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NEWSLETTER

UPDATED - JAN/FEB 2012



All veterans are reminded that the fastest way to inquire and secure the benefits you have earned is by visiting your local County Veterans Service Office. A listing of these offices is available at www.cacvso.org or on CalVet's website at www.calvet.ca.gov/resources/database.aspx

CALVET & ITS PARTNERS BRING NEW FEDERAL DOLLARS TO CALIFORNIA

By Anthony Zamarron
Staff Writer

SACRAMENTO – Over the past year, The California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) and County Veterans Service Officers (CVSOs) have put greater emphasis on marketing and outreach to veterans. As a result, California veterans have received more federal compensation and pension dollars than ever before. CalVet is home to more veterans than any state in the nation. CalVet and its partners proudly serves veterans of every generation by helping them connect with the benefits and services they have earned through military service.

“By the end of 2010, California had received \$300 million more compensation and pension dollars than it had the year before,” said Peter J. Gravett, CalVet Secretary. “We are confident that the 2011 numbers will show another significant increase in compensation and pension dollars. Those dollars mean money in the veterans’ pockets – money they can spend on everyday living that stimulates local economies.”

CalVet's marketing and outreach efforts relied on the dedicated work and tireless efforts of CVSOs, AmeriCorps

volunteers, the use of social media and mobile applications, the assistance of public libraries, chambers of commerce, government agencies statewide, and the engagement of diverse private-sector employer partners. This array of approaches has helped CalVet to reach and assist veterans who have been out of military service for decades and veterans returning to California from Iraq and Afghanistan. CVSOs continually assist veterans in the State's 58 counties on a day to day basis to ensure they receive the benefits they have earned. AmeriCorps volunteers logged more than 50,000 hours of service, calling recently returned veterans upon their discharge and older veterans who had never before applied for benefits.

In addition to CalVet's more aggressive approach to helping to connect veterans with their benefits for the first time, the department is also focusing on making sure that veterans are receiving all benefits they qualify for.

“Many Vietnam-era veterans are not aware that they are entitled to compensation and pension benefits if they suffer from diseases and disorders related to Agent Orange exposure,” said Trevor Albertson, CalVet Deputy Secretary for Veteran Services. “Our team's goal is to make sure every dollar available goes to the deserving men and women in our state who are eligible to receive them. We strive to be above the national average in terms of compensation for our veterans and will



shortly accomplish that goal.”

In addition to helping veterans get the compensation and pension dollars to which they are entitled, CalVet is also committed, through its Home Loan Program, to helping veterans and active duty personnel attain the American dream of home ownership. CalVet's efforts not only help veterans and their families but also stimulate local economies, improve communities, and add value to the California real estate market.

For more information about CalVet, contact pao@calvet.ca.gov.

INSIDE ▶▶

Pearl Harbor Day	p. 2
Veteran to Veteran	p. 3
Benefits for Older Vets	p. 6
American Legion Riders	p. 10
Buyout Plans	p. 12
Upcoming Events	p. 16

PEARL HARBOR DAY “GROVE OF HONOR” CEREMONY HELD AT LANCASTER VETERANS HOME

By Jeanne Bonfilio
Staff Writer

A Pearl Harbor Day “Grove of Honor” tree planting ceremony and memorial dedication was held at the William J. “Pete” Knight Veterans Home of California in Lancaster on Wednesday, December 7. The event was held to honor and remember the service and sacrifices of veterans and the members of the United States military.

Attended by 60 guests, the ceremony was held on the 70th anniversary of the attacks on Pearl Harbor during World War II. More than 2,000 Americans were killed and more than 1,000 were injured. In the months that followed the attack, the slogan “Remember Pearl Harbor” swept the United States and radio stations repeatedly played a song of the same name. “Seventy years later, we are still remembering Pearl Harbor with a special ‘Grove of Honor’ tree planting and memorial dedication sponsored by “Veterans for Trees,” said Norman Andrews, Director, Lancaster Veterans Home.

CHRISTMAS EVE HOT-AIR BALLOON RIDES

By Jeanne Bonfilio
Staff Writer

For the second straight year, Lancaster Veterans Home residents took flight in a huge, colorful, hot-air balloon, compliments of Simi Valley-based Details Above All hot air balloon



Lancaster Veterans Home Administrator Norman Andrews receives the Grove of Honor memorial plaque from Richard Sheffield, Director of Veterans for Trees.

Veterans for Trees is a national, non-profit veterans memorial tree and reforestation seedling planting organization. Veterans and supporters of veterans unite to plant trees in memory of those veterans who have served their country in the Armed Forces and to replant forests devastated by fire and flood. Their sole purpose is to provide veterans, families, friends and supporters of veterans with an opportunity to memorialize veterans’ service and sacrifice, and to improve the health of the environment and the nation’s forests.

Participating at the event were Assemblyman Steve Knight; Lancaster Veterans Home Administrator Norman Andrews; Director of Veterans for Trees Richard Sheffield; Brittany Randall, representing Senator Sharon Runner; Norm Hickling, representing Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael Antonovich; and J.D. Kennedy, representing Congressman Howard “Buck” McKeon. Gail Knight, widow of the late Senator and astronaut for whom the veterans home was named, also lent her support.

company. This year, the spectacular event was held on a bright, brisk and clear Christmas Eve morning, December 24. It was a huge success! “Our veterans had a great time!” said Lawrence Hawkins, Supervising Rehabilitation Therapist, who coordinated the rides.

