

Call 1-800-562-2308 for Statewide Assistance

May/June/July 2014



WDVA Vet Services and Behavioral Health Services were joined by Health Care Authority partners in the Capitol Reception Room to be recognized for the success of their Veterans Benefits Enhancement Program and programs aimed at eliminating Veterans homelessness. The programs were each recognized by the USDVA with a Pillar of Excellence Award. Nationwide, this new Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) award recognizes state partners for outstanding programs supporting Veterans in their states. Of the five awards presented, Washington State was honored to be the recipient of two of them!

Great news!

WDVA received official word July 2 that its US Department of Labor Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program grant funds were renewed for both the HVRP Rural and HVRP Urban grants through FY 2015. If you know a veteran who is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless that needs employment assistance, this grant could help! Veterans can apply through their local Disabled Veterans Outreach Program at WorkSource offices throughout WA State. Find yours here: <http://www.wa.gov/esd/veterans/ContactVeteranStaff.htm> Learn more about the WDVA HVRP at: http://www.dva.wa.gov/homeless_veteran_services.html

New Regulations Automate Burial Payments for Veterans' Survivors

WASHINGTON – New burial regulations effective July 7, 2014 will now allow the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to automatically pay the maximum amount allowable under law to most eligible surviving spouses more quickly and efficiently, without the need for a written application.

Under former regulations, VA paid burial benefits on a reimbursement basis, which required survivors to submit receipts for relatively small one-time payments that VA generally paid at the maximum amount permitted by law.

This automation enables VA to pay a non-service-connected or service-connected burial allowance to an estimated 62,000 eligible surviving spouses out of a projected 140,000 claimants for burial benefits in 2014. Surviving spouses will be paid upon notice of the Veteran's death using information already in VA systems. The burial allowance for a non-service-connected death is \$300, and \$2,000 for a death connected to military service.

For more information on monetary burial benefits, visit:

<http://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/claims-special-burial.asp>.



A Note from the Director

Lourdes E. Alvarado-Ramos (Alfie)

alfie@dva.wa.gov

Early in 2013, Governor Inslee issued his first Executive Order creating the Washington State Military Transition Council, making Washington the first in the Nation to form this type of partnership. I was honored when he asked me, as the director of your Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs, to serve as Co-Chair along with Colonel H. Charles Hodges, Joint Base Commander of JBLM.

We've been busy, establishing the Council Executive Board and getting down to work. On June 3, 2014, the Governor visited with the Council and heard from leaders from both public and private organizations.

Ultimately, our goal is for the Washington State Military Transition Council to operate as a partnership between federal, state, public, community and private entities to quickly identify obstacles to seamless transition, remove the obstacles, and make recommendations helping to continuously improve the transition process. This will help Washington State achieve the lowest veteran unemployment rates and the most competitive earning wages in the United States.

I'm excited to say that we're already seeing changes to the way things have always been done when it comes to transition out of the military.

- Soldiers are authorized to participate in a variety of pre-apprenticeship programs while still on active duty.
- Pacific Mountain Workforce Development Council received a \$5.6 million Dept of Labor grant to help transitioning military personnel with case management, supportive services and training in order to help them apply the sought-after skills they acquired through military service in the civilian workforce.
- JBLM developed Northwest Edge to give transitioning servicemembers information about public and private employment in Washington state, an opportunity to work with local agencies to build networks and make connections and a variety of job "shadow" opportunities.

Last year the Washington State Military Transition Council facilitated the following activities. While the participants were mostly JBLM soldiers, we are beginning to gain momentum in duplicating some of these programs for the Navy, Coast Guard, Air Force and Marines.

Activity	# Of Service Members Supported
Higher Education Trips	960
Career Technical Track Trips	600
Entrepreneurship Trips	250
Hiring Events	2200
NW Edge Cohorts	55
Camo2Commerce Program (JAN 14)	195 Enrolled/43 Placements
Total	4260



It's great to see our state leaders taking such an active interest in helping military personnel be successful as they move from their military to civilian careers and I'm excited about changes we'll be able to make in the coming months!

