



VETERANS ASSISTANCE FOUNDATION

THE ALLIANCE

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Fall 2012

SERVING WISCONSIN'S AND THE NATION'S HOMELESS VETERANS FOR OVER 16 YEARS

LHI PROVIDES CRUISE AND DINNER FOR VAF RESIDENTS

Don Weber of Logistics Health, Inc. (LHI) out of La Crosse, Wisconsin is a huge supporter of Veterans in our area. Several times a year, LHI will sponsor events and dinners for Veterans from around the Coulee Region. The Veterans from the Veterans Assistance Foundation (VAF) have had the great pleasure of being the recipients of this generosity several times in the last couple of years. They have been treated to tours of the Veterans Museum in La Crosse, the Rotary Lights in Riverside Park and trips along the Mississippi on the *La Crosse Queen*.

The thoughtfulness and generosity of these outings is something that many will never forget. Several of the Veterans who have attended have never been treated to meals such as the ones served at these dinners or been treated with the amount of kindness displayed by Mr. Weber and the staff from LHI. Many would have never gone to see the Rotary Lights display or went to visit the Veterans Museum. The opportunities provided by these events are a wonderful experience and much appreciated.

Once again, earlier this year Mr. Weber and LHI staff provided an opportunity and an experience of a lifetime for some Veterans

in the Coulee Region. On August 21, 2012, thirty-eight VAF residents, along with case managers Andrew Stargard and Bill Melton, President Colin Moten and Board Chair/CEO Bob Piaro, as well as several other organizations from the area, were treated to a wonderful day sponsored by Mr. Weber and LHI.

We had a perfect sunny day as we loaded a bus for La Crosse, Wisconsin. Once we reached our destination we were treated to a breathtaking one-hour boat ride on the *La Crosse Queen*, traveling along the Mississippi River. Some of the highlights were seeing turtles on logs and

— **CRUISE AND DINNER, cont. on page 3**



AREA STUDENTS FUNDRAISE FOR VAF



In July 2012 the Veterans Assistance Foundation received a generous donation in the amount of \$422.80 from a group of sixth grade students from Cashton Middle School in Cashton, Wisconsin. This group changes every school year, but the main purpose of the group does not.

Sixth grade students in Sue Hutchens class have been writing to Veterans serving overseas and fundraising to help with the creation (and mailing) of care packages to Veterans serving overseas for over 20 years. This year they raised funds to help the Veterans Assistance Foundation. Below you will find a brief description of their group as written by Sue Hutchens:

When Desert Storm began, so did we. As a 20-year veteran of the U.S. Army and a teacher, I felt compelled to do something. Then I was approached by a man named Tom Sharratt from Westby, Wisconsin, who is also an Army Veteran. He took the lead in finding the individuals from our area who were serving overseas in war or peacekeeping missions. He named the overall organization, Youth Supporting Troops, and when we joined forces, my 6th grade students have been known as Cashton's Youth Supporting Troops.

Mr. Sharratt provides us with names of those to write to and in addition, we hold fundraising events to help with creating and mailing care packages for each soldier from all branches of the military. We have been involved ever since. I am proud to say that all students 6th through 12th (and even post-graduates) have been part of Cashton's Youth Supporting Troops.

In addition to writing letters, fundraising and helping with care packages, the 6th graders perform during our yearly Veterans Day Program which is VERY

— **FUNDRAISE, cont. on page 2**

CREATIVE ARTS FESTIVAL AWARDS



Pictured is VA Director Mario DeSanctis giving awards to: on left, Don D. (with his grandson); center, Paul S.; and at right, David W.

The Veterans Assistance Foundation would like to congratulate the following Creative Arts Festival participants for advancing onto the Creative Arts National Level: Joey A., Don D., David W., and Charlie S. The aforementioned artists performed musical arrangements and submitted art pieces earlier this year during the VAMC Veterans' Fine Arts, Applied Arts and Crafts Competition held February 14th.

