





VETERANS ASSISTANCE FOUNDATION

THE ALLIANCE

VAF, P.O. Box 610, Tomah, WI 54660 608-372-1280 www.vafvets.org Visit us on Twitter & Facebook  

Summer 2011

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

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Hello All,

Summer is almost gone! I'd like to start by thanking everyone for the kind gifts and donations to the Veterans in our program. Your kindness is much appreciated and does not go unnoticed.

Several new events have gone on since our last newsletter. Michelle, our Step Up Case Manager, hit her one year anniversary with the Foundation in July – Congratulations.

The Friends of Veterans had their annual Poker Run in early May this year. Despite it being an extremely busy day (at least four other local events were going on at the same time) and a threat of rain, the Friends had a large showing. As a result of all their hard work, dedication and planning, they had a safe and successful run, which resulted in a very generous donation of \$5,500. Thank you very much – ride safe and keep the rubber side down.

Our Veterans entered a float in the Independence Day parade. All of the artwork was completed by hand and they performed live music and singing during the parade. There have been several requests to have it entered into the Cran Fest parade in September. I've already been notified that this second one will be even better. Good job!

In July, VAF purchased an office building in Tomah. This new space will be used to aid in our future expansion of services, as well as containing the corporate office. Total space is approximately 2,800 sq. ft. and will include six offices and a meeting area.

We are hoping to have the project completed and to be moved in by the end of the year.

Take care, be safe and enjoy the rest of summer.

Semper Fi,
Colin Moten
VAF President



LHI'S EASTER WITH THE VETERANS



Don Weber, LHI

Once again, Don Weber and Logistics Health, Inc. (LHI) invited a gathering of veterans for a lavish Easter Dinner. It was held at the Waterfront Banquet Room in La Crosse, Wisconsin, with a beautiful view of the rapidly

flowing and engorged Mississippi River. The Marine Corp was on hand, including their mascot bull dog, "Chesty", to present Colors. It was a grand presentation and a proud moment for all attendees.

The dinner was a delicious display of pork loin topped with a grape jelly sauce, mashed potatoes, fresh green beans, and for dessert, a very smooth cream cheese torte topped with lemon and strawberry.

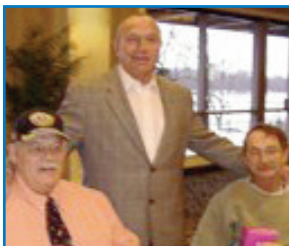
After dinner, Don spoke to the veterans and thanked them for their years of service. He told a story about his younger years and then spoke of how he has done well in his life. He attributed his success to his time in the service and felt the dinner is one way he could show his thanks to all veterans.

After many thank yous and handshakes, we boarded the bus to continue on to the Veterans Hall of Honor at The University Wisconsin-La Crosse. Once at the Hall, there were many mixed emotions as we read stories of Wisconsin veterans from all of the wars. The most apparent emotion that filled the air was a wonderful sense of pride in our military, fellow veterans and a cumulative love of our great country.



"Chesty"

**Harry M.,
Don Weber
and Al W.**



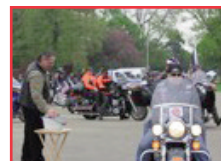
FRIENDS OF VETERANS POKER RUN HELD

On May 20, 2011 the Friends of Veterans put on another great poker run benefiting the Veterans Assistance Foundation (VAF). Colin Moten and Dawn Ollendick assisted with the set up and also with selling patches, pins, polo shirts and hats on behalf of the VAF. Coffee was also served.

The riders started showing up at 9 a.m. with the departure time from the VA parking lot being at 10:30 a.m. Once all the bikes were lined up, the blessing of bikes was given just before departure from the VA.

Although we did not have the turnout as in year's past of riders at the start, due to numerous other events going on within the community, Ronesa Revels stated that they ended up with more in attendance for the meal and after party.

Thanks to the Friends of Veterans for another successful event.



4TH OF JULY PARADE FLOAT CONSTRUCTED BY VAF RESIDENTS

For the first time, the Veterans Assistance Foundation participated in the 4th of



July parade in Tomah. Colin volunteered the use of his trailer and three residents from our Step Up and Building 407 locations. Reggie L., Jason Y. and Craig F. designed and constructed the float within a two-week timeframe.