Lancaster Veterans Home Director Norman Andrews said that the veterans were eagerly anticipating the balloon rides. “This is an event the veterans look

forward to with much anticipation,” said Andrews. “We are so grateful to the ‘Details Above All’ hot air balloon company and thank them for their continued support of the Veterans of the William J. ‘Pete’ Knight Veterans Home of California—Lancaster.”

Veterans Home residents made contact with the company last year



(L-R) Larry Miller from Lancaster American Legion Riders; Home resident Chuck H.; Activity Coordinator Rachel Wilson (seated); Mike Strickland and Melissa Buchanan from Edwards Air Force Base Public Affairs; Home resident Richard B; American Legion Riders; and Supervising Rehabilitation Therapist Lawrence Hawkins.

“VETERAN TO VETERAN” CARE PACKAGE PROJECT BRINGS HOLIDAY JOY TO TROOPS IN AFGHANISTAN

By *Jeanne Bonfilio*
Staff Writer

December 13th and 14th were heartwarming days of giving at the Lancaster Veterans Home when members of Edwards Air Force Base stopped by. The special visit was made to pick up items that veteran residents had been collecting, with help from the high-desert communities, as part of their “Veteran to Veteran Care Package Project.” The goal of the project was to collect and deliver items and supplies to troops currently stationed in Afghanistan, especially during the holiday season.

“The ‘Veteran to Veteran’ effort by the veteran residents of the Lancaster Veterans Home, was their way of expressing how much they care about our troops in Afghanistan,” said Norman Andrews, Director, Lancaster Veterans Home. “It is not the size or value of a gift but the recognition that we care that matters.”

Veterans Home residents partnered with Panache Salon, the American Legion Riders from Lancaster and Palmdale and the Tehachapi American Legion Auxiliary to collect enough items to fill more than 350 care packages!

Edwards Air Force Base picked up the items and facilitated delivery. The care packages were sent with the Edwards Air Force Base troops deploying to Afghanistan. “We are very grateful for the assistance that Edwards Air Force Base has provided in delivering the packages,” added Andrews. “They are always supportive of the Home and our veterans.”

Andrews also expressed his appreciation to others involved in the project. “I would also like to thank Panache Salon, the American Legion Riders, the Tehachapi American Legion Auxiliary, our wonderful Veterans Home residents and everyone from the community who helped collect items for this great effort.”

Diane Betzler from the Aerotech News was also present to cover this event.

<< BALLOON

when their balloon set down just outside the Veterans Home in 2010 after a flight from Lancaster Municipal Stadium. Commercial balloon pilot Marie Chiruzzi said that, as a family, they decided to give this gift to the Veterans Home instead of exchanging gifts with her family this year. Her crew consisted of two workers, Marie’s police officer husband, as well as her son and daughter. “I love to give back to the veterans because my father was a veteran,” Chieruzzi said. “This is my extended family.”

“The weather was gorgeous,” added Hawkins. “There was no wind, great visibility, and it was cold”. Media outlets covering the wonderful day include the Antelope Valley Press and the Aerotech News. The balloon rides are so popular, that they are asking Details Above All to please come back next year to make it three years in a row!



Residents Al H. and Don M. enjoying the view from high above the Lancaster Veterans Home.

1940'S NEWS YEAR'S EVE USO SHOW "A SALUTE TO THE TROOPS"

A fabulous New Year's Eve USO Show took veterans back to the 1940's at the Veterans Home of California in Ventura on December 30, 2011, when talented staff members and dedicated volunteers came together to honor World War II veterans.

Multi-talented Jeanne McCormick, Veterans Home Volunteer, served as the event's dance instructor, choreographer, costume maker and producer of the show. She even donated funds for gorgeous costumes and props!

"To honor you and thank you for your service, we're taking you back to the 1940s during World War II when most of you were just kids serving in the military and away from home for the first time," McCormick told the veterans. "In true Bob Hope tradition, you'll be entertained by our USO troops featuring

music, song, and dance from the 1940s, including numbers by Bob Hope, the Andrews Sisters, Ethel Merman, Kate Smith and the Bob Hope Dancers."

Rehearsals went well and designers worked diligently on costumes and military uniforms reminiscent of the World War II era. Posters and promotional information were also provided. Veterans were also encouraged to wear their military uniforms. Special arrangements were also made to have veterans take photos with the entertainers after the show.



Veterans Home staff dress up in 1940's attire.



Brenda Manke (third from left) and staff smile during the Homes' New Year's party.

FREE TELEPHONES FOR VETERANS WITH HEARING DIFFICULTY

The telephone may be an accepted part of life in the 21st century, but not for an estimated three million Californians. Most of us take using the telephone for granted. But if you have difficulty hearing, seeing, speaking, moving, or remembering, what seems to be a simple telephone call can be quite challenging, thus preventing communication with family, friends, and others.