Joey A. and Don D. will advance with a gold medal in instrumental solo jazz, pop and original composition, and a bronze in vocal

rock, respectively, in the music category.

David W. advances with silver awarded to his latch-hook piece and Charlie S. will advance with a bronze in "painting by numbers."

The National Creative Arts Festival is a non-competitive event; instead, it is an opportunity for artistically inclined veterans to "explore, learn and celebrate the healing power of the arts." In 2010, veterans from 123 different VA facilities across the nation entered the competition. Of the countless competitors, 143 of the medal-

— **FESTIVAL, cont. on page 4**

NEW VAF CASE MANAGER, DON ROACH



I am Don Roach and very happy to be a team member of an excellent organization as the Veterans Assistance Foundation. I am looking forward to working with everyone and to serve all of our Veterans and their families as a Case Manager. I am a veteran with 26 years of service in the Army and Army Reserves, which I retired from in September 1, 2011. I believe the skills, knowledge, experience and training I have obtained, coupled with my bachelor degree in legal studies received from the American Military University in August 2010, will prove to be an asset to our organization. The American Military University is an online university that provided an exceptional learning experience. Due to the experience, the thought of continued education emerged with a desire to complete a master degree in business administration (MBA) and as of this date, I have completed

seven courses toward my MBA.

The recreational side, what can I say; I'm in Wisconsin where there is great fishing, hunting and the honey-do list to keep me occupied during free time. My wife and I have been married for over 39 years with the complete love and support of each other in achieving our goals. We continue appreciating each blessing that is received from our precious Lord every day knowing all can be accomplished through him. Our children are grown and on their own; they have given us six grandchildren, but only limited time visiting caused by them being located in other states.

Best wishes to everyone and once again, I'm looking forward to working with everyone in providing the best Veterans' service possible.

Welcome, Don. Your previous experience working with Veterans will be a great asset in case managing the residents of the program. We are excited to have you as a member of the VAF team.

SSVF CASE MANAGER JOINS VAF STAFF



My name is John Fuhrman and I have just become a member of the Veterans Assistance Foundation as a case manager for the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF).

Recently I moved to Tomah because of the Tomah VAMC and I also like the quieter area. I have enjoyed the facilities at the Tomah VA in the past, so it wasn't a hard choice to relocate.

A few years ago I retired from working

with veterans, so I am familiar with the problems some vets have, and now I am glad to be able to help them again.

Once we get the SSVF up and running, I'm hoping the folks in our area will help us accomplish making our program a success. I can't wait to meet and work with all of you.

Welcome aboard! John is a Navy veteran and also a former Wisconsin CVSO (County Veterans Service Officer); his knowledge and experience working with veterans will surely be a great fit for our program.

NEW ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT MELANIE KIEL



Working at Fort McCoy in the Personnel Administration Center for Mobilization, I became aware of VAF and the services they provide for Veterans. I would like to say "thank you" for considering me as part of the VAF Family.

My name is Melanie Kiel, the new Administrative Assistant at the VAF Tomah Office on Superior Avenue. I have lived in Monroe County most of my life and currently reside in the Kendall area. I have two daughters, ages 20 and just shy of 18. My oldest (Cas-

sandra) is working on becoming a CNA. My youngest (Sabrina) is a senior at Royall High School in Elroy. My interests are spending time with family and friends, genealogy, reading (currently reading what books my children have read or are reading – but not a horror fan), cross-stitching and craft projects.

I look forward to being part of the continuing growth and outstanding things VAF does to help the Veterans.

Welcome, Melanie – being a quick learner, we know you will fit right in and be awesome at your position at the new VAF Superior Street office.

FUNDRAISE, cont. from page 1 ———
important in the Cashton Community. We also work with the local VFW and Ladies Auxiliary in Cashton. We have vowed to continue until every soldier comes home.

