



VETERANS ASSISTANCE FOUNDATION

THE ALLIANCE

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

Summer 2010

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

CONGRATULATIONS GINA AND WELCOME ABOARD, MICHELLE

We have a couple of staff changes to tell you about. Due to a case manager moving on to explore other opportunities, we had a case manager position open up. Gina Baldwin, our Administrative Assistant, has transferred into that position and we have hired Michelle Hove as the new Administrative Assistant in the front office.

Regina "Gina" Baldwin



Gina Baldwin

In the last issue, we left off with me being the new Administrative Assistant (Tina got promoted). Guess what? It's my turn to pass on the torch to a newbie (see Michelle Hove's article below). I am proud to announce that I have been promoted to a vacant Case Manager position. I am very excited about this transition. The last couple of weeks have been busy learning all the duties and responsibilities of my new position. It is definitely going to take awhile for me to rise to the level. However, starting out in the front office definitely is an asset for me. Being part of this program is very rewarding and I'm ready for the challenge of my new job. I look forward to continuing my employment with the VAF and assisting Veterans to the best of my ability. Thank you for the confidence, support, experience, and most of all, the opportunity to grow with you!

Michelle Hove

I was born and raised in the Tomah area. I moved away a couple of times, but we have a very close-knit family and my roots always pulled me back here. Early in 1990

FROM THE PRESIDENT

We are now full bore into summer. Here at the Veterans Assistance Foundation things rarely slow down, and this summer is no exception. We've had staff going in all directions; presenting information at Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs Supermarkets in Cleveland and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and soon to be Rice Lake and Madison; a board meeting; the National Coalition of Homeless Veterans conference in Washington, D.C.; adopt a highway; and many other projects.

Since our last newsletter we have lost one staff member to other endeavors, promoted Regina to the position of Case Manager and welcomed aboard Michelle

as our newest staff member. Friends of Veterans had their annual Bike Blessing and Poker Run, which was followed by a very generous donation to the program. I wasn't able to attend this year, but from what I heard the weather was much nicer than last year. The Veterans and staff of VAF extend a much appreciated thank you to all who support this program. The value of support, whether it be in the form of donations, volunteering or just lending a helping hand, is priceless.

Thank you all. Be safe and take care.

Semper Fi,
Colin

FRIENDS OF VETERANS 8TH ANNUAL BIKE BLESSING/POKER RUN

We want to thank the Friends of Veterans and Ronesa Revels for putting on a successful Poker Run for the Veterans Assistance Foundation in Tomah and all the Veterans we serve. For those of you who do not know about the Friends of Veterans, they are a motorcycle organization that helps fundraise for our veterans. This organization was founded by a gentleman

whose name was Larry Dahn (Moss, as we knew him). Moss died on June 14, 2008, in an accident while riding on his motorcycle

On Saturday, May 15, 2010, it was another adventure again with the Poker Run. VAF's Faye Rainey and Dawn Ollendick came in around 9 a.m. to set up tables and made coffee and hot cocoa and some extra goodies to go with the beverages. We handed them out to the riders while they registered for the ride. They had many stops on the way so they needed that coffee, which we ran out of. Sorry to all.

The Friends of Veterans had a good turnout for the event. After the blessing of the bikes (we counted around 63 bikes), they lined up on 5th street and all took off at the same time. It was amazing! More bikes showed up late; they turned around and took off to catch up with the rest!

That night they were staying in Wyeville to eat, drink and camp. During their fun time, they had lots of raffles and prizes to give out. This was all done in memory of Moss – "his dream lives on, but he is not forgotten."



Dan and Peggy Koresh (yes, that is VAF case manager Peggy Koresh) participating in the 8th Annual Friends of Veterans (FOV) Poker Run benefiting the Veterans Assistance Foundation.

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FRIENDS OF VETERANS PRESENTS CHECK TO VAF



Pictured, L-R: Faye Rainey-Program Director VAF, Dawn Ollendick-Programs Director VAF, Colin Moten-President VAF, Ronessa Revels-FOV, Billy Johnson-FOV and Kathy Cook-FOV.