The same telecommunications technology that fuels never-ending innovation has produced a wealth

of specialized phones and devices so people with disabilities can communicate with family and friends. These phones are provided by the Deaf and Disabled Telecommunications Program (DDTP) at no charge to eligible Californians.

DDTP distributes telecommunications equipment and services that improve communication for all Californians. A program of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), the DDTP provides Californians with specialized telephone equipment and relay services through the California Telephone Access Program (CTAP) and California Relay Service (CRS), respectively. CTAP provides specialized phones that amplify sound,

adjust tone, light up for incoming calls, display phone conversation as text, have large buttons with raised numbers, are portable, or have speed dial phone buttons incorporating photographs. CTAP offers approximately 60 types of specialized phones and devices, so all Californians can communicate their own way.

CRS provides specially-trained Relay Operators and Communication Assistants to relay telephone conversations between people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or are speech-disabled with those they wish to communicate with by telephone. CRS, captioned telephone, and Speech-to-

LOS ANGELES AIR FORCE BASE BRINGS HOLIDAY CHEER TO WEST LOS ANGELES VETERANS HOME

By Jeanne Bonfilio
Staff Writer

Ten members of the Los Angeles Air Force Base made a welcomed visit to the West Los Angeles Veterans Home on December 15 to meet and greet Veterans Home residents – and much more!

Service members not only spent quality time visiting residents, but they also decorated the Christmas tree, helped hang garland and sang Christmas carols with residents and staff.

They were also provided a tour of the Veterans Home. Special souvenirs from the United States Air Force were given out to residents as gifts by Captain Brandon Galdino, the son of West Los Angeles staff member Stanja Cherry. An enjoyable time was had by all. CalVet thanks the United States Air Force for their memorable visit and for their dedicated service.



Members of the Los Angeles Air Force Base, Veterans Home residents and staff are all smiles after singing a lively round of Christmas carols.



United States Air Force Captain Brandon Galindo, Captain Rosander and Lieutenant Marchetti helped decorate the Christmas tree at the West Los Angeles Veterans Home.

<< TELEPHONE

Speech relay services are all offered in English and Spanish.

California residents are eligible for specialized equipment if they have phone service and are certified by a licensed physician, medical doctor, or audiologist. There is no cost, obligation, age, or income requirement.

Once an individual qualifies for a specialized telephone, they can call (800) 806-1191 or go into one of CTAP's Service Centers throughout California to determine the most appropriate device for their requirements. CTAP staff will demonstrate phone features, recommend the phone that best fits a client's needs, and provide training on how to use and personalize the phone.

DDTP is funded by a small surcharge that appears on all Californians' telephone bills. The money collected pays for both CTAP and CRS. This surcharge appears on phone bills as "CA Relay Service and Communications Devices Fund." For more information or to download an application, visit www.ddtp.org.

VETERANS!

You may be eligible
for a home loan!

For more information contact CalVet at www.calvet.ca.gov/calvetloans or call (866) 653-2510

CAL VET
HOME LOANS



BENEFITS FOR OLDER VETERANS

By Carolyn Ballou
Staff Writer

California is currently home to 1.9 million veterans. Sixty-five percent of those veterans are 55 years old and older. With Americans now living longer, there has been a dramatic uptick in the demand for elder health care and other services. Veterans' benefits available through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) and the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) can help veterans of any age, but may be especially important to those nearing or in retirement.

For older individuals, veterans' benefits could mean the difference between a life of poverty and a life of secure retirement. Benefits could also mean the difference between undiagnosed and untreated health problems and quality health care, including free eye glasses and hearing aids. Unfortunately, less than 15% of California veterans are taking advantage of their USDVA compensation and pension benefits and less than 40% are accessing their A health care benefits.

VETS CAN ENLIST FOR RESEARCH

Veterans are signing up to serve again—but this time the focus is on better health care. The Million Veteran Program, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) Office of Research and Development, has a \$19.8 million budget to research how genes affect the health and illnesses of those who have served in the armed forces.



Confusion is one of the reasons veterans don't file for their benefits. What benefits are available? Is there an application time limit? Does a disability have to be combat-related to qualify for benefits? Can a disability rating be upgraded? What benefits are available to veteran spouses?

These and other benefits questions can be answered quickly by CalVet or the veteran's County Veteran Service Office (CVSO). Both organizations can also help veterans complete and submit their benefits applications.

For answers to benefits or other veteran-related questions, visit the CalVet web site at www.calvet.ca.gov or call (877) 741-8532. For the location of the nearest CVSO, visit www.cacvso.org, click on "Contact Us," and then click on the veteran's county of residence.

More than 25,000 vets have signed up so far – and the USDVA hopes to hit the 1 million mark within seven years. "We will customize treatments for conditions that affect veterans," says Joel Kupersmith, M.D., the USDVA's chief research officer, and study "whether there are underlying genetic factors that contribute to disorders."

For more information, call (866) 441-6075 toll free.

Courtesy AARP Bulletin, January-February 2012

WEST LOS ANGELES VETERANS HOME CHOSEN AS NEW SITE FOR UCLA/VA ACADEMIC GERIATRIC TRAINING PROGRAM

By Jeanne Bonfilio
Staff Writer

The Veterans Home of California – West Los Angeles, recently became the newest training site for the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Medical School and Veterans Administration (VA) Academic Geriatric Fellowship Program.