The VAF logo was drawn freehand on the back of the float. They used the motto that is on our ID Badges, as well as above the door to the front office in building 407, which reads: "We are not here because of our past; we are here because we have a future." Also incorporated into the design were flags for each branch of service.

Another resident, Donald D., rode on the float during the parade playing guitar and singing. He did his own rendition of "The Battle of New Orleans", as well as many other songs. A few members of the Friends

of Veterans group followed behind our float on their motorcycles and displaying the American and POW flags. Reggie L., Dawn Ollendick (Programs Director), and Dawn's son, Dawson, walked along beside the float and handed out freeze pops, program flyers and VAF pins.

Reggie L. is already looking ahead to the next parade and talking about what improvements they can make to the float.

Thank you to the veterans who stepped forward to help make this happen and a great success. We feel that this was a great opportunity to reach out to people in our community and let them know what the Veterans Assistance Foundation is all about, as well as to showcase the many talented individuals we have in our Veterans.

SUPERMARKET AT THE MILWAUKEE COUNTY ZOO



Veterans and their families visit a Supermarket of Veterans Affairs at the Milwaukee County Zoo on July 3.

The Veterans Assistance Foundation was fortunate to participate in the Supermarket at the Milwaukee County Zoo held over the July 4th weekend. While we were able to make connections with veterans that were in need of our services, it was also an opportunity to guide others to the services that they were in need of. Below is the press release from the WDVA Web site regarding the event.

News article and photo by Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs press release July 6, 2011

(MADISON) – About 9,000 people attended a military and veterans family day at the Milwaukee County Zoo, which also included a Supermarket of Veterans Benefits, hosted by the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA).

Veterans were able to learn about an array of state and federal benefits at one convenient location – in the U.S. Bank Gathering Place. There were around 40 service providers on hand, including the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, County Veterans Service Offices, veterans service organizations, education centers and community organizations. Attendees had the chance to talk with them about VA health care, education benefits, veterans homes, loans, military funeral honors, women veterans programs, medals and honors and more.

Dave Saula, a Vietnam veteran from Milwaukee, stopped in at the Supermarket. "I came here last year, and to the one at the state fair, to see old friends and talk," said Saula. "There's a connection between all branches of service."

Many newcomers also visited the Supermarket. Milwaukee County Veterans Service Officer (CVSO) Jim Duff said he talked with many veterans. "It's nice to see fresh faces," Duff said. "There are people coming here for the Zoo, and they realize there's information here about their benefits. That's what we're here for. I'm seeing a lot of new people."

Brian Walker was one of the new service providers working at the Supermarket this

year. Walker, who worked for the federal VA for 25 years, recently began working in the Public Affairs Office of the Zablocki VA Medical Center in Milwaukee. He mentioned, "I talked with three veterans who didn't think they were eligible for health care benefits, and it turns out they are."

Kelly Rotruck visited the federal VA booth, among others. She is a U.S. Army veteran who served from 1983-1989 and lives in Butler. "I came here to talk to the VA Regional Office and check on my education benefits," Rotruck said. "All I have to do is go to the CVSO office and sign up, and I hope to go back to school in the spring." Rotruck also said she signed up with the WDVA Women Veterans Coordinator for the Wisconsin Women Veterans News online.

Another veteran interested in education benefits, as well as others he is eligible for, was Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran Herbert Raash of Milwaukee. Raash found out about the Supermarket "through my vet advisor at school – she gave me a flyer." Raash said, "I already knew about education benefits. I came to find out if I am maxing out all my benefits. I'm in school now on the Post 9/11 and Wisconsin GI Bills. I found out my kids are also eligible for education benefits."

TRAINING EXERCISES FOR VAF EMPLOYEES



Karla Pierce.

Ensuring the safety and well being of the VAF residents and staff is paramount and the number one priority within the Veteran Assistance Foundation. This was evident when the VAF reached out to the Tomah Veterans Affairs Medical Center Fire Department for assistance in providing training on

these important procedures.

On June 1, the VA Fire Department put on a training exercise for the new VAF Staff and Security Officers who had not yet completed this training. The first exercise was learning how to correctly operate a fire extinguisher while putting out a fire. There are four steps when putting out a fire with a handheld fire extinguisher. These steps correctly followed, will successfully put out a small fire. They are:

**Pull
Aim
Squeeze
Sweep**

The VA Fire Department also taught staff how to correctly and safely transport a person unable to evacuate themselves down a stairway during a fire. In each of the stairways of our building there are Evacuation Chairs, one for each floor. The person needing assistance is securely strapped into the chair and two

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HIGHLIGHT A VETERAN



Dawn Ollendick, Programs Director; Jerry C.; and Janet Vertheim, AODA Technician.