The Friends of Veterans presented a check to the Veterans Assistance Foundation with the funds raised by the FOV at the 8th Annual Bike Blessing and Poker Run.

APPRECIATION PLAQUE AWARDED TO FRIENDS OF VETERANS



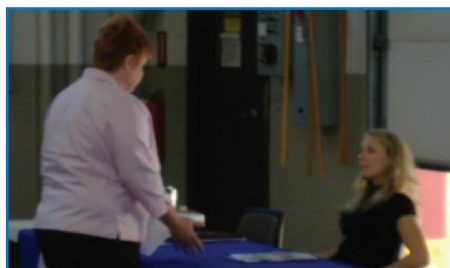
Colin presenting a plaque to the Friends of Veterans in appreciation of their efforts to support the VAF. Pictured, kneeling: Kurt Wohler; 1st Row Standing, L-R: Pete Peterson, Peg Peterson, Colin Moten-VAF President, Ronessa Revels, Tabatha Bishop and Ralph Johnson (seated); 2nd Row, Standing, L-R: Gina Gilpin, Tim Gilpin, Billy Johnson, Kathy Cook, Ron Crow and Pennie Johnson.

The plaque reads:

**Presented to
The Friends of Veterans**
*In Sincere Appreciation of your
Contributions and Support
to the Veterans in our Program.*

*Thank you
2010
The Veterans Assistance Foundation*

SPARTA JOB FAIR



Dawn speaking to a representative of Century Foods of Sparta.

The Department of Workforce Development for the State of Wisconsin held a Veterans Job Fair on June 16, 2010 at the Army National Guard Armory in Sparta, Wisconsin. Of the displays set up, there were 21 employers (including one Federal Agency) and 19 benefit providers. The Job Fair ran from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. and had a very good turnout with 98 Veterans registering for the event.

Through the employers attending the event there were 130 current positions open. There were five veterans hired at the event, and there were 125 confirmed future interviews for the veterans. There was a van from the VAF that made the trip to Sparta taking 14 of our Veterans (including the driver) to take part in the Job Fair. Of these 14 individuals, there were five future interviews set up that day; there may be more interviews pending.

Vern Tranberg represented the Veterans Assistance Foundation (VAF) at the Job Fair as a benefit provider/outreach information table. He indicated that several of the veterans stopped at the VAF table to inquire about the program and to look at the pictures of the program facilities. He commented that they all said they were very happy someone was helping our fellow veterans. He handed out several brochures and asked them to spread the word about the program to any Veterans they knew who may need the services provided by the VAF.

Dawn Ollendick also attended the Job Fair in the afternoon. She and Vern both made contact with several of the employers present to either set up a possible working relationship with a new employer or to touch base and strengthen the relationship with a current employer working with the VAF.



VAF Staff Dawn and Vern with Dave Wolf (DWD-DAV Program Spec.) and Bob Burrier (DAV Deputy Representative) of WI.

CONGRATS, continued from page 1



Michelle Hove

I met my husband and on August 16, 1990 I found out I was blessed with expecting our first child. On August 24, 1990, my husband was put on alert for Desert Storm. He left November 8th for Saudi Arabia. When he returned in July of 1991, our son was three months old.

We now have two children: Our son is now 19 and our daughter is 12. Our son just finished his first year of college; he is an Art Education Major with a Minor in History. He has three more years left, then he plans to return to Tomah to teach and coach football. Our daughter is currently in the middle school and is a straight A student. She hopes to go to college to be a lawyer. Both of our children are in many sports and are currently play-

ing summer softball. My husband and I enjoy camping, fishing, movies and attending our children's sporting events. We also try to vacation once a year, usually to the Caribbean. That is my paradise, and I would choose to retire there, out of any other place in the world.

My experience includes working for Adecco Employment Services and ABR Employment Services. Both places work with companies to fulfill their staffing needs. I believe there are even a few gentlemen here that I have worked with in the staffing field. Besides this, I have many years experience in Human Resources and Customer Service. I feel that every place I have worked has had positive experiences for me to draw from, and I hope to use these experiences to be of better service at VAF. I am so happy to be here working with Faye and the crew – not to mention working with all of the veterans. Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of the VAF team!