"I am very happy to be able to introduce these young trainees to an inspiring community such as our State Veterans Home," said Mira Cantrell, M.D., Chief Medical Officer, Veterans Home of California–West Los Angeles.

"I think the geriatric Fellows will gain tremendous insight by interacting with our residents – through their stories, histories and experiences. I am very thankful to our residents for consenting to be a part of this educational endeavor."

Under the supervision of the State Veterans Home medical staff, nine geriatric Fellows from the UCLA/VA's 2011-12 academic year will participate in providing the longitudinal care for West Los Angeles Veterans Home residents while, at the same time, learning about long-term care practices, standards and regulatory requirements.

This program was developed in cooperation with the UCLA Department of Geriatric Medicine and the VA's Geriatric Research and Educational Clinical Center (GRECC) and will be run under the direction of Cantrell.

REMEMBER, HONOR, TEACH

By Jody Price
Staff Writer

Remember, Honor, and Teach; that is the mission of the Wreaths Across America Organization. Each year, this mission is carried out on the second Saturday in December, which was unanimously voted by the US Congress on December 13, 2008 as "Wreath Across America Day."

On December 10, 2011 at 9:00 a.m. all around the country, wreaths were being laid at the headstones in several hundred cemeteries in honor of our fallen Soldiers. This has become a tradition over the past several years at the Veterans Home of California, Yountville. Susan Heims, Volunteer Coordinator, has worked tirelessly with Colleen Fay, Wreaths Across America Volunteer Location Leader and the Rough Riders, a motorcycle organization and registered volunteer group at the Veterans Home, which has taken this event under their wing.

"I think that it is really great that we participate in this event every year," said Heims. "The Rough Riders have taken this project on to honor our deceased veterans and are involved in many other projects as well at the home, including Memorial Day."

This year, the Rough Riders raised enough money to purchase 487 wreaths for our Veterans Home of California, Yountville Cemetery. Each year the crowd seems to grow and the wreaths seem to multiply.

The following Cemeteries are registered participants in the Wreaths Across America organization and participated in the 2011 wreath laying ceremonies:



- Cloverdale Cemetery, Cloverdale
- Oakmont Cemetery, Lafayette
- Queen of Heaven Cemetery, Lafayette
- Kelseyville Cemetery District, Kelseyville
- Palmdale Cemetery, Palmdale
- Sacramento County Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Sacramento
- St. Mary's Veterans Cemetery, Sacramento
- Hartley Cemetery, Lakeport
- Rio Vista Cemetery, Rio Vista
- Liberty Veterans Cemetery, Fresno
- Merchant Marine Veterans Memorial, San Pedro
- Pacific View Memorial Park and Mortuary, Corona del Mar
- Gridley-Briggs Cemetery, Gridley
- Veterans Grove Memorial Cemetery, Yountville
- Los Angeles National Cemetery, Los Angeles
- Memory Gardens Memorial Park, Brea
- San Francisco National Cemetery at Presidio, San Francisco
- Riverside National Cemetery, Riverside
- San Joaquin Valley National Cemetery, Gustine
- Sacramento Valley National Cemetery, Dixon
- Bakersfield National Cemetery, Arvin
- Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery, San Diego
- Golden Gate National Cemetery, San Bruno
- Lancaster Cemetery District, Lancaster
- Madronia Cemetery, Saratoga
- Miramar National Cemetery, San Diego
- Northern California Veterans Cemetery, Igo
- Orland Cemetery, Orland
- Rosie the Riveter Park & Interpretive Center, Long Beach
- Sonoma Valley Veterans Memorial Park, Sonoma

For more information on the Wreaths Across America, you can visit www.wreathscrossamerica.org.



CAL VET
VETERANS HOME OF CALIFORNIA
YOUNTVILLE

The Yountville Veterans Home has immediate availability for Applicants to Domiciliary and the Residential Care Facility for the Elderly (Assisted Living)

The Veterans Home of California – Yountville is a 1021 bed facility located in the heart of the beautiful Napa Valley in Yountville, California. It is the largest Veterans Home in the United States.

Although four levels of care are offered, immediate space is available in the Domiciliary Care Units and Residential Care Facility for the Elderly.

If admitted the Yountville Home, provides four levels of care to residents; providing continuity in care to the lives of residents in a homelike atmosphere of dignity and respect.

Domiciliary Care: Residents at this level of care do not require assistance and supervision in their daily living and receive room, board, and outpatient medical care.

Residential Care Facility for the Elderly: Receive everything found in Domiciliary Care plus residents at this level of care require minimal assistance and supervision with some activities of daily living.

2 levels of Skilled Nursing (ICF and SNF): Residents at this level of care are provided 24-hour services of licensed nurses and certified nursing assistants.

Skilled nursing residents have greater access to rehabilitation therapies, nursing care, pharmacy management, structured activities and clinical dietary services. Included is a memory care program within this level of care providing a supervised environment for residents with symptoms of confusion, memory loss, difficulty making decision, solving problems or participating in conversations.