Director, WDVA

Never Forgotten - Always Remembered



You are cordially invited to the
61st Anniversary
of the
Korean War Armistice
Annual Wreathlaying Ceremony
at the
Washington State
Korean War Veterans Memorial

July 26, 2014, 11:00 a.m.
Capitol Campus
Olympia, WA

*The public is encouraged to attend as we
Honor Washington State's Korean War Veterans
and their families. Your wreaths and flowers are welcome.*

*For additional information contact Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs
at 1-800-562-0132 opt. 1 or
communications@dva.wa.gov*

Naval Admiral Hosts Commander's Call with Incarcerated Veterans at WCCW

By Maria Peterson, Communications Manager
Washington State Department of Corrections

One of the highest ranking US Naval officials in the Pacific Northwest held a Commander's Call inside the fences of the Washington Corrections Center for Women. Her audience for the call represented veterans from the Army, Navy, Army National Guard and Air Force, all of whom were honorably discharged from service and are now incarcerated.

Rear Admiral Babette "Bette" Bolivar spoke with members of the incarcerated veterans group at WCCW June 20 along with the director of the Washington Department of Veterans (WDVA) Affairs Alfie Alvarado Ramos and Department of Corrections (DOC) Chief of Staff Peter Dawson, Women Veteran volunteer Sharon Kirkpatrick and DOC Veteran Liaison/Research Manager Teri Herold-Prayer.

"I hold you in the highest regard," Bolivar told the group. "I thank you for your service and for supporting our common goal to serve the public."

The veterans at the event served as mechanics, maintenance professionals, nurses, and military police during their military career. While the members of this group may represent different careers and branches of the Armed Forces, Bolivar expressly stated that there is, "One team. One fight."

The fight facing incarcerated veterans is similar to veterans on the outside but made more difficult by their felony convictions, according to the group members. As they explained to the officials at the commander's call, in order to be successful after release they will need education, job readiness training, health assessments, mental health treatment, PTSD treatment and transitional housing. Navigating the complex system to access these benefits has been a challenge, they said.

"You will help those who come after you," said Bolivar. "Because you are letting us know the services you need to take care of you while you're behind the fence and after you leave. And hopefully that will help you to not come back."

DOC began a partnership with WDVA in 2010 to address these and other challenges faced by incarcerated veterans. DOC now educates offenders on the importance of self-identifying as a veteran when they enter the prison system. Veteran offenders receiving disability compensation or pension prior to incarceration are to have that benefit reduced to 10 percent on after 60 days of incarceration. Failing to do so can result in an overpayment, meaning offenders could leave prison owing money to the federal Veterans Administration (VA). With proper paperwork and VA approval, a portion of their benefits can be dispensed to their family members known as apportionment. Classification Counselors assist the offenders with this process and can help identify services for the offenders after release.

DOC's efforts are spearheaded by Herold-Prayer who shared success stories at the event. She noted that several formerly incarcerated veterans are using the GI bill and other benefits they earned through military service to help them with reentry services.



The Commander's Call at WCCW provided an opportunity for veteran offenders to share their issues with DOC and VA staff members.

Rear Adm. Bette Bolivar addresses the Women's Veterans group at WCCW as WDVA director Alfie Alvarado Ramos looks on.

Please join us for a FREE, fun, and informative day honoring Women Veterans of all ages, National Guard and Reserve, and Transitioning Military

Women Veterans Summit

"Dare to Dream—A Celebration of the Warrior Within"

Spokane Convention Center
334 West Spokane Falls Blvd
Spokane, WA 99201

Saturday, September 20, 2014



Painting by: Pam Evenson

Please Register Online at:
<https://www.regonline.com/Register/Checkin.aspx?EventID=1529730>

Special Guests:



Becky Halstead
Brigadier General,
US Army, Retired



Sarah Plummer
(aka Semper Sarah)

Presented by:



Sponsored by:



- ◆ Registration 7:30am Summit 8:30am—3:45pm
- ◆ Keynote speaker, **Becky Halstead**, will present "The First Person You Must Lead is You." Sarah Plummer will provide a motivational presentation during opening ceremony
- ◆ Six workshops with topics such as: "Just Roll With It: the 7 Battle-Tested Traits for Creating a Ridiculously Happy, Healthy, and Successful Life" - Sarah Plummer; "Pure Grit: How American World War II Nurses Survived Battle and Prison Camp in the Pacific" - Mary Cronk; "Service Dogs for Physical and Mental Health" - Kathy Champion and John George
- ◆ Networking and Exhibitor areas
- ◆ Enjoy a complimentary lunch and a day of being pampered with several free spa services
- ◆ Runway Show with volunteer Women Veterans presented by Audrey's Boutique and historical uniforms from the Alice Miller Collection

For more information on agenda, hotels, and more, please visit:
<http://www.dva.wa.gov/2014womensummit.html>

Comcast Cares Day Brought Lots of Volunteers to Washington Soldiers Home in Orting!