We also have been thinking strongly about those who have returned and the support

they need. That's why this year we had decided to donate the money to the Homeless Vets through your organization. The kids felt it was their best idea yet! I'm very proud of Cashton students who work hard for this organization and don't expect anything in return. That's pretty cool.

VAF PRESIDENT COLIN MOTEN FINISHES "TOUGH MUDDER CHALLENGE"



VAF President Colin Moten on left, along with his wife, Kristine, on right.



One of the many obstacles on the "Tough Mudder" course.

On Sunday, September 9th, a grueling twelve-mile, obstacle-laden course came to Wisconsin. The "Tough Mudder Challenge" was founded by former Counter Terrorism Officer, Will Dean, of the UK Foreign Office in 2010 after Dean grew increasingly unsatisfied with the isolation of other endurance events, like the marathons and triathlons he competed in. Wanting to encourage and promote camaraderie, Dean designed an intense obstacle course modeled after British Special Forces training.

Dean's proposed challenge placed second in the Harvard Business Plan Competition. The professors claimed an untimed event would not entice the public to partake. Recruiting his old classmate Guy Livingston, Dean went forth and arranged the first Tough Mudder event May 2, 2010, in Pennsylvania. Dean and Livingston had hoped for at least 500 participants to enter. The day of the initial event, 4,500 participants raised \$200,000 for the Wounded Warrior Project. Since then, Tough Mudder has raised over \$3,000,000 for the Wounded Warrior Project, a nonprofit organization established in 2002 to assist severely wounded service members through rehabilitative practices and provide long-term support for educational, health, housing and employment needs.

An estimated 20,000 "Mudders" participated in the challenge outside Milwaukee September 8th and 9th. Heats of 500 individuals (with several forming teams amongst them) set off every 20 minutes from 8:00 a.m. to 12 Noon.

VAF's own esteemed President, Colin Moten, charged into the challenge at 8:20 Sunday morning, along with his wife, Kristine and a few others making up their team. After reciting the Tough Mudder pledge and uttering a quick prayer, Moten set forth at an even pace to the first obstacle: the Mud Crawl. Tough Mudder teams had to low-crawl in dusty troughs under a field of barbed wire. Follow-

MUDDER, cont. on page 3

HIGHLIGHT A VETERAN

My Name is Don D. and I would like to express my thanks to the Veterans Assistance Foundation and all of the staff in helping me in my time of homelessness which



was the period of May through October of 2011. During my stay in building 407, I feel that I was given all considerations by administrators and staff to better my situation and was able to transition my housing from Dom 407 back to my home in the Fox Valley area with the least amount of problems.

While a resident, my nutritional and medical needs were met in a very timely manner. What was of utmost importance to me were the dental services I received (a complete lower and a partial upper bridge) both at the Tomah VA facility and at a Tomah community dental clinic. Had I not been a VAF resident, these very costly services would not have been available to me at the no cost consideration I received.

I also believe that the social services all VAF residents receive, both in group and one-on-one with a case manager, are second to none and much more thorough than any other social services offered in the public sector that addresses homelessness for veterans. Any veteran that truly wants to better their living situation can accomplish the VAF set program goals with the least bit of problems. I felt that all expectations expected by me from VAF staff were reasonable, as well as for any of the other 60-70 residents at the time in Building 407.

I'm proud to add that I was able to give back to the VAF staff, 407 residents, the Tomah VA, in- and out-patient residents, as well as the Tomah community in general, by using my talents as a performing musician with many hours of volunteered services. Whether it was the sitting area outside building 407, the Midway Room, the outside gazeboes or simply strumming the guitar and singing for my roommates, I felt that I was giving back to some degree. It was through the VAF program that I became familiar with the National Veterans Creative Arts Competition and musical therapist facilitator at the Tomah VA, Jean Calhoun. I'm happy to say that a musical piece I entered this past February earned me a **National Bronze 3rd Place Award**.

In closing, I would just like to again say thank you very much, Veterans Assistance Foundation personnel, for the help you have given me and I wish you nothing but the best in your future growth as an organization that truly is doing its part to end the issue of veterans' homelessness.