Amenities Include:

- Room and Board – three meals and snacks
- Medical care and medications
- Optical care, dental care and podiatry services
- Limited banking services
- Beauty/Barber shop
- Opportunities for worship for all denominations
- State of the art fitness center
- Bowling Alley
- Coffee Shop
- Community Center
- Base Exchange Store
- Library
- Swimming pool and therapy pool
- 9-hole golf course
- 1200 seat Theater, Symphony, Plays and Concerts
- Picnic Grounds
- Baseball Stadium
- Creative Arts Center
- Music Program
- Napa Valley Museum
- Cable Television

The Veterans Home of California–Yountville enjoys the strong support from the Napa/Solano Healthcare System. The local community as well as camaraderie from the neighboring Travis Air Force Base and many local Veterans organizations. Veterans Home of California are also located in Chula Vista, Lancaster, Ventura, Barstow and West Los Angeles.

For more information, please contact:

**Veterans Home of California–Yountville
Admissions Office
260 California Drive
Yountville, CA 94599
(800) 404-8387
(707) 944-4601**



VIETNAM VETERANS AND AGENT ORANGE

By Ted Puntillo
Solano County Veterans Services

This article will focus on Vietnam veterans and the presumptive conditions that the Veterans Administration has identified as a result of exposure to Agent Orange. Approximately 20 million gallons of herbicides were used in Vietnam between 1962 and 1971 to remove unwanted plant life and leaves which otherwise provided cover for enemy forces during the Vietnam War. Shortly following their military service in Vietnam, some veterans reported a variety of health problems at a very young age which some of them attributed to exposure to Agent Orange and the other herbicides used by our government to clear the foliage.

These defoliants had Dioxin as the main ingredient. Dioxin has since proved to be a very powerful carcinogen and is banned in most of the world. The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs has developed a comprehensive program to respond to these medical and health

concerns. The principal elements of this program include quality health care services, disability compensation for veterans with service-connected illnesses, scientific research, outreach and education.

The following conditions are presumptively recognized for service-connection for Vietnam veterans, based on exposure to herbicides during the Vietnam War.

- Diabetes Type 2
- Prostate Cancer
- Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma
- Hodgkin's Disease
- CLL or Chronic Lymphocytic leukemia
- Leukemia Type B (Hairy Cell)
- Parkinson's Disease
- Ischemic Heart Disease (defined as heart disease caused by blockage or reduced blood flow)
- Respiratory Cancers (including cancers of the lung, larynx, trachea and bronchus)
- Multiple myeloma
- Chloracne (must have occurred within one year of exposure)
- Soft tissue sarcoma

- Porphyria cutanea tarda (must have occurred within one year of exposure)
- Peripheral neuropathy (must have occurred within one year of exposure)

To qualify as a Vietnam veteran, the service member must have been in country with boots on the ground for even one day and be able to prove it. Some Naval personnel could qualify if they were on certain ships indentified in the list found on the VA website at www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/shiplist/list.asp. Also, some very specific units in Thailand and Korea may qualify as Agent Orange was used in very specific areas in these countries during very specific times. Use the VA website to indentify these specific units, times and locations at www.va.gov/agentorange.

The most common of the presumptive conditions are diabetes and ischemic heart disease. If you were in Vietnam and have had a stint, angioplasty or a by-pass procedure, you most probably have ischemic heart disease. The widows of Vietnam veterans who died of the aforementioned conditions could be eligible for death benefits as a result of the death.

If you feel that you are qualified for these benefits, please stop by your local County Veterans Service Office (CVSO) and bring proof of your Vietnam service (usually your DD-214/Discharge) and a diagnosis of your health condition. To locate your nearest CVSO, visit www.cacvso.org, click on "Contact Us," and then click on your county of residence.

CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICERS

The best place to begin your application for the benefits you have earned as a veteran is your local County Veterans Service Office (CVSO). All local CVSO offices are part of the California Association of County Veterans Service Officers, an organization of professional veterans advocates.

In California, the County Veterans Service Officer plays a critical role in the veteran's advocacy system and is often the initial contact in the community for veterans services. Through the County Veterans Service Officer, the California Association of County Veterans Service Officers is committed to California counties to provide a vital and efficient system of services and advocacy to veterans, their dependents and survivors.

To contact your local CVSO, visit www.cacvso.org and click on "contact us" and you will be directed to your county's CVSO.



Lawrence Hawkins, Supervising Rehabilitation Therapist (center), receives a generous check from the American Legion Riders, Lancaster. To his right is American Legion Riders Treasurer Fred Johnson and to his left is their President, Larry Miller.

AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS' SUPPORT CONTINUES AT LANCASTER VETERANS HOME

By Jeanne Bonfilio
Staff Writer

The American Legion Riders of Lancaster are continuing their legacy of support for veterans and the Lancaster Veterans Home by participating at the Home's National Football League Playoff Party on January 15.

In addition to supplying the beverages and scrumptious snacks for the party, they also presented the Home with a check for \$360 that was raised in a Poker Run event for the Home. This kind

donation will be added to the Home's Morale, Welfare and Recreation Fund.

Since the grand opening ceremony at the Lancaster Veterans Home, the American Legion and the American Legion Riders have provided camaraderie, financial support and just plain fun to the many men and women veterans at the Home. CalVet thanks the American Legion Riders for their sharing their time, talents, resources and friendship with the veteran residents at the Lancaster Veterans Home!



