



VETERANS ASSISTANCE FOUNDATION THE ALLIANCE

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

Winter 2010

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

MR. PRESIDENT, SIR!!!



Veterans Assistance Foundation's (VAF) CEO and Chairman Robert Piaro and all its Board of Directors would like to proudly announce that Colin Moten has been promoted to the position of President of the VAF. The decision for the promotion was made at the annual VAF board meeting held in Bakersfield, CA in January, 2010. Colin has been with the foundation for almost seven years, and has been in several positions in the company: Case Manager, Program Assistance/Outreach Worker, HRVP Administrator, Programs Director

and Programs Developer.

His exemplary service and dedication over the years has "set the bar" for all the other staff members to follow. Colin's 20 years of service in the U.S. Marine Corps also proves to be a real asset while working with the staff and veterans of the program. We congratulate Colin on his new position and wish him success as he embarks on this new journey as VAF President.

**Robert R. Piaro, USMC Retired
VAF CEO & Chairman**

VAF WELCOMES THREE NEW EMPLOYEES TO STAFF



My name is Andrew Stargard and I have joined the team of the Veterans Assistance Foundation in Tomah, WI as a Case Manager. I was born and raised in Tomah, Wisconsin

and I graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater with a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology. While at Whitewater, I spent a few weeks of one summer learning at the VA in the Substance Abuse Program.

Before coming to VAF, I worked at Goodwill Industries as an Area Team Leader. Other than general management duties, I also coordinated the programs and services that Goodwill provides which include School to Work, volunteering, Riverfront and community service, to name a few. I enjoy sports, movies, games and reading in my spare time with my girlfriend, Linda.

I look forward to being a part of a wonderful team here at the VAF and being part of the successful journey that our veterans will take.

My name is Robin Bucholz, and I have joined the team of the Veterans Assistance Foundation in Tomah, WI as a Program



Assistant in the HVRP Program. I was born and raised in Sparta, WI where I raised my four children, Jennifer, Brandon, Tanya and Heather, who passed away at the age of 18 in 1994, at the hands of a drunk driver. I raised her daughter Jami, who turned 18 this year. We also have four other grandchildren besides Jami; they are Gracie, Owen, Abigail and our newest, Grant.

I married Steve Bucholz from Black River Falls, who works for Jackson Electric Company. We, along with Jami, reside in the Shamrock area of Black River Falls. I retired from the Monroe County Police Department (jail division) in 2008, after 20 years of service. We have two dogs, Jinger our golden retriever; and Gunner, our poodle/yorkie mix, who may I say must be a cat, as he thinks he has nine lives, most of which have been used up.

I was awarded a scholarship to Ashworth Online College for Web Design on the Tyra Banks Show in April of 2009. I want to someday be able to make memorial Web pages for people, as it is very healing to have a memorial Web page, such as was made for my daughter, Heather. People all over the world have seen and signed Heather's Web page, so she will never be forgotten.

I have a couple of hobbies I enjoy; one is

stroke painting and learning new and different things on the Internet. I look forward to being a part of a wonderful group of people here at the VAF.



My name is Regina Baldwin and I joined the Tomah VAF team on February 22, 2010 as the Administrative Assistant. I have lived in Tomah most of my life, and I purchased a home here three years ago, after completing college. I am a single mom of a 12-year-old son who is in 6th grade. He has been in Karate for a little over two years and has attained a brown belt.

I am happy to join the team. I have found the environment very welcoming, by both residents and staff. After a few short days, I have already discovered that this job provides a unique and rewarding opportunity to work with individuals who have served to protect our freedoms. I am looking forward to returning the favor by providing my assistance in their time of need. Although my training is a "work in progress," I will do my best to become knowledgeable about my role and an asset to this organization. Thank you for this opportunity!

VETERANS DAY DINNER SERVED AT APPLEBEE'S

For the second year, Applebee's Neighborhood Grill & Bar offered a free entrée to all Veterans and Active Duty Military Personnel on Veterans Day. They saluted veterans and active duty military for their service and sacrifice by honoring them with free food in all of the nearly 1,900 Applebee's restaurants across the nation.

"Applebee's is honored to have played a role in this national day of respect and remembrance" said Mike Archer, President of Applebee's Services, Inc. "We are proud to lead the way in saluting Veterans on their day of honor."

Sam Rothschild, Senior Vice President of Operations for Applebee's is quoted as saying, "The day turned into a military reunion at Applebee's in neighborhoods across the country. We're proud to have opened our doors for the brave men and women of the military."