The Veterans Assistance Foundation has had an AODA Technician position for a few months now, and it has been a wonderful addition to the services that we offer to the Veterans onsite and at the Step Up houses. It is with hard work and commitment that we have had our first resident, Jerry C., complete the AODA 20 session program. Jerry attended 1-on-1 sessions twice a week with Janet, our AODA Technician. In sessions they worked on Motivation, Communication Styles (nonverbal and verbal), Triggers, Anger Management, Stress Management, Negotiation Skills, RET and more.

Janet has commented, "It has been an honor to work with Jerry and see the growth that he has made in this journey. He has put in

the work in each session and has learned some new skills. These new skills will not only help with his sobriety, but also in other aspects of life. I have watched Jerry become more confident and comfortable with his new skills. Keep up the good work!!!"

Good job, Jerry, and congratulations from the entire staff of the Veterans Assistance Foundation.

The following is written by Jerry C.:

After a long battle with my addiction, I got sick and tired of living the way I was living. I was always praying that this would end. After living in Dallas, Texas for almost 10 years, I moved back to Rockford, Illinois with almost two years clean and started looking for work. There were no jobs anywhere, so I had went online and saw the Veterans Assistance Foundation (VAF) program for homeless vets and where you can possibly get to truck driving school and they would pay for it (through the HVRP grant). My plans were to come up here and go to school for truck driving.

After arriving and being here for a little while, my sponsor thought it would be better for me to work on my recovery. After working in the IT and CWT programs at the VA, I eventually got a job at Ft. McCoy, working for Challenge Unlimited. After being there for a year, I was promoted to Supervisor and was given my own crew to run. I attend church in Tomah and I also go to NA and AA meetings in Tomah. I continue to work on my sobriety with the help of a support network and the staff at the VAF.

In the meetings that I had with Janet, the VAF AODA Technician, we also discussed communication skills, I statements, talking to others, relapse, prevention, body language and negotiation skills. We also worked on skills about getting along with others (seeing others' viewpoints), goal setting and planning and more. Janet helped me to keep things in a positive perspective. She kept me motivated to continue to grow and change.

FRIENDS OF VETERANS HOLDS FUNDRAISER

The Friends of Veterans held its ninth annual Bike Blessing Poker Run Fundraiser on May 21 and presented to the Veterans Assistance Foundation (www.veteransassistance.org) a check for \$5,500.

The event was held at Eagle's Nest Resort with help from Well's Pig Roasting, Mike Baumgarden, Terry Anthony, Chaplin Hofer, Choice Awards-La Crosse and businesses throughout Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois and Iowa.



Pictured, sitting: Ralph Johnson. First Row, L-R: Candy Tveter, Jim Tveter, Pennie Johnson, Colin Moten (VAF staff), Ronesa Revells, Faye Rainer (VAF staff), Dawn Ollendick (VAF staff) and Lillian Grimshaw. Second Row, L-R: Kathy Cook, Billy Johnson, Doug Raiten, Ron Crow and Dan Drew.

VAF BOARD MEETING AND SUMMER PICNIC

On August 27th, VAF held its quarterly Board of Directors meeting, followed with our annual picnic, on the V.A. grounds in Tomah.

Residents, employees and their families, along with the VAF board members, were treated to a delicious meal catered in by

Famous Dave's BBQ. On the menu was beef brisket and pulled pork, along with potato salad, coleslaw, baked beans and corn muffins.

Also in the day's events was an awards ceremony for some of VAF employees. Pins for years of service time were awarded

to: Faye Rainey, 12 years; Dawn Ollendick, 8 years; Renee Pierce, 3 years; and Michelle Hove, 1 year.

It was a sunny, beautiful day and everyone enjoyed the meal and conversation, while being entertained by two VAF residents who played guitars and sang the oldies.



VAF Board meeting.



Everyone enjoying the afternoon.



Dave M. and Don D. strumming and singing.



Chow line for the BBQ.



Faye Rainey receiving her award from VAF CEO Bob Piaro.



President Colin Moten or is it Princess Moten????