NEW COLUMBARIA STRUCTURES ALMOST COMPLETED AT THE NCVC

By Steve Jorgensen
NCVC Administrator

We are a few weeks from completing construction of 10 new columbaria structures at the Northern California Veterans Cemetery, which will provide an additional 2,000 new burial niches

within the developed cemetery. This project was funded by a federal / state veterans cemetery grant; the total project is estimated to cost approximately \$1,200,000. This project has moved very quickly due to the dry weather. This project was begun November 7, 2011 and is scheduled to be completed in March 2012.

Work progresses on a new columbaria.



The Barstow Veterans Home is Currently Accepting Applications for Residency in the Independent Living (Domiciliary), and Intermediate Nursing Levels of Care

The Veterans Home of California—Barstow is a 400-bed, long-term care facility located on 22 acres with a panoramic view of the Mojave River Valley. The high desert atmosphere offers a climate that is healthful, quiet and safe with very low air pollution. The Veterans Home provides California veterans with a living environment that protects their dignity and contributes to their feeling of self-reliance and self-worth. It offers three levels of care that provide continuity in the lives of residents in an atmosphere of dignity and respect.

1. Domiciliary Care (Independent living) for veterans who are self-sufficient and do not require assistance with activities of daily living. Non-nursing staff provides minimal supervision. Residents at this level of care have access to other levels of care and medical services.
2. Intermediate Nursing Care for veterans requiring some nursing assistance to perform activities of daily living. Licensed nursing staff assist veterans with medications and treatments.
3. Skilled Nursing Care for veterans who require a higher level of nursing care and require assistance with many activities of daily living.

Although this Veterans Home offers three levels of care, space is primarily available in the Independent Living (Domiciliary), and Intermediate Nursing levels of care.

Amenities include:

- Room and board – three meals plus snacks
- Medical care and medications
- Optical care, dental care and podiatry services
- Transportation services to all medical appointments

and off-campus activities

- Additional professional services include a beauty/barber shop, multi-purpose room and limited banking services
- Opportunities for worship for all denominations through the Chaplaincy Program
- A modern fitness center and exercise classes
- Library, cable television, and wireless Internet
- Housekeeping and laundry services
- Caring and compassionate staff, and
- Variety of community outings and an enhanced activity program

The Veterans Home of California—Barstow enjoys the strong support from the local community as well as camaraderie from the neighboring Marine Corps Logistics Base and the National Training Center at Fort Irwin.

Veterans Homes of California are also located in Chula Vista, Lancaster, Ventura, West Los Angeles, and Yountville. Veterans Homes are currently under construction in Fresno and Redding. Veterans considering assisted living are encouraged to apply to any of the Veterans Homes of California. Spouses are also eligible to apply with the veteran.

For admission information, contact:

Veterans Home of California—Barstow
100 E. Veterans Parkway
Barstow, CA 92311
(800) 746-0606, ext. 1



BENEFITS GROW MORE IMPORTANT AS VETERANS AGE

By Carolyn Ballou
Staff Writer

California is currently home to nearly 2 million veterans. Sixty-three percent of those veterans are 55 years and older. With Americans now living longer, there has been a dramatic rise in the demand for elder health care and other services. Veterans' benefits, available through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) and the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet), can help veterans of any age but may be especially important for those nearing or in retirement.

For older individuals, veterans' benefits could mean the difference between a secure retirement and having to watch every dollar spent. Benefits could also mean the difference between quality health care, and undiagnosed and untreated health problems. Unfortunately, only about 15% of eligible California veterans are taking advantage of their compensation and pension benefits and less than 40% are using their health care benefits.

Sacramento resident Mike Pagan was just 20 years old when he enlisted. He spent four years in the Navy and two in the Reserves. He was deployed and assigned to a carrier group that operated in the South China Sea. Mike was involved with storage of ammunition and security of magazines. He also worked on replenishment of supplies which involved dismantling great loads of materials and bombs. After retraining in special operations, he was deployed on a small class ship and operated off the coast of Vietnam, north and south of Da Nang, as troop support and rescue.

While working on the ship one day, Mike was hit on the side of the head by a heavy piece of metal packing material tossed by one of his ship mates. "My head hurt for a few days," said Mike, "but I didn't give it much more thought after that." Now, at the age of 63, Mike suffers from repeated ear infections and a loss of hearing. He wonders whether his health issues are related to the injury he sustained on the carrier that day and wishes he had applied for his health benefits with he got out of the service.

Many older veterans are beginning to feel the effects of injuries sustained during military service decades ago or are finding their symptoms have

VETERAN BENEFIT BUYOUT PLANS AND OTHER BAD IDEAS

Look in any military magazine and you'll likely find multiple ads promising a cash lump sum in exchange for a veteran's future disability benefit or pension payments. Drive toward any military base and you'll see business after business offering fast cash for veterans in the form of auto title, tax refund anticipation, payday, and other quick cash loans. The Center for Public Integrity reported in August 2011 that more than one in five active-duty military households have taken out non-bank loans in the past five years.

It's no wonder veterans are being targeted. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA), California veterans were paid more than \$3.8 billion in compensation and pension dollars in 2010. That figure represents only about 15% of the California veterans eligible to receive those payments.