This is also the second year we have had Veterans from our program take part in this wonderful event offered by Applebee's. Jody T., a volunteer driver for the VAF, drove one of our vans and took six other Veterans to the Applebee's restaurant in Onalaska, Wisconsin. The Veterans could pick from six of the top menu items, which included a 7 oz. Sirloin Tip Steak (the most popular), a Fire Pit Bacon Cheeseburger, an Oriental Chicken Salad and a Three Cheese Chicken Penne. According to Jody, everything was "Fantastic! They did an excellent job with outstanding service."

Gary K. stated "Really good food, good company and friendly staff." Gary and Jody both said that they all met another Veteran by the name of Walt and asked him to join them, as they had an extra seat at one of their tables and he was alone and had a wait of an hour and a half. It just goes to show the camaraderie and friendship between Veterans that made this possible. Hopefully, a lot of new and lasting friendships were forged at this event.

A big THANK YOU to the Applebee's restaurant chain and the staff of the Onalaska Applebee's for the salute to Veterans and the outstanding service and food provided.

A portion of the information in this article was taken from an article online at Marketwire.

CITIZENSHIP IN THE COMMUNITY



VAF President Colin Moten, was invited to be a guest speaker on November 16, 2009 for Boy Scout Troop #5 of Tomah. The Troop was working towards their *Citizenship in the Community* badge and wanted to learn more about the Veterans Assistance Foundation and how the program assists Veterans. One of the requirements for the badge is that each individual needs to complete eight hours of volunteer work.

Everyone was very interested in our pro-

Pictured, Front Row, L-R: Dustin Edwards, Jesse Arttus, Zach Farver, Kaleb Cuda, Josh Kuecker and Tyler Cox. Back Row, L-R: Assistant Scout leader Sam Neve, Senior Patrol Leader Nick Salvo, Dillon Benson, Eric Stoikes, Derrick Kane, Isaac Neve, Colin Nastachowski, Colin Moten and Scout Master Glenn Nastachowski.

gram. Each of the boys had good questions to ask Colin. Some of the questions asked of Colin were: How was the VAF started? What does it mean to be a Veteran at risk? What care do Veterans need? What does this service do? How long do homeless Veterans stay in the program? Do Veterans have to have a job while in your program? Are there any female homeless veterans or just male homeless veterans? How can we help you help the homeless veterans?

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, JOHN B.



John B. dressed to serve the food.

On November 6, 2009 VAF resident John B. turned 60 years old. To celebrate, he threw himself a birthday party and invited all of the other Veterans in the VAF program in Tomah to his party.

He purchased decorations and put them up in the 2nd floor day room, which included tablecloths, table decorations and strings of lights. He provided sub sandwiches and pizza for everyone to enjoy and he served everyone while wearing his chef's hat. In addition to the sandwiches and pizza, John also provided birthday cake for everyone.

It seems that everyone who attended had a good time and enjoyed the food.

SPREADING SOME CHRISTMAS JOY

Through donated funds, the foundation was able to purchase a gift for each resident veteran and also purchase prizes which were given out during Bingo games played at the party. The VAF staff served a delicious meal that included beef brisket, barbecued chicken, assorted side dishes and dessert. Every year the staff donates personal time to organize the event, shop for and wrap gifts and participate at the party with food and games.

It was such a joy to see these veterans so overwhelmed by the kindness of strangers. It was a surprise to find out that many of them have never gotten a gift or celebrated the holidays in a very long time. Thank you to all of those people who were responsible for making this event happen by their generous donations and remembering our veterans during the 2009 holiday season.



VAF staff member, Faye Rainey, distributes gifts to the veterans.



B-I-N-G-O!!!! Residents enjoyed playing Bingo at the party.

IT'S A FRIENDS OF VETERANS THANKSGIVING

On Saturday, November 7, 2009 the Friends of Veterans motorcycle group hosted their annual Thanksgiving dinner to the resident veterans of VAF. About 20 members of the group attended and brought with them many homemade dishes to share, including 25 pies, rhubarb being the most requested. Several of the dishes and pies were sent by family, friends and members of the group that could not attend.

Many compliments were given by the veterans during the event and for several days thereafter. A grateful thanks goes out from the veterans and staff of the VAF to the Friends of Veterans. Safe travels!



Everyone was served. The weekend security guard was invited to join the festivities and also got to enjoy the good food.



Those present to help serve the meal on November 7th from the Friends of Veterans pose for a group picture before serving the Veterans.



Faye Rainey, Operation Director of the VAF, stands by the desk full of pies waiting to serve the hungry masses. Don't the pies look good???



SPOTLIGHT ON OUR BENEFACTORS

The following companies, organizations and individuals are recognized for their very generous contributions to the veterans residing in VAF-operated programs.

