



VETERANS ASSISTANCE FOUNDATION

THE ALLIANCE

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

Winter 2011

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

CHRISTMAS JOY AT VAF

On December 8, 2010 the Veterans Assistance Foundation (VAF) staff, along with Kate Loethen, Tomah VAMC clinician who works with the VAF, hosted the annual Christmas Party for the Veterans in our program. Everything started with the meal...beef brisket, chicken, cheesy potatoes, green beans, baked beans, cole slaw and cake for dessert. Mmm...yummy! Once everyone had eaten enough, we moved on to the games and presents.

This year, we added two new games for entertainment, along with Bingo. The Veterans were able to "spin the wheel" and pick a gift according to the color the wheel stopped on (the VAF gifts were in three separate color-coded stacks). After selecting their VAF gift, they moved on to the area of the donated gifts from the ASMC Green Tree Chapter. The ASMC is the American Society of Military Comptrollers, who have been donating Christmas

— **CHRISTMAS, continued on page 2**



JJ spins the wheel to see which stack of gifts he gets to choose from.



Jeff S., Paul P., Michael L. and Argele B. enjoy the meal provided.

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER GIVEN TO VAF VETERANS

*By Logistics Health, Inc.,
La Crosse, Wisconsin*

Once again, the Veterans in our program were able to experience the wonderful generosity of Don Weber, CEO of Logistics Health, Inc. of La Crosse, Wisconsin. Mr. Weber is a Vietnam Veteran who gives generously to Veterans, as well as individuals and groups in the private sector.

On December 22, 2010, Mr. Weber and his wife, Roxanne, along with several volunteers, provided a Christmas Dinner at the Cargill Room in the Riverside Center II building at 332 Front Street South, La Crosse. Along with a wonderful dinner, there

was musical entertainment and Mr. and Mrs. Claus were also present. Some of the different establishments that had invitations extended to them and accepted included the Veterans Assistance Foundation, the Mosher Home from Winona, Minnesota and the Salvation Army of LaCrosse, Wisconsin.

The evening started with a short speech from Mr. Weber explaining the evening's proceedings and entertainment. They had cookie decorating for the children (and the young at heart), Mr. and Mrs. Claus were available for pictures and conversation and they had gifts to hand out to all of the children. The adults attending were also given gifts that night; they

— **DINNER, continued on page 4**

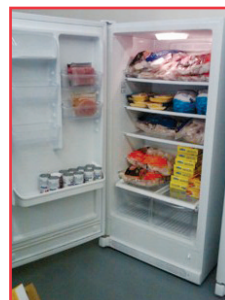


Ricky P., Reggie L., Harry M., John D. and Otha H. enjoying the dinner and the entertainment.



Pictured is one of the groups that provided entertainment.

GARAGE RENOVATION



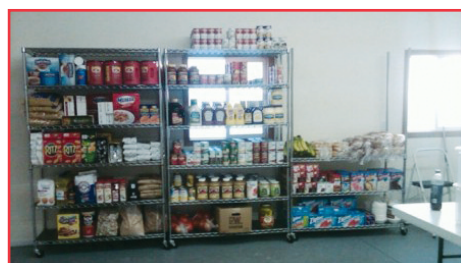
The Garage at 304 Veterans Street has been completed, with just a few minor touches yet to come. We purchased the freezers, a refrigerator and several tables and shelves. We have filled the

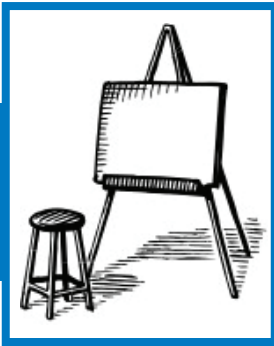
shelves, the refrigerator and the freezers with food, hygiene and cleaning items.

Everything is operational and working very well. The Step Up shopping center is open every Thursday from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. During this time, the veterans who live in the Step Up houses are able to pick up the weekly supplies that they need for their house.

We want to thank all that have worked on this project, as it has turned out better than we expected. We want to send out a big thank you to our contractor, who is also our handyman for the Step Up houses. Rich Siess has been wonderful to the veterans and has quickly taken care of any issues at the houses as needed.

We would like to thank all of those who have donated to VAF, and with your support, have made this project possible.





VAF's Got Talent!!