For veterans struggling to find work after returning home from deployment or veteran families that have incurred unexpected or overwhelming debt, offers of quick cash can appear to be a godsend. Unfortunately, as the saying goes, if it sounds too good to be true it probably is.

Companies that offer cash in exchange for assignment of future military benefit and pension payments typically pay only a fraction of a veteran's actual entitlement over time—about 30 or 40 cents on the dollar. To add insult to injury, veterans that agree to sign away 8 to 10 years of their benefits for cash may be required to put up a form of collateral, such as

<< BENEFITS

gotten worse with age. Some Vietnam veterans, whose average age is now between 60 and 65, are being diagnosed with ailments associated with their exposure to Agent Orange—the toxic herbicide used to defoliate the jungle between 1962 and 1971. The USDVA now presumes that 14 diseases and disorders found in “boots-on-the-ground” veterans and certain other Vietnam veteran groups are the result of Agent Orange exposure.

“It would be easy for a doctor to overlook Agent Orange exposure as the cause of a patient’s Type 2 diabetes when genetic and lifestyle risk factors are present. The post traumatic stress disorder at the root of a veteran’s chronic

depression could also be missed,” said CalVet Secretary Peter Gravett. “That’s why it’s so important for veterans of every era to make doctors aware of their military history when being evaluated, diagnosed, and treated,” he said.

Confusion is one of the reasons veterans don’t file for their benefits. What benefits are available? Is there an application time limit? Does a disability have to be combat-related to qualify for benefits? Can a disability rating be upgraded or a disability rating denial be appealed? What benefits are available to veteran family members?

These and other benefits questions can be answered by CalVet or by the veteran’s County Veteran Service Office (CVSO). Both organizations can also help veterans complete and submit the

often confusing and frustrating benefit applications.

Mike recently contacted CalVet. The department is now helping him determine the veteran health and disability benefits he may be entitled to, including free hearing aids. When asked whether he had any advice for veterans now coming home, Mike said, “Yeah, talk to someone about your benefits and take advantage of them as soon as you can.”

For answers to benefits or other veteran-related questions, visit the CalVet web site at www.calvet.ca.gov or call 877-741-8532. For the location of the nearest CVSO, visit www.cacvso.org, click on “Contact Us,” and then click on the veteran’s county of residence.

<< BUYOUT

their house, to secure the contract in case they default. They may also be required to take out a life insurance policy payable to the company in case they die before the contract period is complete. With loan charges and other fees, veterans may pay interest rates exceeding 30%.

With payday loans, a veteran takes out a quick loan to deal with a temporary financial problem and promises to pay back the loan with the next paycheck. The Consumer Federation of America warns that some payday loans can cost up to \$30 per \$100 borrowed and borrowers carry annual interest rates (APRs) as high as 650%! If the veteran uses his or her pay check to pay off the loan and doesn’t have the money they need to pay their other bills, they take out another payday loan and the expensive cycle continues.

Tax refund anticipation loans (RAL) are no picnic either. One of America’s

largest personal income tax preparation firms will grant clients a \$5,000 within two days of filing their taxes—for an additional \$110 in fees and charges. According to the firm, if the clients do not take advantage of the RAL, they have to wait an average of three weeks to receive their refund. However, consumers who accept the loan offer may be spending more money than they’ll receive on the refund. This is because the fees and charges of the RAL actually add up to an annual interest rate of more than 37 percent.

While acknowledging that these pension buyouts and quick-cash loans are not necessarily illegal, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs calls this type of offer a “financial scam” that takes advantage of desperate veterans who may be down on their luck and need quick cash.

Last summer, an Orange County Superior Court Judge, ruled against one company that offered pension buyouts, awarding a total of \$2.9 million to 63

veterans in a class action lawsuit. The judge said the agreements that the retirees had signed violated federal law against “assigning” military pensions to other parties and called the buyouts “unscrupulous and substantially injurious.”

The new federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) was established to protect veterans and other consumers. Holly Patreaus, wife of Army Gen. David H. Petraeus, heads the bureau’s Office of Servicemember Affairs. Ms. Patreaus plans to educate military personnel about how to protect themselves financially, enforce consumer protection laws already on the books and hold accountable companies that ignore them.

The best defense against unscrupulous and predatory lenders may still be a good offense. Check out the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation’s Money Smart facts, tips, and calculators at <http://69.0.254.19/wwwMS/english/InfoBooth/index.htm>.



GOVERNOR'S INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON VETERANS MEETS IN SACRAMENTO

By Anthony Zamarron
Staff Writer

On January 25, 2012, community and private-sector members of the Governor's Interagency Council on Veterans (ICV) met to discuss veterans' issues and how to efficiently and effectively coordinate veterans' services across government, nonprofit, and private sector lines.

Representatives from the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Kaiser Permanente Veterans Association, Prudential, USC, Housing California, and other well-respected entities took active roles in outlining the challenges and needs of the veterans they serve. They provided insight into how their organization

delivers services and how their methods differ from those of local and state government.

"With all the knowledge and expertise represented on the ICV, I am very optimistic that we will be able to find creative ways to meet the full range of housing requirements of California veterans, especially those veterans most in need – the extremely low income and the homeless," said Zack Olmstead, Homeless Policy Director of Housing California.