More than 200 volunteers assembled at the Washington Soldiers Home in Orting in May to clean, paint and perform other maintenance as part of the 13th annual Comcast Cares Day. More than 2,000 employees, family, friends and others volunteered at a dozen sites throughout Washington, and more than 80,000 people donated time worldwide. The Orting volunteers included more than 60 people from the United States Army's Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps, (JROTC) at Graham-Kapowsin High School. The gathering was organized by Comcast employees based in the Puyallup field office, which serves Pierce County.

Photos courtesy of Comcast.

AmeriCorps Volunteers Get Washington Veterans Home Grounds Ready for Summer!



AmeriCorps volunteers put in hundreds of hours at the Washington Veterans Home getting the grounds ready for the residents to enjoy the summer weather. Acting Superintendent Dax

Dowling presented them with a certificate on behalf of WDVA as a small show of gratitude for their hard work.



Service for Service Washington Goes to the Dogs



Ty Carter is a United States Army Staff Sergeant and Medal of Honor recipient. He was awarded the United States of America's highest military honor for his actions at the 2009 Battle of Kamdesh in Afghanistan.

Carter, Army Captain William D. Swenson and Army Sergeant First Class Leroy Petry are the only Medal of Honor recipients in any branch of service still on active duty as of 2014.

Carter is currently stationed as a staff noncommissioned officer with the 7th Infantry Division at Joint Base Lewis-McChord.



Kathryn Champion is an honorably discharged Iraqi War Veteran & Bronze Star Recipient. She receives VA care for multiple sclerosis and post-traumatic stress disorder. Kathryn was an Army reservist and former science teacher in Thurston and Yakima counties who rose from the ROTC to the command of an all-male "civil affairs" unit in Iraq. Her job was laughably uncivil. For 15 months, she made life-or-death decisions, tended to bleeding comrades, and stood her ground under fire. She was awarded a Bronze Star. While in Iraq, Kathryn contracted a virus that caused her optic nerves to deteriorate.



John George, WDVA Service Dog Program Coordinator, is a veteran of OEF & OIF. John served 8 years in the United States Air Force, with multiple deployments to combat zones within Iraq. John separated from the military and was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. He spent many years researching different approaches to managing his symptoms of PTSD, and decided a service dog was the best option. John worked extensively to become educated on the process, extensive training, and the law as it pertains to service dogs. He is currently partnered with Alphie, a good-natured and loving Goldenoodle.

Green River Community College

Lindbloom Student Center

August 7, 2014 ~ 8:30am - 3:30pm

Registration from 7:45 - 8:30

Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) and the King County Veterans Program bring you a fascinating day focused on service dogs and Veterans.

Sessions on Service, Emotional Support, Companion, and Therapy Dogs.



<https://www.regonline.com/Register/Checkin.aspx?EventID=1535900>



Lunch and CEUs provided.

Vet Corps 2013-2014 Team Celebrates Success Providing Service and Recognizing Excellence

Marking the end of Vet Corps Service Year 2013-14, members from around the state descended on Cashmere, Washington on June 6.

In true Vet Corps fashion, they kicked off the day with a service project, with about 40 veterans building a Veterans Reflection Area at the Chelan County Fair Grounds.

Their hard work was followed by an awards dinner to recognize the amazing impact the group of volunteers has had over the past school year.

Due to the Washington Vet Corps' dedication, over 12,000 individual veterans were served, with over 500 confirmed connections to federal VA resources, and over 1000 confirmed connections to Veteran Service Organizations.

The evening was topped off with the following awards presented for outstanding Vet Corps service throughout the year:

- **Vet Corps Peace Prize** - Bryan Bales from Lower Columbia College.
- **Veterans of Vet Corps**- Rebecca Murch, Randall Burgess, and Marty Jonquiere, all having served three years or more.
- **Excellence in Professionalism** - Erle Hunter from University of Washington Bothell and Shameka Mitchell from Pacific Lutheran University.
- **Innovation, Invention & Institution Award** - Jesse Schweizer from the University of Washington Tacoma and Scott Troser from Sarges Place in Forks, Washington.
- **Trail Blazer** - Justin Power of Growing Veterans in Lynden Washington.
- **Site Collaboration** - Crystal Mazac from Antioch University Seattle and Erick Flieger's from Washington State University Tri-Cities.
- **S.T.A.R (Service, Teamwork, Attitude and Reliability)** - Tony Sondoal of Wenatchee Valley College.
- **Coordinator of the Year**- Heather Bahme Eastern Washington Coordinator.
- **Member of the Year**- Jonathan Wagner of Clover Park Technical College.