Showcasing Our Veterans Many Creative Talents

MY DISEASE

(What I was like, what happened, what I'm like now)

The time I have wasted is my biggest regret
Spent in those places I will never forget.
Just sitting here thinking about the things I have done
The crying, the laughing, the hurt and the fun.

I pretended to be so tough and so cool
When actually I looked like a blind old fool.
I can no longer play this childish game
Of acting real hard with no sense of shame.

I lost my family, my job, my house and my dogs
All this because I drank like the hogs.
Now it's just me, my hard-driven guilt
Behind a wall of emptiness I allowed to be built.

But the chase is over, there's no place to hide
Everything is gone, including my pride.
With reality staring me right in the face
I'm scared and lost, alone in my pace.

Living for booze, and the things I have blown

My feelings were lost, afraid to be shown.
As I look at my past, it's so easy to see
The fear that I had, afraid to be me.

Now memories of my past, flash through my head
The pain is obvious by the tears I have shed.
I ask myself why, and where I went wrong
I guess I was weak when I should have been strong.

So, it's time that I change and stop being a louse
And fulfill my dreams for a family and spouse
What my future will hold, I really don't know
But the years I have wasted have started to show.

Now it's one day at a time, now I have a new start
With the dreams I now hold so deep in my heart
I pray that I make it and stay a nice guy
Because I was heading towards death, and
I DON'T WANT TO DIE!

By Rinaldo C., VAF Resident



**Artwork by VAF Resident,
Reggie L.**

CHRISTMAS, continued from page 1 —

gifts, and also cheese and sausage trays for New Year's, for our residents for the last several years.

After receiving their gifts, the Veterans could move into the classroom to play Bingo – with an added twist. When someone would call out a “Bingo!”, staff would draw out three residents’ names from slips in a bag. These three residents then would be allowed to play “VAF Plinko.” There were four different, holiday-themed categories on the bottom of the VAF Plinko board, each of which coincided with a stack of wrapped presents from which they could choose another gift.

The staff had received many heartfelt “thank yous” from the Veterans, with several of the Veterans commenting that they appreciate the efforts of the staff and know that we truly do care about them (the Veterans). Several also commented that these were the first gifts they had received in many years. All in all, everything was a great success and fun was had by all, Veterans and staff alike.



Carlten M. plays “VAF Plinko.”



The VAF Christmas tree and presents.

HIGHLIGHT A VETERAN

Words of Wisdom from a Former VAF Resident

Hello, my name is Charles G. I am a former resident of the Tomah VAF program and the VAF Madison Step Up House. First, I want to thank the staff for the opportunity and support given to me during my entire stay. Thank you for helping me stay focused, so I could accomplish the goals I needed to acquire to positively move forward with my life.

Secondly, I wanted to share a few things with you, my fellow veterans. Thank you for serving! And thank you for showing the willingness to participate in this program. With your consent and commitment, VAF will help you make positive changes in your lifestyle, which will help you move forward. For most of you, this may be the only time you will have to focus solely on yourself. Be diligent and use this time in a positive and productive way.

Also, take time to do some real soul searching on what you need to do to improve and enhance your job training and/or skills. Know exactly what you want to do; then ask your caseworker how VAF can help you accomplish your goal. For me, this was very important. I asked VAF for their help and support to acquire my Wisconsin CDL license. It took a lot of study and testing, and additional training at Fox Valley Tech College, before I accomplished this goal.

I also worked a part-time job while in Tomah, to help enhance my job readiness and performance skills. Immediately upon moving to the Madison Step Up Program, I began to seek employment. Within a week, I successfully acquired gainful employment using my CDL training and licenses. I have enjoyed working this job for the past 14 months, and my prospects for continued employment look very good.

The last thing I wanted to share with you is to be patient with yourself. Change takes time. I spent 16 months at VAF in Tomah and 10 months at the Madison Step Up House. What a successful investment of my time!! I now make an excellent salary, have my own place, am paying off my old debts, own a vehicle and I continue to improve my living and social skills. I get up and go to work six days a week! That's pretty good for this 68-year-old vet. This success can also happen to you. Remember: "If you continue to do what you always did, you get what you've always got!"

Thanks, VAF!

Charles G.
11-15-2010



SPOTLIGHT ON OUR BENEFACTORS

VFW POST 1915 DONATION

The Veterans Assistance Foundation has received a very generous donation of a motorized chair for use by the resident veterans in our program. This donation was received from the Towner-Little Bear-Arnold VFW Post 1915 of Trempealeau, Wisconsin. They had the chair serviced and delivered it in person.