VAF RESIDENTS ENJOY TRIP TO "HIGH GROUND"



On October 9, 2012, VAF took a van to the High Ground Veterans Memorial Park located just outside of Neillsville, Wisconsin. The mission of the High Ground is "to honor veterans and their families and to educate the public about the cost of things – the human cost." The vision of the High Ground is "to honor human courage and sacrifice whenever it is displayed, without either denying or glorifying the pain and suffering of war and of life."

We were greeted immediately upon entering the information center and offered a free audio tour of the grounds. After the audio tour, we were guided through the

walkways of the branches of services that are represented throughout the grounds and given a verbal explanation of each display.

It was a rainy, chilly day but we managed to see almost all of the stops on the tour, including the National Native American Vietnam Veteran Memorial and the Meditation Garden. The fall colors provided a beautiful background for all of the pictures we took. Despite the unpleasant weather, it was a remarkable place to visit. We all enjoyed ourselves and we hope that the next time we plan a visit that more veterans will be able to accompany us on the trip.

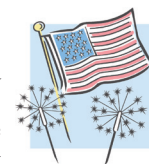
2012 – 4TH OF JULY FIREWORKS SHOW

This year the 4th of July Tomah area fireworks were again held at the Tomah Recreation Park where there is always plenty of room for whoever ventures out in the heat to be a part of the festivities.

Several of our Veterans signed up to take the short van trip to the fireworks show. Leaving VAF at 9:30 p.m., our Veterans found a good seat in the grand-

stands where they enjoyed the view of the 10 p.m. show. It was a full house and a hot, sticky night, but the fireworks were – as always – a terrific Independence Day celebration.

All of our Veterans who attended had a wonderful time and everyone is looking forward to next year's light show in the skies.



MUDDER, cont. from page 2

ing that, participants had to run an estimated half-mile to the next challenge.

The Camelback is a series of slippery, muddy hills rolling up between pools of mud-blackened water of varying depths. Becoming sufficiently soaked and slick with mud, participants then had to clamor over ten-foot tall wooden walls, before trotting a short distance to a nearby pond for a quick dunk under a half dozen floating barrels.

Some of the more unforgiving obstacles included a dumpster of ice water, an electric field over a pit of mud, and a towering half pipe of greased plastic. During the frozen swim, one participant noted a thin sheet of ice would form over the water if the pool sat undisturbed for

too long. In the electrified mud-crawl, President Moten took a sudden plunge into the grime after taking a stunning shock to his back.

Frustration and exhaustion consumed the challengers at the curved, greasy wall climb, as participants repeatedly slammed themselves into the obstacle in a mad scramble to reach the top.

After all the running and torturous events, Mudders were awarded an orange Tough Mudder headband, a stylish and comfortable Under Armor T-shirt, and a cool glass of Dos Equis. President Moten's team finished in good time at a little after 11:00 a.m. A quick rinse and a hearty meal later, he enjoyed the pulsating ache of sore and tired limbs while reveling in his accomplishment.

CRUISE AND DINNER, cont. from page 1

seeing how the boat is powered by the big wheels in the back of the boat. Crackers and cheese with soda were served during the boat ride for the enjoyment of the attendees.

After the boat ride we went to the LHI-sponsored dinner that was catered and served by the Waterfront Restaurant. The meal consisted of a salad, prime rib, chicken, potatoes, green beans and a dessert of pumpkin pie and apple bars. The meal had a very high presentation itself and was equally delicious.

After the meal was served, Don Weber gave a moving speech thanking all of our veterans for their sacrifice of their time. At the end of the meal, each veteran received a gift certificate from Walmart and a "goodie bag" filled with hygiene supplies and a T-shirt.

Everyone who attended had a great time and was very much appreciative. Thank you, Don Weber and LHI, for this wonderful experience that you have provided for the veterans of our program.