Vet Corps Member of the Year Jonathan Wagner of Clover Park Technical College.
"Jonathan exemplifies service and the Vet Corps ethos."



Flag Day 2014, the Brothers in Arms Motorcycle Club - North Thurston County Chapter raised over \$1,700.00 for the Veterans Conservation Corps! They finished the ride by presenting the funds to WDVA Veterans Conservation Corps/Vet Corps Program Manager Jason Alves.

Thank you so much
for your support!

VA Provides Guidance to Same-Sex Married Couples Seeking Benefits

June 20, 2014 WASHINGTON -- After close consultation with the Department of Justice (DOJ), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is providing guidance to same-sex married couples on the benefits and services to which they are entitled under current laws and regulations.

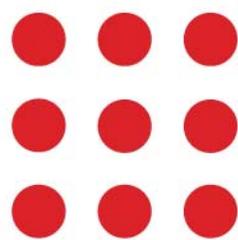
The U.S. Supreme Court overturned section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which governed the definitions of “marriage” and “spouse” for all federal agencies. However, there remain certain provisions of federal law governing Veterans’ benefits and services that, like DOMA, define a spouse as a member of the opposite sex. In September 2013, the U.S. Attorney General announced President Obama’s directive to cease enforcement of those VA-specific definitional provisions.

However, another provision of the law governing VA – 38 U.S.C. § 103(c) – requires the Department to look to the place of residency rather than the place of celebration to determine whether a Veteran’s marriage is recognized for the purposes of VA benefits. This statutory requirement to look at the laws governing marriage in the place where the Veteran or Veteran’s spouse resided at the time of the marriage or at the time they filed their claim or application precludes VA from recognizing certain same-sex marriages, such as when a couple has never lived in a state that recognizes same-sex marriages. VA has worked with DOJ to develop guidance to process claims and applications for same-sex married couples while still following the statutory requirement to look to the place of residency.

VA is committed to treating all Veterans and their spouses as equally as possible under the law. Since the *Windsor* decision, VA has worked with DOJ to develop guidance to process claims and applications for same-sex married couples while still following the statutory requirement to look to the place of residency. Importantly, the administrations within VA will aim to apply the same level of scrutiny to all Veterans’ marriages, regardless of whether it is a same-sex or opposite-sex marriage. VA will therefore process claims and applications involving same-sex marriage in the same manner that VA processes claims based on opposite-sex marriage without any additional scrutiny or development. This means generally that VA will accept a claimant or applicant’s assertion that he or she is married as sufficient evidence to establish a Veteran’s marriage for the purpose of VA benefits. VA has made efforts to ensure that claimants will not be negatively impacted as a result of the time that has passed while developing this guidance.

VA is now processing all claims and applications involving same-sex marriages that were previously being held by the program offices. VA launched a new website and is continuing to update forms to inform Veterans and beneficiaries of the recent changes in the law and procedures. The new website provides important information to help Veterans and beneficiaries understand the eligibility requirements under federal law and VA regulations, and answers frequently asked questions.

Veterans can learn more about VA’s guidance regarding same-sex marriages at <http://www.va.gov/opa/marriage/> or by reaching out to one of our Call Centers at 1-800-827-1000.



**Veterans
Crisis Line**

1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1

Memorial Day at the Washington Veterans Home



Memorial Day started early at the Washington Veterans Home. At 7:00 am local boy scout troops gathered to display the colors and raise the flags in the cemetery for memorial day. They all worked together to post flags by each marker in the cemetery. At the end of the day, the boy scouts returned to retire the flags.

The Washington Veterans Home held a special Memorial Day program and ceremony to honor veterans and more specifically the veterans who have lived and passed at the Veterans Home in the last year.

CMC Shawn Piersel, Naval Base Kitsap gave the welcome address by sharing memories of two fellow service members and good friends who gave all.

Resident Cameron Cook lead the pledge of allegiance, and Resident council Chairman Mark Davis read the Governor's proclamation.

Key note speaker Captain David K. Konke, NUWC Keyport spoke about Memorial Day, and reminded us of our Veterans and neighbors who have given all for our freedoms.

Roll call was read listing each veteran from the Veterans Home who had passed away in the last year.