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF MILITARY COMPTROLLERS

Every year the American Society of Military Comptrollers has gone above and beyond for our Veterans. They bought enough gifts during the holidays so that every Veteran in our program, including the residents in our Step Up houses, would each receive two gifts. This year, a \$25

Walmart gift card for each Veteran was also included. They also provided meat and cheese trays with crackers for New Year's Eve.

A big thank you to all the members of the American Society of Military Comptrollers.

THE TORO COMPANY

The Toro Company Giving Program has helped in a couple of different ways. They donated a 2009 Disney Vacation Package, which included three nights lodging and four 4-day Park Hopper Pass tickets to the Magic Kingdom, Animal Kingdom, Epcot Center and MGM Studios, a combined value of \$1,300. This vacation package was used as a Grand Prize in a raffle held by the Friends of Veterans to benefit the Veterans Assistance Foundation. There are also 13 employees of Toro who have signed up through the Toro giving program, "Dollars for Doers". Through this program, the employee(s) signs up to volunteer a mini-

mum of 30 hours of their time in service to a nonprofit organization within a 12-month time period. In exchange for their volunteer time to the nonprofit organization, The Toro Company giving program then donates \$300 to the nonprofit for each individual who has completed their 30 hours of volunteer service time.

Thank you so much to the 13 individuals who signed up and completed their 30 hours of volunteer service time as we received \$3,900 from the Toro Company giving program. Thank you to the Toro Company for providing these programs and for your generous donations.

THE FOUNDATION FOR AMERICAN VETERANS

The Foundation for American Veterans from West Bloomfield, Michigan has given us a cash donation, as well as giving VAF large donations of new clothing items on

several occasions.

Thank you to Bob McDonald and the Foundation for American Veterans for thinking of the veterans in our program.

THE FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF JOHN F. VONADA

We would like to recognize the friends and family of John F. Vonada, who passed away August 2009 and requested that contributions be made to our program in lieu of flowers. Mr. Vonada was proven to be a very special man as we received an outpouring of donations

made in his honor.

Our deepest thank you to all who thought of the veterans in our program in honor of Mr. Vonada, a veteran of the U.S. Army serving during WWII under General George Patton, receiving two Purple Hearts and a Silver Star.

THE AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY 66 AND THE FRIEDMAN FAMILIES

We have also received generous monetary donations from the Parker-Jose-Stockwell ALA Unit #66 from Athelstane, Wisconsin and from the Friedman families from Mequon, Wis-

consin and Dubuque, Iowa.

We would like to extend a thank you to all of you for your generous donations and thinking of our nation's heroes in their time of need.

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
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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
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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.

NEW LOGOS GRACE VAF WALLS

Tomah VA employee Audrey Zumbrunnen, pictured standing next to a completed logo that she skillfully painted on the 3rd Floor of Building 407 as you exit the elevator. She is currently painting another logo in Room 2748 on the 2nd Floor. The new logos will be a great addition to our décor here at VAF.

Audrey, you've done an awesome job and we thank you for all the time and talent that you have put into your project. **YOU ROCK!**



CLIMBING UP THE LADDER

Hello! Dawn here, to let you all know about my new position with the Veterans Assistance Foundation. Yes, I am the funny staff member and I tell great jokes (just ask Bob). So, let me tell you a little bit of what I have done while working for the VAF. I started as a case manager with the VAF on January 13, 2003. While working in this position, I learned a lot about the program and the different veterans we serve. From there, I went on to work with Colin in HVRP, a grant that helps Veterans get back in the main line of working again which include such things as obtaining their GED, further schooling or getting items needed for a particular job.

After working in that position for a few years, the VAF opened additional Step Up houses out in the community, and I was asked to become the new Program Specialist and work as a case manager for the Veterans in the houses. It was a lot of fun setting up the houses, as it was like I bought them but was unable to live in them. Kind of like a foreclosure where – you bought it – you just can't live in it. I have worked as the Program Specialist for a few years now and I have loved it.

Now I have been promoted to the position of Programs Director, overseeing the HVRP and Step Up Programs. Two positions I have loved working in and now I am the Director

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.



of both. It feels wonderful to know that the company and people you are working for acknowledge what you do and how well you do it. I could fill this page up with all of the great people that I have worked with throughout my seven years of employment with the VAF, but I would not know where to start. So I will just say it has been an experience and an adventure to work here and I hope to continue working for the VAF and everyone affiliated with the VAF. It's all about making a difference and this is why I do what I do.

Dawn Ollendick
VAF Program Director