AMERICAN LEGION VETERANS JOB FAIR

July 27, 2011 was the American Legion Veteran's Job Fair in La Crosse. Jeff Ard and Michelle Hove attended the event representing The Veterans Assistance Foundation. Our primary goals were to inform the general public and any veterans of our services while making connections with prospective employers on behalf of our veterans.

Our very own social butterfly, Jeff made the rounds several times charming employers with his charisma and smile. He solidi-

fied several relationships with employers including Challenge Unlimited, LHI, Schwann's and Century Foods. In the meantime, Michelle, the wallflower (ha-ha), held down the fort at our home table informing any visitors of our services.

There was a very good turnout of veterans, as well as civilians. Of course, the highlights of the day were the several visits from Vern Tranberg and his quirky sense of humor. All in all, the day was a success with many work relationships forged.

CARS FOR CAUSES



The Veterans Assistance Foundation (VAF) has been signed up with Charitable Auto Resources for approximately a year and a half now. During this time we have received several donations through this program. Charitable Auto Resources, Inc. (CARs™) is a service-oriented company based in San Diego, California. Their mission is to manage successful vehicle donation programs, raising funds to support nonprofit organizations, such as ours.

They collect the donated vehicles, bring them to their car donation center, and when you (as the donor) indicate you would like to give to the Veterans Assistance Foundation, they will sell the car for you and distribute the proceeds to our organization.

As well as helping out our nonprofit organization by donating a used vehicle

and designating us to receive the proceeds, you will be able to claim an itemized tax deduction for its full, true value. Charitable Auto Resources will also help you with all of the paperwork for this.

Cars are not the only type of vehicle you can donate; you can also donate boats, RVs, trucks, semi-tractors, airplanes and motorcycles...they even accept farm equipment.

To learn more about donating to CARs, you can go to their Web site at www.donatingiseasy.org or you can contact them by mail at: Charitable Auto Resources, Inc., 4669 Murphy Canyon Road, Suite #100, San Diego, CA 92123; or by phone at 858-300-2900.

If you wish to donate a vehicle and designate the VAF as the beneficiary, go to www.donatingiseasy.org/donate-car-veterans-assistance-foundation.htm or call 877-537-5277.

YOU, ALWAYS

You weren't always easy
But who,
who can truly challenge us ever is?

You weren't always laughing
But who, who truly knows the value
of laughter ever is?

You weren't always serious
But who, who truly loves to see
others smile ever is?

You weren't always healthy
But who, who truly loves all of life's
richer flavors ever is?

You weren't always appreciated,
But who, who makes us feel
truly comfortable ever is?

You won't ever be forgotten
But who, who is truly loved ever is?
—Author Unknown

*The following are those
who have passed away,
who were either present or past
Veterans of our program.*

In Remembrance

Steve E. – U.S. Army
Age 62 Years
08/28/1948 – 02/08/11

Curtis B. – U.S. Army
Age 58 Years
05/24/52 – 05/19/11

Richard B. – U.S. Army
Age 52 Years
07/23/58 – 05/19/11

Roger D. – U.S. Coast Guard
Age 53 Years
12/08/57 – 07/10/11

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."

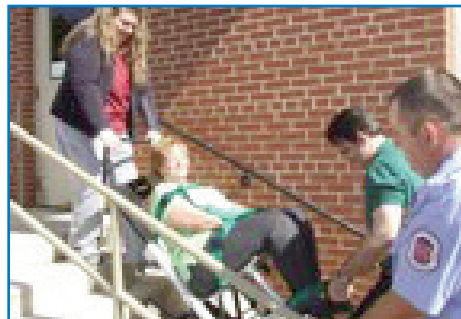
VAF MISSION STATEMENT

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.

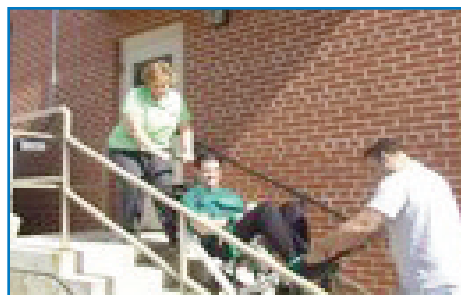
TRAINING, continued from page 2 —

people will move the chair with a rider safely down the stairs. This can be accomplished safely if only one person is available to assist, but ideally they would like to have two people assisting.

Everyone learned valuable information and had fun while doing it.



Janet Verthein, Karla and Bill Nelson (Security Officer).



Karla, Bill and Travis.