DRUM ROLL, PLEASE... and the winners for VAF are... THUNDER AND LIGHTNING



VAF residents Bob D. and Louie G. display their 1st Place awards from the 9-Pin Tap Bowling Tournament hosted by the Tomah VAMC.

The Tomah VAMC held the March Madness 9-Pin Tap Bowling Tourney Fundraiser as a way to raise funds for the 2010 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. The tournament was open to all – Veterans, Employees, Volunteers and members of the Community and was held from March 1-April 9, 2010.

There were seventeen, 2 person teams entered in the tournament at a cost of \$20 per team. The tournament consisted of two rounds – a qualifying round and a championship round. In the qualifying round, each team bowled one game. The game was played with the teammates taking turns, one bowling the first frame then the other bowling the second frame and so on until the end of the game. Of the 17 teams to compete in the tournament, the three teams with the highest scores then proceeded to the championship round.

The top three teams were: Louie and Bob (VAF residents) with a score of 192, Bill and Tom with a score of 176 and Joey and John (VAF residents) with a score of 175.

The competition was tough, and there was probably a lot of good-natured ribbing going on, but in the end the team of Thunder and Lightning persevered and took home the top honors of the tournament. The final standings of the tournament are as follows:

1st place: Louie and Bob, Final score of 186
2nd place: Joey and John, Final score of 178
3rd place: Bill and Tom, Final score of 177

Quoting Thunder (aka Louie) "it was all in good fun to raise money, and I would like to thank Jim Theres of the Tomah VAMC for running it. We need more activities like this. Hint, Hint."

HIGHLIGHT A VETERAN

My name is Terry Morrisard and I have been with the Veterans Assistance Foundation since September 26, 2007. I was living with my sister, but I became homeless when she asked me to leave. I had nowhere else to go.

I came to VAF, and while I was in the program I became a voluntary driver. I enjoyed that very much and did any drive that was asked of me. Renee kept me busy with drives, and I also moved all the vehicles so plowing could get done in the



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

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

FRIENDS OF VETERANS

Moss Dahn and Ronessa Revels have supported the Veterans Assistance Foundation (VAF) since its inception in 1994. Moss bought new televisions for the dayrooms to replace the old sets that were over 20 years old. They brought in towels, washcloths, sheets, clothing and other items that the VAF could use to help the Veterans in the program. When the VAF needed refrigerators for the program, Moss found a way to get them. Moss wasn't afraid to ask organizations for donations to help the Veterans.

In 2002 Moss and Ronessa decided they wanted to do something bigger to help raise money for VAF. So talk was started of a fundraiser, that turned to a Poker Run and finally to a Bike Blessing. The first Bike Blessing and Poker Run was held in May 2003 with approximately 20 bikes registered and they raised \$100 for the VAF. They decided to hold the event again the next year and had 10 to 12 friends and family members helping them organize the event, which has turned into an annual event and grown from there. This year they had approximately 100 people signed up – some only came to have their bikes blessed, while others took part in the Bike Blessing and the Poker Run itself, which was 90 miles long for the whole route. This year, the Friends of Veterans Bike Blessing and Poker Run raised \$5,000 for the VAF.

In 2008, the Friends of Veterans lost Moss due to a motorcycle accident; at that

time, Ronessa was going to give up on the Friends of Veterans as it was something they had built up together. Several members of the group would not give up on Ronessa and told her that Moss would have wanted her (and them) to keep it going to help the Veterans. Ronessa decided to stay with the group and keep it going. The Friends of Veterans currently has over 40 members in the group with approximately 15 of them Veterans themselves with service dates ranging from WWII, Vietnam, Desert Storm, OEF/OIF, other conflicts, peacetime and currently serving on active duty.