Throughout the program there were musical selections to remember, reflect and honor our Veterans. Maddy Hanson, Emma Wasilchen, Meagan McCormick and Evelyn Panfili were the vocalists who enriched the event for all who were there.

Naval Personnel from Naval Base Kitsap volunteered to escort all residents to and from the program so all who wanted to attend were able, and the Patriot Guard welcomed them with a flag line.

The day focused on remembering those who staff have had the honor of serving through care at the veterans home, and recognizing all Veterans who have given all.

The Kitsap Women Bowlers Association

President Lisa Barfield came by to make a donation of \$1,053.00 to the Washington Veterans Home. This generous gift will be used for a new music



therapy program being developed for the veterans at WVH. Retsil will be utilizing the technology of today, MP3 Players, to develop personalized music playlists for our most frail residents.

Thank you to the KWBA for once again thinking of our Veterans!

The Annual Fred Ross Memorial Ride was held May 26th and the Silverdale Chapter of the Harley Owners Group raised \$1,060.00 for the Washington Veterans Home Residents Betterment Fund. Around 75 riders met at the Silverdale Harley Davidson shop and rode to Retsil to show off their motorcycles and visit with the residents.

One VERY young-at-heart resident, Maggie, talked one of the bikers into taking her for a ride around the parking lot!

The Ladies of Harley presented our WWII veterans present with wheel chair bags, and following the bike show, 2 bus loads of residents went back to Destination Harley for a BBQ and quilt raffle. Thank you so much Silverdale HOG!





The Brothers In Arms Motorcycle Club Dust Off Ride was an exciting fund raiser for the WA Soldiers Home!

The residents had the opportunity to mingle with the riders and partake in the delicious barbecue fare. The Brothers In Arms presented a check for \$1,129.00 to Gary Smith, Resident Council Chairman and Greg Heiden, Resident Council Vice Chairman for the Welfare and Betterment Fund. There was also a donation of recreational supplies and gloves for the residents. Thank you Brothers In Arms Motorcycle Club - East Pierce County for your continued support for the residents at the WA Soldiers Home!

Memorial Day at the Washington Soldiers Home



The Washington Soldiers Home 2014 Memorial Day Program was a time of both remembrance and celebration.

Lael Hepworth, Superintendent was the emcee. The guest speaker, COL Ronald E Smith, MD, Commander, 62nd Medical Brigade, JBLM, WA delivered a moving speech that touched the audience's hearts.

Resident Wesley Gourley, U.S. Army led the Pledge of Allegiance. Resident John Underwood, Resident Council Activities Committee, U.S. Army, Vietnam presented the Governor's Memorial Day Proclamation. Resident Raymond McDade, Resident Council member, U.S. Navy, WWII delivered the



Roll Call. Chaplain Ric Fritz delivered the invocation and the benediction. Rogers High School JROTC Color Guard posted and retired the Colors with precision and expertise. The Puyallup Valley Community Band gave a stellar performance throughout the program. The American Legion Auxiliary, Eagles and independent volunteers assisted at the refreshment table. Boy Scouts and Girl

Scouts of America, Clover Park Technical School teachers and students, the Air Force Sergeants Association, Dave Kiesig, Ombudsman and independent volunteers assisted with event support.

Thank you to all our community group and individual partners who helped make the WA Soldiers Home 2014 Memorial Day Program a success!





The Washington State Cemetery in Medical Lake provides solace to many, whether honoring loved ones or enjoying special visitors at the Scatter Garden. <http://www.dva.wa.gov/cemetery.html>



Building 9 for Veterans picked up their new van last month, purchased through a partnership with a Kitsap Transit Grant. The van will be used to transport Building 9 Veterans to and from appointments, work and other activities that will help in their transition back to their communities.

(l-r) Ray Switzer, Program Manager - Transitional Housing Building 9 for Veterans and Dee Williams, VanLink Coordinator with Kitsap Transit.

Find out more about Building 9 for Veterans Transitional Housing at <http://www.dva.wa.gov/bldg9.html>

Keep informed about upcoming Veteran events by checking our Public Events Page on a regular basis: http://www.dva.wa.gov/public_events.html

Have an event of interest to Veterans you want others to know about? Send fliers and information to communications@dva.wa.gov

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Veterans Voices is published every other month for Washington veterans and all interested in news affecting veterans and their families. View previous editions here:

<http://www.dva.wa.gov/publications.html>

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