WISH LIST

Personal Care Items:

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

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

Clothing: Used clothing, in good condition, is fine.

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

Household Supplies:

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

While donations of any kind are always welcome, please call us 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.

FESTIVAL, cont. from page 1—

winning veterans earned an invitation to participate in the 2010 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, hosted by the Tomah VA Medical Center. The following year, the Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks hosted the Arts Festival in both Bentonville and Fayetteville, Arkansas.

The Festival is a weeklong event, beginning October 8, 2012 and held this year in Boston, Massachusetts. The VAF staff would like to again congratulate participants and wish them well in Boston!

Great job, guys! You done VAF proud!

WISCONSIN WOMEN VETERANS 2012 EXPO



Pictured, from left: The hosts of the Women's Veterans Expo; center, the women Veterans in attendance at the event; and on the right, the VAF display booth.

The Veterans Assistance Foundation had the privilege of attending the 2012 Wisconsin Women Veterans Expo/Many Voices One Spirit held at the Trinity Equestrian Center located near Eau Claire on September 14th.

It was a very successful event, not to mention educational. Equestrian is a Latin word referring to the skill of riding, driving, steeple-chasing or vaulting with horses. This broad description includes uses of horses for practical working purposes, transportation, recreational activities, artistic or cultural exercises and competitive sport.

Based on the limited Outreach that I've experienced thus far, this gathering had several unique services offered to their guests including yoga, Zumba, manicures, pedicures, massage and a therapy called "rump hugs". For example, to perform such a hug, a person mounts a bare-backed horse backwards, then would rest their head on the horse's "rump", relax and theoretically, the individual's breathing becomes one with the horse, therefore working as a stress reliever! I cannot answer any questions regarding the effectiveness of this procedure, but it was entertaining at the very least.

Several people signed up for our newsletter and others were very proud of the services that the Veterans Assistance Foundation provides.

DO NOT STAND AT MY GRAVE AND WEEP

By Mary Elizabeth Frye

*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 morning's 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.*

In memory of our friend and former co-worker, Russell K.

Russell K., a prior resident and staff member of the VAF, passed away on September 21, 2012 from an aneurysm to the stomach. Russell, a former Marine, was born

on May 3, 1950. He came to the VAF on September 17, 2004. Russ was a hard worker; he worked his program and completed his goals while in the program and soon after that (10/07/05) he was hired on with VAF as a case manager for our Grant and Per Diem program located in building 407.

During his time as a staff member, Russ was known for his inspections. Everyone knew they had better have done their cleaning duties, because no job was unchecked while Russ was inspecting. He could tell at a glance if something had been moved or was out of place.

Russ had done a wonderful job as a case manager; he had gotten along well with both staff and residents and was respected by residents during his transition from resident to staff.

Russ will be missed by all who knew him.

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

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.

THE 40TH ANNUAL WARRENS CRANBERRY FESTIVAL PARADE

In 2011, we had a few residents in the program volunteer to help design and create a float that the Veterans Assistance Foundation, Inc. (VAF) can use to participate in local parades. This provides a wonderful outreach opportunity for VAF and has helped increase our visibility within the community.

On September 30, 2012 we participated in the 40th Annual Warrens Cranberry Festival Parade. Programs Director Dawn Ollendick coordinated VAF's participation in this event for the second year. She was joined by Employment and Training Case Manager Greg Hammer, Step Up Program participant Mike C., former program participant Reggie L. and several other volunteers.

The weather was wonderful, which meant a large crowd was on hand to watch the parade. While participating in the parade, they all had several people tell them, "Thank you for what you have done and are doing" as well as complimenting the float. Reggie L., who is one of the Veterans who helped design and construct the float, was able to hear the compliments from the public while seated on the float, which meant a lot to him.

VAF hopes to be able to continue participating in the local parades and use this as a tool to reach out to people who may need the program or know someone who may need the program. It's also a great way to let the public know what the Veterans Assistance Foundation, Inc. is all about.