The members of the Friends of Veterans put on an annual Thanksgiving Dinner for the residents of the Veterans Assistance Foundation. They cook a traditional dinner with turkey, potatoes and gravy, stuffing and pies, along with several other goodies. They come in and serve the dinner to the Veterans and thank them for their service to our country. Many heartfelt conversations take place between the two groups on this day.

The Friends of Veterans is not a Motorcycle Club, but a group of people who come together to help and support others – they are a "family". Even though there are Veterans in the group, several members are not Veterans, but have joined because they have family members that have served in the United States military. Ronessa always tells everyone, "The Friends of Veterans isn't about us, it's about helping others."



Thank you from the Residents, Staff and Board of Directors of the Veterans Assistance Foundation for all you do to help the Veterans in our Program. A special thank you to Moss and Ronessa for your efforts to support our program and in starting the Friends of Veterans group. We miss you Moss, your dream lives on!

winter. I got my own room when I became a driver, and I liked that very much.

I moved to the Step Up house in July 2008. Shortly after going into the Step Up house, I became house manager and still hold that position today. While being the house manager I have been in charge of different things around the house, which I like. I got a job at the VA with the IT program in the kitchen; I have had that job ever since I came into the Step Up house, and plan to continue to work there.

Because of living in the Step Up house, I have been able to grow my savings account,

and was able to purchase a car with cash. My savings account is still growing because I have learned to save money and I like that. I always keep the house clean and make sure that the other Veterans are also doing their part. Just like at your own house, you have to do your jobs.

I was able to connect with HUDVASH, and was approved, and I now will be getting my own apartment to move into. I would recommend the VAF program to other Veterans.

Terry Morrisard

2010 WISH LIST

Personal Care Items:

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

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	Exercise Mats
Stationery	Books	26" Bike Tire Tubes
Stamps	Bicycle Rack	Bicycle Tire Repair Kits
Greeting Cards	Bicycles (26")	

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)	Pillows & Pillow Protectors
Bath Towels/Wash Cloths	Clothes Hangers (plastic)	Laundry Detergent (powder)
Fabric Softener Sheets	Sewing Kits	Laundry Bags (mesh type)

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.

FRIENDS, continued from page 1

We want to thank Ronesa and the Friends of Veterans and all who participated in this great event that we look forward to every year. This organization means a lot to all of us at the Veterans Assistance Foundation, especially to our veterans. We thank you.



Departing the VA for the start of the 8th Annual FOV Poker Run.



The Tomah VAMC Chaplain Maynard P. Hofer preparing for the Blessing of the Bikes.

WDVA SUPERMARKET OF VETERANS BENEFITS CLEVELAND, WISCONSIN

On the 4th and 5th of June, VAF's Dawn Ollendick attended a Supermarket of Veterans Benefits in Cleveland, Wisconsin as an outreach effort for the Veterans Assistance Foundation.

At this free "one stop shop," veterans can learn about eligibility criteria for state benefits, programs for veterans and services available to them. They can also apply for their benefits. Veterans also receive information about loans, education and employment benefits.

Veterans who earned medals and need to get them or have them replaced had an opportunity to do that, as well. Veterans could apply to get their medical records or DD214'S ordered and obtain information about assisted living and nursing home care available to them. Veterans could also pre-register for burial in state veterans' cemeteries.

It was very busy both days and also very educational for Dawn. This event was well organized and she met a lot of nice people. These events are very important to our veterans; many of the veterans who came to this event were not aware of all their benefits.

OUTREACH TO SUPERMARKET

VAF's Faye Rainey was able to attend the Supermarket of Veterans Benefits on July 3rd of this year. It ran in conjunction with Operation Freedom hosted by Milwaukee County at the Milwaukee County Zoo.

Besides the Veterans Assistance Foundation, there were over 35 providers that gave information regarding VA health care, federal and state benefits and educational opportunities. Many were there for veterans and there were several others for all individuals – not just for veterans.

Hundreds of veterans from all service periods, including Iraq and Afghanistan, came through the display areas that day. It was nice to hear the many expressions of gratitude from people in their appreciation for us being there and providing the services that we do.