Meeting participants were assigned to one of four groups based on their expertise or area of interest: housing, employment, health or education. Each group member then explained their organization's specific services, how

those services are delivered, gaps in service, and challenges they encounter when serving veterans. The groups outlined action objectives and made plans for further discussion prior to the next ICV meeting.

"Getting together and opening up a dialogue will help us all learn from one another and discover best practices when it comes to serving veterans in our state," said William York, Chief Operating Officer of 2-1-1 San Diego.

The next meeting of the ICV is scheduled for February 22 and 23, and will include all members of the Governor's Interagency Council on Veterans.

On August 23, 2011, Governor Jerry Brown issued Executive Order B-9-11, creating the California Interagency Council on Veterans, to improve veterans' services that are coordinated across local, state, and federal government. Governor Brown's Executive Order directed the Secretary of the California Department of Veterans Affairs to establish the Council, which is tasked with identifying and prioritizing the needs of California's veterans and coordinating activities at all levels of government in addressing those needs.

For more information about the ICV's effort, please e-mail CalVet at pao@calvet.ca.gov.



The West Los Angeles Veterans Home is Currently Accepting Applications for Residency in the Assisted Living Level of Care



The Veterans Home of California—West Los Angeles is a 396-bed, long-term care facility located adjacent to the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System in West Los Angeles.

Although two levels of care are offered, immediate space is primarily available in the Assisted Living Unit.

The Veterans Home provides California veterans with a living environment that protects their dignity and contributes to their feeling of self-reliance and self-worth.

The Veterans Home of California—West Los Angeles offers two levels of care that provide continuity in the lives of residents in a homelike atmosphere of dignity and respect.

Assisted Living: Residents at this level of care require minimal assistance and supervision with some activities of daily living. Services may include care by licensed nurses.

Skilled Nursing Care: Residents at this level of care are provided 24-hour services of licensed nurses and certified nursing assistants. Skilled nursing residents have greater access to rehabilitation therapies, nursing care, pharmacy management, structured activities and clinical dietary services. A memory care program within this level of care provides a supervised environment for veterans with symptoms of confusion, memory loss, difficulty making decisions, solving problems or participating in conversations. These levels of care will be available in 2012.

Amenities include:

- Room and board – three meals plus snacks
- Medical care and medications
- Optical care, dental care and podiatry services
- Transportation services to all medical appointments and off-campus activities
- Additional services include a beauty/barber shop, multi-purpose room and limited banking services
- Opportunities for worship for all denominations through the Chaplaincy Program
- A modern fitness room and exercise classes
- Library and cable television
- Restorative Therapy Center
- Housekeeping and laundry services
- Caring and compassionate staff, and
- Variety of community outings and an enhanced activity program

The Veterans Home of California—West Los Angeles enjoys the strong support from the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System, the local community as well as camaraderie from the neighboring Los Angeles Air Force Base and many local Veterans organizations. Veterans Homes of California are also located in Chula Vista, Lancaster, Ventura, Barstow and Yountville.

For admission information, contact:

Veterans Home of California—West Los Angeles
11500 Nimitz Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90049
(424) 832-8202
(424) 832-8203
Toll Free: (877) 605-1332
www.calvet.ca.gov

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FEBRUARY 4

**2nd Annual Crab Feed
Sacramento Blue Star Moms &
Hy-Rams of Harmony Lodge**
National Guard Armory, Gate J
Corporation Yard Rd., Roseville, 95678

FEBRUARY 8

Veterans Small Business Expo 2012
Long Beach City College
4901 East Carson St., T 1200
Long Beach, CA 90808

FEBRUARY 22-23

**California Interagency Council on
Veterans Conference**
Sacramento Convention Center
Contact: Eric Worthen (916) 651-3043

FEBRUARY 29

**AMVETS, Department of California
2012 Capitol Legislative Day**
State Capitol, Sacramento, CA
Basement Cafeteria, Eureka Room
Contact: Pete Conaty and Associates
(916) 492-0550

MARCH 14

Sacramento Valley Collaborative
Brandman University
3001 Lava Ridge Ct., Ste. 250, Rm. 136
Roseville, CA
Contact: Mary Ellen Salzano (408) 779-6916

MARCH 28

**Vietnam Veterans of America
California State Council
2012 Capitol Legislative Day**
State Capitol, Sacramento, CA
Basement Cafeteria, Eureka Room
Contact: Pete Conaty and Associates
(916) 492-0550

MARCH 19-23

Women's Military History Week

MARCH 30

Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day

APRIL 18

**American Legion
Department of California**
State Capitol, Sacramento, CA
Basement Cafeteria, Eureka Room
Contact: Pete Conaty and Associates
(916) 492-0550

MAY 9

**California Association of County
Veterans Service Officers**
State Capitol, Sacramento, CA
Basement Cafeteria, Eureka Room
Contact: Pete Conaty and Associates
(916) 492-0550

MAY 14-19

**Nation Association of State Women
Veteran Coordinators Conference**
DoubleTree Hotel
Sacramento, CA
Contact: Lindsey Wathen (916) 653-2327

