victor A. Also pictured, off to the right, are: VAF Operations Director Faye Rainey; MECA/Donation Organizer, Lee Zebro; Tomah VAMC Director Jerry Molnar; and CEO and President of MECA, Tom Bramwell.

RESIDENT'S REMARKS



To VAF Staff,
On behalf of myself and others, I want to express gratitude for the help and hope at a time when there was none and needed most, as well as for your

support, guidance and encouragement.

It is organizations such as this, married to people like yourselves, that create a light at the end of a long, dark tunnel and bring calm to an otherwise turbulent sea, instilling a renewed sense of being, self-esteem and spirit. Thank you for helping me find purpose and strength to move forward in the pursuit of happiness, personal growth and freedom, while refusing to give up, and personally affording me the opportunity at a chance of a lifetime

to do something with my life that I have always wanted to do, but was never in a position to capitalize on my two biggest assets – my time and by energy.

When I first arrived here, I had no clue what I wanted to do with the rest of my life, and given a chance in more ways than one, it has become clear to me that I now want to make the most of it and become a success and this is where it is going to begin. Harnessing passion, patience and persistence, this can and will be achieved.

Thank you all once again,
Scott Shower

*"Every Creative Act involves
A New Innocence of Perception,
Liberated from the
Cataract of Accepted Belief"
3-15-2010*

EULOGY FOR A VETERAN

Do not stand at my grave and weep.
I am not there, I do not sleep.

I am a thousand winds that blow.
I am the diamond glints on snow.

I am the sunlight on ripened grain.
I am the gentle autumn rain.

When you awaken in the mornings' hush,
I am the swift uplifting rush
of quiet birds in circled flight,
I am the soft stars that shine at night.

Do not stand at my grave and cry,
I am not there, I did not die.

**John O., age 62,
U.S. Army, died July 19, 2009
Gary M., age 61,
U.S. Air Force, died April 17, 2010**

2010 WISH LIST

Personal Care Items:

Toothbrushes/Holders	Toothpaste	Denture – Bath, Cleaner, Adhesive
Dental Floss	Shampoo	Conditioner
Combs	Brushes	Disposable Shavers
Shaving Cream	Bar Soap	Lotion
Kleenex	Fingernail/Toenail Clippers	Foot powder
Bath Towels/Washcloths	Deodorant	Bar Soap Holder/Container
Baby Oil	Vaseline	

Laundry Items:

Fabric Softener Sheets	Laundry bags (mesh type)	Sewing Kits
------------------------	--------------------------	-------------

Recreational Items:

Model Kits	Phone Cards	Pool Sticks and Chalk (red)
Craft Kits	Movies	Pool Stick Repair Kit
Board Games	Crossword Puzzles	Nine Ball Rack
Pens, pencils	Envelopes	Stamps
Stationery	Greeting Cards	Exercise Mats

Clothing: Good used clothing is fine.

House Slippers (Sizes 8-13)	T-shirts (S, M, L, XL, 2XL)
Underwear (S, M, L, XL, 2XL)	Socks – Athletic (Sizes 8-13)
Men's jeans (Waist sizes 32 to 42)	Shower shoes/flip flops (M, L, XL)
Tennis Shoes	Winter – Hats, Gloves, Boots, Coats

Household Supplies:

Sugar/Sugar Substitute	Coffee mugs (plastic)	Snack foods/Baked goods
------------------------	-----------------------	-------------------------

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.

A MOVING EXPERIENCE

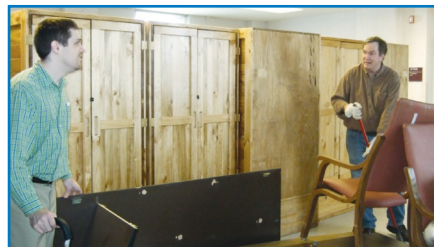
On February 9th, amidst a winter snowstorm, we received our second half of the furniture purchased for the VAF. This delivery consisted of the remaining new wall lockers to put into the bays, new dressers for all of the rooms, new chairs and end tables for the reading alcove, a new sofa and coffee table for the visitors lounge, and new tables and chairs for the computers used in the dayroom.

The driver of the truck was here and ready to go at 8 a.m., but most of the delivery crew had been involved in an automobile accident on the way here from the airport in Chicago. They decided that they were going to turn around and go home (the crew came from the east coast). One member of the crew was already in the area and was here to assist the driver and some of our residents in the unloading of the truck. There was quite the assembly line of old wall lockers going out of the rooms, and the new furniture going into the rooms that kept the elevator busy all day long (and even into the next day).

It may have taken longer than planned to get everything into place, but everyone seems to be very happy with the new furniture.



New furniture for the bays.



Pictured are VFW Case Manager Andrew Stargard and resident Paul D., residents that helping with the unloading and moving of the old and the new furniture.

STITCHED WITH LOVE

During the months of February and March, 2010, Sister Linda Wiberg of Sparta, Wisconsin (through the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) came to the Tomah VA (usually in the Midway Building 406) and volunteered her time and skills to assist Joseph B., a resident in the Veterans Assistance Foundation, sew a quilt for his grandchild. The wording on the quilt is "For Jaz, Stitched with love by Grandpa February/March 2010."

Sister Wiberg taught Joseph the art of quilting and he plans to continue making quilts for himself, his family and his friends. She stated that Joseph is a fast learner and has done very well. Below, Joseph displays the finished quilt. He is currently working on another quilt – this one displaying the POW/MIA flag.



Sister Linda Wiberg looks on as Joseph B. sews the seam of his quilt.



Joseph B. sitting proudly with his finished quilt.