Thanks, VFW Post 1915! Your donation is deeply appreciated, and especially thankful are those residents in our program with disabilities.



Bob Rand, Ron Williamson (both of VFW Post 1915) and Colin Moten, VAF President.

A HOLIDAY DONATION OF SWEETS AND TREATS



A group from the Human Resources Department at Fort McCoy delivered apples, pudding and cookies for all of the VAF Veterans. They also met and spoke with the Veterans in our program.

A BIG thank you from all the VAF program residents, who truly enjoy receiving these treats and mostly, for being remembered during the holiday season. It really means a lot to them.

MOURN NOT WITH BROKEN HEARTS

Mourn not with broken hearts, when friends and dear ones go,
For you the night of loneliness, for them the morning glow;

For you the daily burden of the years that are to be
For them? A new adventure in a world you cannot see.

For sorrow has its season. Nothing lasts, not even grief.
Every winter has its ending, and then the greening leaf.

One day, you will awake and find that time has eased the pain.
That is how God's mercy works. Spring will come again.

—Anonymous

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

In Memory

Ishmael L. – USAF
Age 54 Years
07/31/56 – 12/28/10

Dwight P. – Army
Age 65 Years
11/15/45 – 12/27/10

2011 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.

DINNER, continued from page 1 —

received gift cards, a carrying bag and take home dinners, if they desired. We had several of our Veterans take pictures with either Mr. or Mrs. Claus – and some with both. When asked what he thought of the evening, VAF resident, Don M., stated, "It was great. An absolutely wonderful Christmas dinner, and one of the best events I have attended in my life."

After leaving the dinner, we were able to take the attending veterans from our program through the Rotary's light display in Riverside Park. This was enjoyed by all and they discussed the different displays and the number of lights used throughout the park. The conversation and laughter continued throughout the ride home and for several days after. The evening was a great success and those attending were able to see that there are wonderful and selfless people in our community who truly care about others and are willing to make an effort to spread some joy and give back to others.

Thank you Mr. and Mrs. Weber and your group of volunteers for all you have done for those on the receiving end of your generosity. It is greatly appreciated, and will surely always be remembered by those VAF resident veterans who attended.

2010 STAND DOWN

On October 21, 2010, VAF staff (Dawn and Vern) and volunteers from the Friends of Veterans group arrived at Legion Post 52 in La Crosse, Wisconsin at approximately 7:00 a.m. to set up and prepare for the day's events.

The actual Stand Down ran from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Throughout the day, staff and volunteers met and greeted the attending veterans. The total attendance was 370 veterans, with 195 of those Veterans seeking assistance from the Veterans Assistance Foundation, Inc. In addition to the Veterans Assistance Foundation, there were tables for Service Providers, such as: County Veterans Service Officers, Western Technical College, Tomah VA Medical Center and Workforce Development. Medical staff was also present to give flu shots.

There is one story in particular that we would like to share. We were able to assist a veteran that day by getting him off the street and into our program. It is wonderful when our staff and supporting agencies can make this happen in just minutes. Not that long ago, he was staying in motel rooms until his money ran out, at which time he started staying in parks or on the street. He tried living at a house sponsored by Coulee Cap, which didn't work out. He then went to stay with a friend, but the house burned to the ground in the first part of October, again leaving him without a place to stay. At the time of the Stand Down, he was

living on the streets again.

We assisted a variety of veterans from several service eras, with ages ranging from 18-60+. The volunteers and VAF staff helped in the distribution of hygiene items, clothing, boots, sleeping bags and a variety of winter items, which were all purchased with grant-issued monies.

In addition to the above listed services, staff and volunteers served breakfast and lunch to attendees. The La Crosse County Veterans Service Office received a small grant to provide part of the food for the lunch, as well as a take along sack lunch. They purchased the items necessary to make chili. The Legion cooked up a very tasty chili that went over well with all who tried it. In addition to providing hygiene items, sleeping bags, boots and clothing, the Veterans Assistance Foundation also provided food items for breakfast and lunch. We provided breakfast bars, fresh fruit, juice, coffee, milk, hamburgers, cheeseburgers and brats, among other things.

We would like to extend a thank you to the Friends of Veterans for donating their valuable time by volunteering at the Stand Down. "Great Job!" to Jim Gausmann, a La Crosse County Veterans Service Officer, the Stand Down Committee and all of the volunteers who put in a lot of time and effort to make the 2010 Stand Down a big success.